

UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA

LISBON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT



RIVER BASIN ORGANISATION IN NIGERIA
The Case of the Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority

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Supervisors:
Professor Daniel C. Bach
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DEDICATION

To

Sabastian Chukwujekwu Emekaekwue (Brigadier-General Rtd.).
My friend and Inspiration;

John Atoba,
Provincial of Nigeria, North-East CSSp. (2010 – 2016)

&

Ken Okoli
Provincial of the British Province CSSp. (2016 -).

For their roles in our journey

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ABSTRACT

The management of river basin organisations is inherently political, due to its unalienable constraints and institutional structures. Characterised by resources limitedness, conflicts of multiple actors, policies, and evolving institutional structures, river basin organisation often becomes the centre of political intrigue and power-play. In developing nations struggling with political instabilities, river basin management is the theatre of complicated politics, and its yield is often minimal since the primary goal of agriculture becomes emasculated by other interests. This study explores the political economy of the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) as a mirror phenomenon of Nigeria's peculiar and challenge-laden federalism. The mission of the RBDAs become an instrument in the politics of fissiparous fragmentations, recurrent military interventions, and a series of reforms in the water sector.

In six separate but interrelated chapters, set out as macro-level and micro-level analyses, this study explores the development trajectory of the RBDAs as a reflection of the turmoil that characterises Nigerian federalism. The macro-analyses focus on the federal actors, while the micro-analyses examine the case of the Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority (LBRBDA).

The literature review and the field trips confirm, at both levels of analysis, the claim that river basin organisation is intrinsically political. The study also found that the social life or the politics of the RBDAs derive its push from the general politics of its ambient environment, and bears a likeness to it, as exemplified by the case study. The quest to reposition Nigeria's ailing RBDAs must further explore the role that politics plays in the creation and management of the RBDAs. The insights from the study will prove valuable to the stakeholders and policymakers. Considering the findings and limitations, the conclusion also highlights some areas for further research.

Keywords: Nigeria; River basins; Federalism; Politics; Economy

RESUMO

A gestão de bacias hidrográficas tem uma dimensão inerentemente política uma vez que envolve tomar decisões que são limitadas pelos contextos institucionais, caracterizados por escassez de recursos e conflitos entre múltiplos atores, políticas e estruturas institucionais. No caso de nações em desenvolvimento que padecem de instabilidades políticas, a gestão de bacias hidrográficas torna-se um teatro político em que os principais objetivos de produção alimentar e gestão ambiental ficam fragilizados perante complexos interesses políticos que envolvem o controlo de recursos, a governação de organizações e a política partidária.

Enquanto medida de recuperação no pós-guerra e com o apoio das Nações Unidas, a Nigéria adotou uma abordagem integrada para a gestão das bacias hidrográficas. Esta gestão cabe às Autoridades para o Desenvolvimento das Bacias Hidrográficas (ADBH) que estão sob a alçada do governo federal. A sua evolução reflete a instabilidade que caracteriza o federalismo nigeriano. Envolvidas numa política faccionária, com recorrentes intervenções militares e várias reformas no setor da água, as ADBH têm tido um desempenho abaixo do esperado.

Este estudo visa explorar a economia política das ADBH na Nigéria, mais concretamente, a trajetória de desenvolvimento das ADBH enquanto reflexo do instável federalismo nigeriano. O documento está organizado em seis capítulos autónomos mas interligados que, no conjunto, encerram uma análise de nível macro e outra de nível micro.

O primeiro capítulo descreve a forma como diferentes líderes nigerianos deixaram a sua marca no desenvolvimento das ADBH, desde a sua fundação até à presente administração de Muhammadu Buhari. De uma forma ou de outra, todos os grandiosos planos para aumentar a produção alimentar terminaram em nobres ambições. O capítulo inicia-se com a identificação dos motivos que desencadearam a reorganização da rede hidrográfica na Nigéria. O rescaldo da Guerra Civil, as secas na região do Sahel e a pressão da publicação do relatório das Nações Unidas em 1969 encontram-se entre os principais motivos. Depois de um fraco desempenho inicial em que vários princípios da gestão integrada das bacias hidrográficas foram ignorados, seguiu-se um conjunto de contributos de chefes de estado e presidentes. Infelizmente, nenhuma das promessas feitas surtiu os resultados esperados.

O segundo capítulo analisa as ADBH à luz da turbulência que caracterizou o federalismo nigeriano, utilizando o paralelismo como estilo. Este capítulo inicia-se com a discussão do

conceito de Federalismo enquanto sistema político e prossegue com a conclusão de que o federalismo existente na Nigéria é peculiar. No início do processo de independência nigeriano, os grupos étnicos não negociaram os termos deste federalismo e a governação militar continuada erodiu os já frágeis pilares criados pelos fundadores da nação. O sistema militar criou os estados e as áreas de governo locais por fragmentação, bem como os mecanismos federais, como são exemplo as três Constituições pós-independência e o Princípio do Carácter Federativo (PCF).

O capítulo aborda igualmente vários fatores que influenciaram este paralelismo entre as trajetórias do federalismo nigeriano e das ADBH, nomeadamente, a delicada e volátil questão das minorias, o papel dos militares, o boom petrolífero da década de 70 e o PCF enquanto mecanismo de consociativismo e as recorrentes discontinuidades das políticas públicas e de governação. O paralelismo estabelecido mostra-nos que as ADBH tem uma trajetória que espelha a turbulência do federalismo nigeriano.

O terceiro capítulo conclui a primeira parte da tese. Este capítulo foca-se nas reformas introduzidas por diferentes administrações das ADBH e na forma como a organização foi afetada por essas reformas. Os desafios colocados às ADBH começaram com a administração de Shagari, na década de 80, apesar da primeira tentativa para reposicionar as bacias hidrográficas ter ocorrido apenas no final dessa década, com o Programa de Ajustamento Estrutural de Babangida (PAE). Neste capítulo são detalhados o quadro de comercialização parcial criado e alguns dos seus conceitos centrais, as várias fases de preparação das ADBH para o seu novo estatuto, o seu processo de recapitalização e o cronograma da organização até se tornar financeiramente autossuficiente. Todo este processo foi condicionado pela cedência de Babangida à pressão pública e sua conseqüente demissão. Depois desta tentativa de comercialização das ADBH, várias outras se seguiram mas nenhuma foi bem-sucedida.

No capítulo quatro inicia-se a segunda parte da tese, que corresponde a uma abordagem de nível micro à Autoridade para o Desenvolvimento da Bacia Hidrográfica do rio Lower Benue (ADBHLB), uma das doze autoridades existentes no país. Foi dado enfoque a como é que as dinâmicas observadas na primeira parte da tese ocorrem no contexto de apenas uma Autoridade. Este quarto capítulo documenta as observações conseguidas em projetos de irrigação da ADBHLB. As evidências apresentadas provêm de dezasseis instalações da organização, incluindo a sua sede.

Na conclusão do capítulo, são discutidos os traços característicos dos projetos de irrigação. Todos os projetos tem recursos naturais abundantes tais como vastos terrenos, acesso a água e localização em planícies férteis. No entanto, são disfuncionais e tornaram-se dívida pública. A constante mudança política deixou uma longa cadeia de construções inacabadas (e.g. a barragem inacabada de Guma, os terrenos abandonados em Tede ou sistemas de irrigação inacabados em Doma e Guma) e gestores de projeto desesperados.

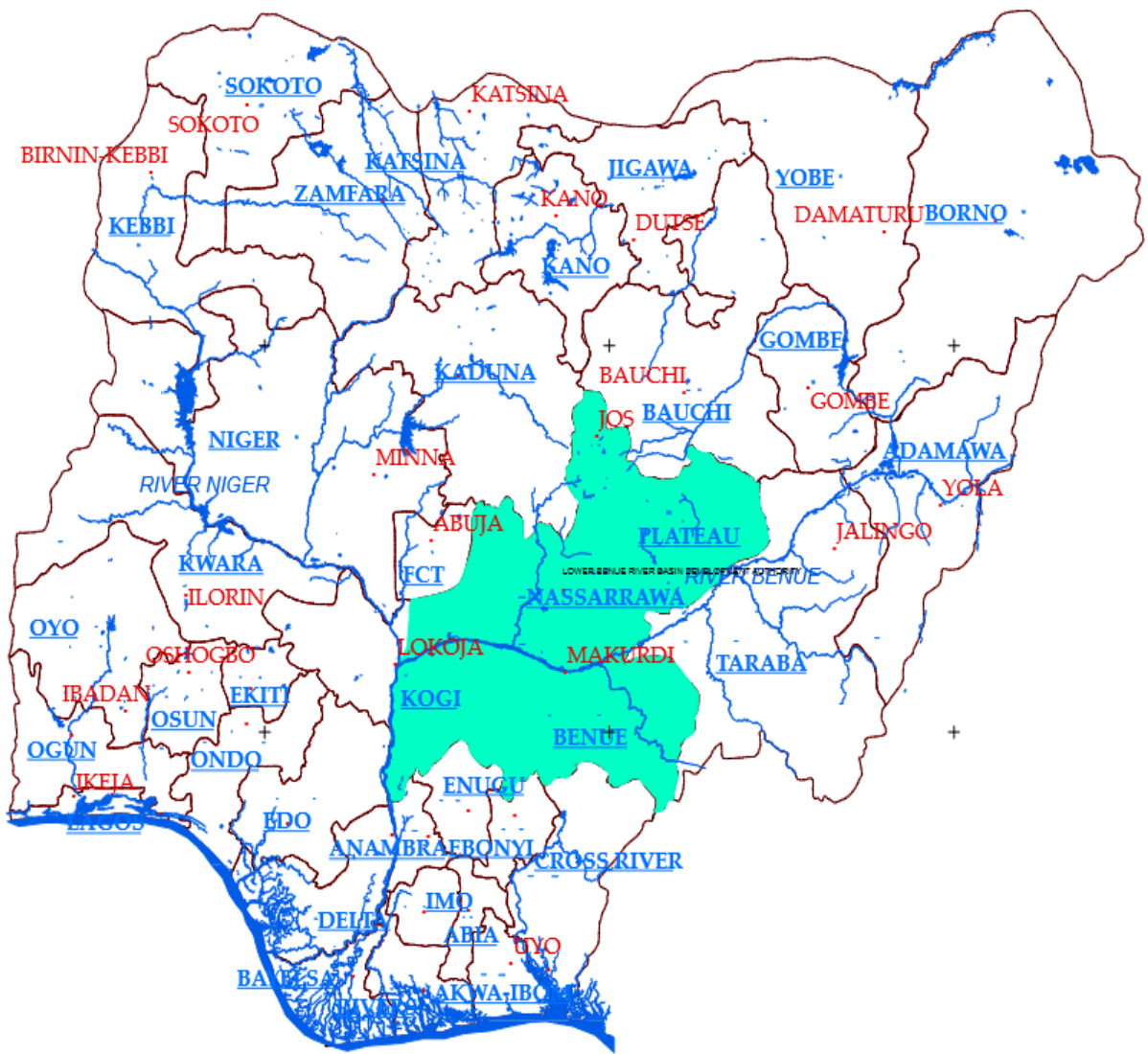
O capítulo cinco trata os impactos da fragmentação do federalismo ao nível de análise micro e detalha como é que o conflito de interesses se transformou à medida que o numero de partes interessadas na ADBHLB aumentou. Este capítulo dá-nos a conhecer como é que a ADBHLB reflete a instabilidade do federalismo nigeriano através de ilustrações da fragmentação estrutural da bacia hidrográfica da ADBHLB, que passou de dois estados fundadores (Benue e Plateau) para quatro (Benue, Plateau, Kogi e Nasarawa), após a fragmentação dos estados fundadores. O capítulo apresenta igualmente casos em que a ADBHLB se tornou uma plataforma política na medida em que os seus executivos de topo utilizam as instalações governamentais para alcançar os seus objetivos políticos. Neste capítulo, é possível concluir que os reveses descritos são um efeito em cascata da fraca negociação do federalismo na Nigéria.

O sexto e último capítulo da tese dedica-se a como a ADBHLB respondeu à política de comercialização parcial de Babangida, o esforço renovado de Obasanjo e administrações seguintes. O capítulo inicia-se com a análise do quadro para a comercialização criado pelo governo federal e o plano articulado pela ADBHLB como resposta. O plano estratégico da organização traçou a forma como a ADBHLB se deveria impor no mercado competitivo mas não foi feita qualquer implementação. O capítulo finaliza com a conclusão de que o plano estratégico da ADBHLB foi mal sucedido, com base numa análise aprofundada dos relatórios do trabalho de campo realizado.

Esta investigação foi afetada pela limitação do acesso a documentação oficial, tanto ao nível federal como ao nível da ADBHLB. Além disso, a falta de segurança vivida no país não permitiu a cobertura de todas as instalações da ADBHLB. Contudo, o estudo mostra claramente que o fraco desempenho das ADBH reflete a instabilidade do federalismo fragmentado nigeriano. A busca pela revitalização, reposição e comercialização parcial das ADBH deve ter em consideração as suas motivações.

O documento termina com um conjunto de sugestões de pesquisa futura. Entre elas, inclui-se uma análise das políticas que estão a conduzir ao crescimento do número de ADBH e, em particular, ao argumento de que não há correlação entre a dimensão das ADBH e a dotação orçamental recebida do governo federal.

Palavras-chave: Nigéria; bacia hidrográfica; federalismo; política; economia



A map of Nigeria showing the catchment area of the Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority.
 Source: LBRBDA

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

APC	All Progressive Congress
ATA	Agricultural Transformation Agenda
BPE	Bureau of Public Enterprises
CDC	Constitution Drafting Committee
CSER	Centre for Social and Economic Research
DFID	Department for International Development
DFRRI	Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FCP	Federal Character Principle
FDRD	Federal Department of Rural Development
FDWR	Federal Department of Water Resources
FEC	Federal Executive Council
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
FMA	Federal Ministry of Agriculture
FMANR	Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources
FMARD	Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
FMAWR	Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources
FMAWRRD	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development
FMG	Federal Military Government
FMWR	Federal Ministry of Water Resources
FMWRRD	Federal Ministry of Water Resources and Rural Development
FNAAE	Fellow of the Nigerian Association of Agricultural Economists
FNDP	Fourth National Development Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GYES	Graduate Youth Employment Scheme
Ha	Hectare
HOD	Head of Department
ICRC	Infrastructural Concession Regulatory Commission
ING	Interim National Government
IPM	Irrigation Project Managers

IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
LGAs	Local Government Areas
MD	Managing Director
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAFPP	National Accelerated Food Production Programme
NCGR	National Council on Green Revolution
NCPC	National Council on Privatisation and Commercialisation
NCWR	National Council on Water Resources
NFSC	National Food Security Council
NPN	National Party of Nigeria
NTCWR	National Technical Committee on Water Resources
NULGE	National Union of Local Government Employees
NWRI	National Water Research Institute
LNRBDA	Lower Niger River Basin Development Authority
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OFN	Operation Feed the Nation
OORBDA	Ogun-Osun River Basin Development Authority
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
ORBRBA	Owena River Basin and Rural Development Authority
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PEs	Public Enterprises
RBDAS	River Basin Development Authorities
RBO	River Basin Organisation
RBOI	River Basins Operations and Inspectorate
RBRDAs	River Basin and Rural Development Authorities
SAP	Federal Character Principle
SNDP	Second National Development Plan
TA	Transformation Agenda
TCPC	Technical Committee on Privatisation and Commercialisation
TNDP	Third National Development Plan
TRIMING	Transforming Irrigation Management in Nigeria

TSA	Treasury Single Accounts
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Plan
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UPN	Unity Party of Nigeria
USD	United States Dollars
WSRM	Water Sector Road Map
WUA	Water User Associations

INTRODUCTION

Fifty years ago, following the United Nations' (UN) recommendations, Nigeria reorganised the water bodies in the country into the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs). The reorganisation followed an integrated model where each catchment basin was a semi-autonomous unit with various functions. The RBDAs were among the responses to the challenge of food scarcity that hit Nigeria after the Civil War. The shortages caused by the disruption of farming in the south aggravated the pressures of the Sahelian droughts in the north. The government expected the RBDAs to yield positive results, within the shortest possible time.

The expectations that the RBDAs would become a significant force in the nation's agricultural pursuit relied on the available natural resources of the country. With the cessation of the war, the entire country was one nation again. Thus, the large agrarian endowments of the country were at the service of the RBDAs. Such resources included the variety of fertile lands and vegetation belts that supported the production of different crops, a wide rainfall range that increased from the desert north to the evergreen and mangrove forests of the south. Other resources included crude oil income with the boom in the early post-civil war period. Since the early 1970s, Nigeria has been among the top ten exporters of crude oil worldwide.

However, five decades later, despite the available resources, the RBDAs were still dependent on the federal government for funding. The expected boost in the production of food was still a matter of speculation, and the fraction of the population facing hunger and poverty was growing in leaps and bounds. The quest to understand how an agriculturally endowed country like Nigeria, with its position as the sixth highest exporter of crude oil in the world, could not feed her population had been the subject of local and international debates. All the evidence suggested that the problem lied in the politics and policies of the agricultural sector where the RBDAs belong.

Critically viewed, the various reasons suggested for the lacklustre performance of the RBDAs all implicated the non-availability of well-coordinated human agencies. The reviews of the literature on river basin organisations across the world yielded some hints about the missing link in the RBDAs puzzle. Frank Molle, who has researched extensively on the challenges of river basin organisations, observed a few years ago that although the organisation of river

basins was inherently political, the search for the solution to underperforming basin systems tended to focus more on technical issues (Molle, 2009: 1). The focus on how politics affected river basin management helped us to concentrate our analyses on the suggested solutions to the Nigerian situation. Sneddon and Fox (2008) comprehensively explained the place of politics in river basin organisation through a variety of elements. They described river basin politics as:

[...] the contestations and collaborations among different actors seeking to articulate, define and advance – through discourses, policies, coercion and other means – a particular relationship between, on the one hand, human livelihood and economic activities and, on the other, river-basin processes involving hydrological and ecological dynamics (e.g. flow regimes, aquatic organisms, channel-floodplain relationships) (Sneddon & Fox, 2008: 72).

In the case of the RBDAs, the fundamental dynamics of politics found a context in Nigeria's nascent democracy and the political instabilities that followed the civil war of 1967–1970. The RBDAs were created through military decrees. Since the authorities had undergone several military regimes within their lifetime, the politics of the RBDAs was coloured by military influence. In addition, the political context of the RBDAs had another peculiarity; Nigeria practiced a federalism which was unusual in many ways, as the following pages argue. The fragmentation of the initial regions created new federal units, along with specific features inspired by consociation engineering. With many geo-ethnic groups and the recurrent conflicts over ethnic identities, politics at all levels of governance became the source of territorial battles. The unique form of Nigerian federalism and its resilience earned a place in Political Science as a case of 'federal exceptionalism'.

Even though the effects of the peculiar nature of politics in Nigeria, evident in its fragmentation federalism, on the development of federal agencies, such as the RBDAs – with inherent political dynamics – was glaring, the realisation is just dawning. Watts (1985) flagged up that gap in his review of Hans-Otto Sano's (1983) *The Political Economy of Food in Nigeria, 1960–82: A discussion on peasants, state and world economy*, where he noted that:

[...] What strikes one continuously about discussions of Nigerian agriculture is the relative absence of politics. What are the conflicts within the military or between the World Bank and the Department of Agriculture on the merits of irrigation or Green Revolution packages? How exactly do the river basin schemes operate as political entities, i.e. trans-state agencies, and in what ways do they serve as sources of patronage? How does resistance express itself on such projects? Sano

cannot be faulted for not discussing what has not been systematically studied; but these gaps in the account may serve to stimulate political scientists to take up the challenge (Watts, 1985: 233).

Thus, the problem under consideration is not the compelling evidence that the RBDAs have performed grossly below expectations but about the insufficiently addressed gap in the quest to remedy the situation. The focus of our research is on how the interplay of human agencies, through a poorly managed political economy, have undermined the vast human, natural, and economic resources of the RBDAs.

Why is it that some people in Nigeria are so impoverished that they starve to death? We have personally been asking ourselves this question for a long time. As we grew up, the need to find an answer grew stronger as we learnt more about our country and its vast human and natural resources. The question became more throbbing when we discovered that people were not poor because the earth could not feed everyone, but due to the faulty design of human society. The passion from this discovery propelled us to make some contributions, in some significant ways, to the fight against poverty and show gratitude to those who have supported us in our life's journey.

One of the first significant steps that we took was to commit ourselves perpetually to the missionary outreach of the Congregation of Holy Spirit. The Congregation has a particular commitment to the liberation of the poor, as boldly enshrined in the group's *Rule of Life*:

We count the following as the constitutive parts of our mission of evangelisation: the "integral liberation" of people, action for justice and peace, and participation in development. It follows that we must make ourselves "the advocates, the supporters and the defenders of the weak and the little ones against all that oppress them (Congregation of the Holy Spirit, 2013: SRL 14).

Our motivation to study the RBDAs initially resulted in our studying for an MSc in Energy and Environmental Management at the Glasgow Caledonian University in Scotland, United Kingdom. The fieldwork for the Master of Science degree took us to riverine farming communities where we observed that politics played a significant role in the way that climate change affected the rural women, even though politics rarely got mentioned. Our further readings about farming communities opened our eyes to the politics involving the RBDAs; it became the topic that we wanted to explore further. In our secondary days in Kaduna, Northern Nigeria, in the mid-1980s, we had seen local irrigation farming by the shadouf

methods on the banks of the Kada River in Mando, the northern part of Kaduna where the National Water Resources Institute (NWRI) is located. We did not see any connection then between the NWRI and the local farmers using the shadouf to water their crops, until many years later. We discovered that the farmers were part of the general structure called the RBDAs, but they rarely received any attention, even though they were within the precincts of the NWRI. We finally made up our mind when we found that politics played a significant role in how the RBDAs operated, although its impact had been under-investigated.

The choice of identifying which of the RBDAs to investigate at the micro-level was easy to make. After their sojourn in Kaduna, our parents went back to Benue state, their ancestral home, and the seat of the Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority (LBRBDA). We still vividly remember travelling pass the headquarters of the LBRBDA every time we visited to see our parents. The bold logo of the LBRBDA office in Makurdi always caught our attention and gradually, we began to wonder why Benue state, the seat of one of the most endowed RBDAs, was still one of the poorest in the country. Paradoxically, Benue still carried the enviable tag of the 'Food Basket of the Nation'. A further push was the fact that due to the political arrangement of Nigeria, Benue is our state of origin, even though we were born in the western part of the country and had spent the better part of our lives outside the state. Logically, the LBRBDA was chosen for the micro-level analysis. Later, this choice paid off as we travelled through the catchment area; introducing ourselves as belonging to Benue state by origin softened the resistance from many of the respondents.

Accordingly, this research sought to show, by critically engaging some of the stakeholders of the RBDAs, how the internal politics of river basin organisation is delicately intertwined with the turmoil of Nigeria federalism as an independent country. We have undertaken to explain how the development of the RBDAs and their low-performance ratings, mirrored the peculiar politics of Nigerian fragmentary federalism.

There are six sets of research questions with their corresponding hypotheses; a set dedicated to each section. In the order of their appearances, they are as follows:

The first hypothesis (H_1) is: The organisation of the RBDAs have been expressions of grand ambitions that were either unaligned with the overarching goal of food production, not sufficiently thought through, or not diligently executed and thus, did not yield the desired

results. The related research question (RQ₁) is – How aligned with the overarching goal of food production, diligently planned and executed, have been the series of policies made for the RBDAs since their creation in the 1970s?

The second hypothesis (H₂) is: The development of the RBDAs is a classic reflection of the turmoil that characterised the trajectory of Nigerian federalism. The associated research question (RQ₂) runs thus: How have the RBDAs mirrored the trajectory of Nigeria's federalism?

The third hypothesis (H₃): The quest for the reform of the RBDAs, through partial commercialisation has so far yielded minimal and unsatisfactory dividends because the privatisation policy – which is the principal reform mechanism – has been undermined by policy gaps, inconsistencies and discontinuities. The related research question (RQ₃) asks: How have the policy gaps, contradictions, and discontinuities affected the realisation of the reforms of the RBDAs through privatisation?

The fourth hypothesis (H₄) is: The irrigation projects, colonies, farms and administrative units of the LBRBDA, which served as endpoints in the policy implementation chain, reflect the successions of grand but unrealised ambitions that informed the formulations, articulations and implementations of the government policies for the LBRBDA. The connected research question (RQ₄) runs thus: How do the irrigation projects of the LBRBDA reflect the many policy introductions, poor implementations and sudden disruptions that characterise the succession of the grand but unrealised ambitions behind the policies of the governments for the River Basin Development Authorities?

The fifth hypothesis (H₅) is: The LBRBDA, as a basic unit of the twelve federal RBDAs, reflects in its development-trajectory the political dynamics that shaped Nigeria's fragmentary federalism. The associated research question (RQ₅) is – As one of the micro-level units of the twelve federal RBDAs, how has the LBRBDA mirrored the development trajectory of Nigeria's federalism?

The sixth and final hypothesis (H₆) is: The blueprint for the implementation of the policy on the partial commercialisation of the LBRBDA was stillborn and the implementation process has been below expectation. The related research question (RQ₆) is: What were the responses

of the LBRBDA to the federal government policies on the privatisation and commercialisation of public enterprises?

This thesis draws from a diversity of resources of information beginning with us, as the embodiments of the many interests discussed in this work, to the sources we consulted and the fieldwork that we carried out. We grew up in the military barracks in Kaduna. There we began the last four years of our primary school education in 1979 – the year Obasanjo signed the RBDAs’ decree into law. As we grew up, the sight of farmers exerting their strength on the shadouf was a frequent occurrence as we made our way across the streams on our way to school. Also, we saw first-hand the ‘military approach’ to facing challenges, and learnt to speak Hausa – the primary language of Northern Nigeria. Our background played a very significant role in data collection; travelling through the familiar terrains was a homecoming experience after three decades.

The second aspect of our personal involvement in this thesis was our academic range which enabled us to apply an interdisciplinary approach in the collection, collation and analyses of the data. Our educational background cut across the social sciences, sacred sciences, physical sciences, and environmental management. In addition to strict academic pursuits, our calling as priests of the Roman Catholic rites took us to the several parts of Nigeria in the south for our training, and later to Lagos in the western region where we ministered after our ordination to the priesthood. We were able to relate to our secondary data more easily because of our disciplinary ambit and travels across Nigeria.

The actual sources of the data included the libraries of the Lisbon School of Economics and Management (ISEG) in Portugal, the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, the National Water Research Institute (NWRI) at Kaduna, the Ministry of Water Resources in Abuja, and the Centre for Historical Documentation and Research at Arewa House, Kaduna. Furthermore, there were also online sources that included Google searches and research hubs such as ResearchGate, Academia.edu and open access online libraries.

The field trips and interviews covered three of the four states of the LBRBDA: Benue, Nasarawa and Kogi. The fourth state, Plateau, had many reports of killings by herdsmen and ethnic militias at the time of the field trip, and was unsafe for travelling. However, we were able to interview two senior staff who served in Jos but had redeployed to the headquarters

in Benue state. We visited all the irrigation projects in the three other states. These visits enabled us to see things for ourselves and to verify our data by triangulation.

We interviewed thirty-six people, including Olusegun Obasanjo, the former President of Nigeria, who signed the RBDA's decree in 1979 as a military leader. We also interviewed directors, executive directors and senior officers of the LBRBDA. The total time for the oral interviews with a semi-structured question format was 20.16 hours. Additionally, we distributed questionnaires to 120 people among the junior staff of both sexes, at the premises of the LBRBDA; 96 of those inquiries came back. The surveys balanced the oral interviews, which we restricted to the senior officials.

One outstanding difficulty during the collection of data, especially during the field trips, was the bureaucracy of the government offices which made it challenging to reach strategic public officers even when they were physically within reach. In the same vein, access to official documents was a herculean task, even when they were already in circulation, and many of the officials refused to comment on some issues which they considered critical. In some of the offices, the staff treated us like investigative journalists. While some gradually relaxed and cooperated, others did not. We dressed up in our religious habits for some of the interviews, which in most cases earned the trust of the respondents, but others vehemently resisted us and did everything to keep us at a distance.

In the end, the collection of data proved extremely useful because of the enormous amount of new information we obtained. The different sources of information, libraries, oral interviews, questionnaires and field trips enabled us to double-check and triangulate the data we collected. Although we rigorously checked the data for accuracy, we accept responsibility for any error in the data or the analysis.

As a research work, this thesis addresses the political economy of the RBDA's at different levels. The first is centred on macro-level issues and debates. It has three chapters that examine the political economy from a holistic standpoint. Chapter One addresses the development of the RBDA's as the grand ambitions of Nigerian leaders. Chapter Two examines how the development trajectory of the RBDA's mirror the turmoil of Nigeria's peculiar federalism, and Chapter Three critically explores the reforms undertaken to reposition the RBDA's. The focus at the macro-level draws on the development of the RBDA's as federal

enterprises, and the analyses follow their policies and politics as they affected all the units. Our illustrations come from across the spread of RBDAs, except the LBRBDA which we isolated for the micro-level analysis. Each of the chapters forms an independent reading unit but discusses an aspect of the primary heading – *The Policies and Politics of River Basin Development in Nigeria*.

