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Abstract

The issues of Nigerian youth and their roles in national development is increasingly taking centre stage in most discuss that concerns the state of the Nigerian nation. This has become more vital since the age brackets of most of the people in leadership be it public or private sphere does not fall into the category defined as youthful. But have Nigerian youth not contributed to national development? The paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach, with a methodology that relies on secondary sources and a theoretical framework that leans on advocacy theory which aims to create social change in the individual, evolving to and influencing groups in community or society. The paper demonstrates that since the colonial period Nigerian youths have made outstanding contributions to national development in the midst of draconian policies and unfriendly environments. The paper concludes by way of advocating that since youths have been underutilized, stakeholders in the Nigerian state who make policies both at the public and private spheres should become the strong enablers of the opportunities that will help this youths channel their potentials to national development Thus, reducing the spate of migrations to foreign lands

Key words: Nigerian youths, advocacy theory, development, self help projects

Introduction

Youths are the foundation of any society. Their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and security of a nation. Thus, a nation's economic and socio-political development is a product of its youth. And because of their dreams and aspirations, the future of a country is assured.¹

The Nigerian National Youths Policy aptly describes the place and importance of the youth in the development process quoted above. Since the transition of society from one generation to another is critical to the formative and developmental aspiration of such a community, a society's youth has a secured future in terms of development; despite the challenges of national reconciliation and development.

Nearly 50% of the developing world population is youth and children as "there are 1.2 billion 15 to 24 years olds in the world and one billion live in developing

¹The Federal Republic of Nigeria. National Youths Policy, 2001, 2



countries."² This statistic demonstrates the 'youths bulge' as young people constitute a high and peaking proportion of many populations. "The youth bulge represents both a challenge and an opportunity for development. With such a large proportion under 15 years of age, Africa's youth population will grow in the years to come while the youth population in other parts of the world shrinks.³ For example, in Uganda, it is estimated that the country needs to create over 600,000 new jobs per year for the next 12 years - equivalent to the total size of the formal employment sector. It will be possible to reach the Millennium Development Goals targets, particularly on extreme poverty and hunger Millennium Development Goal 1, child mortality Millennium Development Goal 4, and environmental sustainability Millennium Development Goal 7.⁴

Youth, as a concept, is defined traditionally as a period from childhood to adulthood. In the African Youth Report⁵ A youth is between 15 and 39 years; Ghana, Tanzania and South Africa are between 15 and 35 years of age; Nigeria and Swaziland define it as those between 12 and 30 years; and Botswana and Mauritius define it as those between 14 and 25 years.⁶ United Nations defines youths as those aged 15 to 24 years.⁷ Although arbitrary, this age group has been recognized internationally as "Youths." Youths do not constitute a homogeneous group; their socioeconomic, demographic and geographical situations vary widely within and between regions.

Notwithstanding these, the Nigerian youth policy defines the youths as all young persons of the ages 18-35 years. The youth population in 2006 was almost a hundred million.⁸ The youth constitute more than two-thirds of the country's population of 140 million. They are the backbone of the development of the country. Indeed, Nigeria's sustainability is based on the resourcefulness of the youth population.⁹ This paper demonstrates the contributions of Nigerian youths in national development and the challenges that have constrained them.

This paper adopts the advocacy theory a category under Conflict or Marxist ideology by Karl Marx (1818-1853). This theory is from broad categories of ideologies relevant in studying society. Although originally developed to focus on different aspects of development, they have particular relevance for interventions in youth development settings. The intention is to bring about

²S. Amanda. "Youths Network and Governance" *Commonwealth Journal of Youths and Development* Vol. 1 No.2, 2003, 25.

³K. Gyimah-Brempong, . and M.S Kimenyi. Youth Policy and the Future of African Development, Africa Growth Initiative. Working Papers⁹, April 2013. 1-44.

⁴World Bank. "Poverty Headcount Ratio at \$1.25 a Day, 2009." World Bank Research Group. <http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/index.htm>.

⁵UNECA (UN Economic Commission for Africa). Youths, Education, Skills and Employment. Addis Ababa: UNECA, 2005b

⁶Eugene Odoh and Okechukwu Innocent Eme "Role of the Youths In National Development," *Singaporean Journal Of Business Economics And Management Studies* Vol.3, No.164, 2014, 22.

⁷UN 'World Programme of Action for Youths to the Year 2000 and Beyond'; New York: UN, 1995, 2.

