

## **SOCIAL SECURITY; A PUBLIC POLICY FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF NIGERIAN LEGISLATURE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The ability of any country to consistently improve her economic growth and development depends on good governance embedded in well-structured and diligently implemented public policies developed by officials within institutions of government to address public issues through the political process, called legislation. These officials, in Nigeria are the legislators, who are faced with the situation of jointly identifying a desirable future condition, creating policies and taking actions to move towards the desired future state; monitoring progress to allow for necessary adjustments; adjustments that will lead to that desired future state. That desired future state is the whole essence of governance. But in Nigeria today, especially since the upsurge of perennial and escalating unemployment, the lawmaking body of the nation cannot be said to have jointly identified the Nigerian problems, enacted policies that will ensure good governance in the country. Finding the reason for such inadequacies and the way forward is the thrust of this paper, as it x-rays the role of the Nigerian legislature in enacting social security policies for the unemployed and aged Nigerians for attainment of good governance where poverty, hunger, destitution and unemployment are eradicated.*

**Keywords:** Good governance, Legislature, Public policy, Social security, Nigeria State.

### **Contribution/ Originality**

While social security has overtime been relegated to the background by the Nigerian government, Nigerians have learnt to fend for themselves to avert the usual heartbreak that occasions expectations from the government. What is more is the fact that unemployment and Nigerian youths/graduates are intertwined as there is no mentioning of either of them without recourse to the other. Clearly, the government has lost touch with the reality on how to solve this social problem. This paper therefore calls for social security as a panacea to the social and economic insecurities that have bedeviled Nigeria, as asserted by Prof. Ben Nwabuzo in 1989 that the abandonment of social security is the reason for any threat that Nigeria is facing when iterating that the wantonness with which state security is pursued in place of social security is the real cause of social insecurity necessitated by economic insecurity.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The hue and cry of insecurity in Nigeria that has occasioned loss of lives and properties of recent which has been linked to poverty and unemployment is because of lack of organized social security system that accommodates the needs of the deprived, less opportuned and less privileged people. This organized Social security system is accredited to have set countries like the United States of America, Canada, Great Britain on the right tract in the fight against corruption and poverty unlike Nigeria that has no organized social security system but is remarkable with organized corruption that has created and keeps fanning the ember of poverty, hence the need to develop a policy that will ensure that poverty, hunger, unemployment and starvation is circumvented.

The justification of social security and its legislation in Nigeria is premised on the fundamental obligation of government to legislate, execute and adjudicate, in confirmation, observation and application of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chapter of the 1999 Constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria which deals with the elementary objectives and derivative principles of state policy in providing for the security (social and economic) of the people as the primary purpose of government, thus:

*The Federal republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice...2(b) the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government...(FRN, 2011)*

Consequently, a consciousness of heightened poverty in the country has necessitated a collective action towards supporting the Social Security Bill in line with the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), Canada and Brazil who have adopted Social Security legislation in pursuance of the welfare of their citizenries. In the African scene, adoption of social security legislation would have placed Nigeria at par with about 42 African countries that have embraced different types of Social Security Programmes ranging from Pension, Providence Funds, Unemployment Benefits, Family Allowances and others, as revealed by a statistic from the Social Security Administration (SSA), USA.

For instance, the Republic of Seychelles, which has only a GDP of US\$26,652 to cater for one (1) Million people, provides subsistence income for unemployed persons under the 1980 Unemployment Fund Act. The country has a total population of about 1 million people and a GDP per capita of US \$16,652. Kenya, another African Country with a population of about 40 million people and a GDP per capita of US\$1,140 enacted the Social Security Fund Law in 1965 which has been amended in 1966, 1971, 1987, and 1997 to cover the formal sector and some workers in the informal sector including farmers. Malawi is known for a contributory scheme such that a person previously employed is entitled to some benefit from the government in the event of loss of job. Egypt also has a Social Security law since 1975

Regrettably, Nigeria is still far behind in the drive for social security amidst government constitutional responsibility to provide welfare for the citizens as captured by the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy. Thus, the Social Security Bill, 2009 is a child of necessity for the common man in the country. The responsibility of having a society not

excessively poverty-stricken and corruption-ridden rests on all of us but more dependent on a government whose executive, legislature and judiciary is imbued with genuine courage, intention and political will to tackle these fundamental and indispensable issues, hence Nigeria has enacted few legislations with Social Safety nets relating to the formal sector, including the Provident Fund Act no. 20 of 1961 and the 2004 Pension Reform Act, making the social security bills a necessity for a modern, progressive democratic Nigeria.