The second part of the thesis reviews, through a detailed case study, one of the twelve river basins under federal supervision – the Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority (LBRBDA). It has three chapters that examine the RBDAs at a micro-level through the development of the LBRBDA. Under a common subheading, *The Dynamics at Play in the Lower Benue River Basin Authority*, the second part examines how the macro-level factors play out in the LBRBDA. The narratives and illustrations in this section are limited to the catchment area of the LBRBDA. Chapter Four investigates how the politics and policy interruptions at the federal level led to truncated ambitions in the LBRBDA while Chapter Five studies how Nigeria's fragmented federalism led to an increase in the stakeholders of the LBRBDA and the conflicts of interests. Chapter Six examines the implementation of the government's partial commercialisation policy by the LBRBDA and how its well-articulated Corporate Plan for the policy became a still-born blueprint. Our conclusion provides a brief recap of the key points, analyses of some of the findings and their implications for policymakers and technocrats and makes some suggestions for further research on the politics of river basin organisation in Nigeria.

PART ONE: POLICIES AND POLITICS OF THE RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITIES IN NIGERIA

CHAPTER ONE

RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES AS THE EXPRESSION OF GRAND AMBITIONS

Every Nigerian government, to date, has acted as if it had complete knowledge of what is needed to achieve self-sufficiency in food needs. Hence, policies and programmes have been carried out without bordering to undertake pilot projects to determine its economic feasibility, even on a limited scale. The result has always been a wide gap between intention and outcome (Agbo, 1988: 29).

One of the most significant dents in the image of Nigeria as the giant of Africa is the inability of the country to produce enough food for her population despite her ample human and natural resources. Analysts often refer to Nigeria as an oil-rich but starving country. Aggravated by the conflict-induced food scarcity, such as the current Boko Haram insurgency situation in the North-East of the country and the land and water contamination by oil exploration in the Niger Delta areas, the general food insecurity has been a lingering issue. Successive leaders of the country have tried to address the food production by introducing new agricultural policies, launched with pomp and pageantry, glamorous demonstrations and elaborate speeches, laden with promises to turn the tremendous agrarian potentials of the country into a reality during their term in office. It always looked like the long-awaited Eldorado had arrived, but the ends have all been the same; tales, blame games and more empty promises.

The River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) are among some of the oldest agricultural policies of Nigeria. Many others have been either suddenly truncated by a succeeding administration or gradually relegated to the background by the introduction of a new approach which bore the political symbol of the administration in power. The RBDAs have continued to survive because of their links to the land, water resources and food production. Historically, the move to reorganise the river basins was part of Nigeria's rebirth, following the 1967–1970 civil war. Some researches into the creation and management of river basins, support the opinion that the process is inherently political, often involving socio-economic and political trade-offs (Houdret, Dombrowsky & Horlemann, 2014: 2392-3). The Nigerian situation was all that and more. The case of the RBDAs had the added factors of Nigeria's multi-ethnicity and political fragmentation that characterised the development of its federalism. The RBDAs were the platform for some of the most ambitious policy statements

made by governments in the history of the country's quest for food security. The situation began in the 1960s, when political turbulence disrupted the stable course of food production in Nigeria. By the 1970s, Nigeria had joined the league of countries with a rising profile of food importation (Figure 1:1).

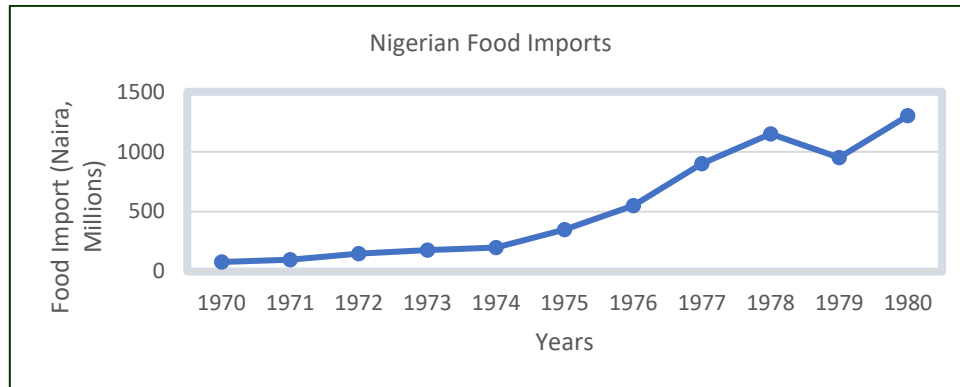


Figure 1:1 Nigeria Food imports: Adapted from Bonat, (1989: 66).

Nigeria still faced food insecurities, more than four decades after the creation of the RBDAs, with a long chain of unfulfilled ambitions mapped out for the RBDAs by various administrations. The chain began with Yakubu Gowon, and it is still counting. The result has been a series of grand dreams, deliberately or inadvertently, floated as policies aimed at boosting food production in the country. This chapter explores the dynamics of those ambitions as they manifested in the history of the RBDAs. Our hypothesis (H_1) for this chapter is as follows:

The organisation of the RBDAs have been expressions of grand ambitions that were either not aligned with the overarching goal of food production, not sufficiently thought through, or not diligently executed, and thus did not yield the desired results.

To test the validity of the hypothesis, we shall examine how the different administrations tried to respond to the lingering food insecurity in Nigeria through the policies that they formulated for the RBDAs as the most prominent stakeholders in public irrigation. The research question (RQ_1) for this chapter is:

How aligned with the overarching goal of food production, diligently planned and executed, have been the series of policies made for the RBDAs, since their creation in the 1970s?

Considering the foregoing, this chapter chronologically examines the various policies mapped out for the RBDAs by different leaders of the federal government from the beginning. We

shall look at what the different Nigerian presidents expected of the RBDAs when they came into office, and what they did to realise those plans through the creation of institutional structures to push their agenda. In considering the expectations and inputs of the various governments, the focus is on how many well-articulated policies with promises of a sudden increase in food production ended up as expressions of grand ambitions. The phrase 'grand ambition' is used here in two ways: First, it describes the grandiose desires to address the food security question in Nigeria in manners that turned out to be unrealistic, because the plans were not in tune with the prevailing socio-political constraints. Second, it also refers to the well-articulated programs presented as food production strategies that turned out to be veiled party-politics agendas, crafted to ensure victory at the polls for the ruling parties. Our story of grand ambitions begins with General Yakubu Gowon, who initiated the process of reorganising the water bodies in Nigeria into river basins.

We begin by examining the factors that shaped the first steps taken towards the setting-up of the RBDAs. The most important, immediate determinants were the post-civil war recovery efforts of the 1970s, the famine in the North caused by the droughts, and the oil boom of the early 70s. Alongside these are the socio-political context and the historical role of agriculture in the economy of the country before colonial times.

1.1 Irrigation in Nigeria before the River Basin Authorities



Figure 1:2 A local farmer using the shadouf. Source: (Tabachnick, no date)

The origins of the RBDAs lie in the practice of irrigation as an ancient farming practice in the northern part of Nigeria. The essential implement was the shadouf which originated from the Nile Valley in Egypt, but had been used for irrigation in Northern Nigeria for centuries (Nwa, 2003: 15). The shadouf is a simple device for lifting water using the principle of the lever (Figure 1:2). Existing records show that by the time the British reached Northern Nigeria in the 18th century, irrigation by this method was widespread in the regions of the Sokoto-Rima, Kano Hadejia-Yobe, Yedseram, Niger and the Lake Chad rivers. The first documented colonial interest in the irrigation potentials of Northern

Nigeria was the Baro Experimental Irrigation Farm in the flood plains of River Niger, between Baro and Jebba, in 1908. It was commissioned by Percy Girouard who assumed the Governorship of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria in 1907. Later, explorations of irrigation in the north included the building of dams, canals and weirs by H.S.W. Edwardes, who was the Resident Officer of the Sokoto Province in 1921. It also included the invitation of Colonel M. R. Collins, an irrigation engineer, to review the state of irrigation in 1923 after the failure of Edwardes' efforts. In the same, there was also the Kware Irrigation Scheme which received a very robust support from the colonial government and became well-known.

The Kware Irrigation Scheme, otherwise known as the 'Shalla Project', was one of the most documented irrigation projects of the new colonial government. The Shalla stream was a continuous lake that flowed into the Rima River in northern Nigeria. The work began in 1923 but suffered a series of breaching issues and was abandoned the same year. Subsequently, it continued to function as a dry season irrigation scheme only. Several efforts were made to ensure that Kware Irrigation Scheme succeeded, but it turned out to be an unrealised grand ambition despite the support of the colonial government. In 1944, an irrigation and drainage engineer, Mr C. J. Rae, came from Sierra Leone to assess the irrigation potentials of the protectorate. In his report titled, *Possible Agricultural Development by Means of Irrigation and Drainage in the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria*, Rae described the Kware Scheme as a 'complete failure' (Nwa, 2003: 35). After extensively travelling through the newly amalgamated northern and southern protectorates, Mr Rae noted that there were tremendous potentials in Nigeria where irrigation, drainage and land reclamation works could be undertaken to boost food production (Nwa, 2003: 39). He also made many recommendations about how the existing irrigations schemes could be made more efficient and new ones constructed across the rivers. However, he noted that there was a severe lack of topographic maps and hydraulic data upon which to base designs.

Nwa (2003), who wrote extensively on the development of irrigation, opined that there were valuable lessons to learn from the Kware Project, for the new efforts to boost irrigation agriculture in Nigeria. He noted that the Kware Project had a deficient design with little attention to operations and maintenance. Second, the government tried to force the farmers and labelled them 'lazy' and 'uncooperative' when they resisted. Third, the land tenure system did not favour the farmers, because they lived under a constant threat of the

expropriation of their lands if they performed poorly, and for their refusal to cooperate with the authorities. Fourth, they were expected to pay taxes for water and other inputs, but if they lost all their crops through a breach of the dam, they were to bear their loss. Thus, the small farmers decided not to take part in the scheme because there were hardly any incentives. The result was that the grand plan of the colonial government suffered a setback at Kware because of the wrong approach. However, the development of irrigation in Nigeria received a significant boost from the countrywide survey carried out by C. J. Rae. Many irrigation projects sprang up in the provinces. Rice production started in Warri, Ogoja Province and Ilorin. In the north, more irrigation projects sprang up in the Kano, Katsina, Plateau and Zaria provinces. In 1953, an irrigation policy was drawn up for Northern Nigeria, but it was not fully implemented because of the declaration of independence in 1960. Irrigation practice continued but with reduced attention, as the newly independent nation struggled with the myriad of challenges that came with its new status.

After independence, irrigation development became part of the duties of the Federal Ministry of Agricultural and Natural Resources created in 1965, following the recommendations of the Food and Agriculture Organisation. The new ministry was still trying to find its footing when political turmoil overtook the country, and a civil war erupted. The civil war accelerated agricultural stagnation in the war zones of Eastern Nigeria and became one of the immediate factors responsible for the creation of the river basin authorities (Nwa, 2003: 60).

According to Oyenuga (1967: 24), agriculture flourished in the immediate years after independence before the war. In 1963, agricultural products accounted for more than 64% of the total GDP. There was a booming interest in agriculture in the early post-independence years as the regions struggled to increase their outputs for different crops. The federal government invested in research programmes, but that changed in the mid-1960s as the nation was engulfed by the political crises that culminated in the thirty-month civil war. The war broke out in the fifth year of Nigeria's First National Development Plan (1962–68) and effectively cut short the government's aspirations to accord agriculture, industry and human resources the highest priorities in its development plan (Federation of Nigeria, 1962: 22). Hereafter, the federal government shifted its focus to stopping the secession bid in the eastern part of the country.

While the war raged and agricultural development in the south suffered, the Sahelian Droughts hit the north and undermined the production of cereals and tuber crops. By the time the war came to an end, the nation came face-to-face with another threat to its survival; it had become a nation in dire need of food. The immediate response was to increase the importation of food while developing sustainable long-term solutions. Once more the government turned to irrigation; a decision, that through some deliberate and inadvertent political actions, triggered a sequence of grand ambitions beginning with that of General Yakubu Gowon who initiated the project of organising the river basins, as a part of his post-war recovery measures.

1.2 Gowon – The Midwife of a New River Basin Organisation

The Nigerian Civil War, often referred to as the Biafran War, had many after-effects on agriculture which was the most prominent economic base of the country. The nation overcame the threat to its unity but was left with its agricultural capacity seriously impaired. Yakubu Gowon, who led the federal side in the Civil War, spearheaded the rebuilding of the nation with his policy of 3Rs (Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction) (Eneh, 2011: 65)¹. Food production was ebbing, due to the disruption of farming activities in the south and the agricultural policies outlined by the government before the war. It was in the post-war policies and Gowon's pronouncements that plans for the creation of the river basins appeared for the first time. Gowon began the national shift from the small-scale irrigation farming that had characterised agriculture in northern Nigeria for centuries to the RBDAs scheme, propelled by the new international standards and trends.

In responding to the post-war needs of the country, Gowon, who had previously gained an international reputation for his benevolence during and after the war, wanted to consolidate the federal supremacy that had come at a high cost. Thus, in pursuing his 3Rs campaign, he aimed to carry every part of the country along; no section of the nation was to be left out. He announced a programme which included plans to return to democratic rule six years after the war but he later reneged on them (Agedah, 1993: 22). The re-organisation of the water bodies

¹ The 'federal side' is a term often used in the narratives of the Nigeria Civil War to refer to the Government of Nigeria controlled by General Gowon; the side under Colonel Ojukwu is referred to as the Igbos or Biafra.

of the country into river basins was one of the grand ambitions of Gowon's rebuilding efforts. A combination of several remote and immediate factors shaped the foundations that Gowon laid for the RBDAs. Among the background factors was Gowon's knowledge of how farmers plied their trade in the north – where rainfall was sparse. He grew up in Zaria (North Central Nigeria) and knew about irrigation farming using the shadouf, which was a common implement². The immediate factors included the pressures of the Sahelian Droughts, the aftermath of the war, the new developments in the management of water basins (which UN had been researching for more than a decade), and the windfall from the oil boom of the 1970s. One of the first steps taken by Gowon in his 3Rs bid was the release of a roadmap for national restoration entitled, *Second National Development Plan (1970-74) – Programme of Post-war Reconstruction and Development*.

1.2.1 The Second National Development Plan (1970–74)

The Second National Development Plan (SNDP) did not explicitly mention the RBDAs, but the plan recognised the vital role that agriculture must play in the recovery process. The first progress report of the plan showed that many irrigation schemes were already receiving attention, with 'substantial provisions' in most of the northern states (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1972:). In the second progress report, the government declared the establishment of the first two RBDAs – the Chad Basin and the Sokoto-Rima Valley – with a promise that plans for developing other river basins in the country were well underway. The grand plan would culminate in a year-round production of food for the entire country. In the plan, the government provided a glimpse into the emerging national outlook that it had planned for the RBDAs:

The development of irrigation facilities for all-year-round cultivation is regarded as the prerequisite for agricultural development, especially in the Northern States of the countries where rainfall has been most undependable. In most of these states, steps have been taken to establish this basic agricultural development infrastructure. While no major irrigation scheme has been completed so far, construction is in progress in some, and more studies are being carried out to

²Yakubu Gowon grew up in Wusasa, in the old Zaria District, where his father (a Church Mission assistant) migrated to. Gowon was born in Tuwan, in Pankshin area of the present Plateau state. See Chapter Three; Elaigwu, J. I. (1986, pp. 16–29, 297) *Gowon- The Biography of a Soldier-Stateman*. Ibadan: West Books Publishers Ltd.

determine the technical feasibility as well as economic viability of others (FRN, 1974: 49).



Figure 1:3 Nigeria – Vegetation belts. Adapted from www.globalsecurity.org by Daniel Adayi

The second progress report of the plan yielded valuable information on the early stages of the RBDAs. First, when the government created the first RBDAs, all the irrigation schemes were incomplete. Secondly, the first RBDAs were instituted and began to receive funding without a blueprint of what the government wanted to achieve by reorganising the water bodies. The overriding aim was to increase food production, but the absence of a clear plan left the administrators trying to figure out the utilisation of the government’s investments in the new scheme. Jan van Apeldoorn (1978), a researcher at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria who investigated the droughts and the responses of the government at about the same time, affirmed that the same situation of unfinished irrigation schemes converted into river basin hubs persisted, even when the government expanded the RBDAs to eleven in 1976 (Apeldoorn, 1978: 124).

Thirdly, the government planned to spread the RBDAs across the country, but the pilot studies were all conducted in the north. For a country with as diverse agro-ecological belts as Nigeria, it was not enough to have concentrated the pilot studies in the north and afterwards, to make a blanket policy for the RBDAs across the country (Figure 1:3). While the northern parts received insufficient rainfalls, the southernmost areas had perennial rainfalls. The strategy of

using a uniform schema all over the country has remained one of the weaknesses of the river basins project (Akpabio, 2008: 275).

In the interim, the government was determined, in the spirit of national reconciliation, to adopt the new blueprint for integrated river basin management that the UN released the year the SNDP was published. It became a part of its agricultural policies for the whole country. The UN report supplied a significant impetus for Gowon's grand plan for the RBDAs, but the local implementation fell short of the blueprint.

1.2.2 Integrated Basin Development- The Impetus of 1970 United Nations' Report

By the time the rebuilding process began at the end of the war, the UN published the findings of the experts it had commissioned to research river basin operations. The report titled, *Integrated River Basin Development: Report of a Panel of Experts*, called for a shift from the old single-purpose control of water for hydroelectric power, irrigation, navigation or domestic supply to an integrated approach, embracing all units. The report encouraged the nations to shift their perspectives to river basin organisation, because of the physical possibilities for integrated river basin development and the increasing pressure on the world's natural resources. It envisaged that the new approach would make river basin management economically attractive in the decades ahead (United Nations, 1970: 8).

Thus, a decade after the Nigerian government requested the FAO to undertake an intensive study of the country's agricultural potentials and draw up a scheme of priorities for development, Gowon issued the Chad Basin Development Decree no. 32 and the Sokoto-Rima Basin Development Decree no. 33, both on 14th August 1973 – to set up the first two RBDAs. Within the preceding decade, there had been a flurry of interests and activities in anticipation of the RBDAs. In 1963, the FAO carried out a study of the land and resources of the Sokoto-Rima Basin and, in 1965, UNESCO and the FAO studied the water resources of the Chad Basin. In the same year, the Bureau of Reclamation under the United States Department of Interior undertook a study on the Kano River Basin, which culminated in the establishment of the Kano River Project in 1968 (Nwa, 2003:109).

With the creation of the two RBDAs, Gowon inaugurated the path to integrated river basin development in Nigeria. As the UN report of the *Panel of Experts* stated, the integrated approach would involve:

[T]he co-ordinated and harmonious development of the various works concerning all the reasonable possibilities of the basin. These may include irrigation and drainage, electric power production, navigation, flood control, watershed treatment, industrial and domestic uses of water, recreation and wildlife conservation (United Nations, 1970: 1).

The new profile was the kind of arrangement that Nigeria needed to harness its vast water resources at that time, and Gowon immediately adopted it wholeheartedly. However, the determination to adopt the new international initiative disregarded the needed corresponding efficiency in the setting-up of the recommended structures. The report of the pilot studies showed that the structure set up for the beginning were inadequate, and even deficient in some cases. The report of the *Panel of Experts* boldly sounded a note of warning:

If a river basin programme is to be integrated in more than a name, it will require unified planning and administration. One essential, therefore, is to provide an organisational framework under which such unified planning and administration can be carried on. A second essential is a continuity in the planning, construction and operating phases. While it is not necessary that the planning agency should build or operate a project, it is important that planning, construction and operation should be regarded as a continuous process and that all the staff engaged in these various functions should be under a common control (United Nations, 1970: 27).

Later records showed that the government did not pay enough attention to that note of caution and many other strategies mapped out in the UN report. The reason for that may be the unplanned decision to hastily transform the irrigation projects into the first RBDAs as the Sahelian Droughts of the 1970s increased the food scarcity. The influence of the droughts altered the planned course and undermined the foundations of the RBDAs, because the first steps short-circuited the process. It is noteworthy that the false start which marked the creation of the first two RBDAs persisted with the setting up of the latter ones, even though the pressure of the drought later abated.

1.2.3 Pressures from the Sahelian Droughts

The factors that shaped the agricultural policies of the post-war years were the famine in the northern part of the country due to the catastrophic Sahelian Droughts (1968–1973) and some small-scale droughts that continued late into the 1970s (Abaje, Ati, Iguisi, & Jidauna, 2013: 4). The impacts were monumental - whole communities were forced to migrate “as the

only way to survive” (Apeldoorn, 1981: 46). A critical look at the concerted responses revealed a lot about the beginnings of the RBDAs.

In mapping out responses to the drought, irrigation development through the RBDAs was a priority choice. Both the federal and the state governments took steps to build on the irrigation farming which already existed in the north for centuries. The report on the irrigation schemes revealed two factors that undermined the beginnings of the RBDAs and further impaired the grand ambition that informed its creation - the disregard for the recommendations from the pilot studies, and the enormous amount of money spent on the projects because of the windfall from the oil boom of the 1970s.

1.2.4 Effect of the 1970s Oil Boom

One factor that played a significant role in shaping the creation of the RBDAs was the oil boom in the 1970s. Nigeria joined the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1971, and shortly after experienced an increase from the oil shocks of 1973 (Issawi, 1978: 3). For a country that had been at war for more than two years (fought in the southern parts) and at the same time faced a famine in the North due to droughts, the sudden wealth was too good to be true! As the crisis raged between the western nations, Nigeria amassed a fortune from the sharp incline of the cost of crude oil. One oft-repeated quote of Gowon, the then military leader, was the assertion that Nigeria’s problem was not money but how to spend it. Within that period, the government increased the minimum wage by 100%. The Nigeria government paid the salaries of striking teachers in Jamaica and hosted the flamboyant Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, also known as Festac '77 (Oluwaseyi, 2017: 13). With the windfall of money came a surge in mismanagement and corruption by the military administration. The rise in fraud adversely affected the foundations of the nascent post-war rebuilding policies (Agbiboa, 2012: 331). Some of the most affected systems were the agricultural programmes, where the government allocations increased tremendously. Although, during the first two decades of the RBDAs, the government invested over USD 3 billion in the irrigation development of the various basins, available resources suggest that the earliest structures were shoddily erected (Pradhan, 1993: 21). Apeldoorn recorded the growth of the irrigation schemes and the foundations of the RBDAs. The first thrust was to respond to the droughts, but gradually the RBDAs became the big picture as the consensus opinion suggested that:

The basins will eventually be the chief source of self-sufficiency. Their use will be the main bulwark against the unpredictable weather changes in the environment (Apeldoorn, 1978: 123).

The works of Apeldoorn showed that the federal government ignored the notes of caution raised in the preliminary studies. He summed up the salient points in the call he made for the re-evaluation of the irrigation schemes, as the ventures continued to receive more money with little regard for the related foundational concerns. He pointed out that:

As a minimum, the government should make it imperative that all feasibility studies for irrigation schemes in northern Nigeria will only be accepted if the "drought risk" forms an integral part of the evaluation. [The expected] performance should include crop production, farmers' incomes, alternative means of survival and subsistence, and government measures required to abate hardship and suffering. Above all, they should clearly spell out the future structural position of all the people affected by the schemes (Apeldoorn, 1978: 126).

Furthermore, he noted that the health implication of the schemes, the legal issues around herding, and the documented cases of failures in the pilot studies were not sufficiently addressed in 1976, with the nine new RBDAs. There was hardly any consideration for the social implications of the schemes. Out of his fear for the long-term consequences of the shoddy foundations, Apeldoorn warned that:

Past 'feasibility studies' have tended to concentrate on the technical and economic aspects, to the neglect of other considerations. They almost invariably show that 'it can be done' and even made it to look as if it can 'pay its way' (by, e.g. excluding costs of resettlement and placing high shadow prices that might be imported if not grown on the scheme). It is high time to change this because technological feasibility based on dependency-creating, import technology, plus calculations that assume most real cost away, cannot form the basis for sound, integrated development planning (Apeldoorn, 1978: 126).

Indeed, the oil boom led to a massive increase in the government's allocation for agriculture, but food production remained far below the required levels. Apeldoorn asserted, in a later text, that the importation of food and food price inflation continued to rise, and it took some time before the government realised the vast gulf between funding and food production (Apeldoorn, 1981: 121). Apparently, those directly responsible for the irrigation schemes were unaware of the gulf, or the government had decided to overlook the flaws with the hope that the poor yield would improve over time.

One of the first indications of the government's shoddy foundation for the RBDAs was the introduction of Gowon's pet agricultural programme as a parallel. In a national broadcast, on April 1974, Gowon reaffirmed his commitment to the RBDAs and his plan to launch the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) campaign:

While Government is making a substantial investment in large-scale agriculture, the needs of our small-scale farmers will continue to receive adequate attention. To this end, the National Accelerated Food Production Campaign which has been designed to make available to the farmers high yielding seeds, fertilisers and other inputs has been launched in four states³ and will be extended to the remaining parts of the country soon (Gowon, 1974: 6).

The spread of the NAFPP to the other states in the south and the middle belt of the country did not happen as envisaged; the programme was stillborn. Notwithstanding the failure of the NAFPP, it became an unhealthy precedence which continued to haunt the RBDAs in several ways. First, it was run side-by-side with the pilot schemes of the RBDAs in the northern part of the country. There is no documented attempt of an effort to harmonise the two agricultural programmes, even though they had the same beneficiaries, and both were meant to produce cereals in the first instance. Second, the AFPP became a precedence for many parallel programmes that militated against the RBDAs. Following the NAFPP as an antecedent, all subsequent governments launched their pet-agricultural projects under different names and acronyms, some with more than one programme (Ayoola, 2016: 4). The only exemptions were governments with very short stays, such as the administrations of Murtala Mohammed who was assassinated in his seventh month and Ernest Shonekan who was ousted in his third month. Third, and unfortunately, the primary reason provided for the failure of the NAFPP reappeared in the shortcomings of the later pet agricultural programmes – the policies were without due consideration for the human and material realities available at ground level (Adah & Abasilim, 2015: 279). Even though the failure of the AFPP had some impacts on the grand plan for the RBDAs, Gowon came through with the Third National Development Plan

³The four states were Anambra, Kano, Borno and Niger States. See, FGN (1981, p. 76) *Fourth National Development Plan (1980–85)*. Lagos: The National Planning Office, Federal Ministry of National Planning.

(TNDP), where agriculture remained a priority. By the time the TNDP was proposed, Nigeria was well into the oil boom period and facing new political and economic challenges.

1.2.5 The Third National Development Plan (1975–1980)

Gowon called the TNDP, 'A Monument to Progress'. It was the grand plan that would usher Nigeria into self-sustained growth. In the forward for the publication of the plan, Gowon presented it as the government's effort to accelerate the process of economic and social recovery in Nigeria. He boasted that:

[the plan was] undoubtedly the most ambitious development effort ever attempted in Nigeria. The investment programme is ten times as large as that of the Second Plan, and the projected rate of economic growth is about double the average rate experienced since independence in 1960. The full implementation of the Plan should ensure a radical transformation of the Nigerian society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1975a: 3).

Additionally, the plan officially announced the government's decision to expand the RBDAs, with an increase in budgetary allocation for the development of the irrigation schemes. The agricultural sector felt the full impact and it went into a flurry of activities at once. Many of the irrigation projects received bumper appropriations. An allocation of two million naira was set aside for irrigation feasibility surveys in five RBDAs – Ogun, Osun, Imo, Anambra and Cross River (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1975b).

Expectedly, the first progress report on the TNDP, released in 1978, showed that the RBDAs had become a mainstream concern, with irrigation reported as a separate section. The report also showed that as of 1978, although nine new RBDAs had been created, bringing the total number to eleven, the irrigation feasibility study and other technical evaluations were still incomplete (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1978: 44-45). The modus of procedure adopted did not follow the UN recommendations on the harmony between the development and utilisation of resources – existing and potential – and the needs of the local populations. The UN report emphatically stated that:

The preliminary investigation should lead to (a) a broad idea of what kind of basin development programme seems technically possible; (b) an outline of the main requirements and objectives of the project from the viewpoint of the people already living in, or eventually to be settled in, the area in question; and (c) a listing of the questions and problems which must be investigated before an over-all plan of development can be drawn up. It should also contain a provisional estimate of the expenditure involved in making this further investigation (Nations, 1970: 10).