⁸Nigerian Population Commission. Population Commission Press, Abuja, Nigeria. 2006..

⁹R. E. Aiyede,(nd), The State, Values and Development: Towards Re-orientating the Nigerian Youths for Positive Leadership.

institutional reform through policy, social relations, and political action changes. Advocacy theory is based on a pluralist view that sees society's social problems as emanating from inequitable distribution of power and resources. It is argued that the struggle for social resources is caused by groups that are more powerful than others. This theory sees young people as being involved in a struggle for and against equalising power relations and control exerted over young people by adults. In this case the adults here include the stakeholders in the Nigerian state and their policies which are unfriendly to the youth.

This struggle between generations manifests itself in problems such as lack of respect for young people's rights and society's failure in protecting young people's rights. One example of this struggle for young people's right in Nigeria occurred during the ENDSARS protest in October 2020. It is on the basis of such outcome that youth workers and other service providers in the youth development space, have to play the role of advocates who act on behalf of and with these youth to create conditions for them to discover themselves and give meaning to their lives. However, it has been revealed that whereas schools play a crucial role in providing young people with general educational abilities on which everything else is built, services to young people, alongside schools, will help those youth to develop life, social, and workplace skills and attitudes. In that regard, the asset-rich communities are seen to be giving young people the resources needed to build and pursue healthy lives that make a productive contribution to self, family, and community.

National Development

The term national development is a term that refers to the sustainable growth and development of a nation to a more desirable one. National development is people-oriented.¹⁰ In defining the concept, the Third National Development plan of 1980 notes that;

Actual development must mean the development of man, the unfolding and realization of his creative potential, enabling him to improve his material living conditions through available resources. It is a process in which man's personality is enhanced, creative, organized dances and disciplined, which is the moving force behind the socioeconomic transformation of any society.¹¹

To B.O. Elugbe, national development refers, among other things, to the nation's growth in terms of unity, education, economic well-being and mass participation in government.¹² In summary, development entails providing all the necessary materials and equipment to guarantee that man in every society makes a living and essence out of life. S. G Anaeto and M. Anaeto¹³ Citing M. P.

¹⁰Eugene Odoh and Okechukwu Innocent Eme "Role of the Youths In National Development," 24.

¹¹Nigeria's Third National Development Plan (NDP111), 1980, 2.

¹²B. O. Elugbe, National Language and National Development in Language and Polity 1994, 3-4.

¹³S. G. Anaeto and M. Anaeto. *Development Communication Principle and Practice*. Ibadan: Sterling-Holden Ltd. 2010, 5

Todaro and C. P. Smith's 2009 book *Economic Development*, identified three objectives of development which are;

- Increase availability and widen the distribution of basic life-sustaining goods such as food, shelter, health and protection.
- To raise levels of living in addition to higher incomes, the provision of more jobs, better education, and greater attention to cultural and human values, all of which will serve not only to enhance material well-being but also to generate more excellent individual and national self-esteem and
- To expand the range of economic and social choices available to individuals and nations by freeing them from servitude and dependence, not only on other people and nation-states but also on the forces of ignorance and human misery.

Development is a society's socio-cultural, political, economic and spiritual well-being. In an indeed developed state, there is the assurance of a good quality of life, exercise of all human rights, and freedom to participate in the democratic process.¹⁴ From the preceding, development implies enhanced quality of life, equity and justice, as it considers the well-being, growth and advancement of individuals within the society.

Youths and Political Development

Nigerian youth had a background of being involved in political movements during colonialism. They led the way and achieved status unavailable in the traditional system to persons of their juniority.¹⁵ Nationalism also, although its earlier proponents mainly were elderly or middle-aged men, the younger generations eventually took over and provided the shock troops. It is indicative that when the "Nigerianization" agitations commenced resulting in independence, members of the latter age groups mainly filled the positions of influence and power. For example, in the 1950s, the median age of 30 and early 40 dominated the colonial legislatures. The Eastern Region had elected the most youthful legislators, with a median age between 35 and 39 years.¹⁶ Generally, Nigeria's democratic experiment has created the opportunity for actors in the civil society, or what social entrepreneurial scholars now call the 'citizens sector', to take on their role in the political participation process.¹⁷

¹⁴Eugene Odoh and Okechukwu Innocent Eme "Role of the Youths In National Development," 27.