Thus, the need to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, at least to some extent, motivated Senator (Elder) Anyim Ude in initiating the Social Security Bill, in 2009 which had five interrelated Parts with rationale to provide social security for unemployed graduates and the aged in Nigeria and for purposes connected thereto (<http://www.nasslegisdigestonline.com/newsdesc.php?id=185>).

The proposed law provided for the establishment of a Graduate Unemployment Benefit Fund from which beneficiaries who are graduates and under the age of forty will be given monthly social allowances. The establishment of an Old age Benefit Fund was also stipulated in the bill. The fund was to provide financial assistance for the aged individuals. But it failed to pass the second reading. However, a few weeks after the Senate and the House of Representatives kicked out the bill seeking to enable jobless graduates in the country receive a N15,000 monthly allowance credible reports have it that the Goodluck Jonathan-led Federal Government had decided to pay unemployed graduates in the country a N16,000 monthly allowance. This monthly stipends is to be paid only to unemployed graduates of accredited Nigerian Higher Institutions who were on regular programmes until they have been productively engaged or gainfully employed, before the attainment of thirty (30) years. This age limited to me is not rational as the same age is the limit for Youth Services, but not limit year for unemployment. Even though the bill failed to scale through, reports from Presidential sources say the President has already approved the budget for the Social Scheme for Unemployed Graduates and the first payouts will commence this 2014 (<http://www.nairaland.com/1210273/bill-allowance-unemployed-graduates-rejected>)

However, in 2013, a proposed legislation, titled: "A Bill for an Act to amend the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) Act, Cap. No. 28 which seeks the creation of specified function of the National Directorate of Employment catering for the unemployed Nigerian graduates, was unable to survive its second reading following a mixed reaction of the House of Representatives Members which led to it being put to vote by show of hands as administered by the speaker of the House, hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal. The sponsor of the bill, Arua Arunsi, the Honourable House of Representative Member representing Ohafia/Arochukwu Federal Constituency, Abia state, had, during his submission on the floor of the House, said the objective of the bill was to design and implement programmes to combat mass unemployment of graduates that are between the ages of 18 to 35 years and also between third to fifth year of post-graduation experience, but in the mean, pay stipends as allowances to the unemployed Nigerian graduates for upkeeps at least for the time being.

Unfortunately, opponents of the proposed legislation pointed out that the provisions of the bill failed to meet critical criteria of filling gaps inherent in the existing laws it was seeking to amend. A member, Ibrahim El Sudi, noted that the bill had nothing new as a similar programme for unemployed graduates is already in existence at the NDE known as graduate attachment programme which does exactly what Arunsi's Bill proposes. This claim, I have not been able to find supporting documents that NDE is empowered to pay stipends as allowances to the unemployed Nigerian. He however, recommended that the authorities should strengthen these programmes.

Frankly, El Sudi, made a great point especially when considered alongside the documentation by Ogunlela (2012) that the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) intervene directly in the areas: Employment counseling services; Skill acquisition and entrepreneurship development training; Provision of transient jobs; and Enterprise creation to train beneficiaries. These are achieved under the following programmes that exist in NDE: Vocational skills development programme under which there are schemes such as National Open Apprenticeship, School-on-wheels, waste-to-wealth, resettlement of disabled persons scheme and so forth; Small scale enterprises programme under which there are graduate and mature people scheme, 1 Million jobs, start your own job, women training and so forth; Rural employment promotion programme where graduate self-employment programme is emphasized; and Special public work programme (Ogunlela, 2012). But the critical question is- if NDE with all these perfect plans have not been able to impact positively on the unemployed as found by (Ogunlela, 2012) when she asserted "the impact of NDE on graduate employment has not been positive hence much still need to be done". And called for a thorough re-appraisal of the programme (NDE) in order to overhaul the system, which may be the reason for Arua Arunsi, the honourable House of Representative Member representing Ohafia/Arochuku in Abia, position in calling for the repositioning of NDE to be pro-active in dealing with youth/graduate unemployment in Nigeria, by first giving them stipends to survive on while something tangential is arranged for them.

In reacting to the stipends allocations to unemployed graduates in Nigeria as suggested by Arua Arunsi's Bill, James Faleke said that providing such monetary incentives could only compound the economic challenges facing the country, because since nigerian economy is not production-based, industrial revitalization efforts will be overwhelmed . "Rather than turn our unemployed youths into lazy ones, government should channel the monthly stipends towards the revival of our industries"(<http://www.theguardianmobile.com/readNewsItem1.php?nid=11171>)

The question that seems imminent is why the legislature has not seen reasons alongside the executive to allow the teeming unemployed Nigerian a stipend to wage their lives upon while they await job opportunities or get productively engaged in private or entrepreneurial sector?