Despite the allocations that the irrigation projects received, the foundation of the RBDAs short-circuited the recommended first steps. The long-term goal of the TNDP was to respond to the agricultural demands of the projected population growths (2.5% annually), urbanisation, and a sharp rise in real income. Moreover, agriculture must provide for the raw material needs of the local industries and generate foreign exchange (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1975a: 63). Indeed, the RBDAs held a position of pride in Gowon's post-war recovery programme as the country struggled with food supply. It was a local potential that could respond to the nation's food need. The TNDP acknowledged that:

The level of food production in the country is barely keeping pace with population growth, mainly due to low yields, decreasing soil fertility with the limited use of fertiliser, unimproved crop varieties and breeds of livestock, lack of credit, inadequate extension services and the use of very simple manually operated tools. This condition has been further aggravated by the recent drought and losses due to disease and pest in the field and storage. The tragedy of this situation manifests itself in shortage of food and poor nutritional status of a large proportion of the population (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1975a: 64).

Notwithstanding the enormous investments, the production of food did not improve in the days of Gowon. Along with the pressure of food, Gowon's regime faced the dissatisfaction of some junior military officers with his style of governance. His colleagues in the military lost patience with his speed of action and ousted him through a bloodless coup. Murtala overthrew Gowon while he was away attending an OAU Summit in Kampala, Uganda in July 1975. However, the new regime continued the implementation of the TNDP, and the RBDAs remained on a priority for the government because of the food production agenda.

1.3 Murtala-Obasanjo Interventions

The ascent to power of General Murtala Ramat Mohammed [fondly referred to as Murtala] brought about a reorganisation policy which quickly swept across the nation. However, Gowon's national plan, the 'Monument to Progress', was retained. Murtala, who became the next military leader, accepted the policies but felt that the implementation process had become slow and derailed (NewsAdmin, 2012). He wanted things to change quickly, and so he promptly incurred the wrath of his colleagues. He fell to the vengeance of military officers who were sympathetic to Gowon. The leadership of Mohammed lasted for 198 impactful

days⁴. This period was labelled as the ‘days of action’, due to the sheer volume of changes that he accomplished, and for many policies that he set in motion within that period (Ndujihe, 2016). Mohammed was brutally assassinated in a bloody coup on Friday, 13 February 1976. It was a coup d’état that not only cut short Murtala’s life but also extinguished the renewed hope that Nigeria could yet be a great nation and a source of pride for Black people worldwide. One of the national dailies, the New Nigeria Newspaper, in its tribute to Murtala, poetically summed up the sentiments of the people as follows:

Public indignation is not surprising, for Murtala Mohammed’s government was a triumph of efficiency and a record of promises fulfilled. It will go down in history as a great, though short-lived administration, which took the difficult decisions over States, the Federal Capital, cleared the cement log-jam in a business-like manner and instilled a sense of discipline in the country (Ardo, 2003: 190).

What were Murtala’s plans for the RBDAs? The exact details may remain hidden forever, but the panoramic sweep of his reforms invariably suggested that he would have touched upon the new RBDAs. Indeed, he adopted the RBDAs as part of the TNDP, as did Obasanjo – the next Head of State. Murtala’s assassination brutally curtailed many dreams and promises, but Obasanjo committed himself to carry the government’s plans and policies through to their logical ends.

1.3.1 Obasanjo’s Bid to Feed the Nation

Murtala Mohammed was succeeded by his former deputy, General Olusegun Obasanjo. He ascended to Murtala’s position as Head of State but upheld the policies that the government had charted under Murtala and guided the transition to civil rule as planned (Chuku, 2004: 118). In the three years of his reign, Obasanjo made three significant contributions to the development of the RBDAs. First, he adopted the TNDP, which Gowon had drawn up. Second, like Gowon, Obasanjo also launched a parallel pet agricultural programme called Operation

⁴In a volume of compact analyses that used a regime-focused, case-study methodology to x-ray Nigeria’s post-colonial development, Gloria Chuku, a professor of African and African Women History, and the Chair of African Studies at the University of Nigeria, presented a superlative profile of Murtala. She contended that Murtala gave Nigeria a new sense of nationalism, patriotism and revolutionary approach to government at an unprecedented high pitch. His government “touched all facets of Nigeria society – the economy, agricultural, communication and gender” with a purposeful leadership. See: Nwachuku, L. and Uzoigwe, G. N. (eds) (2004) ‘The Quest for National Purification: Murtala Mohammed’s New Vision, 1975-1976’, in *Troubled Journey: Nigeria Since the Civil War*. New York: University Press of America, pp. 79–101.

Feed the Nation (OFN), while carrying on with the preliminary studies of the RBDAs' pilot projects. Third, he finally signed the decree that expanded the RBDAs from the initial two to eleven. The decree statutorily set up the river basins as a project of the central government. All the inputs had implications on the growth of the fresh concept of integrated river basin management in post-civil-war Nigeria, and they all bore the trappings of the grandiose thinking behind the policies of the RBDAs.

OFN was Obasanjo's pet agricultural programme and his government initiative, launched just three months after he became the Head of State. In his speech at the formal launching of OFN on 29 May 1976, Obasanjo proudly declared that:

Operation Feed the Nation is the most ambitious and critical programme of direct benefit to the farmer this nation has ever embarked upon. It will, for the first time, guarantee that farmers who form the overwhelming proportion of our people share directly in our prosperity (Obasanjo, n.d.: 68).

According to a blogger Jindu Osakwe (2013), OFN had a specific focus to ensure a higher nutrition level and accelerate national development through an increase in food production. At the launching of OFN, Obasanjo stated that the goals of the scheme were as follows:

1. To mobilise the nation towards self-sufficiency and self-reliance in food.
2. To create a general pride in agriculture through the awareness that a nation that cannot feed itself cannot be proud.
3. To encourage balanced nutrition and thereby produce a strong nation (Jindu, 2013).

Obasanjo used the three first pilot projects of the RBDAs – the Kano River Project, the Bakolori Scheme (Sokoto-Rima Basin) and the South Chad Irrigation Project – to push his OFN agenda. Many students were paid to spend their vacations working on farms and distributing fertilisers to farmers. To boost the OFN programme, the federal allocation for irrigation rose from N4 million (USD6.5 million) in 1974–1975 to about N190 million (USD297 million) by 1976–1977 (Iiffe, 2011: 58). However, the yields were not as impressive!

Although Obasanjo insisted that OFN was an exemplary success, and some records showed that the prices of food had dropped by more than 400% between 1976 and 1979, some analysts hold that it only served as a publicity stunt for the government (Ashiwaju & Areola, 1995: 33). The minutes of the final OFN council meetings in 1979 showed that General Shehu

Yar'Adua, who was the vice president and coordinator of the OFN, had become disenchanted with the programme even before the military left office (Farris & Bomoji, 2004: 130–131).

During this research, Obasanjo – who had ruled Nigeria both as a soldier and as a civilian – granted the author the rare privilege of an interview at his house in Abeokuta, the capital city of Ogun state, on 6 July 2018. The meeting took place in his common room, in the presence of many dignitaries who had come to see Obasanjo for various reasons. In about seventeen minutes of discussion, Obasanjo explained why the development of the RBDAs, the creation of the OFN, and the reasons why RBDAs have stayed, even after so many years. Obasanjo began by providing the background to the RBDAs:

Let me tell you the history! You cannot talk about agricultural development without talking of management of water. If all our agricultural business; farm development and production were based on rainfed water, we were not going to succeed as much as we should. That was the position of our government when Gowon started the pilot programme. He did not go for eleven river basins; he went for three. It was to see how we could harness our water resources to help our agricultural production? The only way was to make sure that your rainwater which collected in the valleys and river schemes did not just drain straight into the seas and the ocean. How could we do that? Through management [which] meant creating the river basins and damming them for irrigation, water supply and environmental management. With this as a background, I can take it from there (Interview One, 2018).

When we raised the issue of the OFN, the interview took an interesting turn. Obasanjo vehemently rejected the suggestion that the OFN took away from the attention that the RBDAs received. When asked whether the OFN was a parallel programme to the RBDAs, he replied that:

It was not a parallel programme. It was a complementary programme. There is a difference between a parallel programme and the complementary programme. Complementary, they work together; parallel, they do not meet. Now, if I say to you that you cannot have agricultural production and agricultural business without water and you then say that with the complementary programme, you want to raise awareness about agriculture by making everybody do something about agriculture, even at the back of their houses. That is what OFN was about. (Interview One, 2018)

Thus, Obasanjo insisted that he created the OFN to raise more awareness about agriculture at the grassroots level.

Notwithstanding Obasanjo's denial, there is evidence to show that without the OFN, the attention given to the RBDAs would have been purposeful, singular and concerted. Another scenario could have been one in which the OFN was indeed in a supportive symbiosis, aimed at strengthening the RBDAs. In this case, the question would be about the timing. Why was a complimentary programme floated for the RBDAs when the government was still looking at the reports from the pilot project? The RBDAs had not been signed into law when Obasanjo inaugurated the OFN.

In any way, the results of the OFN did not create a cooperation with the RBDAs; while the latter wobbled unsteadily through Obasanjo's administration into the new civilian rule, Shagari speedily dropped the OFN. Within the same period, irrigation, which was the main thrust of the RBDAs, did not progress as expected. The attention given to them was insufficient and, in comparison, the irrigation costs were too high. The price per irrigated hectare was 400% higher than what it cost in the neighbouring Cote d'Ivoire at the same time, even though Nigeria had more natural resources and had embarked on large scale irrigation. Evidence showed that under the Bakolori scheme, which was best known, the cost per hectare was 1400% higher than the price for the Ivorian irrigation scheme, at the same time. Also, there were a series of violent incidents against farmers by the police, and the benefits of the programme went to contractors and wealthy farmers (Iliffe, 2011: 58).

The net result was that OFN did not achieve the lofty goals that Obasanjo had set for the programme. When Shagari took over, he set aside the OFN and launched another very ambitious agenda – the Green Revolution, which we shall examine shortly.

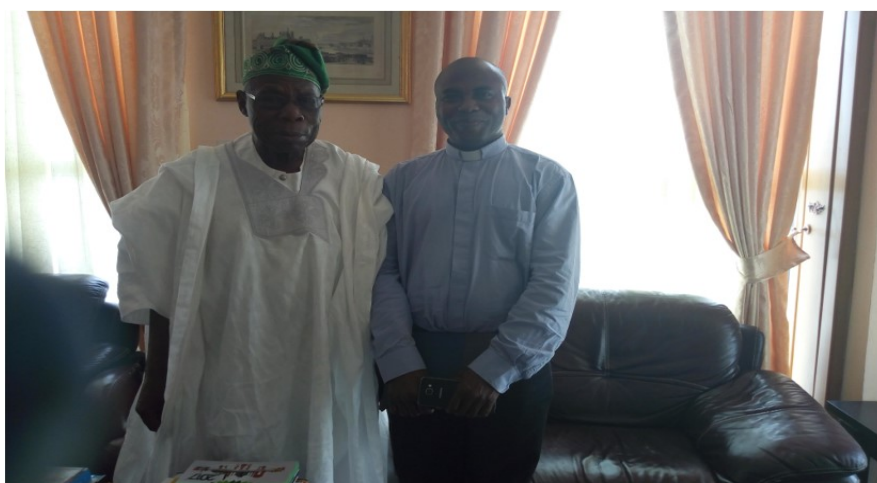


Figure 1:4 Former President Olusegun Obasanjo and Daniel Adayi posed for a photograph after the interview at Obasanjo's house in Abeokuta in July 2018. Source: Daniel Adayi.

At the end of the Obasanjo regime, he signed the decree which created the RBDAs as juridical entities. With this proclamation, Obasanjo set the stage for another grand ambition within the scope of duties for the RBDAs.

1.3.2 The River Basin Development Authorities Decree (Decree No. 87)

On 28 September 1979, two days before Obasanjo left office, he issued Decree no. 87 which set up eleven RBDAs. It was the first action of its kind in the history of the country. The decree issued in the usual fashion of military laws, did not go through a democratic process but was drawn up and handed on to the incoming civilian government to execute. As it turned out, the decree was the written expression of Obasanjo's ambition to achieve the same goals he had pursued with the OFN, through a different design.

Table 1 The eleven RBDAs created by Decree No. 87 of 1979: Compiled by Daniel Adayi

The Eleven RBDAs	Headquarters
Anambra- Imo RBDA	Owerri
Sokoto-Rima RBDA	Sokoto
Chad Basin Dev. Authority	Maiduguri
Cross River Basin Dev. Authority	Calabar
Lower Benue RBDA	Makurdi
Hadejia-Jama'are RBDA	Kano
Niger Delta RBDA	Port Harcourt
Niger RBDA	Minna
Ogun-Osun RBDA	Abeokuta
Upper Benue RBDA	Yola

A textual analysis of the decree showed that the RBDAs had several structures, some of which appeared commonplace and some novel. Nevertheless, the decree was another expression of grand ambition. The government presented it as a one-stop solution to the lingering food problem.

In the first place, the RBDAs were properties of the federal government with marked indicators. They took their name from the rivers that drain them and had their headquarters situated in each of the existing state capitals. All the states of the federation (twelve) belonged to one basin authority catchment area each, except Lagos (Federal Military Government, 1979: 1–2). Lagos, the (then) federal capital of Nigeria, was placed with the Ogun and Oyo states, under the catchment area drained by the Ogun River, with its headquarters at Abeokuta.

Secondly, the RBDAs were directly under the Authority of the presidency. They were beyond the power of any state or region and had the capabilities to do anything that would help the carrying out of their statutory functions. Strategically, the RBDAs were outside the control of the states and the local government authorities. In the constitution of the republic, released the same year as Decree no 87, the RBDAs were placed in the Exclusive Legislative list, reserved for the central government (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1979: Second Schedule Pt. 1). The reason for the empowerment of the RBDAs was for them to be unhindered in their pursuit of the grand agricultural revolution that Obasanjo had planned for the nation.

Thirdly, the functions of the RBDAs showed the all-important role that they were expected to play in the development of the country. The fourth section of the decree stipulated the functions of each Authority, which cut across a myriad of water-related development-drives and some other non-water related areas of rural development. A cursory look at the list of about eleven items with sub-units showed that they covered surface and underground water sources, fisheries and animal husbandry, reach-outs to state and local government areas, and rural electrification projects. Furthermore, the decree mandated the RBDAs undertake a wide range of functions that included the following:

- The full development of both surface and underground waters for multi-purpose use and the construction and support of dams, dykes, wells, boreholes, irrigation and drainage systems.

- As part of their surface water responsibilities, the RBDAs would supply water from reservoirs and lakes for irrigation purposes and urban water supply schemes, for charges decided by the authorities.
- Handle the control of pollution in rivers, lagoons and creeks in their catchment areas. The people displaced by the works and schemes of the RBDAs would be resettled under some special resettlement schemes, to be worked out by the RBDAs.
- Development of fisheries, improvement of the navigation of the surface waters and undertaking the mechanised clearing of lands to produce crops, livestock and for forestry, for the fees charged by the authorities.
- Large-scale multiplication of improved seeds, tree seedlings, the processing of crops, livestock products and fish produced by the farmers.
- Undertake all stages of food production from preparation to processing, in partnership with state agencies and persons.
- Helping states and local governments in the implementation of rural development works, such as the construction of small dams, wells, boreholes and feeder roads for the evacuation of farm produce.
- Other areas of collaboration were the provisions of rural electrification, the establishment of agro-service centres and grazing reserves. The RBDAs would train staff for their collaborative works with the states and local governments, for the running and maintenance of rural development schemes and general extension services at the village level.

From the start, Obasanjo's regime realised that the task before the RBDAs was unprecedented and would need a coordinating body. To coordinate the diversity of functions that the RBDAs would have to handle, the decree provided for the setting up of an entity called the National River Basins Development Coordinating Committee (Federal Military Government, 1979: secs 1 & 2), but the committee was not set up either by Obasanjo or the leaders after him.

In the end, Obasanjo signed the decree on 28 September 1979, two days before he handed over power and left the implementation of the new experiment to the incoming administration of Shehu Shagari. Although the change of batten between Obasanjo and Shagari went smoothly, the government of the latter could not cope with the demands of running the country according to the democratic principles after thirteen years of unbroken

military dictatorship, series of bloodshed through coups and countercoups, and a three-year civil war. The newly created RBDAs suffered a national setback when Shagari got booted out by the military about four years later.

During the interview with Obasanjo, the writer asked the former military leader how he had expected the government of Shagari, a civilian administration, to implement the decrees of a military Head of State. Obasanjo rhetorically quipped that it was a question of continuity and not about the laws made. According to him:

Government is continuity, and it is when you stop the government from being a continuity that things start failing. When you come in as a government, you inherit all the assets and liabilities of the previous government. When I was signing the Constitution of 1979, I included NYSC in that constitution. I did not start NYSC; Gowon started it, but I considered it very good for Nigeria. I put it in the Constitution; just like I put the Land Use Act. So, it does not matter who made the law. If the law is useful, it can be implemented (Interview One, 2018).⁵

He counted on Shagari's long experience in the agricultural sector at the national level for the smooth execution of the grand plan, but he did not reckon that, like himself, Shagari would float the agricultural agenda on which he rode to power. In assessing the question of continuity in governance concerning how Shagari handled the OFN, he acknowledged that there was a wide gap between theory and praxis and that Shagari set aside the OFN for his political reasons. Obasanjo placed it in the broader context of the problem of continuity between governments:

That is what I said to you earlier that in Nigeria, continuity is our problem. When Shagari came, the people with him advised that Operation Feed the Nation was a military thing; that as a civilian, he must start something new. So, he started the Green Revolution. Eventually, what he started was neither a revolution nor was it green! (Interview One, 2018).

Notably, the peak moment of this interview was when the writer pointedly confronted the interviewee with the public opinion that the RBDAs had been a wild goose chase. The outburst was revealing and showed how far Obasanjo would go to defend the role he played in the development of the RBDAs. The conversation went like this:

⁵ The National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) is a compulsory one-year national scheme for university graduates or the equivalents

Adayi:

It is about five decades now since you created the river basins and the country is still importing food. Food export has not amounted to much. Some analysts have claimed that the river basins are some of those grand ambitions... (Obasanjo cuts in).

Obasanjo:

(sharply) Anybody who says that is an idiot and if you say that, you are an idiot too!

Indeed, when Obasanjo exited as the military Head of State, a new era began in which the OFN ended. Shagari discarded OFN and embarked on the implementation of the new RBDAs decree. His tenure added more beads to the elongating chain of grand ambitions in the development of the RBDAs, because he repeated the mistakes of his predecessor even though he had been in government for a very long time.

1.4 Truncated Aspirations – Shehu Shagari’s Dashed Dreams

By the time Shehu Shagari became the President of Nigeria in 1979, he had been in the central government for three decades, beginning as the Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa in 1958 (Shagari, 2001: 77). Before his election, he had served in the capacities of a federal commissioner or a federal minister in about seven different ministries, under all the administrations that had governed the country since independence. Assessed from the point of what he brought to the presidency, his profile was heavily laden with a series of work experiences; likened to a bowman, his quiver was full of arrows. When he received the mantle of leadership from Obasanjo as the first elected president of the republic, he aspired to build the Nigeria of his dreams. In retrospect, he saw it as a beckon to serve, propelled by “some unforeseen hands”. Shagari strongly believed he was to fulfil roles beyond his imagination (Shagari, 2001: viii).

Shagari became the elected president when the military decided to return to the barracks, as promised by the Murtala-Obasanjo regime when Gowon was ousted. Obasanjo cleverly avoided a repeat of what happened when Gowon reneged on his handover plan. The backlash was Gowon’s overthrow, Murtala’s assassination and the upheavals in the military that almost returned the country to another civil war (Agedah, 1993: 21-22). The hurried departure of the military from the scene saddled Shagari with many unfinished implementations of policies and the new policies signed into law in the last days of Obasanjo.

Among the new policies handed over to Shagari was that of the newly created RBDAs. The RBDAs decree came into force two days before Shagari assumed office. He also inherited the TNDP (1975-1980), which was in its final phase. When the time came for Shagari to present his economic plan for the country, he tried to avoid the pitfalls of the past plans but failed. Contrary to earlier projections by the FAO and a US Consortium that agriculture would become the mainstay of the Nigerian economy by 1985, the economy was snowballing, but the agricultural sector was lagging (FAO, 1966; Johnson et al., 1969). It was within these socio-economic contexts that the new development plan came up, and under the same that the RBDAs took-off entirely under Shagari (Shagari, 2001: 292).

From the perspective of the RBDAs, Shagari had two big desires for agriculture, which he translated into policies. The first was the enthusiastic acceptance of the RBDAs in the Fourth National Development Plan (FNDP), expressed in the increase of allocation to the sector, and the second was the irresistible desire to fulfil a campaign promise he had made. Even though Shagari could have made his mark by developing the nascent RBDAs, he opted for a parallel agricultural policy. In a rather unfortunate move, he launched the Green Revolution which, along with the FNDP, was cut short by the military coup that ousted him.

1.4.1 The Fourth National Development Plan (1980–85)

The FNDP which came into effect in the second year of Shagari's first tenure, more than the earlier plans, clearly showed the increased attention that irrigation got from the federal government. The seventh chapter of the plan titled, *Irrigation and Water Resources Development*, gave a glimpse into the vast natural resources available for irrigation. The plan estimated that Nigeria had 71.2 million hectares of cultivable land, with only about half of it cultivated due to the constraint imposed by the lack of water. The coming of the wet season and its duration vary annually in different parts of the country. The scarcity was more in the Sahelian region. Irrigation was the solution, and the plan spelt it out clearly. Irrigation carried a national prospect, and the government wanted to explore the full extent of it. According to the plan:

These facts illustrate the importance of irrigation in the agricultural development of the country. Nigeria has endowed many river systems and basins amongst which are, the Niger, Benue, Gongola, Hadejia, Ogun, Imo, Anambra and Cross River. Some of these rivers overflow their banks during the rainy season providing ample water for flood irrigation. These river systems, coupled with the

underground water system, which is being investigated, can provide enough water for large-scale irrigation facilities throughout the country. This will make double cropping possible and increase the yield for a wide variety of crops (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1980: 98)

The federal military government set up a new structure to propel its vision with the creation of the Ministry of Water Resources in 1975. The ministry had a Department of Water Resources as its technical arm. In 1976, nine new river basins were added to the existing two. According to a collation by Adeboye (1989: 14), out of the three billion naira allocated by the FNDP for crop production, the eleven river basins got about nine hundred and twenty-four million naira, with the expectation that about 1.4 million hectares would be irrigated by the federal programme under the RBDAs, while the state governments would do over 76,730 hectares. The plan outlined the government's expectation as follows:

The eleven Authorities were charged with a range of responsibilities including the harnessing, management and exploitation of the country's water resources for agricultural and other activities. They were also to provide other specific infrastructural facilities like feeder roads and set up pilot agricultural and agro-industrial projects in their respective areas of Authority. The creation of these institutions filled a serious gap that had hitherto constrained the initiation, coordination and effective implementation of policies for the management and utilisation of the country's water resources (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1980: 98).

Notwithstanding the lofty plans and expectations of the government, the plan underscored the inadequacy of data for planning, because the studies carried out were minimal. There were also technical and managerial human resources shortages for planning, implementation and evaluation of projects and programmes.

Nevertheless, neither the shortcomings of the FNDP nor the immediate political challenges that faced the government deterred Shagari from applying the RBDAs in the pursuit of his dreams. He had promised repeatedly during his campaigns that he would revolutionise food production in Nigeria. However, instead of adopting the RBDAs as the mainframe for his agricultural dream, he created the novel Green Revolution programme (GR) and made it the central unit that would coordinate the RBDAs, along with other functions. It turned out to be a grand strategy that proved counterproductive.

1.4.2 “Neither Green nor Revolutionary” – Shagari’s Food Programme

Like Obasanjo and Gowon before him, Shagari also launched a pet agricultural programme which he named the Green Revolution (GR). The GR was regarded as one of the primary pillars of the National Party of Nigeria’s (NPN) manifesto, and aimed for the ambitious target to make Nigeria self-sufficient in basic foods within five years from October 1979, and a crop exporter in seven years (Williams, 1982: 220). Shagari abolished the OFN council and committee and set up a national council on Green Revolution (NCGR). When he launched the NCGR in April 1980, he listed the specific functions of the council as the coordination of the ministries associated with agricultural activities, and the monitoring of the federal ministries of agriculture and water resources. The overall goal was to assist the departments in their pursuit of self-sufficiency in agricultural production (Shagari, 1981: 223).

The NCGR had, therefore, the enormous responsibility of bringing about the GR and occupied a prime position among all the institutions created by Shagari. He highlighted the importance of the council in the address he gave at the inauguration of the NCGR in June 1980 when he declared, as the chairman of the NCGR and as the president of the nation, that:

I should like, therefore, to impress upon you that this Administration is irrevocably committed to the speedy implementation of the “Green Revolution” programme. We will pursue with all seriousness this programme to produce adequate food for all Nigerians in the shortest possible time (Shagari, 1981: 230).

Unambiguously, the RBDAs had become a part of a broader scheme to be coordinated by the NCGR. The policy to submerge the RBDAs under the GR was in line with the FNDP, which spelt out the aims of the GR as the guiding beacon for the nation’s agricultural drive:

The development strategy envisaged in the creation of the River Basin Development Authorities remains basically sound. The Federal Government is committed to the provision of water for agricultural and domestic uses in line with the objectives of the Green Revolution. To this end, the River Basin Development Authorities will directly participate in the development of small irrigation schemes for the benefit of small farmers (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1981: 99).

The submerging of the RBDAs under the GR, which was a political platform of the NPN (Shagari’s party), coupled with the vigorous agricultural push in the rural areas through the RBDAs, did not go down well with the state governors of the opposition parties. Many of the

governors eyed the GR with suspicion, and some took steps to curtail its activities in the rural areas.

In his bid to ensure that the GR was nationally accepted, Shagari appealed to the state governors to set up councils and committee in all the states of the federation. The appeal did not get the desired response, because some of the Governors saw the GR as a programme that would redound to the political advantage of the NPN (Shagari's party), and not as an agricultural programme to boost food production (Okion, 1982: 500). Notwithstanding the opposition from some of the state governors, Shagari went ahead to expand the activities of the RBDAs to all the states and expanded their operations beyond the initial focus to all the rural areas. The opposition party governors fought back fiercely, as the general election of 1983 drew close. In a lecture on *Agricultural Rebirth in Nigeria*, delivered by Professor Gbolagade Ayoola, a Fellow of the Nigerian Association of Agricultural Economists (FNAAE), the erudite scholar succinctly recalled the legal struggle that surrounded Shagari's use of the RBDAs for his GR:

As the 1983 general elections approached, the opposition governors became jittery, in the fear that ruling party NPN would win the next gubernatorial elections in their states. Thus, the fear of RBDAs became the beginning of political wisdom! The six state governments dragged the federal government to court to challenge the right of the federally owned RBDAs to undertake rural development in their own states, thereby claiming trespass (can you imagine?). They claimed it naturally belonged in the jurisdiction of the states (Ayoola, 2016: 6).

When the elections were over, the NPN won overwhelmingly, but the country was already in terrible shape. The military speedily overthrew Shagari on December 31, 1983, accusing his leadership of ineptitude, corruption, and hopelessly mismanaging the economy (Abacha, 2013: 276). By the time Buhari ousted Shagari, the GR was still very far from achieving the agendas outlined for it. It had not proven to be a green revolution, because the country continued to drift towards economic stagnation, and food importation was sky-high. In the interview with Obasanjo by the writer, he decried the creation of the GR as a hidden political agenda that failed. In his words, the GR neither made the country green nor did Shagari's agricultural policies. Obasanjo satirically described the GR as a political agenda that ended up, "neither green nor revolutionary." In that answer, he re-echoed a position taken a few years

ago by Jide Ibietan, a public policy analyst. Ibietan was of the view that Shagari did not need to set aside OFN. According to him:

It has been argued for instance that in terms of objective and orientation, Green Revolution was the same with Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), the only difference was that each was launched by a new regime. The import of this is that it would have been for the Shagari administration to continue with the OFN to enable it to run a full course and implementation. This explains the nature of government developmental programmes in Nigeria with the attendant reversals and somersaults in policy formulation and implementation (Ibietan, 2011: 103)

In the end, the GR ended as abruptly as did Shagari's government. The return of the military was a new coordinate in the developmental trajectory of the RBDAs. It was a new phase where the RBDAs continued under the new military regime, headed by General Muhammadu Buhari.

1.5 The Long-awaited Institute and the Stalled Expansion – Buhari's Salvos

According to Ayoola (2016: 6), the 1983–85 military regime headed by Muhammadu Buhari was the only one that did not launch an agricultural programme, either as a national programme or as a pet project. However, Buhari merits a place among the leaders who have contributed to the succession of grand ambitions in the development of the RBDAs. Most of the literature on Buhari as a military leader focusses on his all-out fight against corruption, the War Against Indiscipline campaign, and the repression of the media; rarely is he credited with an input in the RBDAs⁶. However, Buhari made two notable contributions to the development of the RBDAs; he increased the number of the RBDAs and issued the decree that created the National Water Resources Institute (NWRI).