¹⁵Little Kenneth. *West African Urbanization: A Study of Voluntary Associations in Social Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965. Obar Ayami Irom "From Nigerian Youth Movement to Militant Youth: Bridging the gap between Educational Policy and History in Youth Development" *International Journal of Humanitatis Theoreticus* Vol. 5, Issue 1, May 2021, 169-172.

¹⁶J. S. Coleman. *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958, 56-9.

¹⁷Mark Robinso and Steven Friedman "Civil Society, Democratization and Foreign Aid in Africa." Discussion Papers Series 383, Brighton. Institute of Development Studies, 2005, 5.

Recent research on government-civil society partnership in Nigeria revealed that: "Civil society groups are reaching out and trying to work with various government agencies and parastatalsto build their capacity for service delivery and be accountable to citizens."¹⁸ Given this opportunity, Nigerian youths are currently faced with the task of redefining their role in the democratization process. The mission statement of the National Youth Policy is quoted here as a reference in articulating the role and expectations of Nigerian youth in the political participation process. The document

insisted on "a purposeful, focused, well-articulated and well-directed effort aimed at tapping the energy and resourcefulness of the youth and harnessing them for vitality, growth and development of the country well into the 21st century".¹⁹

In light of the preceding, the crucial issue of creating an enabling environment will be prioritizing the youth's productive capacity and resourcefulness to bear on the political and developmental process. Thus, given a suitable climate, the roles and expectations of Nigerian youths in the political and developmental process will include the following.²⁰First, the youths should parade themselves as agents of political socialization. Political socialization means the way "in which political values are formed and political culture is defused in the society."²¹ This socialization process ultimately determines how individuals form their political attitudes and, thus, collectively, how citizens form their political culture.

In Nigeria, experience has shown that the youths often provide the workforce requirements for general elections. Rather than succumb to the unwholesome maneuvers of selfish and bankrupt politicians to pervert elections by rigging, the youth should exhibit good conscience and insist on due process and fair play. We also have an array of youth organizations with diverse and varied interests in Nigeria. They can begin to explore the political space to influence the decision-making process. Recent studies have proved that: Young people need to be consulted and involved in designing developmental strategies to be youths-relevant and accurate (sic) factors in the contribution of youths to the national political and sustainable developmental process. This is so since the participation of young people in decision-making concerns is more than integrating young peoples' issues into existing policy paradigms.²²

¹⁸I. Chukwuma. Government – Civil Society Partnership in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects, Paper presented at a unique retreat on Government-Civil Society partnership in Nigeria, Kaduna September 12-15, 2005,

¹⁹National Political Reform Being a Memorandum submitted to the Nigeria Youths Organizations held at Oba Akenzua Cultural Centre, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, from Wednesday, 19th - Friday, October 21, 2005.

²⁰A. Suleiman. "The Nigerian Youths in Contemporary Political Development: Relevance, Challenges and Role Expectation." *A Journal of Constitutional Development* Vol. 6 No.4, 2006, 25

²¹G. Almond, G. Bingham, Jr. Powel, K. Strom, and R. J. Dalton, *Comparative Politics Today*, Singapore: Pearson Education Inc, Singapore, 2004, 17.

²²S. Amanda. "Youths Network and Governance", 30.

Active participation in governance at all levels, including the local government, is another way youths can impact the political and developmental process. The learning process fundamental to political maturity must start from the grass-root. Grass-root politics will allow the youth to identify with the masses, appreciate their problems and master the terrain. In a nascent democracy like Nigeria, grass-root apprenticeship rather than glorified 'messenger' under the tutelage of bankrupt and greedy political godfathers offers the best training ground for the youth.²³

Through their political education and public enlightenment campaign, policy advocacy, and active involvement in the electoral process, they can build bridges of understanding across ethnic groups, political affiliations and religious divides. Democracy and good governance can only be nurtured and sustained in an environment of peace, security and stability. Where these are lacking, it is not only democracy and good governance that suffer, but also social progress and the future of the youths are seriously compromised.²⁴

The Role of Nigerian Youths in Peace Building

Peace is a precursor of development, and as the most active segment of any society, youths are the significant determiners of peace and stability.²⁵ Conversely, the degree of disorderliness and instability in society is also partly determined by youths. Peace is necessary to ensure that meaningful development can take place. The National Youths Policy affirms that the extent of the youth's "responsible conduct and roles in society positively correlated with the development of their country."²⁶The statement above acknowledges the youths' role in a nation's peace and security. D. J Eberly and R. Gal1 support this line of thought; thus, "young people in national youths service organizations can play a vital role in post-war; community reconstruction, peace in tense situations, and perhaps in preventing post-conflict squeueled."²⁷