## 2. METHODS

Methodologically, this paper is not an expeditory effort at obtaining new data to expand the frontier of knowledge in Nigerian governance, but it is descriptive and affirmative hence by exploring for and collating existing and known data, this work seeks to corroborate what is

already known, which has not been admitted because should we had admitted overtime, that the Nigerian legislature owe Nigerians the duty of charting a good course for social security for the unemployed and aged, perhaps, the issue of enacting social security policy for the unemployed and aged Nigerians would not have sufficed hence the legislators would have done their legislative duties appropriately and judiciously. This claim is supported by the two bills that have proposed social security in both the upper and lower houses of the National Assembly within an interval of three years. The above implies that the secondary source of data generation was utilized for data generation and therefore, the content analysis approach sufficed.

### 3. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

Theoretically, the Institutional model is applied hence, public policy is determined by political institutions, that give policy legitimacy as government universally applies policy to all citizens of society and monopolizes the use of force in applying policies ([http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What\\_is\\_the\\_institutional\\_model\\_of\\_public\\_policy\\_analysis](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_the_institutional_model_of_public_policy_analysis)). The legislature, executive and judicial branches of government are examples of institutions that give policy legitimacy ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Policy\\_analysis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Policy_analysis)), hence public policy is authoritatively determined, implemented and enforced by these governmental institutions, and the relationship between public policy and government institutions is very close.

Traditionally, a policy does not become public policy until it is adopted, implemented and enforced by some government institutions. Government institutions, as a matter of policy, gives public policy three distinctive characteristics, one of which is that government institution lends legitimacy to policies . Government policies therefore are generally regarded as legal obligations that command the loyalty of citizens. Secondly, government policies involve universality hence it is only government policies that extend to all people in the society; hence the policies of other groups or organizations reach only a part of the society. Finally, government monopolizes coercion in society as it is only government that can imprison violator of its policies.

Unfortunately, the institutional approach in political science did not devote much attention to the linkages between the structures of government institutions and the contents of public policy. Instead, institutional studies usually describe specific governmental institutions- their structures, organization, duties and functions without systematically, inquiring about the impact of institutional characteristics on policy outputs; hence constitutional and legal arrangements were described in detail as were the myriad government offices and agencies at the federal, state and local levels. Even when the linkage between institutional arrangements and contents on policies remains largely unexamined, the impact of institutional arrangement on public policy is an empirical question that deserves investigation. Yet caution must not be thrown to the wind in our assessment of the impact of the structure- the legislature on the public policy- “social security policy”.

#### 4. THE NEED FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIAN POLITY

Despite her enormous resources and huge potentialities, Nigeria remains grossly undeveloped hence characterized by political instability, abject poverty, acute youth/graduate unemployment, heightened crime rate, poor health prospects and widespread malnourishment. As to the causal factors, the problem of Nigerian developmental strands has been linked to lack of good governance; especially when defined in terms of the proper, fair and equitable allocation of resources for the achievement of the end or purposes of the state, which is the promotion of the common good (Ogundiya, 2010).

Regrettably, even when many Nigerians have identified good governance guaranteed in social security as the only assurance of peace, progress, stability, free and fair elections, we have lacked the foremost ingredient in governance and government called 'good'. Good governance thus, is viewed as the only passport to delivering the dividends of democracy. For the health, power, the manufacturing sectors, education and largely the nation to work, we need good governance. To maximize our potentials, improve the general welfare of the Nigerian people and even development in geo-political terms, we need good governance. Until good governance is viewed as the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented, we are still far off simply because the way and manner public persons tend to public institutions, conduct public affairs, manage public resources, are corrupt, and so do not bring about the good of the people as adumbrated in social security provisions.

To wit, good governance within the confines of a popular democracy should be anchored on two things- a constitution suited to the special needs and circumstances of Nigeria as multi-dimensional ethno-religious and political economic structure: and a leadership suited not only to the exigent needs of Nigeria, but the exactitudes of the people. Hence good governance requires no ordinary type of leadership; as tolerance; breadth of outlook, intellectual comprehension; hard work; selfless devotion; statesmanship; a burning sense of mission are some of the virtues that are necessary to make a success in leading this nation. Unfortunately past administrations have lacked these virtues or at best have possessed one at the expense of the other and that has led them to groping in the dark on how to deliver good governance. The increasing fears is that today, with the legislature implicitly, involved, the current government is guilty of the same crime; as the current administration have refused to cultivate leadership qualities shown to have knacks to develop a mental magnitude, as clear as our problems are, and there seems a lack of ability in appreciating and grasping the salient details as well as most of the temporal and practical implications of a given situation or problem such as youth and graduate unemployment (Dickson, 2011).