⁶Literary opinions are divided about whether it was Shagari or Buhari who expanded the RBDAs from 11 to 19 in the early 1980s. Shagari did not explicitly mention it in his autobiography but admits that the OFN got to all the states. The RBDAs were the vehicle for the OFN. Ayoola, G. B. (2016) suggested that Shagari increased the number of the RBDAs to support his agricultural policy. Idachaba and some others argue that it was Buhari who increased the number of RBDAs, but they gave no evidence of the motivation. The odds favour Buhari because he was not subject to a political process. See also: Idachaba, F. S. (1993, p. 96). Agriculture and Rural Development Under the Babangida Administration. In J. O. Osakwe & A. Adefuye (Eds.), *Seven Years of IBB, Volume 2 – The Economy* (pp. 83–118). Lagos: The Daily Times of Nigeria Plc.

One of the reasons behind the overthrowing of the Shagari government, as provided by General Buhari and his colleagues, was the inadequacy of food at reasonable prices for the populace, along with the rising importation of food (Abacha, 2013: 276). When Buhari seized power, he began to look inwards for local avenues to reduce the import of food. In his quest, he turned to the agricultural potentials of the country and saw in the RBDAs an already available structure that he could spread across the nation. Without much ado, through *executive fiat*, he speedily brought about what Shagari wanted to accomplish but could not, because of political oppositions. In 1984, as the Supreme Head of the military government, Buhari ordered that the RBDAs be increased from 11 to 18, and that rural development be added to their functions to make them River Basins and Rural Development Authorities (RBRDAs). In the new dispensation, all the states had one RBRDA, and it looked like the dawn of a new era in food production for the country, but the impetus was short-lived. The creation of the 18 RBRDAs remained at the level of an executive order, and ungazetted by the time Buhari left the government in 1985.

Despite Buhari's alleged goodwill, military might and expediency of action, some analysts have faulted his expansion of the river basins and renaming them RBRDAs. In a conference paper presented in Malaga, Spain, Anthonio and Akinsoye (1985) argued that Buhari increased the number of the river basins without taking steps to address the systemic problems associated with the first structure of the RBDAs, which included a confused objective and the absence of a cost recovery mechanism. Furthermore, they asserted that the RBRDAs became the distributors of non-conventional inputs to the farmers; a function they carried out parallelly with state bodies and other agencies. Anthonio and Akinsoye also pointed out the erratic nature of fund allocations, with no clear correlations between the distributions and the area of the river basins. The researchers concluded that the government needed to take a leaf from the private sector about profit-making ventures. They advocated for a new direction:

Governments have to borrow ideas from the private sector if they want successfully to introduce structural changes in the farm industry through the River Basins farm projects. Using the conventional bureaucratic managerial approach to the management of the operations of the River Basins cannot be very effective. It is proposed that the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development should set up a task force that will work out a new scheme for the operations of Nigeria's River Basins to introduce business concepts into their management (Anthonio & Akinsoye, 1985: 157).

Following the same path of analysis, Akindele and Adebo (2004) who carried out a retrospective study of Owena River Basin and Rural Development Authority (ORBRDA), one of the RBRDAs created by Buhari, stated that the creation of the RBRDA further highlights the political cleavages of the country. The new arrangement, contrasted with the original concept of the RBDAs which were designed to draw the whole country together under different blocks, and not based on any existing political cleavages. They concluded that:

The failure of the RBRDAS is due to unnecessary political interference and managerial problems resulting from socio-economic cleavages which have permeated the nations socio-political, economic and cultural institutions (Akindele & Adebo, 2004: 55).

Buhari's vision of the RBDAs, integrated with rural development and spread across all the states of the federation, was indeed a brilliant idea. However, it ended up as one of the grand ambitions that litter the developmental route of the RBDAs.



Figure 1:5 The Author with a water engineer at the National Water Resources Institute, Kaduna. Source: Daniel Adayi.

Another significant input by Buhari in the developmental trajectory of the RBDAs was conferring of an official status to the National Water Research Institute (NWRI), situated in Kaduna. The idea of the water institute was born in the early post-independence years and progressed slowly until 1979. After about two decades of working with the financial and technical support of UNESCO, FAO, UNDP and the World Meteorological Organisation, the Nigerian government admitted the first set of students to begin classes at the NWRI in Kaduna

in 1979 (UNDP, 1987:1). Kaduna was a strategic choice with political attractions and promises⁷. Buhari signed into law the National Water Research Institute Decree 1985.

The decree also stipulated the functions of the administrative organs of the institute and how to manage its finances. It was the prerogative of the head of the state to appoint the director and the chairman of the governing board of the institute. Three decades after Buhari issued the decree; the profile of the NWRI has remained the same. The same pattern, repeated as the introduction of the annual publications of the NWRI, had been taken up to the new national water policy (Federal Ministry of Water Resources, 2016: sec. 9.8). Thus, to Buhari's credit, the NWRI continues to turn out graduates at different levels every year (National Water Resources Institute, 2015: 14).

However, akin to those of his predecessors, Buhari's grand input of expanding the RBDAs, both in numbers and functions, turned out to be very short-lived. The following year, Babangida, who succeeded Buhari, reverted the number to 11. Babangida radically redefined the RBDAs as he tried not only to correct the perceived shortcomings of Buhari but also to lay a lasting economic foundation for the RBDAs. However, his aspirations only succeeded in setting new heights for the grand ambitions in the development of the RBDAs.

⁷The choice of Kaduna may not be unconnected with the personal interests of Sir Ahmadu Bello, who was the Premier of the Northern Region, in the development of agriculture in the northern part of the country, and the establishment of Kaduna as the 'City of the Sardauna', the Premier's Capital City. It is also noteworthy that the plan for a water institute began in the early 1960s when Shehu Shagari was the Federal Minister of Economic Development & Natural Resources. Shagari was as a 'sedate and political surrogate' of the Sardauna. Cf. Agedah, D. (ed.) (1993: 221).



Figure 1:6 The Author with some staff of the National Water Resource Institute Library. Source: Daniel Adayi.

1.6 Deregulation or Derailment? – Babangida’s Home-crafted SAP

General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB) overthrew the Buhari government in 1983, over what he described as a systematic denigration of hope. He alleged that Buhari continued the trends of the economic mismanagement and general deterioration in the living standard, which led to the overthrowing of Shagari. But the food problem, which has proven to be difficult for earlier governments did not give way, despite the promises of the government to handle it speedily. One of the first steps taken by Babangida to was to introduce a new agricultural programme ‘Back to Land’, but it failed because, like others before it, it was inherently weak, without sufficient data, and was bedevilled by technological deficiencies (Ibietan, 2011: 103).

To check the economic decline and put the nation back on the path of recovery, Babangida launched the Federal Character Principle (SAP), which became the landmark of his administration (Babangida, 1989: 21-23). SAP was employed usually according to the dictates

of the World Bank, but Babangida's SAP was locally crafted.⁸ The minister of information in IBB's cabinet said of the SAP in 1989 that:

We packaged our own programme. The IMF would like us to open our gates to imports, and import wheat, corn, malt and rice. Our programme consists of growing our food. It was importation that undermined Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) and the Green Revolution. The United States even threatened to list Nigeria among countries that discriminate in trade. But we did not relent (Duyile, 1991: 49).

From the start, it was evident that the RBDAs would play a very significant role in the choice that IBB had made. In articulating the government's economic response, Babangida rolled out a set of policies aimed at deregulating the economy. In the short run, SAP would reduce government subvention to the otherwise commercially unviable enterprises and increase the scope of private sector activities. In the long term, it would promote managerial and financial autonomy, enhance operational efficiency, raise the quality of services rendered, and more importantly, improve resource allocation in the public enterprises and lay a solid foundation for sustained economic growth in the future (Babangida, 1991: 130-131).

However, the effect of SAP policies on the RBDAs left the analysts asking whether SAP deregulated (i.e. the removal of restrictions upon entry or exit from specified markets and upon the permissible range of a basin authority's activities) or derailed the RBDAs from the path mapped out for them from the beginning. Whichever was the case, Babangida carved a niche for himself in the chain of grand ambitions that have trailed the development of the RBDAs. Babangida's grand ambition for the RBDAs using the SAP manifested through the policies, which he made directly or indirectly for them. The strategies included the partial commercialisation of the RBDAs, the review and re-enactment of the RBDAs decree, and the parallel agricultural and rural development programmes of Babangida's regime. All three are examined below.

⁸Emmanuel Akpa, on behalf of the World Bank, presented a regular picture of SAP which differed from what the IBB implemented, 'Structural adjustment is the package of policies which we work out with our client countries, comprising a view on restoring macroeconomic balances, as this is often the genesis of the problem, and creating an incentive environment that builds on a stable macroeconomic environment and facilitates growth.' See: Akpa, E. (1998 : 5), 'The World Bank and the State of Structural Adjustment', in *Séminaire sur la Banque Mondiale et les programmes d'ajustement structurel*. Helsinki, Finland, pp. 3-76.

1.6.1 The Partial Privatisation of the River Basin Development Authorities

The RBDAs were among the federal agencies listed for partial commercialisation, which meant that they were to be reorganised, partially owned by the government, and operate as profit-making ventures (TCPC, 1993: 13). The new plan involved the structural rearrangement of the agencies. The policy seemed like it would get the ailing public enterprises out of the financial quicksand that they had sunk into. Professor Idachaba, who belonged to Babangida's team of policy planners, summed up the actions taken for the RBDAs as follows:

This administration (Babangida's) pruned down the number of RBDAs from eighteen to eleven. This was meant to emphasise the River Basin concept underlying the RBDAs whereby water resources of a given River Basin that straddles several states and therefore crosses several State boundaries need to be comprehensively developed. To further achieve sharp programme focus, this administration stripped all the RBDAs of their agricultural responsibilities, with a directive that RBDAs must henceforth concentrate on water development (Idachaba, 1993: 96).

The stripping divested the RBDAs of all functions except those directly related to water. This action of the government erased the integrated dimension of the basin organisation, which was the roadmap on which the RBDAs began. The TCPC sold off the non-water agricultural assets. The sale of the properties started but were not completed, even though it looked like a lot of progress had been made. In an address to an international conference, Babangida held up the RBDAs as one of the success stories of SAP.⁹ However, the final report of the TCPC revealed that the partial commercialisation of the RBDAs neither went as planned nor did it reach completion. Before the TCPC released its report, Babangida admitted in his 1988 and 1989 budget addresses that the SAP had several unintended results. In his 1988 budget address to the nation, he attributed the setbacks to the nascent stage of the new policy and the enormity of the challenge that faced the government:

The Federal Character Principle has, however, not been without some negative side effects. These included, in 1987, higher production costs, cash-flow problems

⁹At an international conference, Babangida announced that the partial commercialisation was on course as, 'the Committee (TCPC) has concluded sales of some 44 projects worth N98 million designated as non-water assets of the River Basin Development Authorities.' See: Keynote address at the opening of the International Conference on Privatisation and Commercialisation at the National Assembly Complex, Tafawa Balewa Square, Lagos, on Tuesday, 6 November 1990. Cf. Babangida, I. (1991). p. 132.

for enterprises, low capacity utilisation in some manufacturing industries, increased industrial unemployment and low consumer demand. Such pains of structural adjustment only go to underscore the fact that, given the enormity of the nation's fundamental problems of development over the past two decades, the re-alignment policies can neither be easy nor quick if we want to do it at our own pace and on our own volition (Babangida, 1988: 4).

For a second time in the 1989 budget address, he acknowledged that the implementation of the SAP had aggravated the economic burdens of the people. He listed a catalogue of financial problems engendered by it:

Adjustments in the foreign exchange rate have resulted in a generalised increase in prices of the high import content of our installed manufacturing production capacity. This has resulted in higher costs of living and reduced living standards, especially for the low-income groups. High costs of imported inputs have adversely affected many small-scale enterprises. At the same time, tight monetary policy, necessary to preserve the gains of the Federal Character Principle, has raised the cost of credit. This has seriously affected enterprises with high debt/equity ratios, some of which manage to remain in operation mainly to service debts. Rationalisation of the enterprises has resulted in retrenchment and created social problems (Babangida, 1989a: 9).

Contrary to Babangida's expectation, his promised returns from SAP never came, the economic recession worsened, and the privatisation and commercialisation processes were stalled with negative consequences. Coupled with the effects of the incomplete commercialisation process was the federal government deadline for rescinding allocations for the RBDAs. When the appointed time came, the funding did not stop as the TCPC had recommended, because the RBDAs were in disarray, needing re-direction and support. The picture of the new public sector irrigation arrangement did not look good at all. According to a paper presented by a water sector worker, Inuwa Musa, at the conference on Irrigation Management Transfer at Wuhan, China, in 1994:

The impact of these economic reforms on irrigation development was very significant. Most of the ongoing irrigation-development projects were scaled down, some to the construction of headworks only, while others were suspended at various stages of implementation (Musa, 1995: 448).

By the time the two-year SAP programme came to an end in 1988, the RBDAs had lost their original footings and were struggling to find new ways. A review of the process by later administrations revealed that the government reneged on their promise to give grants and

subventions that would help the RBDAs assume their redefined responsibilities (National Council on Water Resources, 1999b: 27).

1.6.2 RBDAs Decree: Reviewed and Re-enacted, but Strengthened?

In pursuance of his grand dream for the RBDAs, Babangida repealed Decree no. 87 (1979) and issued RBDAs Decree no. 35 (1987). By the new decree, he institutionalised the stripping of the RBDAs of their agricultural activities for SAP and the creation of pet development programmes for himself and the office of his wife. The new decree outlined a new set of roles for the RBDAs. Notably, it assigned only five functions to the RBDAs, in place of the thirteen outlined in the first decree. The services of the RBDAs then concentrated on the supply of water and the construction of dams, dykes, boreholes, polders and irrigation system. In effect, Babangida set aside the idea of an integrated river basin organisation, which had been one of the factors that shaped the creation of the RBDAs. To this day, no national level law has been made to change the structure imposed on the RBDAs by SAP.

1.6.3 The Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation Programmes

Babangida's third input was the creation of new agricultural pet-projects called rural development programmes or poverty alleviation programmes, which were placed directly under the presidency and only loosely under a federal ministry. These pet projects were designed to carry out the functions that had hitherto been part of the integrated outreach of the RBDAs. The two most prominent ones were the Directorate of Food Roads & Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) and the Better Life Programme (BLP). DFRRI came on board the same year as SAP (1986), promulgated by decree no 4 of 1987, with mandates that cut right through the functions of the RBDAs, both in the types of duties and their geographic spread. Principally, DFRRI was:

To co-operate with all agencies of the Federal, State and Local Governments, with the organised private sector, the informal economic sector and all Nigerian communities, both rural and urban, in transforming living and productive conditions in our rural areas (Babangida, 1991: 142).

DFRRI's functions, as elaborately explained by the Chairman, Larry Koinyan, mirrored the duties of the RBDAs before the stripping by Babangida's government (Koinyan, 1993: 2-3). Figuratively, with DFRRI, Babangida took the wind out of the sail of the RBDAs. The river basins

became skeletons of their old selves. The aim was to make the RBDAs more focussed, but it did not work out that way. The BLP also first came under the DFFRI but later became an autonomous body. Its target was also women, with a bias for the rural areas. It is noteworthy that Better Life had offices in all the states and local governments of the country and involved all the First Ladies at both federal and state levels.¹⁰

Notwithstanding all that Babangida put in place and all the propaganda that went with them, everything crumbled when political forces forced him to abdicate his office without even a formal presidential address. Like many other federal agencies, Babangida's big dream changed the RBDAs but not for the better. When Babangida stepped aside, he appointed an Interim National Government (ING), which was overthrown by General Abacha in less than three months to make way for what has been described by many as the most repressive military dictatorship in the history of Nigeria. Even as Abacha battled with local and international opposition to his dictatorship, he left his mark on the RBDAs.

1.7 Abacha's Shrouded Executive Fiat

Sani Abacha ruled Nigeria from 1993 to 1999 as a military dictator. His person and his rule were associated with the darkest moments in the trials of democracy in Nigeria.¹¹ However, Abacha carved his name on the development of the RBDAs by creating a RBDA out of nowhere and increasing their number to twelve. He cut a niche for himself among the grand ambitions of the RBDAs.

¹⁰The title First Lady referred to the wife of the President or a State Governor. Under the Office of the Miriam Babangida, there was the Better Life for Rural Women, run with federal budget and an array of staff on the funding of the central government. See: Duyile, D. (1991, p. 169) *Babangida - His Vision, His Mission, His Courage*. Ibadan: Ororo Publications.

¹¹Okechukwu Okeke (2004) praised Abacha for restoring stability when the country lapsed into a national paralysis but noted sadly that his "government suddenly became bereft of energy and patriotic feelings." [Okechukwu, O. (2004, p. 260) 'Legacy of National Paralysis: Ernest Shonekan and Sani Abach, 1993-1998', in Nwachuku, L. A. and Uzoigwe, G. N. (eds) *Troubled Journey - Nigeria Since the Civil War*. New York: University Press of America, pp. 238-267.]; Obasanjo (2014) described Abacha as a man with an "insatiable appetite for corruption" in his autobiography [See: Obasanjo, O. (2014b, p. 415) *MY Watch - Early Life and Military*. Lagos: Kachifo Limited].

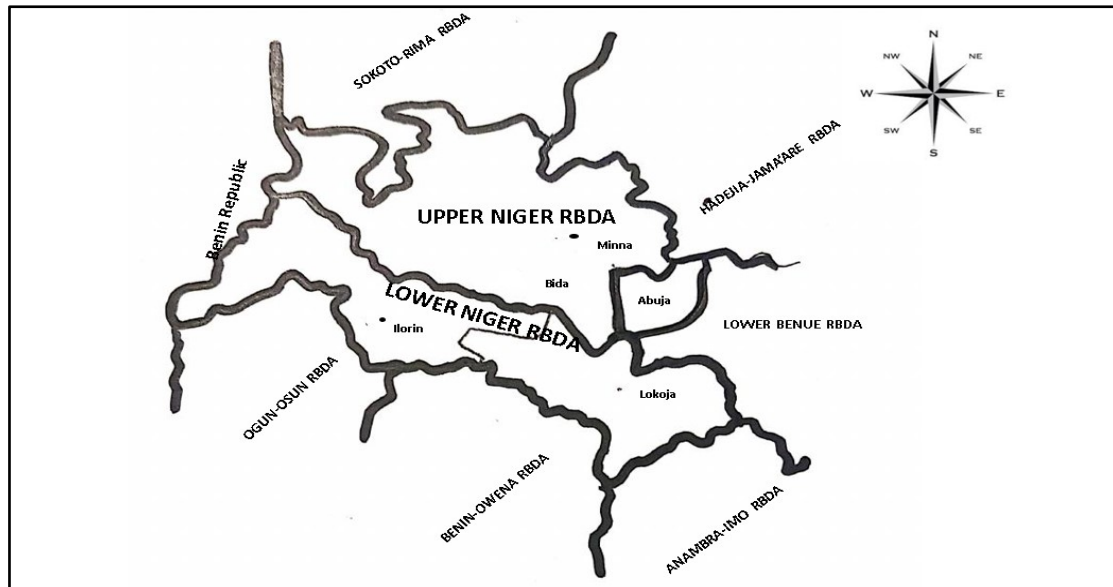


Figure 1:7. A current map of the former Niger River Basin Development Authority now split into two, showing the States within the catchment area. Adapted by Daniel Adayi from Babatolu et al. (2014: 3).

The creation of the last RBDA by General Sani Abacha has a much-shrouded history. The indications were that the directive to create the Lower Niger River Basin Development (LNRBDA) was an oral order. No existing literature, in wide circulation, tells of how the Authority finally came to be. However, Adekunle et al. (2015: 43) suggested that the first split of the old Niger RBDA took place in 1984. That was the year that Shagari increased the number of the RBDAs to eighteen, as channels to execute his GR policy (Adekunle et al., 2015: 52). We conjecture that this was when Babangida reverted to eleven RBDAs, and the Niger RBDA regained the status it had in 1976. In creating the LNRBDA, Abacha instructed that the two RBDAs which Shagari created by splitting the Niger Basin during the GR be kept separated. Thus, he reinstated the Lower and Upper Niger RBDAs (shown in Figure 1:7). No government publications or national dailies reported it, at least not the common ones in regular circulation. The LNRBDA is now officially one of the twelve RBDAs in the country, with all the rights and privileges. A bill presented in the National Assembly to amend earlier laws on the RBDAs, gave its catchment areas as Kwara and Kogi States (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2011: 4).

From all indications, Abacha's grand plans for the RBDAs gave way to more pressing political exigencies, like quelling the ever-present resistance to his government from the citizens and the international community. Someday, the story of the last RBDA to be created will be told as it happened with all the details. Notwithstanding the missing information, Abacha's

creation of the LNRBDA was one of the decisive inputs that shaped the RBDAs. Abacha's dictatorship suddenly came to an end one eerie morning with the announcement of his death over the national radio on 8 June 1998. For a year after Abacha, General Abdulsalami Abubakar steered the country through a transition to civilian rule. In the interim, the RBDAs, like other federal agencies, could not go on with the reforms. A new light appeared at the end of the tunnel when Obasanjo returned as an elected president.

1.8 Obasanjo's Grand Re-Awakening Bid

When Obasanjo returned to government as an elected President in 1999, he made it clear that he would embark on reforms in the public sector. In his maiden speech, he decried the near-comatose state of public infrastructures and made the re-awakening of the economic sector one of the priorities of his government (Obasanjo, 1999). For the RBDAs, the re-awakening happened at two levels; Obasanjo activated the privatisation and commercialisation process that had become dormant. That re-awakening, at the general level, affected all public enterprises billed for privatisation during Babangida's era. At a more specific level, informed by the more comprehensive vision, Obasanjo directed a review operation on the RBDAs; he wanted the RBDAs repositioned for higher productivity.

In retrospect, Obasanjo wanted to avoid the difficulties that Babangida encountered in the first effort to privatise and commercialise public enterprises. He tried to carry out a privatisation programme that was well designed, adequately coordinated and sequenced, one that would be credible and widely accepted (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2001: 5). He wanted public enterprises that would support themselves economically, for a start, and in the long run support the government in revenue generation, the provision of security and necessary infrastructures, as well as ensuring access to crucial services like education, health and environmental protection.

With the RBDAs, Obasanjo showed the same commitment to food security that had informed his creation of the OFN programme two decades ago. He appointed a junior military colleague, retired Brigadier Bello Kaliel, who had worked with him as the federal minister of

Water Resources.¹² Furthermore, Obasanjo overhauled the leadership of the RBDAs and directed the reconstituted managements to chart new pathways for the Authorities (National Council on Water Resources, 1999a: 24). To ensure that the desired targets were unambiguously clear, a new policy directive called, *Policies for full Utilization of Resources of River Basin and Rural Development Authorities*, formed part of the working documents submitted to the National Council during the Water Resources meeting in 1999 – the year Obasanjo became the President. The overarching goal of the reforms was to secure enduring public benefit. The four avenues adopted for the achievement of the set goal were:

- I. Making full use of RBDAs resources.
- II. Giving beneficiaries of RBDAs better services and products
- III. Reducing the government burden of the cost of operation and management of providing water services.
- IV. Demonstrating greater transparency and accountability to the government and beneficiaries.

One of the high points of the new policy directives was that each RBDA should follow an optimisation proposal drafted for it, based on the peculiarities of its size and level of development. Other factors considered were the nature of the assets and the resources on the ground, the potentials and how to realise them, and the prevailing economic circumstances of the nation (National Council on Water Resources, 1999c: 36).

The feedback from the RBDAs after the new policy did not satisfy President Obasanjo. In his first cabinet shake-up in 2001, Obasanjo dropped Kalief from the federal cabinet. By the time Obasanjo finished his second tenure, three water resources minister had served under him, and the RBDAs did not become financially self-reliant as he had promised at the start of his first tenure. For a second time, Obasanjo had the opportunity to shape the RBDAs in line with the original plan but did not accomplish it. He could not translate his lofty dreams into

¹²Colonel Bello Kalief was the Military Governor of Bauchi State in 1976 when Obasanjo was the Head of State, after the assassination of Murtala Mohammed.

concrete reality by the time his second tenure came to an end after eight years. It was another case of a grand ambition that did not materialise.

1.9 Yar' Adua's Ill-Fated Seven-Point Agenda

In a move that suggested that he was not impressed by Obasanjo's institutional arrangements for the agricultural sector, Alhaji Musa Yar'Adua¹³ who succeeded Obasanjo, announced a merger of the Water Ministry and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to form the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources. Effectively, the RBDAs became a sub-unit of the sub-department of Water Resources under the new dispensation. Indeed, Yar'Adua had grand plans for the agricultural sector in his policy guide called the seven-point agenda!

Concerning agriculture, the agenda identified the lacks militating against farmers' optimal performances and proposed some responses. The resuscitation of the RBDAs was among the critical interventions highlighted in the agenda:

Critical areas for intervention will include strengthening agribusiness through the institution of profitability and price support mechanism, land tenure changes, aggressive development and supply of new land, strengthening of farmer support groups through commercial farmers, improvement of rural access infrastructure, and resuscitation of the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs). Additional land for cultivation and idle irrigation facilities around our dammed water bodies provide excellent opportunities to increase farm output and employment prospects in the rural areas (Nigeria High Commission, 2007).

The *Seven-Point Agenda* remained 'unpowered' because of Yar'Adua's health challenges. Some analysts suggest that the promise of resuscitating the irrigation was failure bound, because of a lacklustre government attitude for a lofty agenda (Dode, 2010: 6). Eventually, the entire agenda suffered a massive setback when the president left the country in a situation that created a power vacuum (McConnell, 2010). The sudden death of Yar'Adua ended the seven-point agenda but not the grand vision he had for the revival of the agricultural sector. Goodluck Jonathan, who succeeded Yar'Adua, was his deputy and the head of the National Economic Commission (NEC). When Jonathan took over, he launched a

¹³ Yar' Adua succeeded Obasanjo as the next elected President and was in office for about three years (May 2007– May 2010) but his tenure was bedevilled by health challenges.

comprehensive national economic revival agenda called the transformation agenda, in which agriculture would play a significant role alongside the RBDAs as some of the principal agencies.

1.10 “A Burst of Fresh Air?”¹⁴ – Jonathan’s Grand Agenda

The resuscitation of the RBDAs, which Yar’ Adua included in the seven-point agenda, received a make-over in the transformation agenda (TA) of Goodluck Jonathan (2011–2015). Based on the inspiration the government got from other programmes and policies, the TA articulated an agenda that set the priorities which would guide the government in the implementation of policies and plans. The grand target of the TA was the transformation of the economy and meeting the future needs of the Nigerian people (National Planning Commission, 2011: 6).

Within the TA, the government created the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA), with the specific target of producing enough food to feed the nation and generating income for the country through efficient exploitation and utilisation of available agricultural resources. The ATA created a coordinating unit called the river basin operations and inspectorate for the first time, since the inception of the RBDAs (Ibrahim, 2015). Subsequently, the Federal Minister of Water Resources kicked-off the *Transforming the Nigerian Water Sector*, and embarked on the transforming irrigation management programme, supported by the World Bank (World Bank Report, 2014: 7). The next target was to increase the mass of irrigable land. Minister Sarah Reng Ocheke estimated that on completion, TRIMING would radically alter the state of irrigation in the country. According to her:

The project, when completed, will add 52,000 ha of irrigable land to the existing public irrigation projects, provide 625,000 jobs and increase national food security with 520,000 metric tons of rice and other cereal annually. Implementation of the project commenced at the last quarter of 2014 for a seven-year duration with a World Bank Credit of USD459.3 million (Ocheke, 2015: 7).

¹⁴The slogan, ‘a burst of fresh air’ was Goodluck Jonathan’s promise to the electorate as he campaigned for election in 2015.

At one point, it all looked like the long-expected journey to food security for the country had begun, but it only became an addition to the grand ambitions for the RBDAs. Two reasons are given for that here. First, with all the media attention given to the TA, Jonathan lost his bid for a re-election. Observers were amazed that he lost the election as an incumbent president, with all the publicity the TA received in the run-up to the 2015 election. Massive corruption and cronyism were some of the reasons given for Jonathan’s defeat at the polls (Siollun, 2015). The wave of massive political corruption allegations and trials that followed the ousting of Jonathan resurrected the old question of whether Nigeria was transformed by the TA (Ojo, 2014). Second, the statistics of the FAO of the UN showed that the persisting trend of undernourishment continued, despite the claims of the TA. (See Figure 1:8). In the end, Jonathan’s inability to secure a second term as an incumbent was the electorate sending a powerful message that his wave of reforms did not sit well with them, and that they did not feel he was ‘a burst of fresh air.’ The flipside can be that the results of Jonathan’s grand ambition were yet to manifest. Either way, the administration of Muhammadu Buhari embarked on the articulation and implementation of its aspirations for the RBDAs upon its inauguration.