Nigeria offers an excellent example of the utility of youthful participation in effecting post-conflict reconciliation. Between 1967-1967, Nigeria was plunged into civil war when one region Biafra - tried to secede from the rest of the country. Biafra failed to secede, but the Nigerian government decided it must endeavour to foster national unity. University students and other youth groups called for a national youth scheme whose first project would be providing relief in war-torn areas. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors called for one year of service by all university students following their first year. After much debate and considerable controversy, the Head of State General Yakubu Gowon issued a decree in 1973 creating the National Youths Service Corps

²³A. Suleiman. "The Nigerian Youths in Contemporary Political Development, 31.

²⁴A. Suleiman, 32

²⁵P. Ozohu and A. -Suleiman. The Nigerian Youths in Contemporary Political Development, Relevance, Challenges, and Role Expectation. *A Journal of Constitutional Development*,6,(4), 2004, 97-111.

²⁶The Federal Republic of Nigeria. National Youths Policy, 2001, 5.

²⁷D. J Eberly, and R. Gall. "The Role for Young People in Building Post-Conflict Civil Society," *International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law*/ vol. 9, no. 4 August 2007, 35.

(NYSC) to develop “common ties among the youth of Nigerian and to promote national unity.”²⁸

The NYSC scheme requires all university graduates under 30 years to serve for one year in parts of the country different from where they grew up—following a quasi-military orientation period. Corps members engage in community service in their respective places of primary assignment. The government pays monthly stipends for them. At the end of the compulsory service year, Corps members are brought together again to discuss their experiences, participate in a parade, and receive Certificates of National Service that entitle them to be employed in Nigeria. Although neither entering members nor their families like postings to distant parts of Nigeria, a study of ex-Corps members posted away from home showed that in retrospect, only one in ten viewed the experience as negative, with the rest judging it positively.²⁹

D. J. Eberly has used her experiences in 1962 in a biology class in a high school in Benin, a geography class in Ikenne in 1989 and an encounter with 16 corps members serving in the same area but from other parts of Nigeria, most of them teachers, a few worked in village administration and one was a physician, all serving in the fields in which they received their university degrees to prove the viability of the NYSC scheme and perhaps the most direct example of utilizing youth participation to foster post-conflict reconciliation.³⁰

Youths and Self-Help Projects in Nigeria

An effort to accelerate rural development through youth participation cannot be over-emphasized as youths are deeply involved in self-help projects in various local governments in Nigeria especially projects that involve trade, commerce, home economics, small and medium-term enterprises and agriculture. These self-help projects can be classified into two: Government Aided Projects (GAP) and Non-Government Aided Projects (NGAP). Government aid projects are those executed with the assistance of the government in either finance or material resources while non-government aid projects are those executed solely with the collective effort of community members.³¹ In recent times, youths have realized the importance of self-help projects in improving the way of life and living standards of their communities. Such self-help is a collective

²⁸For a series of favourable antecedents, actions and programmes that culminated in the government decision to formalize and institutionalize the compulsory NYSC scheme see Samuel O. Asein. *Call to Service: Twenty years of the National Youth Service Corps Scheme 1973- 1993*. Ibadan: Sam Bookman, 1993 and S, A. Danfulani and Akpuru-Aja Aja (eds) *NYSC in its Fourth Decade: A Strategic Policy Outfit for National Development*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 2008.

²⁹G. Enegea and G. Umoden *NYSC: Twenty Years of National Service*. Lagos: National Youths Service Corps Directorate Headquarters. 1993, 3.

³⁰D. J. Eberly. (ed.), *National Youths Service: A Democratic Institution for the 21st Century*. Washington, D.C.: National Service Secretariat. 1990.

³¹International Labour Organization(ILO). *Decent Work and the Informal Sector*. Report of the Director-General, International Labour Conference, 90th Session, Report VI. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2002.

effort of the community to ensure that their efforts are based on their initiatives to achieve maximum benefit with or without the assistance of the government.