Therefore, for good governance to be feasible in Nigeria there is the need for a dedicated and functional legislature, a viable, vocal and independent judiciary with integrity, and attitudinal transformation on the part of the political elites, to ensure good governance and development. The essence of a functional, dedicated and virile legislature is to make a sound policy for the public such as passing "the social security bills" or at best fashioning another pattern of social security, but not rejecting it as long as unemployment persist, it must be tackled head-on through

a policy approved by the appropriate authority- the legislature. Aside, the unemployed youths and the aged, there are women whose husbands were of little means and died without anything means of survival. There are others married who are not graduates and are not youths but have no tangible means of livelihood. They need to be provided for, or at worst be given a grant/loan to start up a means of living.

## 5. MEANING AND FINANCING OF SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAMMES

Semantically, social security is a public provision for the economic and sometimes social welfare of the aged, unemployed, etc, especially through pensions and other monetary assistance. It is a government programme designed to provide such assistances. In the United Kingdom (UK), social security is monetary assistance from the state for people with an inadequate or no income. In United States of America (USA), it is a federal insurance scheme providing benefits for pensioners and those who are unemployed or disabled. It is defined as the theory or/and practice of providing economic security and social welfare for the individual through government programs maintained by moneys from public taxation. It is a program in which the government provides money to people who are unable to work because they are old, disabled, or unemployed. Simply put, it is money that is paid to people with vulnerable situations through a social security program. Social security is a collective care arrangement to meet contingencies and other conditions of insecurity due to deprivation or contingencies of both. Strategically, it is a collectively collegial arrangements that redeems the person(s) protected against adversity as a result of some social deficiencies ([www.thisdaylive.com](http://www.thisdaylive.com)).

According to [Iroabuchi \(2009\)](#) Social Security is a human right, as well as an economic and political necessity. Therefore, as an efficient market economy, Nigeria has to embrace social security as an indispensable part of its institutions because it breeds development by ensuirng a clamps down on poverty . These systems of socio-economic security were introduced in Europe in the late 19th century and were slowly implemented in most countries during the early 20th century and consolidated after the Second World War. He (Iroabuchi) contended that social security programmes has existed in Nigeria since 1942, however in piecemeals with the workmans' compensation as a starting point. Others are benefits for temporary and permanent disability, unemployment, maternity and sickness. All these have been going on without a unified policy with no clear funding.

In the words of [Nwabueze \(1989\)](#), Social Security is about the social protection, organized collective protection, of the individual against the economic consequences - loss or suspension of income, poverty, want, destitution, etc- arising from certain social risks of life such as sickness, maternity, invalidity, death resulting from non-occupational injury or disease, old-age, employment or occupational injury and unemployment. The concept of social security is predicated upon a vision of a fairer arrangement of society in which the state assumes a general responsibility to ensure that the individual is secured by organized collective action against the risks of social and economic life. It is based on solidarity (one of Africa's traditional fundamental values), which gives greater protection against certain social risks than individual effort to



provide for the future. It works by pooling resources to provide benefits and services to the persons protected when a prescribed contingency takes place". It is a matter to be tackled by general policy and under a general national scheme. The least required of the state is to regulate law by the way social security is organized and administered, but its responsibility should extend beyond this to involvement in its administration and, in appropriate cases, its funding in the whole or in part to ensure its legitimacy.

However, Social security should be differentiated from social welfare services (including public health services). The latter are amenities provided by the state, either free or at a fee for the population at large as part of its social responsibility to cater for the well being of its citizens but no individual can claim them as an entitlement or right legally due to him from the state. Social security is founded on the notion of individual right whereby cash benefits can be claimed as an individual entitlement. But the fact that social welfare services cannot, for reasons of limited resources, be claimed as an entitlement suggests that the range of persons and contingencies that can be covered by social security is necessarily limited, at any rate in countries whose economy is insufficiently developed. Social security and social welfare services need to be coordinated for them to be able to complement each other; hence the latter had so eluded Nigeria (Nwabueze, 1989).

In Nigeria, State Security looms so large not so much because the Nigerian state, its ordered existence, safety and territorial integrity, face any real threat of danger, either from within or without, but because the personal safety of those in control of the state and the security of their offices are regarded by them as synonymous with the security of the state. This explains why we hear so much about state security- a network of state security organizations (SSS) spread all over the place with vast sums of money appropriated and spent to maintain it. But little or nothing is known, said or done about social security, about how to secure the individual against want, poverty, destitution, diseases and idleness, which may be trust upon him by the varied hazards and vicissitude of social life, notably loss or suspension of income or means of sustenance resulting from sickness, maternity, accident injury, invalidity, old-age, death of breadwinner or unemployment, hence there is no clear statement of policy regarding it and little is spent on it by the state, except in its capacity as employer. This neglect has manifested itself in the hordes of blind people and other disabled persons who infest our cities, all begging for alms, in the lack of proper and adequate maintenance for children, and in the hunger and disease that constantly inflict the masses. Without protection from the state, the individual is left largely to his own devices in the fight against the risks of social life- a situation made worst and confounded by the insecurity of life and property by a harsh economic environment made manifest in escalated poverty, inequality and unemployment (Nwabueze, 1989).