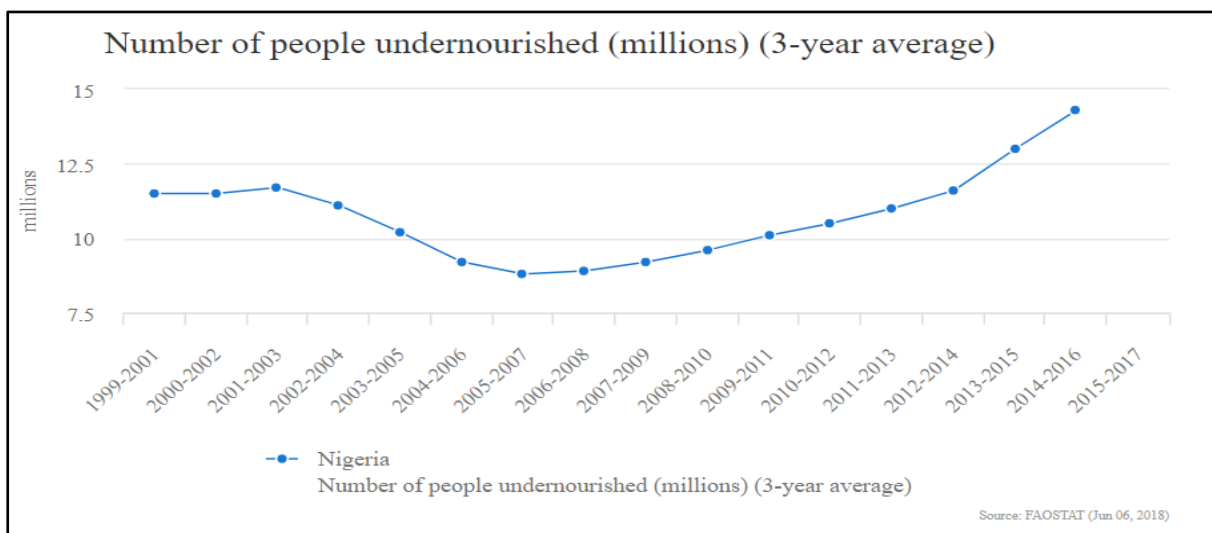


Figure 1:8 Trend of undernourishment in Nigeria. Source: [www.fao.org/faostat/en/#country/159]

1.11 Closing the Key Gaps – Buhari: The Dawn of Another Grand Ambition?

Like the administrations before it, Buhari’s current administration, which started in 2015, has announced that it would revive the agricultural sector and make Nigeria sufficient in food

production by the end of its four-year tenure. The Minister of Agriculture published a policy statement which suggested that there was still a lot to be done in the TA inherited from the last administration (Federal Ministry of Agriculture Nigeria, 2016). Targeting the start of self-sufficiency in food production, in the first quarter of 2018, Buhari inaugurated a National Food Security Council (NFSC) to tackle the twin-menace of food insecurity and youth unemployment (Anonymous, 2018a). In the water sector, the minister declared a revival plan which looked like a return to the first concept of the RBDAs. In a nation-wide broadcast to mark the nation's 56th Independence day celebrations, Buhari reiterated the promise he made at the start of his administration, that Nigeria would be producing enough food by 2019 (Anonymous, 2018d). Even though the announced time has come, it is still too early to make absolute statements on whether it is another case of a budding grand ambition. So far, no declaration has been made by the government about the expected income.

1.12 Conclusion

A common denominator that runs across all the inputs of the leaders of government presented in this work is their conviction that the production of food crops could be increased by harnessing the potentials of the RBDAs or, so it seemed. This chapter explored the big dreams that the leaders of Nigeria, coordinating the nation's resources, nursed for the RBDAs. It has also highlighted the dissonance between their often-disproportionate ambitions and the practical steps taken to actualise their dreams for food production, using the infrastructures of the RBDAs. We have also looked at the roles of military generals as absolute rulers, the effects of oil as an alternative source of money and the dynamics of the windfall of the 1970s, and the political intrigues and interests of individuals and regions over the years, as the nation struggled to find her place as an independent nation. In between, there have also been 'acts of God', like the death of Yar' Adua. Viewed through the angle of the RBDAs, it has been a series of discontinuities, primarily powered by the overriding interests of the heads of states and the presidents; beginning with Yakubu Gowon, who restructured the country to save it from political disintegration through to Buhari, the incumbent president.

Some politicians have applied the RBDAs as political tools to win the sympathy of the citizens and to create the impression that the leaders cared for the people's primary needs. In some cases, they were used to fulfil promises made during electioneering campaigns (Shagari's GR),

or to satisfy some private personal interests which left the larger section of the population with unanswered questions (Abacha's split of the Niger RBDA). Altogether, they all failed to achieve the breakthroughs promised by their policies and have all alike left expressions of grand ambitions unfulfilled.

Political instabilities have eclipsed the development of the RBDAs. In the first two decades of the RBDAs (1973–93), six military generals ruled Nigeria. Military dictatorships rule by decrees or executive fiats. Their policy declarations rarely passed through public debates. They got the citizens to accept their plans by a populist approach, described as 'army arrangement'¹⁵ by the late Nigerian Afro-music maestro, Fela Anikulapo Ransome-Kuti; the people eventually saw through the façade. Such policies that are easily floated also get pushed aside easily, leading to discontinuities. Arguably, the RBDAs has remained because they stand for Nigeria's central effort to engage in food production for her teeming population, despite all the setbacks.

A different side to the same story was the situation of the RBDAs, during periods of democratic rule, when they were caught up in the turbulence of party politics. In the case of Shagari, he faced opposition from the UPN governors. But even when the PDP had the country to itself for sixteen years, (1999–2015), the policies for the RBDAs changed with every new leadership. Obasanjo called for a revival of the RBDAs in 1999 and also introduced other agricultural and development programmes. After him, Yar' Adua, who belonged to the same political party (PDP) as Obasanjo, launched the seven-point agenda with a rider that he would resuscitate the RBDAs, after whom came Jonathan with yet a different programme – the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA).

From the precedent, it is evident that the RBDAs passed through a series of policies. Some of those were outrightly at variance with the original blueprint of the RBDAs, while some were political ambitions masked as drives for food production campaigns. No new policy in the RBDAs outlived the administration that created it. On the weight of all the evidence deduced,

¹⁵'Army Arrangement' is the title of Fela's celebrated music in which he criticised the military junta for trying to hoodwink the populace over the sum of seven billion naira that went missing from Nigeria's foreign reserve when Obasanjo was the Military Head of State.

it is the submission of this chapter that the development of the RBDAs has been a succession of grand ambitions and that, mostly, the policies were not faithful to the overarching goal of food production, and the implementation of the plans were not diligently executed. The RBDAs is a microcosm of the broader picture that encompasses the whole nation, which Ibietan characterised as a public policy-making process fraught with such difficulties as:

[...] inadequate definition of goals, over-ambitious policy goals; lack of well-defined programme for attainment of goals; choice of inappropriate organizational structure for implementation of policies; lack of continuity in commitment to policy; lack of clear definition or responsibility; political opposition during implementation; compromises during implementation capable of defeating policy purposes; political insensitivity to policy demands; (wrong) timing in implementation; corruption; lack of adequate data for decision making (Ibietan, 2011: 100-101).

The RBDAs has really been a theatre of grand ambitions, where the heads of states and presidents of Nigeria deliberately, and sometimes inadvertently, played out their scripts through policy redefinitions and discontinuities. While they might not have set out with concerted intents to create unrealisable goals in their policies for the RBDAs, the net result of their actions showed that as far as the RBDAs were affected, those policies were not sufficiently thought-through nor diligently executed. Most of the policies were not aligned with the overarching goal of food production by the RBDAs, and where the plans aligned with the first aims of the RBDAs, they lacked diligence in their execution.

CHAPTER TWO

A TRAJECTORY THAT MIRRORED THE TURMOIL OF NIGERIA FEDERALISM

One of the persistent problems we have in this country is lack of continuity. When a government comes into power, you will hear, "For the first time ever..." as if it has never happened before in this country. – President Olusegun Obasanjo (July 2018).

The chapter focuses on how the management of the river basin development authorities (RBDAs) of Nigeria, as duly constituted agencies of the federal government of Nigeria, mirrors the political trajectory of Nigeria's federalism. The contention is that the RBDAs, like most federal structures, suffered the same development malaise as the political system; or, put another way, the institutional arrangements for Nigerian federalism and their evolution, with all their setbacks, could only have produced RBDAs burdened with the same difficulties. This claim holds true not only for the RBDAs but also for the entire agricultural sector.

The proposition that the RBDAs reflect the trajectory of federalism in Nigeria, comes from the understanding that political systems provide opportunity structures for the emergence of some network structures over others.¹⁶ Although, Nigeria is the largest democracy in Africa and, comparatively, has fared better than many smaller ones in terms of political stability, it still struggles with historical burdens and new challenges that continue to undermine her development potentials.

It is a glaring truism to assert that the government agencies cannot be more efficient than the political system that defines their policies and implements them. It is also true that the degree to which each agency mirrors the political system differs, because of such specificities as differences in human agencies, political coalitions, the involvement of international agencies and implications, indigenous institutionalisation, etc. (Leftwich, 2009: 5). The RBDAs belong to the group of agencies created after the Nigerian Civil War as part of the post-war recovery

¹⁶The correlation between political systems and the network of interaction patterns that shape the power structure and the decision-making processes, has been recently explored in a new essay. See: Metz, F., & Brandenberger, L. (2018). Decision-making Networks Across Political Systems.

efforts; a critical juncture that redefined not only the country's notion of 'one nation' but also put the nation on the path of its peculiar federalism. We argue here that to understand the current state of the RBDAs and their administration, a critical exploration of how the RBDAs mirror the federalism is an essential exercise. Thus, our hypothesis (H₂) for this chapter is that:

The development of the RBDAs is a classic reflection of the turmoil that characterised the trajectory of Nigerian federalism.

This chapter will use method of comparative analysis to confirm or nullify the stated hypothesis, by examining the development of Nigerian federalism, highlighting the key factors that have shaped it, and how the same factors have correspondingly accelerated or impeded the progress of the RBDAs. The research question (RQ₂) is:

How does the evolutionary trajectory of the RBDAs mirror the turmoil of Nigerian federalism?

The exploration is set out in two major parts; the first dwells on Nigerian federalism and the factors that shaped it, while the second explores how that same factors correspondingly shaped the development of the RBDAs, and so produced a trajectory that mirrors the turmoil of Nigerian federalism. We will begin with a brief explanation of the concept of the 'mirror trajectory' as the method employed to achieve the parallelism in this chapter. The second subsection will explore the idea of federalism as a political system and the peculiarities of Nigerian federalism, concentrating on four of the critical factors that shaped its evolution. In this, we shall delve into the Minority Question as a lingering problem and a driver of Nigerian federalism. The Minority Question is a debate of the status and rights of the small ethnic groups in a federation, where democracy as the means to power is a game of numbers (Lemun & Erunke, 2013: 122). The other factors also explored are soldiers and oil, the Federal Character Principle (FCP), and the effects of political instability on the trajectory of Nigeria's federalism, with a focus on its implications on policy formulation, implementation and evaluation.

The second major part examines the developmental trajectory of the RBDAs, for the parallels of the four factors discussed in the first part. It is laid out in four separate sub-sections that explore how the RBDAs were caught up in the turmoil of nascent federalism. The corresponding factors highlighted in the RBDAs are the Minority Question in the spread of the RBDAs, the effects of the oil-booms, the application of the FCP in the management of the

RBDAs, and the constant reorganisations of the RBDAs as the resultant effects of the political instabilities trailing Nigerian federalism. In all the parallels, the situations of the RBDAs result in a trajectory which correspond to some turmoil on the path of Nigerian federalism. The assumed zero points of both pathways are the post-civil war 1970s Nigeria.

2.1 Mirror Trajectory as a Literary Construct

The concept of a 'mirror trajectory' presupposes the existence of another path with similar traits. Illustratively, it is a situation where the developments of political ideas or policies A and B, run along the same course, forming parallels with coordinates that show similarities either in their planning, execution, results, or evaluations. There is always a common trait that is constant to both trajectories and which forms the interface between the policies under consideration. In this case, the interface was Nigeria as the field of relationship between federalism as the type governance and the organisation of the river basins. The same approach has been applied to examine the parallels between the foreign policies of Olusegun Obasanjo as a military leader and as a civilian president (Ngara, Esebonu & Ayabam, 2013). It was also been applied by another team of researchers to study how the personality of Muhammadu Buhari affected his foreign policies as a military leader and as a civilian head of government (Bello, Dutse & Othman, 2017). In both cases, the interfaces are the personalities of the leaders; the parallels are between their tenures as military men or civilians.

In mapping the trajectories, the coordinates are the points of interest with parallels. In this work, the coordinates come from the political inputs or outputs that define crucial points in the development of federalism in Nigeria. To show the mirror trajectory, we shall go through a comparative historical analysis of the selected indices, with emphasis on the similarities between the political dynamics that shaped them. As a process, the comparative historical analysis concentrates on the explanation of substantively important sequences, through causal analysis and a focus on processes over time in co-terminus timeframes and the factors of human agency that shaped critical periods or policy outcomes (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003: 12). The method also uses a systematic and contextualised comparison of factors such as political inputs and outputs.

The analyses in this work do not follow a strict chronological order of events or policies, because they are about turmoil in the political system which defies mapping according to times, places or human agencies. The analyses deal more with the causes or effects of the indices under consideration. In each case, the procedure applied is by presentation of the relevant aspect of the federalism, and later, the corresponding element of the RBDAs. The highlighting of the similarities is done sequentially. The impacts of the chosen political factors on the development of Nigerian federalism are exposed first, and then the attention shifts to the parallels in the RBDAs. Since the political arena and the overarching factor is federalism as practised in Nigeria, we shall undertake a brief incursion into the general understanding of federalism as a form of government before looking at the peculiarities of Nigerian federalism by exploring the distinguishing factors.

2.2 Federalism in Nigeria

Political science as a discipline of learning presents federalism as a political arrangement in which the activities of government are shared between the regional governments and a central government in such a way that each government has some exclusive areas on which it makes final decisions (Bednar, 2011: 1). Professor Ben Nwabueze, a foremost Nigerian constitutional lawyer, set out a clear and unambiguous definition of federalism in the first paragraph of his seminal work, *Federalism in Nigeria under the Presidential Constitution*, he defined the concept as follows:

Federalism is an arrangement whereby powers of government within a country are shared between a national, country-wide government and a number of regionalised (i.e. territorially localised) governments in such a way that each exists as a government separately and independently from the others operating directly on persons and property within its territorial area, with a will of its own and its own apparatus for the conduct of its affairs, and with Authority in some matters exclusive of all others. Federalism is thus essentially an arrangement between governments, a constitutional device by which powers within a country are shared among two tiers of government, rather than among geographical entities comprising different people (Nwabueze, 1983: 1).

Based on the definition above, Nwabueze listed the principles that underline the practice of federalism as follows:

1. There must be autonomy for each government, which necessarily presupposes its separate existence and its independence from the control of the other government.
2. A mutual non-interference or governmental immunities that ensure the exercise of the powers due to a government is not impeded, obstructed or otherwise interfered with by the other government, while it is acting within its capabilities.
3. An equality between the regions such that no regional government should have powers separate from the others or gets a unique position in the national government.
4. For meaningful federalism, a certain least number of constituent units is seen as necessary. A multiplicity of groups creates a feeling of inter-dependence, encourages co-operation and mutual tolerance.
5. There must be a technique for power-sharing. There may be two or three lists; one for the federal government exclusively, one exclusive to the regional governments and another concurrent to the both.
6. There must be a constitution that is supreme over both the general and regional governments and overrides any act done by either of them, in violation of those terms. The constitution binds and obliges all tiers of government to keep within the terms of the arrangement and operate to invalidate any transgression of the limits imposed on the powers of each government.

However, Nigerian federalism holds all the core components enunciated above, but with locally fashioned peculiarities which have placed Nigeria among the pioneers of federalist thoughts and practices. Nigeria has three-tier federalism consisting of the federal, states and local governments; a novel, locally designed structure with contentious inter-governmental relationships. Two areas are distinctive in the case of Nigeria; one is the relative roles of the three tiers of government that have continued to be the topic of open and vigorous debates in Nigeria and among scholars of federalism (Khemani, 2001: 1). The financial relationship between the states and the local governments have remained contentious, in spite of the spelt-out constitutional provisions (Umezurike and Ogunnubi, 2016). The second is the creation of the FCP (details later). Political analysts hold up the two innovations as original

expressions of political thought that appeared in the mid-1970s, as part of the quest to craft a stable federal structure for the newly independent country (Ayobolu, 2017: 1).

Nonetheless, there are more complexities to the Nigerian federalism than the three-tiers and the FCP; both are reactions to some historical setbacks met in the practice of federalism. It is important to recall that the choice of federalism as the suitable form of government for Nigeria resulted from the considerations for the country's diverse ethnic, religious, linguistic, and regional groups and interests (Adamolekun & Ayo, 1989: 110). The complex and varied composition of Nigeria made consociation democracy the most suitable form of federalism for the country. Consociationalism is a government formed by grand coalitions and segmental autonomy. According to Horowitz (2014), consociationalism tries to solve the problem of different compositions by setting up a regime of agreed guarantees, including equal group participation in the government and minority vetoes of ethnically sensitive policies (Horowitz, 2014: 5). However, Nigeria's consociationalism is a peculiar one, because of its historical background. Ayua & Dakas (2005) located one of the foundations as follows:

Nigeria was created not by a voluntary union of previously existing, closely related, and freely contracting political units but by the imposition of the union by an imperial power on an artificially demarcated territory containing a heterogeneous population of strangers (Ayua & Dakas, 2005: 240).

The backlashes of the kingdoms suppressed and submerged to achieve the amalgamation and the creation of Nigeria in 1914 still haunt the union. Atanda Fatai-Williams, one-time Chief Justice of Nigeria, who took part in the pre-independence discussions for the making of the federation, later reminisced enlighteningly over the process in these words:

Unlike most of the older federations, what we did in Nigeria was like unscrambling scrambled eggs. We started as a unitary state and then opted for federalism afterwards. Very little was known by most of us about the theory of federation at the time. It may well be that if we knew more about the theory at the time, we would have emerged clearer in our effort to provide our people with a federal constitution that took account of all the peculiar circumstances of our country and our peoples. When things began to fall apart, those of us in the know quickly realised that ours was the tragedy of assumptions. We assumed everybody, both federal and regional governments, the opposition, the electorates, the courts, the civil servants, the generality of the people and even the boy academician would play the game according to generally accepted rules (sic). Well, because of the interplay of political forces which were beyond their control, they did not. It became clear to us all thereafter that all the time, there was no total commitment to the concept of federalism (Tamuno, 1998).

The process of forging one nation out of many nationalities went through phases, later adjudged as rushed and without enough understanding of the concepts by the hitherto independent or semi-independent groups. The rushed processes left the country with a unity deficit, often expressed as the 'national question'¹⁷ which originated, as has been suggested by many analysts, from the circumstances of the creation of Nigeria (Osaghae, 2002: 220). At the core of the national question lies some critical issues, as Momo & Adejumbi (2002) succinctly enunciated:

The crucial question is whether Nigerians are "compatible" people as such; whether the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 "was a mistake", whether what took place in 1914 was a "unity of states" rather than a "unity of peoples" and so on. It is however clear that issues of uneven development, injustice, domination and favouritism have all been mentioned as factors that affect the resolution of the National Question in Nigeria (Adejumbi & Momoh, 2002: 245).

Furthermore, the peculiarities also include how the nation battled with the contending issues in its federalism and the results that were obtained. Odubajo (2011) opined that most of the problems came from the yet-to-be integrated historical indices that have become muddled-up and inefficiently managed in the post-independence administrative structure - revenue allocation, the Minority Question, the process of constitution-making, and the whole process of applying the constitution. Indeed, the country has travelled through windy and thorny paths in its quest to 'build a nation where peace and justice shall reign', as the national anthem promises in one of its stanzas. For Odubajo (2011), the faulty constitution is one the lingering major setbacks of Nigeria federalism. According to him:

Some major points have emerged in the tenets of constitutionalism and constitution-making process in Nigeria. The first of the factors is connected with the faulty nature of the emergence of all of Nigeria's constitutions to date. If the fact of being a colony (and therefore manipulated by the imperial lord) in the first attempt at a federal constitution is accepted as the basis for its faulty foundation,

¹⁷The term 'national question' is an expression used by Nigerians to refer to the nutty aspects of federalism that have not been satisfactorily addressed and so continue to recur. Adejumbi & Momo assert that, '... issues of uneven development, injustice, domination and favouritism have all been mentioned as factors that affect the resolution of the National Question in Nigeria'. See: Adejumbi, S., & Momoh, A. (2002, p. 245). The National question in Comparative Perspectives. In A. Momoh & S. Adejumbi (Eds.), *The National Question in Nigeria – Comparative Perspectives* (pp. 245–264). England: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

the same reason cannot be presented for similar foundations of succeeding constitutions.(Odubajo, 2011: 27).

The consequences of many poorly resolved and unanswered questions are what makes this system of federalism distinctly different from the classic understanding as ‘a single word for the theory and practice of multi-level democratic government from the normative and descriptive standpoints’ (Morelli & Castaldi, 2009: II). The history of Nigerian federalism has been a trajectory that is punctuated by complexities, pluralism and nuances that continue to threaten the fragile unity of the federation. Among the prominent shapers and issues are the status of the many minority ethnic groups, the civil war and the role of soldiers, and oil in the years that followed the independence and even decades later.

2.2.1 Thorny, Volatile and Unresolved: The Minority Question

Nigeria has many ethnic nationalities of different population sizes. Some of them are small and insignificant, in terms of the influence they exert in the shaping of national government. While others, such as Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, are comparatively vast and have been exercising a lot of influence on the governance of the country, as can be deduced from the statistics of the nation’s heads since independence.¹⁸

The Minority Question or the minority problem has remained a lingering albatross on the practice of federalism from pre-independence times. Isawa Elaigwu, emeritus Professor of Political Science at the University of Jos, traced the beginning of the volatile Minority Question to the 1940s and associated it with the fear of the small tribal groups that they would be marginalised in the emerging nation. He proffered three reasons for the fear of domination by the minority groups; (1) the multi-ethnicity of Nigeria, (2) the size and nature of the composition of subnational political units, and (3) the desire by each group to protect its interests as political power passed from the British to Nigerians (Elaigwu, 2007: 32).

Although some commissions were set up to formulate a framework for the emerging multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious nation, they were not able to arrive at a satisfactory

¹⁸Goodluck Jonathan (2011-2015) the only democratically elected president to have emerged from the minority tribes since the beginning of the federation.

structure before independence.¹⁹ The structure favoured the northern block to the detriment of the other regions. Daniel Bach, emeritus Professor of Political Science and the Director of research at the Sciences Po Bordeaux & CNRS in France, who has written extensively on the Nigerian political system, described the scene before the independence as follows:

The dominance of the north with the federation soon became a source of tension and instability. Considerable inequalities existed in the size, population, revenues and spread of education of the three regions. The northern region alone accounted for seventy-nine per cent of the territory of the federation and fifty-five per cent of its population (1953-54 census figures) (Bach, 2006:65).

The unresolved Minority Question returned to haunt the country, not long after independence in the form of discontentment and agitations by the minority's groups – within the civilians and the military classes – leading to coup d'états and eventually culminated in the Civil War in the first decade of the new nation with Gowon as the Head of State.

One of the measures applied by the Gowon's administration to answer the Minority Question was the breaking up of the big hegemonies into smaller, semi-independent units through the creation of twelve states, out of the existing three regions. Although the announcement of the new states could not stop the impending civil war, it became the first of a series of policies by the government of post-colonial Nigeria to address the Minority Question. The post-civil war 3Rs (reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction) policy of Gowon was carefully structured to accommodate the minority groups, even in matters not related to the war directly, like as the organisation of the inland waters into river basin development authorities.

2.2.2 Drivers and Momentum - Soldiers and Oil²⁰

Nigeria reached her independence without resorting to military or guerrilla warfare against the occupying officers of the British government, so the military did not occupy a leading role

¹⁹One of the prominent commissions was the Willink Commission (1957-58), chaired by Sir Henry Willink Michael. Vickers described the failure of the Commission to meet the expectations of the minorities groups as a betrayal. He chronicled the case of the "Midwest" minorities in one his recent work. Cf. Vickers, M. (2010). *A Nation Betrayed – Nigeria and the Minorities Commission of 1957*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc.

²⁰The phrase 'Soldiers and Oil' came from the title of the work edited by Panter-Brick in which the contributors explore the roles of the military in the governance of Nigeria in the early 1970s when the nation experienced the 'oil boom'. Cf. Panter-Brick, K. (Ed.). (1978). *Soldiers and Oil – The Political Transformation of Nigeria*. London (UK): Frank Cass.

as the nation raised its flag as an independent political entity in 1960. However, all that changed when the army overthrew the first republic on January 15, 1966. The army became the drivers of the new federation, using the power of the gun and the momentum provided by the wealth from the nation's vast deposits of crude oil. The imprints of the military were indelibly etched not just on the three tiers of government but also on the public agencies like the RBDAs.

The first military coup d'état took place in 1966. Within the first three decades of independence, Nigeria went through series of coup d'états and seven military regimes which radically altered the original visions of the British colonial government and the founding fathers of the new nation (Abbas, 2015: 57). Among some of the unanticipated and unnegotiated actions of the military eras were the overthrowing of the democratic government and the abolition of the regional governments which served as the pillars of the new federation. Then, followed the years of military rule that bequeathed to the federation a 'militarised democracy', in which the political arena became an army playground (Omilusi, 2015: 2). Recently, Sunny Awhefeada, a columnist for one of the dailies, referred to the political power-play in Nigeria as 'gunboat democracy', because it was still a military affair, parading retired generals and their 'boys' as contestants or godfathers (Awhefeada, 2018).

Apart from the involvement of the military in the elections of public officers, the military regimes created most of the democratic structures still operative in the country, like the three versions of the Nigerian Constitution (1979, 1989 and 1999) after the one at independence. The military not only abolished the regions but handled all the creations of the states: Gowon (12), Murtala (7), Babangida (11), Abacha (6). With the states came the local government areas (LGA), which became the third tier of government and have remained dependent on the states for their revenues. The Murtala-Obasanjo regime created 301 LGAs; Babangida 288 LGAs; and Abacha 185 LGAs. The states and the LGAs have remained the aggregating units of Nigeria's federalism, and though created as the perceived solutions to some lingering problems in the federation, they became sources of new and thorny issues between the federating units and the central government.

For instance, the military created the LGAs, caused them to be recognised in the constitution and decided which financial allocations go to the LGAs. When the arrangement for annual distribution became difficult due to lack of adequate funds, the military government

introduced of monthly allowances, to be paid directly from the federation accounts to the LGAs (Bassey, 2011: 294). The creation and the running of the LGAs is one of the classic cases of the trials and errors approach employed in military production of institutions for the federation. There were no older references to fall back to, and the military leaders wanted immediate results. To cover up perceived flaws, they enacted decrees and foreclosed public debates. They only accepted inputs if the implementation of the policy ran into apparent difficulties, and the public outcry became deafening as it happened with the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), suggested by the World Bank in the Buhari/Babangida era in the mid-1980s. Professor Bach (1989) blamed the unending agitation to split on the institutions created by the military. He described the emergent scenarios in his analysis of the boomerang effects of the fissiparous multiplication of states and local governments as follows:

The quest for a 'fair' representation of Nigeria's socio-cultural components is doomed to remain uncompleted. The 'federal character' principle and the federal revenue allocation formula adopted since 1970 constitute irresistible incentives to the fissiparous multiplication of the states and local governments. The trend is also self-perpetuating for the very process of creating new states generates concomitantly a modification of alliance networks among the elites of the new states (Bach, 1989: 229).

Some of the new demands and sources of frustrations included the frosty relationship between the central government and the other levels of government, the funding of the machinery of government at the different levels, and the allocation of the oil revenue which was still the nation's leading source of income. In their era, the military regimes addressed problems with military *fiat*, and most of the military governments benefitted from the oil windfalls. Indeed, the money from Nigeria's oil reserve was an added impetus to the brazen spirit of the military leaders. They acted without any fear that they could be held accountable. However, the term 'oil money' is used here to refer to the funds generated from the oil sector, which was the wealthiest segment of the nation's economy. The term is also used, figuratively, to refer to the massive wealth that came with little labour during the windfall of the 1970's oil-boom, when Nigeria suddenly became very rich because of crises outside her

borders.²¹ The phrase 'soldiers and oil' refers to the period when the soldier ruled the country, had unlimited access to the nation's oil money and were accountable to no one. General Yakubu Gowon's rule epitomised that period in the early 1970s. Gowon was often quoted to have said that the challenge that Nigeria had was not how to get money but how to spend it.