Some of the contributions of youths in community development projects include the following:

- Educating the rural community on the use of improved seeds or farming techniques through the Young Farmers Club.
- Clearing and draining of drainages/culverts
- Sinking of ordinary dug-out wells
- Renovation of clinics, health centres/dispensaries in the rural areas
- Construction of rural feeder roads
- Assistance to the less privileged in society and
- Other community programmes include; Youth clubs that enlighten fellow youths and women on HIV/AIDS, Women and Children trafficking, child labour and VVS.

The Role of Youths in Community-Based and Faith-Based Organizations

In most rural areas in Nigeria, various types of community-based organizations exist. But most of the thriving organizations now are the ones formed by youths. In the Southern part of Nigeria, youth community-based organizations have been in existence. It has also emerged in Northern Nigeria, especially among the Christian-based communities.

Efforts are being made to encourage the Youth Muslim Ummah to integrate into the formation of youth-based community organizations.³² But the essence of the formation of the Youths community-based organization is to supplement government efforts in community development projects. These organizations are the closest to the people at the grassroots level because the organizations are formed by the members of the community themselves.³³ Like any other community-based organizations, youths community-based organizations enhance community development through:

- Development, promotion and implementation of development projects sustainable for the benefit of their communities.
- Mobilizing members of the community for national development.
- Strengthening community resources management.
- Improving the general skills of youths to be productive.
- Promoting a sustainable human development
- Encouraging the participation of marginalized communities in the promotion of rural development that affects them.
- To ensure proper accountability of the community resources.³⁴

³²Roman loimeir, *Islamic Reform and Political Change in northern Nigeria*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997. :

³³Lawrence .O. Udensi, Gibson I. K Daasi, Domale Sira Emah and Sira A. Zukbee "Youth Participation in Community Development (CD) in Cross River State: Implications for Sustainable Youth Development in Nigeria" *Journal of Humanities and Social Science (JOSR_JHISS)*, Vol. 13, Issue 5, 2013, 61-7.

³⁴Youth Business International (YBI) "Annual Reports and Account" <http://www.youthbusiness.org>. Youth and Community Development in Nigeria. Accessed 12/01/2023.

The Role of the Youths in Human Capital Development

Nigeria was said to have a population of 193.3 million people with an estimated youth population of 31.7% which constitute 61.3 million of the overall population forming the largest source of human resource.³⁵ However, they have remained on the periphery of the country's affairs and their status has not been accorded due recognition. They have been excluded from designing, planning and implementing programmes and policies that affect them. The potentially important role of youths in Nigeria's development cannot be overemphasized. Youths could be a source of labour inputs as well as human capital in production, which would improve total agricultural productivity and boost capital formation³⁶. In addition, these youths could be critical for the development of a new class of entrepreneurs that Nigeria needs to prosper.³⁷

Furthermore, Nigeria has an opportunity to harness a "demographic dividend" from young people with the projection that most countries in Africa will have more working-age adults per child in 2030 than in 2006.³⁸ Hence, there will be a large workforce supporting fewer children and the elderly. This trend would result in a lower dependency burden, freeing up resources for development.³⁹ With this swelling wave of young people, access to reproductive health, information and services becomes critical so that they can choose the number of children they want and can obtain the information and services to avoid unplanned pregnancy, HIV, and STIs. Ignoring the reproductive and sexual health of youths today will have dire global consequences for decades.⁴⁰

Issues Impinging on the Youths in National Development

³⁵Nigerian Population Commission. Population Commission Press, Abuja, Nigeria. 2007.

³⁶IFAD "Nigerian Youth Population Great Potential for Agricultural Sector" Tribune online, 2022. Accessed 12/01/2023

³⁷Dike Onwuamaeze "Report: Youths Entrepreneurs Own 67% of Enterprises in Nigeria, Women Account for 43%" www.thisdaylive.com accessed 12/01/2023.

³⁸United Nations "World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision" (New York: United Nations, 2006), data www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2006/wpp2006.htm accessed 12/01/2023. UNESCO "World Youths Report 2007: Young People's Transition to Adulthood-Progress and Challenges. New York: United Nations, 2007. accessed 12/01/2023.

³⁹Lori S, Ashford "Africa's youthful Population: Risk or Opportunity? Washington: Population Reference Bureau 2007.