The pre-occupation of the state with "state security" and the neglect of the "economic security" of the individuals clearly manifest a distortion in our priorities. The economic security of the individuals should be far greater a concern to the government and society than the security of the state, for, as the constitution solemnly proclaims, "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government" S.14 (2)(b). Paradoxically, whatever threat of danger that



faces the Nigerian state today seems more from the absence of economic security, particularly economic insecurity arising from mass unemployment (Nwabueze, 1989), hence, the then Minister of Employment, Labour and Productivity, Abubakar Umar, once said, "Full employment is ...our guaranteed of stability, security and balanced economic development" hence our effort as a country should therefore be directed more at fighting the root causes of whatever threat there is to the security of the state.

In x-raying the objectives of social security, Nwabueze (1989) upheld that modern social security seeks to fulfill at least six objectives. The foremost, and one with which it began is income security. That is to say the maintenance of income by cash benefit in the event of its loss or suspension caused by any of the contingencies mentioned above, with the object of creating among individuals and families "the confidence that their level of living and quality of life will not, in so far as possible, be greatly eroded by any social or economic eventuality".

The machinery of social security thus seeks, irrespective of social contingencies, to make it possible for "the entire population, or at least, the great majority, to benefit progressively from the same guaranteed maintenance of their standards and ways of life," which for long has been a privilege of a small majority. It seeks to insure that those who are well off do not become poor, that the poor do not become destitute, and that generally want is alleviated.

The objectives cover everybody earning an income - employees as well as self-employed workers, although in Africa and other developing countries, it has largely been restricted to the former. With the exception of family allowances and other social assistance schemes, all social security cash benefit schemes - sickness benefits, maternity benefit, compensation for employment injury, old age, invalidity and survivors' pension, and unemployment benefits- are directed towards income maintenance.

On financing the scheme, he furthered that social security is financed from three main sources: contribution by workers and employers based on wages or earnings and state financing. Usually, financing is by a combination of all three methods, a combination of workers' and employers' contributions or a combination of employers' and state financing; sometimes, it is financed by the employer alone or by the state alone.

Financing by each of these methods is rationalized on different grounds. Workers' contribution is said to ground entitlement to benefits as a right and to participation in the management of a protection scheme; it forces upon workers awareness about the uncertainty of the future and their responsibility to provide for it by compulsory saving. The employer's contribution is rationalized by reference to his part in the chain of causation of some of the risks against which protection is needed, particularly occupational injury or disease, unemployment, illness or invalidity associated with exertions at work and their wear and tear on the human system, as well as his responsibility for the maintenance of the human resources that sustain his enterprise and its profitability. There is also the gain from good labour relations with the resultant improvement in the quality of work and the stability of labour. The state's contribution is predicated on its social responsibility to ensure that the individual, in particular the needy- the aged, the invalid, the blind or mother with dependent children- and the economically weak class, is

protected against the risk of life. Moreover, its actions and policies or lack of them are often a major contributory factor in the causation of some of the risks, e.g. unemployment and sickness. Also, the financial intervention of the state is viewed as “a practical necessity where funds were insufficient or where low contributive capacity of certain categories of workers had to be remedied”.

Thus, tripartite financing, while it is, and still remains the usual method of financing, raises the difficult question concerning the share of the cost to be borne by each of the three social partners, but the guiding principle embodied in International Labour Organization (ILO) Income Recommendation, No 67 of 1944 stipulates that “the cost of benefits, including the cost of administration, should be distributed among insured persons, employers and taxpayers, in such a way as to be equitable to insured persons and to avoid hardship to insured persons of small means or any disturbance to production”.

The social security (Minimum Standards) Convention 1952 (No.102) re-affirms the guiding principle in its article 71(1) which, provides that the cost of benefits, including the cost of administration shall be borne collectively by way of insurance contributions or taxation or both in a manner which avoids hardship to persons of small means and takes into account the economic situation of the member and of the classes of persons protected”, but without going into specifics except only to say that the total contribution borne by workers must not exceed 50 percent of the total financial resources allocated to the protection of employees and their wives and children. But most important of all, it puts on the state the ‘general responsibility for the due provision of benefits: as well as responsibility to “take all measures required for this purpose.”