The oil boom of the 1970s was the dawn of an unprecedented era; many things began to happen simultaneously, leading to unrealistic expectations, as the government started to over-reach itself and even assumed the 'Father Christmas' role locally and internationally.

According to a publication of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies:

The avalanche of oil-based revenues during the 1970s at all levels of government fuelled dramatic expansions in government expenditures and development plans. The level of government involvement in the economic, social and other sectors of the economy rose dramatically. People's expectations from government rose equally sharply and were encouraged by the government's appearance to want to do everything for the people; many are often free of charge. Inevitably, the government began to over-commit. Thus, the size of Nigeria's Development Plans rose sharply from 3.2 billion naira for the 1970-75 Plan, 43.3 billion naira for the 1975-80 Plan, to 82 billion for 1981-85 (Phillips, n.d.: 9).

For a newly independent country that had just gone through a civil war, with lots to restoration to do across the country, coupled with the aftermath of a series of droughts in the North to deal with, there were a lot of infrastructural demands crying for attention. The sudden windfall from the oil, in the hands of young, ambitious but inexperienced military officers as the leaders of the country, was the perfect recipe for a spending spree. The oil boom became not only the foundation of a new Nigeria but also the harbinger of many problems for the nation. Some analysts later referred to the oil boom as a 'doom'. The involvement of the military was one of the critical factors in the Nigerian oil story.

²¹Recently, President Buhari received a heavy backlash when it was reported that he said Nigerian youths did not want to work but wanted to live on oil money. It was interpreted to mean that the youths were lazy and were after easy money ('awuuf') from the sale of oil. Cf.: Anonymous. (2018, April 17). Buhari: Many Nigerian Youths are Lazy, Want Free Oil Money. *Daily Trust*. Retrieved from <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/buhari-many-nigerian-youths-are-lazy-wants-free-oil-money.html> .

Max Siollun, a specialist on Nigerian military participation in politics, in his book *Oil, Politics and Violence – Nigeria’s Military Coup Culture (1966-1976)*, explored the oil boom and the role played by the soldiers in the management of the golden oil period, when Nigeria’s earnings from crude oil exports went up by 500%. He labelled the period a curse and substantiated his claim thus:

Although the oil boom increased the spending power of the federal government, it caused more problems than it solved. The FMG²² was able to monopolise control of the oil industry because oil was located entirely either within the former Eastern Region of Biafra which it conquered during the civil war or in the Christian minority close to Nigeria’s southern coast. The massive funds generated by the oil boom encouraged the FMG to embark upon a series of unprecedented and grandiose developmental construction projects to rapidly modernise Nigeria. City topography was transformed with the construction of new multi-lane highways and flyovers, bridges, hospitals, school, universities dams, factories, hotels, army barracks and office complexes. The FMG imported several million tons of cement from abroad for the execution of these projects. This wasteful extravagance meant that at one point, half of the world’s cement orders were headed for Nigeria! (Siollun, 2009: 168).

With absolute powers and unlimited money, the soldiers shaped the newly independent country according to their delights, creating institutional structures through decrees and *executive fiats*. It was within the context of the oil boom, in the post-civil war years and under the military regime of General Yakubu Gowon, that Nigeria embarked on the reorganisation of her inland water into river basins in line with global best practice, as recommended by the UN. Despite the template provided by the UN as a guide for the exercise, the creation of the RBDA was deeply marked by the ‘soldiers and oil’ culture that dominated the trajectory of the new federation in the 1970s.

Another angle to the soldiers and oil factor was the imprint of the military on Nigeria’s federalism within the periods that the soldiers held the reins of governance, and later in the governments run by civilians who were retired military men or their cronies. Along with jostling for the control of the oil money, the military carried out coups and countercoups. In a bid to avoid another civil war after the devastating impacts of the Biafran War, the military

²²Federal Military Government.

began to search for a mechanism that would address the complicated situation of Nigeria and came up with the Federal Character Principle.

2.2.3 The Federal Character Principle as Home-crafted Consociationalism Mechanism

As a political mechanism, some political analysts adjudged the Federal Character Principle (FCP) as the single most influential, locally crafted political driver for unity in Nigerian federalism. Although the idea of a uniting medium for the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural federation appeared in some of the writings and the speeches of the founding fathers of the country, around the time of independence, it was the military that shaped the articulation of the FCP as a political tool and entrenched it in the constitution. The FCP evolved from a doctrinal concept, presented as a practical tool in 1975 to guide the drafting of the first post-civil war constitution, to a binding political principle and became one of the distinctive democratic features of Nigerian federalism. It has gained pre-eminence, and has been broadened and deepened by subsequent editions of the constitution (Bach, 2006: 67). Indeed, some political analysts think that the FCP has assumed the role of an 'alpha and omega' in the political life of Nigeria, and others contend that it is as a 'distinctive Nigerian contribution to federalist thoughts' (Sklar, 2004: 1).

The first official attempt to explain the FCP appeared in the recommendations of the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), which described it as:

[...] the distinctive desire of the peoples of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nation [notwithstanding the diversities of the ethnic origins, culture, language or religion which may exist and which it is their desire to nourish and harness to the enrichment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria] (M. L. Bello, 2012: 6).

Afterwards, the FCP became institutionalised as part of the 1979 constitution and the later editions (1989 & 1999). The crux of the FCP is in Section 14 (3) of the 1979 Constitution, which reads, among other things, that:

The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and to command national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few States or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or in any of its agencies (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1979: sec 14(3)).

In practice, the FCP is a doctrinal principle and the consociation engineering mechanism for Nigeria' multi-ethnic federalism. A consociation democracy functions in such a way that it goes beyond the simple majority considerations that characterise democracies, to factors that safeguard the participation of minority groups in deeply divided plural societies. In his explanation of the dynamics of consociationalism, Arend d'Angremond Lijphart, a renowned Professor of Comparative Politics, whose seminal works include *The Politics of Accommodation* (1968) and *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (1977), explained the kernel of consociationalism as follows:

Consociational democracy violates the principle of majority rule, but it does not deviate very much from normative democratic theory. Most democratic constitutions prescribe majority rule for the normal transaction of business when the stakes are not too high, but extraordinary majorities or several successive majorities for the most important decisions, such as changes in the constitution. In fragmented systems, many other decisions in addition to constituent ones are perceived as involving high stakes, and therefore require more than simple majority rule (Lijphart, 1969: 214).

Consociationalism advances a system of consensual, multi-ethnic power-sharing, as opposed to the majority rule (Taylor, 1992: 1). The FCP is a mechanism for consociation engineering even though its translation from a political doctrine to a political practice still falls short in many regards.

Notwithstanding its setbacks, the FCP heralded the creation of many innovative political mechanisms for balance in Nigerian federalism, such as the polyethnic device for the electoral system which provides that elections involving multi-ethnic groups are not decided by a simple majority but through distributed majorities across the spread of the ethnic groups. The FCP is also the driver of the Nigerian-style double devolution of power in a three-tier, rather than two-tier, federalism. Robert Sklar, one of the pioneer writers on Nigeria's federalism, listed the FCP, the devolution of powers, and polyethnic device for the electoral system as distinctive Nigerian contributions to federalist thoughts (Sklar, 2004: 1).

Notwithstanding, the FCP is one of the most used reference points in political debates and the clamour for the allocation of the nation's resources. The struggle for resource control is an influential push factor in the fragmentation process, aptly described as the 'fissiparous evolution of the Nigerian state' (Bach, 1989: 236). Gowon explored the fissiparous nature of the Nigerian state in his bid to forestall the Ibo-led secession and to consolidate Nigeria's post-

civil-war unity. The FCP also served as a check-factor to address imbalances, as the wave of fragmentation tossed the country about politically.

Political analysts have also applauded the FCP as a relative success by international standards. Suberu (2010) praised how federalism has been able to address many of the conflict-prone areas of Nigeria's heterogeneity, but conceded that 'its multiple conflict-management roles notwithstanding, contemporary Nigerian Federalism has entailed enormous costs and contradictions' (Suberu, 2010: 466). For Bach (1997), the costs and contradictions were intrinsic to the mode by which the new federal units developed. In his comment on the difficult transition of Babangida, in late the 1990s, Bach opined that:

[A] major corollary to Nigeria's increasing consociational approach to politics is the consolidation of the federal state's territorial control: Nigeria has been evolving toward a unitary state with a strong decentralizing component as a result of the concentration of resources at the central level, the multiplication of states and local governments, the abandonment of the derivation principle and, since 1988, the payment of federal grants directly to the local governments. Such a trend is not really surprising, considering the roots of Nigerian federalism and its development through fissiparity rather than aggregation (Bach, 1997: 336).

Although the FCP still leaves much to be desired, it is the most vocal recognition of how complex Nigeria is as a country. The implementation of the FCP led to the perpetration of the 'State of Indigene' mechanism, a discriminatory practice that denies some citizens (Nigerians resident in a state that does not incorporate their presumed historic ancestral or indigenous communities) access to opportunities (educational admissions, bureaucratic placement, political offices, land and other economic resources, federal projects) available in such states. Second, the FCP has been exploited to multiply the political and socio-economic structures to accommodate the fragmentation of the states and the local government's areas.

On the trajectory of the Nigeria federalism, within the period coterminous with the lifespan of the RBDAs, the federation went from 12 states to 36 states, and the LGAs from 301 to 774, without any addition of land area to Nigeria. In his national broadcast on 18 June 2003, President Obasanjo disclosed that more than 500 LGAs were in the process of creation by state governments (Obasanjo, 2003). The clamour for more local governments evolved to include demands for a clearly defined autonomy for the LGAs (Giginyu, 2018). Meanwhile, more groups that felt marginalised were still agitating for the creation of more states, and politicians always make promises to push such ambitions in the federal legislative chambers

if they get the votes of the people, even though all the states were created by military regimes as are all RBDAs.

Thus, the FCP operated in the country as a mechanism of consociationalism, even though it was not able to quell the agitations for power among the ruling class, whether they be military or civilians. A glaring effect of the frequent clamour for balance was the entronement of discontinuities as a recurrent decimal in Nigeria's fragmentation federalism.

2.2.4 Recurrent Discontinuities

The sound of marshal music over the national radio was the usual prelude that announced military coups in Nigeria, and the first words heard when the music halted were often, 'Fellow Nigerians...' or 'Fellow countrymen and women...' Over the years, those phrases became emblematic of military coup d'états and the resulting total upheavals and disruptions that they meant for the trajectory of Nigerian federalism. This section examines the repeated military interruptions of Nigeria's governance as one of the factors that shaped the federalism in Africa's most populated country.

The involvement of the military in governance bequeathed to the nation men of the military extraction, who mixed up their military career with politics while in service and later carried over the military culture into partisan politics. The result was the politicisation of the military, in which serving soldiers abdicated their statutory duty of territorial defence to pursue political ambitions and occupy political posts, while still in uniform. It also led to a militarisation of the normal process of democracy in which the military culture, marked by authoritarianism and the absence of organised dialogue, became the hallmark of the nation's political processes. The twin anomalies of a politicised military and a militarised civilian population gravely derailed Nigeria federalism.

Mohammed (2011) and Ojo (2011) have handy insights on how Nigeria became a militarised federalism, in their literary contributions, to mark the half-centenary anniversary of Nigeria independence. Mohammed opined that apart from the times when the military was in power, which stood out as an aberration of federalism, founded on democratic principles, the military was the midwife of all the transitions to democratic rule. He argued that military changes could only have produced a militarised democracy, because the processes were flawed both in principle and in practice. He contended that for Nigeria, as had been the cases in many other countries:

[The] military transition was neither intended to democratise the Nigerian society nor institute a credible civilian rule. It was merely designed to re-civilianize politics without a critical plan for democratisation of power. The programme sought and preserved orthodox values and conventional stereotypes, including ensuring the return of the military into parties. This was because the programmes were planned and executed without laying the foundation for genuine popular sovereignty, majority rule and human rights (Mohammed, 2011: 587).

Citing the example of Babangida's SAP policy, Mohammed held that the military-factor introduced arbitrariness into policy making and implementation which are in critical transition processes and thus which nurtured an anti-democratic foundation for the transition projects.

A follow up to Mohammed's insight was Ojo (2011), who recognised two strands in what he called the 'military civilianization of Nigeria'. The first is the class of those who discarded military uniforms and started behaving like civilians, while maintaining direct control of the armed forces. A handy example was General Abacha, who almost got elected as a civilian president while still ruling the country as a military dictator, but for sudden his death (Figure 2:1).



Figure 2:1 A cartoonist's impression of General Abacha's planned transformation to a civilian president. Source: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Abacha-cartoon.jpg>

Another group comprised of those who formally retired from the armed forces and took up a post-retirement career in politics. Some very notable examples include General Olusegun Obasanjo (elected President for eight years/two terms) and Brigadier David Mark (Senate President for eight years). Ojo blamed 'military civilianisation' for the economic and political challenges of Nigeria, describing it as a significant hazard in Nigeria's political history. Along

with a list of ills including disrespect for the rule of law, gagging of the press and gravitation towards a one-party system, which Ojo viewed as emanating from the worldview and philosophy of military life, he summed up the resultant scenario as follows:

The military culture and tradition do not leave room for opposition and dissent to constituted Authority. Just like in military government, the ex-military politicians are dictators and never listen to wise counsel and believed in resolving issues through force and not negotiation (Ojo, 2011: 633).

The military culture and tradition affected the formulation, planning and implementation of development policies during military regimes and under militarised civilian governments, leaving the country with loads of policies that were never properly implemented and many that were cut short and dropped by succeeding governments. Sometimes, the federal administrations abandoned the plans that they conceived. While all sectors of the nation's economy have suffered setbacks due to policy interruptions, some have been more severely hit than others, because of their critical roles in the economy of the country. The chain of policies formulated for the RBDAs implemented halfway, and suddenly dropped, or even formulated at radical variance with the first aims of the basin authorities made the RBDAs a perfect reflection of the turmoil of Nigerian federalism. The next part of this work examines how the factors that shaped Nigerian federalism produced parallels on the development trajectory of the RBDAs.

2.3 Parallel Evolutions: RBDAs and Nigeria's Federalism

The focus here is how the factors explored in the first part dovetailed into the RBDAs and so shaped them. Here, we shall examine how the political economy of the re-organisation of the network of rivers, carried out to boost food production in the newly independent but fast-growing country, inadvertently mirrored the turmoil of the nation's federalism. The exposition follows the same order as the foregoing part: The Minority Question, the oil boom and the soldier's factor, the FCP, and the setbacks of political instabilities and policy interruptions. In this part, the discussion centres on the warps and woofs of these factors in the tapestry of the RBDAs.

2.3.1 The Minority Question

The creation of the RBDAs was primarily to address the agricultural needs of Nigeria in the light of new trends in the organisation of river basins, but the Minority Question shaped it into one of the current issues facing Nigeria in the post-civil war era. Thus, the RBDAs not only followed the trajectory of Nigeria's federalism but also pulsated with the turmoil of the same.

In the first place, the concern for the Minority Question was reflected in the geographical spread of the RBDAs, which followed the 12 new states created by Gowon in a belated move to stabilise the federation. In 1967, Gowon acknowledged that the failure to do that before the independence turned out to be a very costly setback:

In our common desire to win independence, many vital problems were left unsolved. One of the outstanding problems was the creation of more states which would have provided lasting stability for the Federation of Nigeria (Olusegun Obasanjo, 2015: 3-4).

Although the basin authorities were 11 at their creation in 1976, they covered the twelve-state federal structure of 1967–1976 (Figure 2:2). The only exception was Lagos, which formed the Ogun-Osun RBDA with the Oyo and Ogun states. It should be noted, however, that Lagos had a tiny landmass and laid on the same hydrological block drained by the Ogun and Osun rivers – the sources of the name Ogun-Osun RBDA (Damilola, 2016: 72). Practically, it was not possible to isolate Lagos, like the other states with more significant landmasses, and so it was left with the block of the Western State as an exception; while it enjoyed the pride of place, despite its small size, as both a state capital and the federal capital.

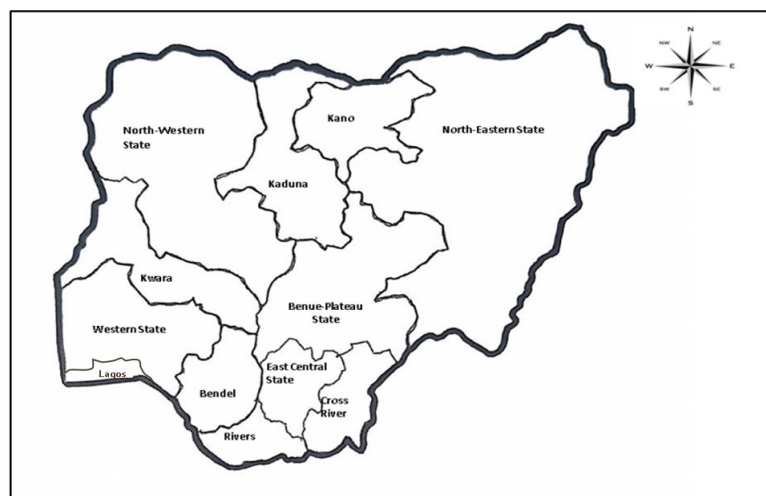


Figure 2:2 The 12 states of Nigeria from 1967-1976. Adapted by Daniel Adayi from: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/>.

Second, the catchment areas of the RBDAs got their names from the major rivers that drained them and not the states, towns or tribes in their catchment areas. The system of nomenclature put them beyond the ethnic or sectional encumbrances that would give the impression that they are anything less than federal entities. Thus, no ethnic group, no matter how large or spread, could claim any of the RBDAs, since the rivers passed through many settlements and predated them in existence.

Third, despite the steps taken to answer the Minority Question in the creation of the RBDAs, it continued to linger in different forms. In a desperate bid to ensure that at least one RBDA covered all parts of the federation, that no place was left out, and that all the RBDAs followed a standard policy prepared by the federal government, some of the RBDAs were apparently created to give to a semblance of federal balance. Some of them have now degenerated to states of redundancy. In a country with vast ecological differences, all the RBDAs operate under one blanket policy. For instance, while the basin authorities in the north like Sokoto-Rima, Hadejia-Jama'are and Chad were heavily dependent on stored water sources for their activities, because of very little rainfall in the northern savannas, RBDAs like the Niger Delta, Cross River and the Anambra-Imo had too much water. While water sale for irrigation worked in the former, it was out of place for the latter. The policy deficiency implicated a twin-factors of soldiers and oil. The deficient structure of the RBDAs could have been addressed at the planning stage if careful pilot studies had been carried out and the RBDAs mapped out according to their ecological potentials. The sudden windfall of the oil-boom derailed the focus of the government and sowed the seed of the RBDAs' doom, driven by the soldiers.

2.3.2 The Oil Boom

The discussion here turns to the oil-boom periods of the 1970s, when as high as 90% of the federal recurrent revenue came from oil-based taxes. The mid-1970s was Nigeria's golden oil era. The oil boom not only ushered in a period of plentiful money but also a culture of financial recklessness. There were many allegations of corruption against government officials, and some people even went to court to prove that certain officials had misappropriated funds

under their watch.²³ The section on Gowon's regime, in the book, *Troubled Journey – Nigeria since the Civil War*, offers a glimpse into the context in which the RBDAs started:

It was in the award of contracts that corruption appeared most prevalent and systematised. In this, both the army and civilians were serious offenders. The actual values of the contract were routinely highly inflated, the excess going into the pockets of awarding government officials. Almost overnight, especially from 1973, the number of private millionaires – even billionaires – increased. Their newly found wealth was deeply rooted in the pillage of the state (Njoku, 2004: 66).

Within that context, the RBDAs enjoyed a place of pride among the projects of the government, because the prospects of using irrigation as a quick response to the problem of hunger in the country appealed to the desperate government. Coupled with the local pressure was the international attention that the RBDAs attracted to the country. It was another feather to the cap of Yakubu Gowon, hailed as a hero for the manner that he executed the civil war. One author likened him to Abraham Lincoln for his magnanimity in the victory over the secessionists.²⁴ The reorganisation of the nation's internal rivers with the promise of an increase in food production was a chance that Gowon did not take lightly, especially with the rise in the pressure with the droughts in 1972. The propaganda was that the RBDAs would be the solution to Nigeria's drought problems. Even after Gowon, the next military governments continued with that mantra. In the interim, Gowon did not wait for the subsequent development plan before embarking on the creation of the RBDAs pilot projects. He issued Decrees 32 and 33 (1973), in which he created the Chad Basin Development Authority and the Sokoto Rima Basin Development Authority. The two new authorities were to serve as pilot projects for the others and to later be erected all over the federation. The solution to the

²³The records have it that Aper Aku who later became Governor of Benue State raised allegations of corruption against Joseph Gomwalk, Governor of Benue-Plateau State and even went as far as swearing an affidavit to that effect at the Jos High Court. Gowon summarily cleared Gomwalk of any wrongdoing, but a probe panel set up by Murtala contradicted Gowon and vindicated Aper Aku. See: Njoku, O. N. (2004, p. 65) 'Era of Misguided Good Feeling: Yakubu Gowon and the Birth of a New Nigeria', in Nwachuku, L. A. and Uzoigwe, G. N. (eds) *Troubled Journey - Nigeria Since the Civil War*. Lanham: University of America Press, Inc., pp. 52–77.

²⁴A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, a former Nigerian Political Officers, in his work *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria, published in 1971* says of Gowon that he, '... is the only new person to have emerged from the civil war with a reputation that has elevated him to a figure of international stature... He alone reminds one of Lincoln.' Cited in Clarke, J. D. (1987, p. 135) *Yakubu Gowon: Faith in a United Nigeria*. London (UK): Frank Cass.

droughts had taken off at last. In 1977, after the creation of the eleven RBDAs, the Federal Commissioner for water resources proudly declared that:

The Federal Military Government has taken measures to establish the River Basin Development Authorities and other organisations and institutions geared towards the comprehensive development of water resources, self-sufficiency in food production, food storage, conservation and other related aspects, all forming part of the long-term campaign against future drought situation (Jan van Apeldoorn, 1977: 4).

Sadly, the government felt that the availability of funds was a guarantee of results, but that turned out to be simplistic thinking. The presumed success of the RBDAs did not materialise as the government made the people believe. The RBDAs became another opening for the corruption that came with the oil boom. The indications were that either Gowon was more interested in getting quick results, or that the government did not worry about how much money it spent since it did not need any approval and so, many crucial issues related to the beginning of the RBDAs were either glossed over or not raised at all.

Akin to the foundations laid for the practice of federalism by the soldiers, the foundations of the RBDAs overlooked some thorny issues that continue to bedevil the progress of the RBDAs years later. For instance, the military government distributed lands to the RBDAs, without reference to the institutional encumbrances of the agrarian land tenure system in the country.²⁵ It was not until 1978 that the government issued a land use decree, but even then, it did not resolve the issue of land ownership between the state and the federal government. The problem of the land tenure in the north, where the first RBDAs started, has been the subject of researches and case studies (Mamman & Muhtar, 1989: 15–23).

Another parallel between the RBDAs and the turmoil of Nigerian federalism, with regards to the military and oil, was the misguided understanding that much money meant much policy success. In setting up the institutional structure of federalism and the infrastructures for

²⁵By the time the RBDAs were created, there were two principal Land Tenure Systems in the country. In the north, there was the Land Tenure Law of 1962 which placed all the land under state control, and in the south, the tenure was governed by customary law under which lands belonged to the community or clan or family and could not be alienated. Cf. Ohiorhennuan, J. F. E. (1989, p. 152) 'The State and Economic Development in Nigeria Under Military Rule, 1966-79', in Tamuno, T. N. and Atanda, J. A. (eds) *Nigeria Since Independence - The First 25 Years. Vol. IV : Government and Public Policy*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Plc.

development, the military government multiplied the structures to quell ethnic tensions. New states came with new local government areas. Gowon created 12, and the pattern of RBDAs followed the states. The states were to break the dominance of the major ethnic groups over the minority groups. The political calculations that the re-organisation of the RBDAs should follow the creation of the states left the RBDAs with many dormant structures. The deficiency arose because the uniform policies designed for the RBDAs had many limitations as a 'one size fits all' for the basin authorities. Mr Adum Ijakapla, an official at the FMWR, described the forced spread of the RBDAs as mere political creations to ensure that federal allocations got to all parts of the country, even when there was ample evidence that there was no agricultural need to be addressed by such funds.

In his assessment of the unbridled allocation of funds to the new RBDAs, Jan van Apeldoorn, a fellow of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, remarked that the starting fell short of the expected standards. The foundations were too capital intensive, and the technology foreign. In the assessment of the costs, the designers treated many real costs as inconsequential. Overall, the feasibility studies for the RBDAs were unsatisfactory, because they lacked any consideration for the social life of the local population and the reviews were in progress when the government rolled out the 11 RBDAs (Jan van Apeldoorn, 1978: 123). The hasty approach was typical of the military regimes; whatever shortcomings they met they pushed under the rug with the proclamation of a decree. Those issues forcefully pushed away, invariably returned to haunt Nigerian federalism and the policies created to support it.

The first official reference to the creation of the RBDAs appeared in the second progress report of the second national development plan (SNDP). It indicated that the Chad Basin and the Sokoto-Rima Valley Basin had taken off and that the development of others in the remaining parts of the country was underway (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1975: 49). The SNDP and its first progress report did not refer to the emergence of the RBDAs, but it appeared in the final update on the execution of the SNDP. Again, that was typical of the military regimes, their modes of legislation and their concept of the role of the centre (Elaigwu, 2007: 106). Even though Gowon created 12 states before the RBDAs, there was no

reference to any involvement of the local authorities in their management.²⁶ The exclusion of the lower levels of government from the planning of the RBDAs, later returned to militate against their progress as river basins.

Interestingly, as the struggle for resource control intensified, the RBDAs assumed the profile of a 'national cake'.²⁷ The problem escalated as state water agencies became operational, because the lands given to the RBDAs were in the care of the state governments. There were no institutional interfaces between the state water agencies and their federal counterparts, and their relationships were faulty. There were disconnects and overlapping of their workplaces or duties. The report of a recent audit of the Lake Chad RBDA by a German firm highlighted the disconnect between the states' firms and the federal agencies as one of the significant weaknesses of water management in the Lake Chad Region. The report described the dysfunctional relationships between the agencies of the six states in that catchment area and those of the federal government as follows:

There was an overlapping of roles and responsibilities among the actors regarding the water management (as in irrigated agriculture, fishing and water abstraction). The organogram of the Federal Ministry of Water Resources did not directly link to the State Ministry of Water Resources and other water sector bodies. No clear distinction between the regulators and the implementers of policies (especially with FMWR/agencies and states institutions) (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2015: 31).

The situation of Lake Chad RBDA was the same as the others, because there had not been any concerted effort to link the states' agencies to the RBDAs supervised by the FMWR. It is one of the products of the disconnected ways that the army laid the foundation of the RBDAs.

²⁶The military created the States to inherit the status of the former regions but through other legislations limited the legislative and executive powers of the States to residual matters in the interim and reserved to itself the power over the Concurrent Legislative List. See the discussion of how the first military government made and bent the law to suit its purposes by suspending the Constitution in Elaigwu, J. I. (2007, p. 102-127) *The Politics of Federalism in Nigeria*. London (UK): Adonis & Abbey Publishers.

²⁷The concept of the 'national cake' began as a reference to the commonwealth of the country but over the years have taken up the added meaning of a commonwealth to be plundered. The emphasis is on what can be gotten from the wealth that belongs to all and not so much as what can be done to safeguard it or make it grow. Cf. Nche, G. C. (2011) 'The Concept of National Cake in Nigerian Political System: Implications for National Development', *Bassey Andah Journal*, 4, pp. 79–94.

2.3.3 The Federal Character Principle

On a parallel trajectory, the development of the RBDAs, under the influence of the FCP, has also been a story that mirrors the turmoil Nigerian federalism. Similar to all the states of the federation, the RBDAs came through military decrees: Gowon created the first two (1973), Obasanjo added nine more (1979), Buhari raised the number to 18 (1984), Babangida returned it to 11 (1986), and Abacha created one more (Ayo, 1991: 5–6). It is noteworthy that akin to the creation of the states and the LGAs, the landmass remained fixed with no addition of land area to Nigeria.

Furthermore, following the prescriptions of the FCP, there have been moves to create new RBDAs by splitting some of the old ones, because some regions of the country felt that the creation of states (from 12 to 36) had redefined the boundaries of the RBDAs. The new boundaries no longer followed the number of states, and some of the catchment areas of the RBDAs showed favouritism towards some states more than others. In 2011, the Nigerian senate raised a bill for the amendment of the RBDAs Act. The proposal was to create four new RBDAs and redefine the boundaries of the existing ones. In the light of the current 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, the bill proposed that the twelve RBDAs be re-structured according to a new schedule as shown in Appendix II (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2011). The Bill did not scale through the necessary process. The senate abandoned it because of the Oronsaye Report on the rationalisation of government agencies and departments. The proposed bill went to the Oronsaye Committee as part of the report of the FMWR, while the senate was debating it. The debate on the bill stopped when the report of the Committee came out with the following statement on the RBDAs in its report:

The Committee strongly believes that the country does not need additional RBDAs as the existing ones if properly managed, are more than sufficient to deliver on their mandates, (and recommends that) the attempt to create additional RBDAs be discontinued and the existing ones be properly managed to deliver on their mandates (Mohammed, 2012: 556-557).