⁴⁰UNICEF, UNAIDS, and World Health Organization, Young People and HIV/AIDS: Opportunity in Crisis (Geneva: UNICEF, 2002), accessed at www.unicef.org/publications/files/pub_youngpeople_hiv_aids_en.pdf, on December 7, 2009. Advocates for Youths, Youth's Reproductive Health. accessed 12/01/2023. UNESCO. Population Below National Poverty Lines. Millennium Development Goals Database, UN Statistics Division. New York: United Nations, 2011b. accessed 12/01/2023. UNESCO. (2011d), The United Nations Program on Youths. <http://social.un.org/youthsyear/docs/UNPY-presentation.pdf>. New York: United Nations. Accessed 12/01/2023. UNESCO. Population Facts, No. 2012/1. Report of Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. New York: United Nations, 2011d. accessed 12/01/2023

The socioeconomic and political environment in Nigeria poses a great challenge to the youths.⁴¹ Almost half a century after the flag of independence, the economy continues to be dominated by the primary sector - agriculture, oil and minerals. This is partly because the country has not been able to create an environment for high-value-added economic activities. What is readily obvious in the country is the informalisation of the economy, with the majority of its people living in poverty. The country lacks basic social and physical infrastructure. As a result, most people in the country have no access to basic services such as potable water, electricity, good sanitation, roads and healthcare.

All of this coupled with a high illiteracy rate, and lack of access to basic medical care occurs against a backdrop of ravaging diseases; a situation which has become exacerbated with the advent of the HR AIDS epidemic. According to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, over half of the population of Nigeria is multi-dimensionally poor, while in general, the incidence of monetary poverty is lower than the incidence of multidimensional poverty across most states.⁴²

The country's underdevelopment has been reinforced by authoritarianism, political instability, and ethnic and religious conflicts in the last decade. Even almost a decade after the return to democratic rule palpable miss-governance is marked by the exclusion of the people from governance, non-accountability of public officials, lack of transparency in decision-making, electoral fraud and the personalization of the state and national resources by the political elite.⁴³ This situation presents particular challenges for Nigerian youths. In this volatile context, greedy and opportunistic politicians could even exploit these grievances by involving these frustrated youths in violent overthrows of legitimate governments creating massive instabilities that could limit the economic growth in Nigeria.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Nearly half of the people in Nigeria today are under the age of 25. Effectively addressing the special needs of these youths is a critical challenge for the future. Although youths may often be perceived as contributing to society's problems, they are, in fact, important assets for the economic, political, and social life of their communities as the paper has demonstrated. Addressing key global threats- like the spread of HIV/AIDS, climate change, growing poverty, and

⁴¹UN World Youths Report "Youths and Climate Change": Realizing the Potential of Africa's Youths'; New York: UN Africa Commission 2009; Copenhagen: Africa Commission, 2010. Amara Nwankpa "Managing Existential Risk and Climate Resilience: The Case of Nigeria." Africa in Focus, March 14, 2022. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog>.

⁴²Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) "Nigeria launches its most Extensive national Measure of multi-dimensional Poverty, 2022. www.nigeriastat.gov.ng. accessed 12/01/2023.

⁴³C. A. Obiora and P. A. Chiamogu. Chop Politics and Economic Development in Nigeria: A Study of Multiple Pension by Former Political Office Holders. A paper presented at the international Political Science Association and International Institute of Administrative Science Conference at the Center for Advance Academic Studies (CAAS) Dubrovnik, Croatia 3-6th October 2019.

⁴⁴P. Ozohu. and A. Suleiman. The Nigerian Youths in Contemporary Political Development, 107-9.

political stability in Nigeria depends on protecting the rights of youths and providing them with the support they need to contribute to the health and well-being of society.

Undoubtedly, the challenges for youths that are central to Nigeria's development are numerous and varied. They include employment, health and political participation. These issues differ among groups within countries by gender, education level, ethnicity and health status and across countries and regions. Conversely, the size, energy, enthusiasm, innovation and dynamism of youths are assets that can be harnessed for Nigeria's development with appropriate policies that deal adequately with the issues facing them. Many of the youths who are productive and energetic remain unemployed, continue to suffer from poor health, and lack sufficient support. Some of them have special needs that require attention. These include those living on the streets, those living with HIV/AIDS, and those with disabilities.

The responsibility of ensuring that the aspirations and hopes of the youths are met lies with a multiplicity of stakeholders. Everyone in the community, both young and old, must play their role since their mindset and roles are major components to the development of their society. This quantum population as noted above is a great asset for the Nigerian state if they are harnessed and utilized in the right direction. The role of youth in national development is therefore sacrosanct to the whole developmental aspiration of Nigerian society. The youth, not oil is the future of Nigeria in the 21st century.