The specifications in ILO Income Security Recommendation (No.67) have been considerably modified in the practice of different national systems, hence a 1984 ILO study revealed for example, that in many countries, the system imposing exclusive liability on the employer for the occupational injury or disease is being replaced by joint financing from employers and workers’ contributions while in other cases, workers’ contribution is being reduced or altogether abolished. On the whole, payroll contributions (mainly employers’) remain globally the predominant source of social security financing.” At the same time, quite apart from the traditional forms of state participation, there has been a significant development of the public financing of either the entire expenditure of one or several branches or of a specific class of benefits, in particular, basic pensions...or benefits granted to certain categories of persons... or benefits granted subject to a means test. Furthermore, instead of self-employed persons paying the combined employer’s and worker’s contribution as is envisaged by the income security recommendation (67), there contribution is at a much reduce rate in any country, with the state making up the difference (Nwabueze, 1989).

## **6. THE NIGERIAN LEGISLATURE AND SOCIAL SECURITY PROVISION**

According to Kolawole (2012) Nigerian legislators have contributed immensely to the underdevelopment of Nigeria but, the tendency has been to look at the clueless executive branch of government as the source of our woes, but that is a correct thing to do because the executive is

responsible for policies implementation and maintenance of law and order in the society, as they run the day-to-day machinery of government.

Hence in any given democracy, the legislature performs three basic functions: lawmaking, appropriation and oversight of the executive. Perceptibly, the Nigerian legislators make laws, especially the ones that would not upset the applecart. They do a lot of appropriation and carefully jack up the budget to accommodate their own interests. Of course, they do perform oversight functions excellently, as long as the agency or ministry or parastatal they are overseeing would “support” public hearings and give committee members tickets and bundles of dollars to fly to some unknown Republic to attend “capacity-building” conferences. But as a matter of responsibility, the Nigerian constitution empowers the legislators to probe a political and public office holder and remove same from office if found guilty. But this is just on paper as they have gladly surrendered their independence to the executive. Therefore, in more ways than one, the legislators have contributed their own quotas to the underdevelopment of Nigeria (Kolawole, 2012)

If anyone is in doubt of the role of the Nigerian legislators in ensuring that Nigerians are denied good governance and thus contribute fervidly to the underdevelopment of Nigeria, an x-ray of their role in the ensuring that the bills seeking for stipends (allowances) for the unemployed graduates does not see the light of the day that has attracted varying and various reactions from student and unemployed graduates in Nigeria which may tear the country into shreds. The Bill, entitled “An Act to provide social security for unemployed graduates and aged in Nigeria,” sponsored by Senator Anyim Udeh.

Leading the debate on the floor of the Senate, Senator Udeh said creating social security infrastructure for the aged and the unemployed graduates would curb crimes and other social vices, including reduction of mortality rate. He said: “The social security Bill is in compliance with section 14 of the 1999 Constitution. It is more so, because over 70 per cent of our people live below poverty level. Creating the social security scheme in which unemployed graduates and the aged will have minimum wage to live on will help tackle the problem of poverty.”

Disclosing the cost implication of the scheme, Udeh told the Senators that an estimated N77 billion would be needed to run the scheme between 2011 and 2015 if the Bill was passed. The Bill received the support of the Senators, but most of them warned against the abuse of the scheme and expressed fears on the ability of the Federal Government to implement it. For instance, Senator Grace Bent (PDP, Adamawa South) in her support for the bill, decried the high rate of poverty in Nigeria and absence of social security scheme to address the problems of the less-privileged. Bent said: “Nigeria, before now, should have had this sort of legislation. A government that has vision and love for the people at heart should have this legislation. This Bill will solve the social security problems all over the place and reduce mortality rate in the country.” Before the second reading of the bill, President of the Senate, Senator David Mark while expressing concern on the rising number of unemployed graduates called for caution in the implementation process. He said: “We need to worry about the level of unemployment in the country. We need to worry about those going without a dime in their pockets. This Bill is not

only for the unemployed graduates or the aged, every Nigerian should be able to have a platform that will guarantee him better living conditions.” (<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2010/06/04/senate-proposes-n15000-monthly-salaries-for-unemployed-graduates-aged>).

However, the bill was truncated by the National Assembly in spite of the Minister of Labour and Productivity (2008-2010), Prince Adetokunbo Kayode's assertion that major crises being witnessed all over the country are traceable to unemployment, hence if the people were engaged and employed, it would be difficult for them to cause crisis in the country. “the duty of every government is to put its people to work and that “when a government creates opportunity for the people to be employed, then it is really responsible for the welfare of the people and this is the mandate of government.” He therefore challenged the Federal Government and the National Assembly to ensure that 2010 was a budget of employment and empowerment of the people (<http://www.tribune.com.ng/index.php/news/1047-unemployment-reason-for-crisis-in-nigeria-minister.html>).