The white paper released by the Jonathan Government on the report accepted the recommendation (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2014 col. 256, no VII). At that time, the senate dropped the bill, but only for a while; it was taken up again at the dawn of a new political era when the opportunity came.

With the general elections in 2015 over and a new government in power, new moves were launched to pursue the split of the RBDA. In November 2016, the Deputy Senate President reintroduced the 2011 bill with slight modifications, and the National Assembly passed it as a bill seeking for the “*Equitable Distribution of River Basin Developments in Nigeria and Other Matters Connected Therein* (National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2016).

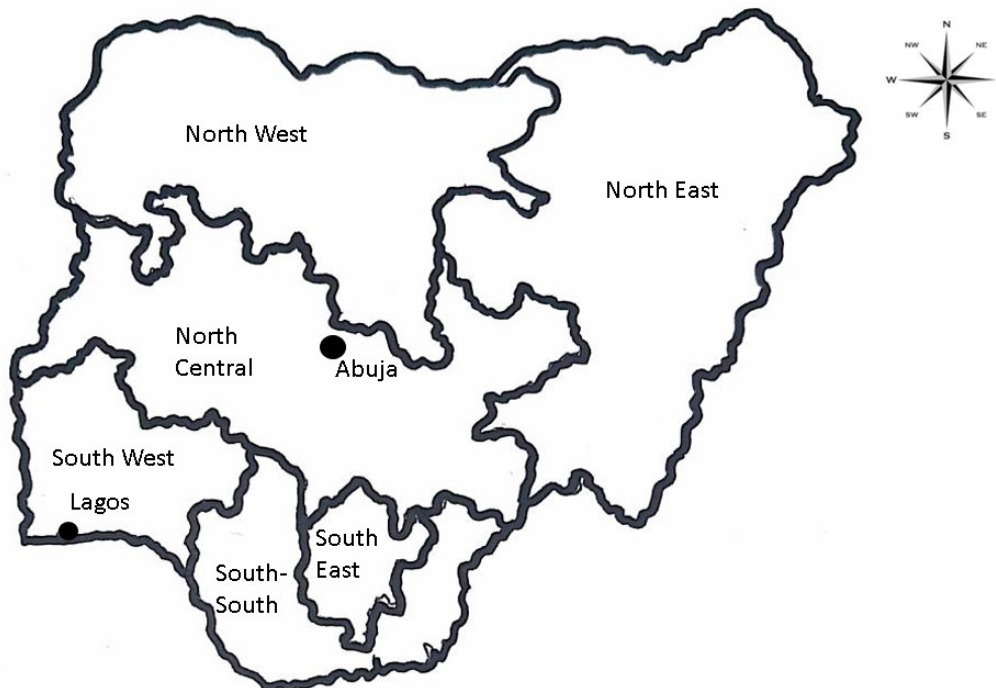


Figure 2:3 A map of Nigeria Showing the six geopolitical zones. Source: Daniel Adayi

Leading the debate on the bill, the Deputy Senate President from Enugu State, the proposed headquarters of a new RBDA, without explicit reference, invoked the provisions of the FCP to make his case for the creation of another RBDA in the south-eastern part of the country. He argued that although Nigeria had 12 RBDA, their distribution was uneven with grossly inadequate situations. He cited the arrangement at the Anambra-Imo RBDA which catered for all the five states in the south-east geo-political zone. Currently, the Anambra-Imo RBDA is the only case where one RBDA, created to serve one state, now covers five states; after the series of state creations that split the catchment area of the original river basin into five autonomous political units (Ike, 2016). The bill was backed by 15 other senators and scaled through the debates in March 2018. The senate passed the bill to the president, but it did not become a law.

If the current president assents to the bill for the creation of new RBDAs, he would be setting a precedence on the trajectory of Nigerian federalism. Until now, only military dictators created states. Even the transference of the nation's political capital from Lagos, and the creation of Abuja as the Federal Capital Territory were the works of military regimes.²⁸ When created through an act of the National Assembly, the 13th RBDA will be a first, casting a new light on the democratic system presented as bourgeois-minded and unwilling to create structures to liberate the minority groups.²⁹ For now, the parallel remains perfect; military regimes created all the states of the federation and all the RBDAs as their expression of national character for the multi-ethnic nation. Beyond the parallel effects of the FCP, the turmoil of political instabilities, which at national level governance has manifested as coups and overthrows, also affected the flow and continuity of operations of the RBDAs. Like Nigerian federalism, the RBDAs went through a series of reforms and reorganisations to get them working well. The next subsection explores the connection between the constant restructurings of the RBDAs and the turmoil of Nigerian federalism.

2.3.4 Unending State of Reorganisation

The politicisation of the military and the militarisation of politics in Nigeria, with the resultant military attitude towards governance, meant a series of policy-summersaults in a sudden and unsystematic fashion for the RBDAs, that left them often worse-off. Both the military regimes and the civilian governments were culpable in the chaotic handling of the policies of the RBDAs. The military systems were the more significant culprits for rolling out arbitrary declarations and sudden policies, which were presented as very pertinent, but later turned out to be self-serving and motivated by parochial gains. To a severe degree, the RBDAs were caught up in the fast-paced policy upheavals which took place between the regimes of

²⁸Abuja was created through Decree 6 of 1976 by the Murtala-Obasanjo regime. Cf. Ardo, U. (2003, p. 126) *Murtala Muhammed: Architect of Modern Nigeria*. Princeton, N.J.: Sungai Corp.

²⁹David (2015) asserted that, 'experience under civilian rule had shown that the bourgeois-minded civilian politicians from larger groups were not ready to entertain any self-determination for smaller groups,' this, he says, is the reason why all the creation of states have been by the military who have responded more favourably to the national question. This position has not received much backing. See: David, D. Y. (2015, p. 77) 'States Creation Since 1967: An Imperative of the Military Contribution to Nation-Building in Nigeria', *African Journal of History and Culture*, 7(3), pp. 71–78. doi: 10.5897/AJHC2014.0199.

Generals Murtala and Obasanjo and the first years of General Babangida's administration (the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s).

Nwa (2003), in his well-researched work, *History of Irrigation, Drainage and Flood Control in Nigeria – From Pre-colonial Time to 1999*, presented a picture of the evolution of the FMWR, the mother ministry of the RBDAs. He said, it was a series of sudden changes characterised by short-lived mergers and appointments that were made and terminated without consideration for continuity. In his words, the constant policy interruptions have left the water resources sector in a 'permanent state of reorganisation'; it appeared the only things taking place were reorganisations and plans for restructurings. Nwa's narratives showed that the FMWR at different times had the status of an independent ministry headed by a minister, or that of a department in a ministry made of a merger of ministries. In the latter case, the RBDAs existed as a department headed by a director.

Murtala's administration approved of the creation of the Federal Department of Water Resources (FDWR) in early 1975 and placed it under the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (FMANR), headed by a director. In April of the same year, Murtala created the FMWR and moved the FDWR from FMANR to a new ministry. After his assassination, General Obasanjo created a new department called the Federal Department of Rural Development (FDRD). The FMANR became the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD). By 1977, in the second year of the Obasanjo's regime, the FMARD and the FMWR were merged to form the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development (FMAWRRD). So, between 1975–77, water resources management went from a department to an independent ministry and to a merger of three bureaus. Shehu Shagari dismantled Obasanjo's arrangement when he took over as an elected president in 1979. The FMWR came back as a separate ministry, but not for long. In 1984, General Buhari, who ousted Shagari the previous year, re-merged the FMWR and FMARD to form the FMAWRRD again. The arrangement lasted for less than five years. In 1989, General Babangida reinstated the FMWR, but he remerged it with FMARD to form the FMAWRRD once more in 1992. After about one year, the merger was set aside by Ernest Shonekan, who managed the country for about three months as the Head of the Interim National Government (ING) in 1993. He also reinstated the FMWR and added Rural Development to make it Federal Ministry

of Water Resources and Rural Development (FMWRRD). The status quo remained until the return to civilian rule in 1999.

The RBDAs did not fare any better with the country's return to civilian rule, beginning with the swearing-in of Obasanjo, who ruled the country as a General between 1975 and 1979. The old dispensation only changed in the nomenclature; the military, arbitrary approach still dominated the civilian era. Obasanjo appointed Bello Kaliel, a retired army officer who served as a Military Governor in his 1975 cabinet, to head the FMWR. Kaliel scaled through the appointment screening of the National Assembly, even though he had no earlier experience of water sector management. That appointment ended with Obasanjo's first cabinet reshuffle in the second year. The effective discharge of the ministerial functions needed more than just old comradeship and party affiliation.

The next two presidents towed the same path of radical policy breaks as their predecessors. Yar'Adua, who took over from Obasanjo, had no record of military experience, but his approach to policy continuity did not differ from that of his predecessors. An analyst suggested that the 'military approach' of Yar'Adua might have come from his exposure to the military through his elder brother, General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua – who served as the second in command to Obasanjo between 1977–1979. The administration of Yar'Adua had many former military officers who had been loyalists of his army general elder brother (Ojo, 2011: 634). Yar'Adua set aside the wave of reforms that Obasanjo had begun in the RBDAs.³⁰ The government of Yar'Adua launched a new seven-point agenda in a complete departure from the policies of Obasanjo, although, both came from the same political party and Obasanjo had paved the way for Yar'Adua's election (Obasanjo, 2014: 204–221).

Next came Goodluck Jonathan, who succeeded Yar'Adua. He also veered tangentially off the policy course of his predecessor, casting aside the policies of previous governments, both military and democratic. Jonathan came from the academia and had no military pedigree.

³⁰As soon as Obasanjo was sworn in as the president in 1999, he called for an overall assessment of the various RBDAs to determine their capacities and how to enhance them. See: FMWR. (1999). Policies for full Utilization of Resources of River Basin and Rural Development Authorities. In *Memoranda Submitted at the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Water Resources held at the Cultural Centre, Calabar, Cross River State (1st – 4th December, 1999)* (pp. 26–38). Calabar: Federal Ministry of Water Resources.

Furthermore, he came from the same party, People's Democratic Party (PDP), as Obasanjo and Yar'Adua and had served in the economic planning team of his predecessor before fate catapulted him into the number one position. At his swearing-in, Jonathan acknowledged that Yar'Adua had left a 'profound legacy' for him follow, adding that, 'He was not just a boss, but a good friend and a brother' (Smith, 2010). However, Jonathan only managed to hold on to Yar'Adua's seven-point agenda for one year and ditched them. Even though he was the vice president and a member of the economic planning team, he jettisoned the seven-point agenda and launched the ATA. Thus, in the 16 years that the PDP held the reins of power in the country, the RBDAs experienced three major policy shifts under the three administrations; but, things went from bad to worse.

Expectedly, in 2015, 'Change' was Buhari's mantra when he called on the electorate to rise against the PDP for not managing the economy well, and for allowing high-level corruption in the government. When Buhari was sworn-in, he decided to discard the policies of the PDP, the same way that many presidents before him had done, without critically assessing them. The setting aside was a wholesale process that condemned the previous administrations and dismissed those appointed to drive the machinery of the Jonathan government. However, Buhari later began to reintroduce the rejected policies under new terminologies with new vocabularies.

For the RBDAs, it was another wave of sudden changes with new heads appointed for all the positions in the FMA and the FMWR. The ATA became the *Agriculture Promotion Policy (2016–2020): Building on the Successes of the ATA, Closing Key Gaps*, and the TRIMING became an agricultural development programme encased in Buhari's change agenda, to revitalise the RBDAs for the eventual full commercialisation (Federal Ministry of Agriculture Nigeria, 2016: 59). In a recent article in one of the most widely read national dailies, boldly titled, *FG to Commercialise River Basin Agencies by 2019*, the Minister of Water Resources set the year of Buhari's seeking re-election for a second term as the long-awaited dream year, for the partial commercialisation of the RBDAs. The political implications of the Minister's announcement were obvious: The campaign for Buhari's re-election had started. Jonathan's government did the same thing in 2015 before the general elections (see Ochekepe, 2014a).

Viewed from the perspective of the RBDAs, the end of one administration and the beginning of another was and continues to be a critical juncture laden with uncertainties; it results in

new policy inputs or the reversals of old ones in the RBDAs' permanent re-organisation. It is logical to affirm that the continuous reorganisation of the RBDAs will not cease as long as the dynamics of Nigerian federalism remain in turmoil. It is a parallelism powered by discordant, but long-standing factors seeking for reconciliation.

2.4 Conclusion

The juxtaposition of the developmental history of the RBDAs on the trajectory of Nigerian federalism revealed parallels of causal factors and results. This literary exposé has examined the RBDAs in the light of factors that has shaped federalism as Nigeria's political mode of governance, against the backdrop of the hypothesis that underpinned this chapter and the research question. The findings have been affirmative.

Regarding causalities, the policies the RBDAs have come from the same political systems and human agencies that moulded Nigeria's federalism and its peculiarities. The causal factors are the same; the civil war, military regimes, the oil boom, the frequent interruptions in the government and the locally crafted FCP. The push and pull effects of the causal factors follow the same pattern. In the era of the oil boom, there was sufficient money to increase federal structures across the country, to consolidate the nascent federalism. The RBDAs benefited from that growth through the increase of allocations and supply of equipment. In the same vein, the windfall of the oil boom led to a rise in financial carelessness which undermined the foundations of the RBDAs.

The same parallelism exists in the impacts that the factors have on the RBDAs and the federation. The effects include the slow rate of development, as a result of many military interventions, spates of ethnic tensions, and violence rooted in the yet-to-be-resolved Minority Question, and the fact that after more than half a century of independence, Nigerian federalism is still struggling. These are effects parallel with the trajectories of federalism and the development of the RBDAs. Some political analysts rate Nigeria's democracy as unstable and uncertain; the same appraisal is accurate of the river basins after five decades of their operations. The hypothesis (*the development of the RBDAs is a classic reflection of the turmoil that characterises the trajectory of Nigerian federalism*) behind the submission of this chapter, in the light of the illustrations that have been advanced to show how the RBDAs have mirrored the turmoil of Nigerian federalism, is a valid proposition.

CHAPTER THREE

THE REFORMS

It is expected that if and when the RBDAs are reformed, they will begin to deliver on their mandates, and either directly or indirectly would begin to drive the production of food, both for domestic consumption and for the purpose of export (food security); jobs would be created directly and indirectly, income would be generated, poverty would be alleviated and the socio-economic well-being of rural dwellers and the rural economy would grow and develop. - Benjamin Ezra Dikki, Ag. Director General, Bureau of Public Enterprises (2014).

The lofty dreams and expectations that coloured the political climate of Nigeria when Obasanjo's government launched the River Basins Development Authorities (RBDAs) in 1979 are yet to produce the much-expected food-secured nation, after four decades. Not even the succession of the grand plans for increase in food production, involving substantial financial investments in the RBDAs have made a significant difference. The RBDAs were the flags of hope for the nation's food security drive. However, as time went by, they appeared to have become entangled in a web of gaps in public policy formulation and implementation which reflects the strands and gaps in the attempts to define the term public policy.

The effort to define public policy has been a multi-faceted and a very dynamic literary exercise. One straightforward definition is that government policies are what government do or neglect to do (Klein and Marmor, 2006: 892). Another perspective, more detailed, viewed it as the 'series of steps taken by a government to solve problems, make decisions, allocate resources or values, implement policies, and in general, to do the things expected of them by their constituencies' (Dahida and Maidoki, 2013: 57). The policymaking process involves the formulation, implementation and evaluation stages. Any failure in the process is considered a gap, revealing a distance between what a policy set out to achieve and its actual outcome (Rosli and Rossi, 2014: 4). The development of the RBDAs tells the story of how a policy could fail in several or all its ramifications.

The RBDAs were classified as an agricultural programme of the federal government and underwent series of policy changes and adjustments (Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe, 2012: 14). This chapter examines the performance of the RBDAs through the evidence available on the implementation of reform policies channelled towards them by different governments. It

looks at the vast literature on how development in the various sectors of the country was adversely affected by the burden of policymaking, beginning with the central administration (Aminu, Tella and Mbaya, 2012), to the subsectors like education (Okoroma, 2006), population (Turnwait and Mayowa, 2017), health (Anyika, 2014) and agriculture (Olukunle, 2013).

Our hypothesis (H₃) for this chapter is that:

The quest for the reform of the RBDAs, through partial commercialisation has, so far, yielded minimal and unsatisfactory dividends, as the privatisation policy, which is the principal reform mechanism, has been undermined by policy gaps, inconsistencies and discontinuities.

Against the backdrop of the hypothesis, we trace how the privatisation policy fared under different governments to establish the gaps in the policy formulation, the policy discontinuities owing to the changes in the administrations, and discontinuities and inconsistencies as various governments reformulated the corporate mission of the RBDAs.

Our research question(RQ₃) here is:

How have policy gaps, contradictions, and discontinuities affected the realisation of the reforms of the RBDAs through privatisation?

The time scope covers the period of about three decades of reforms in the RBDAs, from the first initiative in 1985 by General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida to the current democratic government. In seven broad sections arranged chronologically, the chapter shows how successive governments tried to reform the RBDAs. The discussion begins from the changes that arose from the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of Babangida's regime where we examine the original templates for the privatisation and commercialisation policy using the first official documents of Babangida's government and the actions taken to actualise the programme in the administration of the RBDAs. The second part is a brief examination of the state of the reforms the decade after the kick-off and the third part examines the second phase of the changes which was driven by Obasanjo when he returned as a civilian president. The fourth part looks at the RBDAs modifications within the context of Goodluck Jonathan's Transformation Agenda (TA). The following section, the fifth, is a discussion of the most recent inputs under President Buhari, currently in the first year of his second term in office. The last

part is a discursive summary built around the hypothesis and the operational question underlying the aim of this chapter.

3.1 The Background and the Beginning of the Reforms

The first question that often comes to mind when faced with the success or failure of a reform is why it became necessary to embark on an improvement in the first place. A change presupposes that a social or economic process has veered off the planned path. The quest for the reformation of the RBDAs is part of a broader bid to rid the Nigerian public sector of unproductivity and dates to the mid-1970s. It was the aftermath of some of the failed post-civil war bids to rebuild the nation.

The chronicle of public reforms in Nigeria published by the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation under the title, *Public Service Reforms in Nigeria (1999-2014) – A Comprehensive Review*, traced the roots of the economic setbacks in the public sector to Gowon's Indigenisation Decree (1972). The decree created ways for increased participation in public enterprises (PEs). According to the review, the government set up many PEs across the different sectors of the economy and encouraged citizens to invest in them. However, the policy turned out to be a waste of resources. Sadly, the review noted that:

[O]ver time it became evident that the PEs, which had been established with noble and egalitarian objectives, had failed in the country with their dismal performance. It was estimated that PEs were consuming about USD3 billion of national resources annually by way of grants, subventions, subsidies (both direct and indirect) through import duty waivers, tax exemptions, etc. Tax deductions at source were not remitted to appropriate authorities (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2014: 85).

In the same vein, the PEs became a means for granting political patronages, rent seeking and parasitism. There were myriads of board appointments that controlled funds to the tune of ₦1 trillion. Cumulatively, the PEs never served either their customers, employees, or the taxpayers well and the government incurred substantial economic losses from running them.

To check the huge losses, the government commissioned four studies between 1968 and 1985 to investigate the causes and recommend actions to end the woeful trends. According to Lawrence Okechukwu Azubuike, who carried out his doctoral research on the privatisation policy in Nigeria, four Commissions, namely, Ani (1968), Udoji (1973), Onosode (1981) and Al-

Hakim (1984), studied the states of the PEs and turned in the same verdict: the PEs had, over a period of time, become an economic burden on the government (Azubuike, 2007).³¹ However, the government's response to the last two studies differed significantly from the earlier ones; different regimes commissioned the two studies. Both commissions recommended selective privatisation of the PEs. Shehu Shagari set up the Onosode Commission and the military administration of Muhammadu Buhari instituted the Al-Hakim Commission (Olukunle, 2013). Notably, the two commissions undertook their studies when the country faced economic crises, and there were intense international pressures for the public sector to be revamped to put the ailing economy on the path of recovery. Some analysts argued that the recommendations of the studies followed the emerging global trends championed by the Washington Consensus, which favoured the integration of the public sector with the private enterprises.

Apparently, the reforms were more of window dressing, to place Nigeria among the conforming nations rather than providing concrete solutions to the real problems faced by the country. The government of General Buhari disagreed with the terms offered by the IMF and Babangida, who ousted the former in a coup, opted for a locally-crafted Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) within which he began a series of reforms in the public sector (Adams, 2018). The RBDAs underwent a radical and definitive change of its original mandate during Babangida's SAP.

3.1.1 Babangida's Structural Adjustment Programme

Four years after Babangida seized power to rescue the country from economic collapse, the nation was still facing an economic crisis, and the Bretton Woods Institutions demanded for a privatisation of the public sector as a condition for giving financial aid (Anyanwu, 1992: 6). The studies of the public sector showed that the industries had become a financial liability to the government. SAP which the nation embarked upon in 1986 provided the necessary launch pad for the new policy, as Babangida affirmed in his address at the International Conference on Privatization and Commercialisation in 1990:

³¹ Azubuike, L. O. (1988, p. 7). *Privatization and Foreign Investments in Nigeria*. Golden Gate University.

I wish to use this opportunity to re-emphasise that the Federal Military Government is committed to implementing the programme of privatisation and commercialisation as an integral element of SAP (Babangida, 1991: 129).

The process of commercialising the RBDAs was a whole-scale policy directed at the entire public sector. The awareness campaign of Babangida's regime presented privatisation and commercialisation as the mainstay of SAP:

One of the cornerstones of the Structural Adjustment Programme embarked upon by the Federal Military Government is the Privatisation and Commercialisation of Government's industrial and commercial agencies, parastatals and public enterprises. This bold step is dictated by the sad experience this nation has gathered through the years in terms of the financial returns that should have accrued to Government participating in industrial and commercial ventures. Government has found itself financially harm strung by its own zeal. Especially where over-employment is added to the cancerous social feeling that Government money is nobody's money. The Nigerian nation reached a situation whereby it made great financial contributions to industrial and commercial growth but received no profit (Federal Military Government, 1988).

To kick-start the process, Babangida's regime released Decree No 25, also known as the Privatisation and Commercialization Decree (1988), which provided for the privatisation and commercialisation of all government-owned enterprises and other enterprises in which the government had equity interests. Some of the significant directions in the decree included the definitions of the terms 'privatisation,' 'commercialisation', the list of the enterprises to be affected, the process and the setting up of a Technical Committee on Privatisation and Commercialisation (TCPC) that would mediate the process.

After that, the framework for the implementation came, and the process went full swing. Many publications were made to enlighten the public and the concerned sectors about the expected outcomes and what to do about them. The primary source is the three-volume report released by the TCPC under the auspices of the presidency with the title, *Final Report; Volumes 1-3*. Specifically, the relevant texts were Volume One (Main Report) and Volume Three (Commercialisation) which dealt with the RBDAs and the other PEs listed among the enterprises billed for partial commercialisation. A Clarification of partial commercialisation within the broad context of privatisation is necessary for understanding the overall picture of the template for the policy.

3.1.2 Distinction between Privatisation and Commercialization

Both privatisation and commercialisation are about the mode government's financial involvement in public enterprises. However, the oft-used terminology is privatisation. The reason may not be unconnected with the private sector dimension in both cases. At the technical level, there are a few notable differences. The final report of the TCPC defined privatisation in two ways - narrow and broad:

Privatisation is the transfer of Government-owned shareholding in designated enterprises to a private shareholder, comprising individuals and corporate bodies. Broadly defined, privatisation is umbrella terms to describe a variety of policies which encourage competition and emphasise the role of market forces in place of statutory restrictions and monopoly powers (Technical Committee on Privatisation & Commercialisation, 1993a: 13).

The two definitions stand for the two pathways to privatisation; the first defines the process of privatising without structural adjustment while the second construes privatisation as an integral part of the structural adjustment programme as was the case of Nigeria. On the other hand, the TCPC defined commercialisation as:

[The] re-organisation of enterprises wholly or partially owned by the Government, in which the commercialised enterprises shall run as profit-making commercial ventures without subvention from the Government (Technical Committee on Privatisation & Commercialisation, 1993a: 46).

The commercialisation can either be full or partial. With commercialisation, the enterprises are expected to run profitably and raise funds from the capital market without guarantees from the government. They are expected to use private sector procedures to run their businesses. In the case of partial commercialisation, however, the enterprises are expected to generate enough revenue to cover their operating cost. The government may consider them for capital grants towards financing their capital-intensive projects. All the RBDAs, as one block, were put up for partial commercialisation. As part of the legal framework for the commercialisation exercise, the TCPC explained that the enterprises designated for full marketing were expected to operate profitably on a commercial basis and be able to raise funds from the capital market without a government guarantee. Such enterprises were supposed to use private sector procedures in the running of their business. Also, the TCPC mentioned that the enterprises designated for partial commercialisation would be expected to generate enough revenue to cover their operating expenditures. The federal government

might consider them for capital grants to finance their capital-intensive projects (Technical Committee on Privatisation & Commercialisation, 1993b: 1)

Thus, while privatisation involved the transfer of government-owned shares to the private sector, a process which was to end government's right of ownership to the enterprises; commercialisation was about reorganising how the public enterprises would operate with minimal government intervention. The government would retain its interests, but the enterprises would run as profit-making ventures without funding. The government might step in for capital intensive projects. The terms privatisation, commercialisation and partial commercialisation are used interchangeably in this paper. In all cases where they refer to the LBRBDA, they are to be understood as partial commercialisation in its strict application, since that was the policy recommended by the government for the RBDAs.

3.1.3 Framework for the Partial -Commercialisation of the Basin Authorities

The third volume of the final report spelt out the roadmap for the partial commercialisation of the RBDAs and the recommendations of the TCPC for the enterprises earmarked for commercialisation (both full and partial). Here, we find the specific schema for the RBDAs which addresses only the water-related assets.³² The non-water assets come up in a later part of the report. The RBDAs were part of the public utilities that had not met the expectations of the country as a principal instrument for the attainment of self-sufficiency in food production. Some of the reasons given for the setbacks included inadequate funding, lack of technological infrastructure, bureaucratic bottlenecks in their relations with the supervising ministry, undue interference in the operating decision and poor resource allocation.

Accordingly, the report stated that the thrust of the commercialisation programmes for the RBDAs was to embark on measures that were radical breaks with past attempts at introducing changes. In that regard, the RBDAs would run purely as commercial enterprises and be able to undertake the following function within the general regulatory powers of the government;

³² The water-related assets are those that relate to the new functions of the RBDAs as defined by the TCPC. The non-water assets were put up for sale since they became redundant by the structure of the RBDAs.

fix rates, prices and charges for the goods and services they provide, acquire assets, borrow money and issue debenture stocks, and have juridical rights

3.1.4 Objectives of Commercialization

The broad aims of the partial commercialisation of the RBDAs were to re-orientate the RBDAs towards a new horizon of performance improvement and to remove bureaucratic bottlenecks in their decision-making process to enhance operational efficiency and the achievement of the aims of the RBDAs. Also, the partial commercialisation would evolve a workforce whose fortune was linked with the RBDAs, working in an efficient, cost-conscious and goal-oriented system that profited all stakeholders. In the long run, the new policy would ensure a comprehensive review of the accounting and information system in the RBDAs to install and support a modern and effective accounting system which would promptly and accurately produce the necessary data for checking their financial operations and performance. The new arrangement would review the present dependence of the RBDAs on the treasury for funding through a more realistic capital structure, which would enable them to approach the capital market to fund their operations without government guarantees.

3.1.5 Outline of Proposed Restructuring of the Basin Authorities for Commercialisation

The eleven RBDAs fall into three groups according to their capacities with new and different sizes of the Board of Directors. A timeframe for when the cessation of funding RBDAs from the treasury of the central government had 1997 as the deadline (Table 2). However, Capital Subvention, estimated to be worth 8.4 billion naira as of 31st December 1990 from the government, would continue until the water sector broke even.