Years later, Arua Arunsi, a Federal House of Representative Member, who sponsored a bill seeking monetary social security for the unemployed Nigerian graduates, had, during his submission on the floor, said the objective of the bill was to design and implement programmes to combat mass unemployment of graduates that are between the ages of 18 to 35 years and also between third to fifth year of post-graduation experience. According to him, the bill also seeks to pay certain amount of allowances to the unemployed graduates in Nigeria. The proposed legislation, titled “A Bill for an Act to amend the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) Act, Cap. N28 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004, by creating specific functions and objectives for the Directorate to specifically cater for unemployed graduates of tertiary institutions,” however, failed to scale second reading when it was put to vote by the Speaker, Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, as opponents of the proposed legislation pointed out that the provisions of the bill failed to meet critical criteria of filling gaps inherent in the existing laws it was seeking to amend. A member, Ibrahim El sudi, noted that the bill had nothing new as a similar programme for unemployed graduates was already in existence at the NDE, when he asserted that there is a graduate attachment programme that does exactly what this bill is seeking. Even, a similar programme exists for non-graduates on the social aspect for unemployed non-graduates at the National Social Insurance Trust Fund (NISTF). What should happen is for the authorities to strengthen these programmes. Also, James Faleke said providing such monetary incentives could only compound the economic challenges facing the country as the industrial revival efforts of the Nigerian government will be jeopardized as Nigerian economy is non production based (<http://www.nairaland.com/1210273/bill-allowance-unemployed-graduates-rejected>).

But a sharp response in form of a question from an anonymous sources says if other measures are being put in place for unemployed graduates, why is the agency not effective? Again, the National Social Insurance Trust Fund (NISTF) which Ibrahim El Sudi made mention of was also captured in the speech of the minister of Labour and Productivity, Adetokunbo Kayode, when he

noted that government's new stance on poverty reduction was "informed by the urgent need to ensure that the Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) executes its mandate of delivering social security to the poor", hence he lamented that the absence of a national policy had made it difficult for the Fund to perform this mandate, 49 years after Nigeria attained political independence despite the country being an active member of the International Labour Organisation.

Several questions have emanated from the actions of the legislature by halting two bills seeking to better the lots of Nigerian unemployed graduates and aged. Questions such as: is the social security bill irrelevant to Nigeria? Are the legislators not really interested in the welfare of the Nigerian unemployed graduates? Do they not see any relationship between the perennial unemployment of Nigerian graduates and the increase rate of crimes in the polity? Does the executive have the legal right and moral justification to implement the proposed N16,000 stipends to Nigerian unemployed graduates? Does Nigeria have what it takes to execute such programme and finally, does it really mean that the legislature is only after their wellbeing and does not bother about the teeming unemployed graduates?

## **7. CHALLENGES OF INSTITUTING SOCIAL SECURITY POLICY IN NIGERIA**

According to [Nwokeoma \(2013\)](#), the greatest challenge of instituting social security policies in Nigeria is unavailability of records that could help to check abuses hence in countries where social security schemes are in place, the beneficiaries are identified with and recognized by their special Social Security Number (SSN) thus, without proper recording keeping as evidenced in Nigeria, such noble idea, scheme, policies and programmes may be marred by corruption. This fear is based on the fact of unresolved contestation over the 2006 census which still serve as the official data source for Nigeria. The essence is to check against double or multiple registration by a single person; and knowing the nationality of anybody residing in Nigeria; those that normally come in through our porous borders from our neighbouring countries of Niger, Benin, Chad, Cameroon, etc

In lieu of the challenges of inaccurate operational data for efficient administration of social security programmes, the tendency of diverting the noble intents of social security policies into self-enrichment programmes by those at the helm of affairs, especially the politicians looms large as it is a trend in Nigeria, which made [Nwokeoma \(2013\)](#) to cite the squandering of the "people's bank" and the bursary schemes of the olden days when government saw reasons to engage indigent, diligent and intelligent but vulnerable Nigerians to school. The way the anti-graft agencies in Nigeria conduct their affairs also is a reason to worry. Given the police pension fund scandal for an instance, one cannot but wonder how this policy will turn up because Nigeria lacks the machinery, availability of funds notwithstanding, to undertake a social security scheme. The most sustainable strategy for its poverty reduction still remains the revival of the national economy, which presently is on dire straits given the parlous state of infrastructure and erratic power supply.

## 8. REACTIONS OF NIGERIANS TO THE REJECTION OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY BILLS BY THE LEGISLATION

As against the argument on the appropriateness or otherwise of the policy, an anonymous sources said “yes, the policy can work if and only the leaders can repent from national sins, and also walk by election not selection then all it take to be Nigeria as a nation can stand”. Responding to the senate’s rejection of the bills, Murphy Egbe asserted “without being told, we should know that this kind of bill cannot be passed”. I just don’t understand this people, I just hope they live long to see what will result from this in the nearest future. Arhmeed Aderoju A aired his opinion when he said “while a lot of members in this house are certificate forgers, 419ers, school cert holders and scoundrels being paid millions from the public purse for doing virtually nothing; violent militants being paid 65k monthly for nothing, you guys find it difficult to agree to pay stipends to graduates who could not find jobs through no fault of their own and who have refused to take up arms against their motherland”. And Rasheed Adejuwon blasted “God in His full wrath will shoot down your lives the way you shot down this bill”. Unlike majority of the legislators, Arizona believes that “the only way to reduce poverty in this country is to implement social security, especially when emphasis is paid to its enormous importance one of which is the reduction of state insecurity in Nigeria as social security is beevied up (<http://www.hollerafrica.com/showArticle.php?artId=324&catId=1&page=3>).

## 9. POLICY OPTIONS

Having exhaustively x-rayed the role the Nigerian legislators in the promotion of good governance in Nigeria vis-à-vis the provision of social security, the following recommendations suffice-

- i) That the Nigerian executive should eschew every form of fear or favour that may come in between them and their constitutional responsibility of implementing policies that are in favour of the Nigerian masses such as the social security policy that seeks to cater for the unemployed and the aged, as state security is contingent upon social security;
- ii) That the legislative arm of government in Nigeria who is the public policy-making body should awake to the project Nigeria and pay attention to the yearnings of the Nigerian populace instead of insisting on what they thought might be in the best interest of Nigerians in the interest of our modern progressive democratic society, and enact laws that will promote and provide social security to the aged and unemployed as well other challenged and less privileged Nigerians;
- iii) That the Nigerian masses should not lose sight of the price- a total people-oriented democracy that promises and delivers the goods imbedded in good governance. They should demonstrate/protest peacefully when necessary at least to register their disapproval or otherwise of a given policy by the government such as the

rejection by the legislature the social security bills. Again, those in information dissemination should continue the good work as of social crusade as “an uninformed man is a deformed man;

- iv) Finally, that widely espoused revolution as the only way out, maybe closing up on us except we pursue rigorously, the path of full employment (in public, private and entrepreneurial sectors). Therefore, the presidency’s attempts at curbing unemployment with strategies such as YouWin Nigeria should be made transparent, non-politicized and continuous. Moreso, the financing should not be grant but loan on zero interest rate to be repaid 24 months after the inception of the business. Again, this strategy should be stratified into classes such as graduate with good business proposals, plans for sponsorship, non-graduate skill acquisition schemes, and loans for married women/widowed for small business start ups; less privileged children’s free education and basic upkeep supports. This will give Nigerians a sense of belonging and restore sanity in the system, as insecurity will die a natural death.

## 10. CONCLUSION

Relying on the statement of the former Minister of Labour and Productivity, Prince Adetokunbo Kayode, that the crises being witnessed all over the country is traceable to unemployment; and our efforts, in the words of [Nwabueze \(1989\)](#) should be directed more at fighting the root causes of whatever threat there is to the security of the state by providing the social security, hence if the people are engaged and employed, it will be difficult for them to cause crisis in the country, there is need for an organized social security in the system that will give every Nigerian some sense of belonging as their basic needs are met and they are empowered to fend for themselves and families as well as meet other social responsibilities. Thus, it is the duty of every government to put its people to work or solve their immediate problems arising from lack of opportunity to be gainfully employed. That is why when a government creates opportunity for the people to be employed, such government is seen as really responsible for the welfare of the people and this is the mandate of government.

This challenge may be what inspired the President Goodluck Jonathan’s YouWin programme that aims at creating 800,000 jobs, by means of business plan competition. A programme he started since 2011 and has span till today. To wit, the coordinating minister of the economy and the minister of finance, Okonjo-Iweala, while presenting the 2014 budget to the National Assembly had said that this budget is for inclusive growth and job creation. A lot therefore, is hung in the balance and expectation is much, just as state insecurity is much, poverty, unemployment, deprivation, frustration and death are much. There is the need for an organized and people-dedicated social security scheme to arrest these social anomalies reiterated above, and such need is much.

Therefore, it seems obvious that the legislators’ rejection of both bills is ill-intended and rash, because they (the legislators) are well paid and are aware that the issue of unemployment is not orchestrated but real hence the need to tackle it. Having turned down the proposals, the need to



suggest possible remedial actions behoove on them, hence the need for the legislature to parley with the executive and chart a new course that will achieve the same aim - reduction of unemployment in Nigeria and taking care of the aged- two core focus of social security.

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