Table 2 Outline of the groupings of the RBDAs sizes of the Board of Directors and planned period of cessation of subvention. Source: TCPC Adapted by Daniel Adayi

The Clusters of RBDAs	Size of the Board of Directors	Period of transition	End of Subvention
(A) Hedejia-Jama'are; Sokoto-Rima; Chad	Nine members, including the Chairman and a representative of the Supervising ministry	Two years	1993
(B) Anambra-Imo; Ogun-Osun; Upper Benue; Lower Benue; Niger	Seven members including the Chairman and a	Three years	1994

	representative of the Supervising ministry		
(C) Cross River; Benin-Owena; Niger-Delta	Five members including the Chairman and a representative of the Supervising ministry	Five years	1996

3.1.6 River Basin Activities for the Partial Commercialisation Process

The report also gave a list of the activities to be commercialised and directed that the Board of Directors of each RBDA develop a scale of chargeable fees for the various marketed services. Nine broad service areas were listed viz:

1. Water supply
2. Dam operation and management
3. Irrigation Projects - canal construction, construction of night storage and compensatory reservoirs, procurement and installation of pumps, sprinklers and other necessary equipment
4. Borehole Drilling
5. Land Clearing, preparation, management and leasing
6. Consultancy Services
7. Plant Hire services
8. Soil and Water Testing Laboratories
9. Auto-repairs and Services

In carrying out these services, and ensuring that the expected turn-over of the RBDAs took place within the envisaged timeframe, the government also approved further reforms within the catchment areas of the RBDAs and the water sector in general. These measures included the preparation of the national water policy with the proper legislative backing. RBDAs should allow unimpeded fishing activities and the leasing of land under irrigation at fixed commercial rates. In this regard, RBDAs were to develop accounting policies to discriminate between productive investments and social investments in deciding the depreciation charged on their productive assets. The following were the highlighted areas demanding attention for the turn-over to be complete and sustainable:

- The budgeting system in the RBDAs was in the initial stage. The budget should be used to control expenditure, and the accounting system synchronised with the budgeting system. A management accounting department should be created to provide them with crucial management information.
- RBDAs would be expected to cover themselves for normal business insurance risks for their various assets, including motor vehicles but not dams and reservoirs.
- The board of directors should, as a matter of urgency, develop conditions of services to enable the RBDAs to attract, recruit and keep the most suitable personnel.

3.1.7 The Recapitalisation of the River Basin Development Authorities

Another recognised urgent need of the RBDAs was their recapitalisation. As part of the commercialisation programme, the RBDAs needed a new financial pedestal for them to play their pivotal role in the search for economic development and self-sufficiency, particularly in food production and raw materials for the nation's industries. Accordingly, the TCPC recommended that:

For them to play their rightful roles, they must begin to demonstrate the financial procedure and responsible asset management, particularly the maintenance and rehabilitation of their existing hardware and structure. Indeed, unless good money is put into repair and rehabilitate faulty or disused plants, machinery and equipment and to de-silt canals, the RBDAs stand to suffer monumental losses in material value represented by the non-functioning of the RBDA system. For many years, most of them did nothing beyond the payment of staff salaries to idle staff who cannot work because there are no materials. The government must be prepared to provide adequate financial resources for the RBDAs (TCPC, 1993b: 231).

In that vein, the immediate and necessary funding to get them off on the road to commercialisation included the financing of the repair and rehabilitation of faulty assets, paying debts, acquiring new equipment and providing take-off grants among others

3.1.8 Recommendations on the Sale of Non-water Assets of the Basin Authorities

To complete the picture of the framework mapped out for the partial commercialisation of the RBDAs, we must discuss the alienation of the non-water assets. It should be noted that it was detailed work, and we are only presenting a redaction of the salient points. The TCPC report had the sale of non-water assets of the RBDAs as a separate chapter in Volume Three.

The background to the sale of the non-water assets arose from the directive that RBDAs were to stop direct agricultural productions, and the later approval for the disposal of the non-water assets of the RBDAs. In 1988, the TCPC inherited the task of handling the sales of the asset of the RBDAs on the understanding that:

[Those] assets were surplus to their requirements under the revised role and such sales would not in any way affect their operations as redefined under Decree No. 35 of 1987. Indeed, by 1988, all the RBDAs had abandoned assets and were rotting away (*sic*) (TCPC, 1993b: 231).

The TCPC set up committees to verify the compiled inventories, value them and tender them for sale to the public. The result was below expectation; less than 25% of the amount due came into the treasury.

In a nutshell, the three reasons given for the poor returns were:

- a. Large scale theft of the equipment and spare parts. A considerable number of items advertised for sale were either missing or vandalised
- b. Deterioration of equipment/building. Arising from lack of use, most of the buildings and equipment have deteriorated badly, and their continued abandonment has worsened their operational condition and reduced their market value.
- c. Over-valuation of reserve values. The TCPC believed that the reserve values for many of the projects were overstated and unrealistic.

On the yet-to-be-sold assets, the TCPC recommended to the government that the assets revert to the respective RBDAs on the conditions that:

- a. Such a project should be run strictly on a commercial basis or if necessary, as a separate entity.
- b. Where the projects were uncompleted and require additional investment to make them operational, the host local government or community should be encouraged to take them over and complete them. Such projects could be passed over to them on long-term loans.
- c. Where considerable compensation was still outstanding on the projects, the local communities should take over such project gratis and operate them.

For clarity, accountability and continuity, the report reproduced the comprehensive lists of all the states of the non-water assets of all the RBDAs in the concluding part of one volume of the report. The listings showed all the sold and outstanding assets with a final caveat that the RBDAs should organise the sale using the guidelines given by the TCPC. The funds realised went to the respective RBDAs.

3.1.9 The Basin Authorities at the end of the Babangida's Regime

Babangida's administration left the RBDAs far worse, both structurally and otherwise, since none of them were able to break even as envisaged. The stripping of the RBDAs of their agricultural productions effectively shattered the holistic vision of integral basin organisation recommended by the UN Report of Experts. Furthermore, the RBDAs found themselves in a state of disarray as it became clear that they had been edged out of their primary role of food production and were only existing, without funds to embark on the newly re-defined functions. The situation was aggravated by the ominous political cloud that enveloped and forced Babangida to 'step aside' from his role as the leader of the country. In a pungent summary of the exit of Babangida's fall from power in the book, *Troubled Journey – Nigeria Since the Civil War*, Dibua asserted that the end of Babangida's government was a collapse of purpose that truncated his own aspirations and his chain of grandiose but egocentric national plans (Dibua, 2014: 227).

For the RBDAs, the privatisation process was the case of a policy that appeared suitable on paper, but the implementation fell short of the lofty results it promised. The exit of Babangida ushered in a period of political uncertainty and played up another military dictatorship, led by Sani Abacha. The implementation of the privatisation policy got very little attention as Abacha faced opposition to his repressive government from local activists and the international community (Amuwo, 2001: 1). The resulting state of political uncertainty meant that the various programmes of socio-economic transformation which Babangida put in place either failed or were discarded. The privatisation policy did not receive any significant input as Nigeria went through the dark years of political uncertainties under Sani Abacha. However,

the push for reforms surfaced again in the National Rolling Plans, the new model of development planning adopted in 1990.³³

3.2 Water Sector Reforms During the Abacha's Era

The 1996–98 National Rolling Plan was the seventh in the series of the three-year Rolling Plans since the adoption of the strategy in 1990. It formed an interface between the end of military rule and the return to democratic governance in Nigeria. The 1998 National Rolling Plan marked the decade since the Babangida regime issued Decree No 25 that kicked-off the privatisation and commercialisation programme. The thrust of the Rolling Plan was to create a stable microeconomic environment for long term sustainable growth and development by targeting such sectors as agriculture and manufacturing, promotion of national self-reliance, and reducing unemployment. Accordingly, the Rolling Plans emphasised the sustenance of the policy of managed deregulation of the economy and the continuation of the current posture of tight fiscal and monetary policy. Other measures would include pursuance of privatisation and commercialisation programme, especially with regard to public Sector manufacturing enterprises and public utilities.

For the RBDAs (through the Water Resources Ministry), the Plan proposed a restructure. The Federal Ministry of Water Resources and Rural Development (FMWRRD) created in 1993, would supervise the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) which was launched by Babangida's regime in 1986. The RBDAs would be used by the merged ministry to execute its programmes in various parts of the country. DFRRI was a government programme

The addition of DFRRI to the FMWRRD was to boost the activities of the RBDAs in the small-scale irrigation schemes. The plan announced that aid had been secured from the African Development Bank to conduct a study on National River Basin Irrigation Planning to assist in

³³In 1990, Nigeria adopted three-year development plan called the National Development Plan. For instance, the Rolling Plan in 1990 had a scope of 1990-91-92 while the Rolling Plan in 1991 spread over 1991-92-93. See: Ukah, O. C. (2008, p. 19) 'An Appraisal of the Performance of the Nigeria's National Rolling Plans in the 90's', *African Research Review*, 1(1), pp. 14–23. doi: 10.4314/afrev.v1i1.40987.

the formulation of a framework for project selection, planning and investment decision in the area of irrigation. However, the Plan drew attention to the problems that have plagued the sector persistently, and repeated the oft-tendered lines:

Most of the plants and machinery of the River Basin and Rural Development Authorities are old with most of them have outlived their functional life, and so need complete refurbishment or outright replacement. Added to the problem of ageing plants and machinery are those of high cost of fuel and lubrication necessary for operating the agricultural machinery and equipment (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1996).

The plan noted that because of the difficulties in the RBDAs, farmers grew increasingly unwilling to pay for machinery services provided by the RBDAs. The farmers opted for the use of manual labour with its attendant effects and reduction in crop yields.

With the Abacha government, the privatisation process entered a phase of institutional discontinuity. DFFRI, which had been created to take up the agricultural and rural development aspect of the RBDAs underwent a restructuring. The RBDAs became the parastatal that executed the programmes of DFFRI. The new policy direction did not rectify the poor state of the machines and equipment that had trailed the RBDAs from the implementation of Babangida's SAP. The RBDAs did not receive much attention during the Abacha regime and remained at a shallow level of activities until 1999 when Olusegun Obasanjo returned as an elected President and awakened the privatisation policy. It was the beginning of a new dawn for the RBDAs.

3.3 Privatisation Reloaded

The second phase of the privatisation and commercialisation policy began with the election of Olusegun Obasanjo as the Head of the Government in 1999. The Obasanjo intervention was the second phase, since it was the first wholesale overhaul of the institutional arrangements put in place for the privatisation and commercialisation of PEs, after the adoption of the policy by the Babangida government. In Obasanjo's inauguration speech on 29th May 1999, he called for renaissance and reforms. It was a wake-up call to all Nigerians. With millions of Nigerians in attendance, he lamented the deplorable of the economy:

Instead of progress and development, which we are entitled to expect from those who governed us, we experienced in the last decade and a half, particularly in the

last regime but one, persistent deterioration in the quality of our governance, leading to instability and the weakening of all public institutions. Our country has thus been through one of its darkest periods. All these have brought the nation to a situation of chaos and near despair (Obasanjo, 1999).

Shortly after, Obasanjo rolled out an avalanche of sectoral reforms. He reinvigorated the privatisation policy by enacting the Public Enterprises (Privatisation and Commercialisation) Act 1999. The Act restructured the implementation modalities of Babangida's decree, in line with international best practice and created the National Council on Privatisation (NCP) and the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE). The NCP was to decide the political, economic and social aims of the programme, approves policies and public enterprises to be privatised or commercialised, and issues directives to BPE, while the BPE implemented the council's guidelines.

In his speech titled, *The Imperative of Privatization*, given at the inauguration of the National Council on Privatization in 1999, President Olusegun Obasanjo again decried the comatose situation of public enterprises in Nigeria:

State enterprises suffer from fundamental problems of defective capital structure, excessive bureaucratic control or intervention, inappropriate technology, gross incompetence and mismanagement, blatant corruption and crippling complacency which monopoly engenders. Inevitably, these shortcomings take a heavy toll on the national economy (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2001: 4).

In a veiled reference to the dismantling of political structure, the level of deterioration and plundering of the country's resources under Abacha, Obasanjo lamented that some past governments have adversely affected the economic and political fortunes of the country. Obasanjo promised to undertake a sweeping reform of the public sector to restore damaged infrastructure and win back the confidence of the international community in Africa's most populous nation. Keeping his word, he launched a comprehensive reform of the government sector, which became for the RBDA's the second phase of the partial commercialisation policy.

The second phase of the privatisation of public enterprises began in 1999 with the setting up of the permanent institutional structure. The government restructured the implementation procedures by enacting the Public Enterprises (Privatisation and Commercialisation) Act. The coordinating bodies were now named the National Council on Privatisation (NCP), and the

Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE). According to the official review, *Public Service Reforms in Nigeria*, published by the Jonathan administration:

The new institutional structure ensured that NCP determines political, economic and social objectives of the programme, approves policies and public enterprises to be privatised or commercialised, and issues directives to BPE, while the BPE implements the Council's policies and directives (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2014: 86).

In his speech at the inauguration of the NCP, Obasanjo underscored privatisation as one of the socio-economic reforms undertaken to integrate the Nigerian economy into the mainstream of world economic order. He clarified what the process in these words:

We are not about to replace public monopoly with private monopoly. Rather, in our determination to be unyielding and uncompromising in the pursuit in the best interest of the country, we want to remove the financial burden which these enterprises constitute on the public and release resources for the essential functions of government. We want to ensure that many more service providers are brought in to compete and thereby regulate the market for fairer pricing. We want to ensure that these utilities work and deliver quality services (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2001: 4).

By the time Obasanjo reloaded the privatisation policy, it was evident that the RBDAs had lost their economic appeal. The process required a fresh beginning. Thus, instead of going straight into the privatisation exercise, the Obasanjo administration embarked on a revitalisation of the resources of the RBDAs, to increase their marketability.

3.3.1 The River Basin Authorities in the Second Phase of the Commercialisation

In its bid to appraise the potential asset and opportunities available to the enterprises, the NCP requested for updates. One of the existing documents on the actions taken on the RBDAs is the report of the 1999 meeting of the National Council on Water Resources. The highpoint of that meeting was the input titled, *Memo NCWR (99) AM 8; Memorandum on Approved New Policy for the Operation of River Basin Development Authorities* (National Council on Water Resources, 1999: 23). The memo informed the Council of a presidential directive which was the new policy for the RBDAs and asked for cooperation and compliance for a successful implementation. It signalled a new beginning! The evidence to substantiate the new system was part of the annexe of the report entitled, *Annex 1, Policies for Full Utilisation of Resources of River Basin and Rural Development Authorities*. For a better understanding of the new framework, we shall review the memo and the annex.

3.3.2 Towards the complete utilisation of the resources of the Basin Authorities

The new impetus was a directive by Obasanjo, which called for the preparation of a comprehensive policy that would fully utilise the resources of the RBDAs. The decision came after consultations with a broad cross-section of the stakeholders. The Federal Executive Council (FEC) approved the recommendations. The consensus was that the RBDAs needed strategic repositioning to perform their statutory functions effectively. The terms of the performance agreement signed in 1992, as part of the first phase of the partial commercialisation, between the Government and the RBDAs with the TCPC as a referee, did not reach fruition. As a result, seven years after the agreement, the RBDAs were still heavily burdened with economic problems since the funding remained weak and the promised take-off grants unpaid. The style of management did not change, and the parties to the agreement did not discharge their obligations, since all of them were poorly prepared for the reform. There was no regard to functional specialisation arising from the natural endowment of each RBDA; a state of things aggravated by poor operation and management culture, and the workplace orientation was in dire need of refocusing. Another reason for the downturn of the RBDAs was the absence of any commitment to reach some expected performance which ensured that they were not under any pressure to meet a set target.

The failures were on the sides of the regulating bodies, namely the government and the RBDAs. The policy on subsidy was of an inferior quality and lacked transparency. The plan required consideration for the growing difference between operational costs and fees charged for services provided to farmers, which were intended to stimulate farmers' interest in irrigated agriculture. Furthermore, there was no clear responsibility appointed for the provision of the costs of the maintenance of dams, facilities, and services which cannot be commercialised either in their present state or since they are social services. The memorandum ends on the sad note that the sale of some assets of RBRDAs by Technical Committee on Privatisation and Commercialisation affected their ability to generate revenue.

In addition to the constraints discussed above, the report also provided details about the current activities of the RBDAs, with emphases on areas where the performances had been abysmally poor and required urgent attention. Concerning the activities and resources of the RBDAs, the memorandum listed the following aspects as under-utilised: land, dams, irrigation facilities, plants and equipment, and workforce.

In line with the overriding goal of the policy reform which was ‘enduring public benefit’,³⁴ the vision and policy goals that the RBDAs set out to address, the broad spectrum of stakeholders, the physical and business environments, the organisational capabilities and the water assets, the operations of the RBDAs were classified under six headings as summarised below:

- i. Customer Service – This should aim at delivering cost-effective services to the agreed standards and develop further standards of service with the involvement of the customers.
- ii. Effective and Efficient Asset Management – This should aim at ensuring that the agreed integrity and service standards of the headworks and distribution assets are met over the long term while minimising life-cycle costs.
- iii. Water and Environmental Management - They should aim to maximise water resources for all users while keeping sustainable and productive natural environments.
- iv. Workforce and Organisational Development – Here, the target was to maximise the productivity and organisational effectiveness through improved work arrangements and corporate structure.
- v. Financial Management - The aim was to ensure that all the RBDAs achieve self-financing of at least the real operating and maintenance costs by 2002/2003.
- vi. External Relationships - Every effort would be made to cultivate, develop and strengthen external relationships where they are considered necessary or beneficial to the RBDAs, the beneficiaries and basin economies.

The remaining part of the annex examined further strategies for getting the RBDAs to handle the completed but under-utilised schemes, measures for cost recovery and self-sustenance, and about the measures for plant and equipment rehabilitation and refurbishment. Other areas included the vast domain of agricultural services which cover agricultural extension, tractor hiring services, research and training, staff training and development, water resource data, the safety and security of dams. The summary of the new direction was in the second point of the prayers at the end of the memoranda which read:

³⁴ Emphasis as in the original document.

The new policy seeks to remove the constraints and impediments, as well as to reorientate RBDAs towards customers service, effective and efficient assets management, integrated land and water resources management for sustainable water utilisation and environmental health, service and result oriented manpower and organisational development, developing and strengthening external relationships with other stakeholders, ensuring focus, intensifying revenue generation drive and gradual shift in favour of medium-scale community based irrigation projects to be operated, maintained and managed by the communities themselves (National Council on Water Resources, 1999b: 88–89).

To ensure that the machinery of the reforms kicked off and that it had the right calibre of leaders, the management of the RBDAs got a leadership makeover. The meeting of the National Council on Water Resources received the approval to reshuffle the RBDAs' managements, including the appointment of eight new Chief Executives and the retention of four old ones. The indications were that the RBDAs had been repackaged and repositioned for optimal output, but the reports about the irrigation sector published a few years later revealed that it had been a case of window-dressing.

3.3.3 The Review of the Public Irrigation Sector in 2004

By 2004, the Federal Ministry of Water Resources (FMWR), which supervised the RBDAs, drafted a report on the public irrigation sector after an extensive study. The report did not refer explicitly to the 1999 measures taken by the Obasanjo government, but provided assessments of the various aspects of the operations of the RBDAs with recommendations on what needed attention. The appraisals were insightful as they threw light on the reasons why the many reforms did not yield the desired fruits. In a way, the assessments were new directions for change. For instance, on the lingering inability of the RBDAs to fund their operations, the review traced the problem to the context of SAP in which the commercialisation policy began and the measures that the government imposed through the accompanying economic package. The review explained why the RBDAs were left far worse after the first privatisation exercise.

According to the review:

The removal of subsidy adversely affected the projects operation and maintenance management, as the RBDAs were expected to recover the operation and maintenance costs from the users, a task that they had not been trained to perform. Also, the partial commercialisation of RBDAs was interpreted to mean that the government would continue to provide funds for the development of new irrigation infrastructure, but all completed projects would be managed by the RBDAs without any recurrent subvention from the government after a transition period of between three and five years. Arising from these changes, the functions of the RBDAs were curtailed to exclude any involvement in the supply of agricultural inputs to farmers, produce marketing, agricultural extension services and direct agricultural production (Federal Ministry of Water Resources, 2004: 88-89).

Under the new dispensation, the RBDAs were to generate revenue in through water charges to cover the cost of operation and management. However, the water charges were too low to cover this cost. Regarding the private sector involvement in operations and management, the review recommended that there was a need to improve the project implementation and management skills within the government institutions concerned, to assure the quality of services provided by consultants. On the Agricultural Extension Services supplied by the RBDAs, the review called for a situation where:

The cost of services to private projects will be borne 100% by their owners right from the start while the beneficiary farmers on public projects will initially be sharing the cost with the three tiers of government namely, Federal, State and Local government stage-wise, using a suitable sharing formula (Federal Ministry of Water Resources, 2004: 91).

Although the revenue from water charges was one of the flagged-up areas of income for the RBDAs, less than six irrigation facilities at both the federal and the state levels had Water Users Association (WUA). Even in the areas where WUA existed, there appeared to have been insufficient information and training about how to run.

In the same vein, the land tenure system was still a big challenge in the sector. The current land tenure legislation evolved from customary usufructuary rights³⁵ administered by

³⁵A civil law term referring to the right of one individual to use and enjoy the property of another, provided its substance is neither impaired nor altered. For example, a usufructuary right would be the right to use water from a stream to generate electrical power. Such a right is distinguishable from a claim of legal ownership of the water itself. Cf. 'Usufructuary Right' (2008) in *West's Encyclopedia of American Law*. 2nd edn. The Gale Group. Available at: <https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Usufructuary+Right>.

traditional authorities to one which entrusted all the land to the state government. The legal right of use comes by obtaining a 'Certificate' of Occupancy' under the Land Use Decree. The practice could lead to complications and militate against the viability of WUA.

Finally, the review rated the performance of the RBDAs as below expectation, even in the core task of monitoring water resources and planning. Instead, the RBDAs had extensive portfolios of activities with no discernible success. The final words of the review report, expectedly, called for more reforms in the RBDAs:

It is apparent from the findings and observations of the field investigations that some painstaking management and institutional reforms are inevitable in the public irrigation sector. Such reforms, targeting IMT³⁶ through the PIM³⁷ process, will include the restructuring of existing RBDAs, and re-orientating the restructured agencies towards being more effective and more productive as service providers than they are at present. The reform will also include measures that will facilitate changes in public irrigation policies and changes of attitudes. Both project users and service providers will have to be made to operate towards a common goal of transforming public sector irrigation schemes into positively sustainable enterprises (Federal Ministry of Water Resources, 2004: 95).

It is noteworthy that the report came up less than five years after Obasanjo's plan of action for public sector reforms discussed earlier. Indicatively, the pursuit of the full utilisation of the resources of the RBDAs did not go as planned. Another report published by FAO provides further backing to the FMWR report.

3.3.4 The Food & Agricultural Organisation Report - 2005

The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) report (2005) on regional irrigation efforts, released in 2005, did not reflect a significant shift in the productivity of the RBDAs, even though it came six years after the 1999 bid for the full utilisation of the water resources of the RBDAs. According to the report, in all the RBDAs, the actually irrigated area was less than the equipped area (Table 3). A more distressing dimension was the ratios of the actually irrigated area to the equipped area, given in percentages on the table.

³⁶ Irrigation Management transfer

³⁷ Participatory Irrigation Management

*Table 3 Equipped and actually irrigated areas in the River Basin Development Authorities for the year 2004.
Source: Food and Agricultural Organisation (2005: 8).*

River Basin Development Authority	Equipped area (ha)	Actually irrigated area (AIA) (ha)	AIA as % of the equipped area (%)
Anambra-Imo	3941	10	0.3
Benin-Owen	317	0	0
Chad Basin	26180	1000	3.8
Cross River	364	40	11.0
Hadejia-Jama'are ³⁸	18475	21000	113
Lower Benue	1310	70	5.3
Niger Delta	1870	0	0
Lower Niger	1344	115	8.6
Upper Niger	3697	722	19.5
Ogun Osun	512	110	21.5
Sokoto Rima	27580	5290	19.2
Upper Benue	8410	873	9.3
Total	92317	29140	31.36

A look at the performance of the RBDAs in comparison to other players in the irrigation sub-sectors conveyed a picture that the 1999 reforms were yet to bear fruit. According to the timeline set by the change, all the RBDAs should achieve the self-financing of, at least, the real operating and maintenance cost of each completed project and major services by 2002/2003. That did not happen, as the report under consideration shows.

³⁸ The higher value of 'actually irrigated' area compared to equipped area is due to the fact that areas outside the equipped area are irrigated using water from the main canals

Table 4 Equipped and 'actually irrigated' areas in the River Basin Development Authorities for the year 2004.
Source: (Food and Agricultural Organisation (2005: 8)

Scheme Type	Equipped Area (ha)	Actually irrigated area (ha)	Actually irrigated as % of the equipped area (ha)
River Basin Development. Authority	92317	29140	32
State Schemes	12,200	6700 ³⁹	55
Private sector – sugar schemes ⁴⁰	5,600	0	0
Private small-scale schemes ⁴¹	128,000	128,000	100
Improved fadama (equipped lowland)	55,000	55,000	100
Total	293,117	218,840	75

The report divided the irrigation sector in Nigeria into public irrigation and private irrigation. It defined public irrigation as the schemes run by the RBDAs or by the state governments. In the evaluation of FAO, the projects run by the state governments was about 10% of the RBDAs. Also, it is instructive that more than 50% of the state schemes were actually irrigated, while only about 30% of the RBDAs projects were actually irrigated (Figure 3:1).

³⁹ Estimated value

⁴⁰ Equipped area is part of the equipped area of Upper Benue RBDA.

⁴¹ Estimate by FMWR, based on 80 000 ADP fadama pumps and other small schemes. Figure seems too high and there might be some double counting with the non-equipped flood recession cropping area.

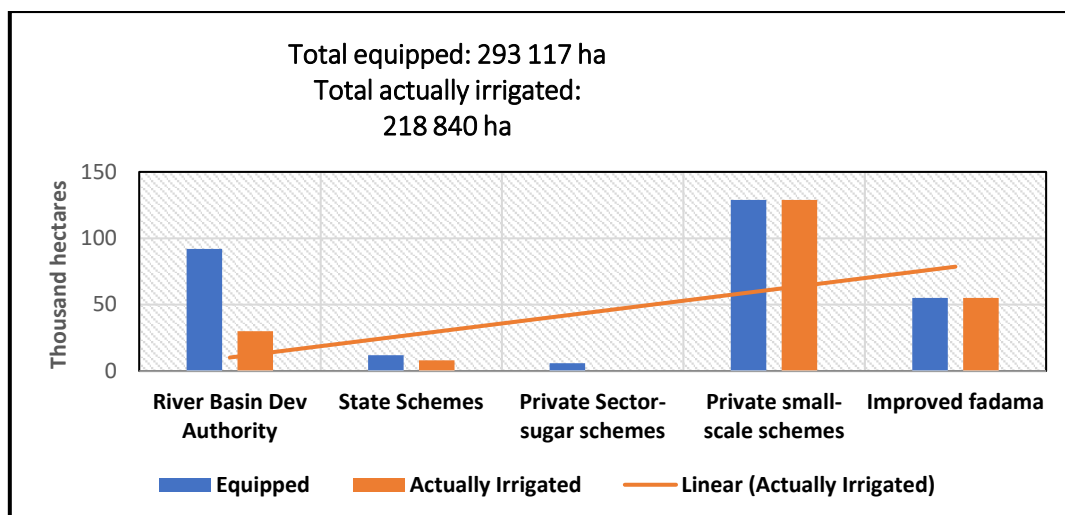


Figure 3:1: Structure of the irrigation sub-sector in Nigeria in 2004. Adapted from the Food and Agricultural Organisation (2005: 6).

The public sector rating was abysmal, and the reasons given for this was the poor utilisation of the developed areas available for irrigation. The terms used to describe the situation are compact, the propositions short and impactful:

The poor utilization of the developed irrigation area in the public irrigation sector can be attributed to a number of factors including i) the lack of a coherent irrigation subsector development policy and strategy; ii) insufficient attention to management systems; iii) inadequate funding (including poor cost recovery); iv) high capital and operating costs; v) inadequate farm support services; vi) poor operation, repair and maintenance; vii) a low level of project ownership acceptance by the direct beneficiaries; and viii) uncertain financial and economic viability. Because of these lapses, a number of schemes have already deteriorated badly, and they are in urgent need of major renovation and repair, less than 20 years after their construction (Food and Agricultural Organisation, 2005: 6).

Again, the evaluation of the RBDAs, in unambiguous terms, was that the RBDAs were performing below expectation. The irrigated land was a very little fraction of the totally equipped land except in the improved fadama sector (Figure 3:1). The story remained the same until Obasanjo ended his tenure in 2007, even though he got pats on the back for unfolding a well-articulated process of reforms across the various economic sectors from the World Bank. For a second time, the RBDAs could not reach economic viability within the timeframe set for them.

3.4 Yar'adua's Short-lived Seven-Point Agenda

The wave of the Obasanjo's reforms did not pull the RBDAs out of the doldrums of unproductivity. One evidence that the RBDAs would require more re-awakening to become economically productive appeared on the Seven-Point Agenda of President Umar Musa Yar'adua, who succeeded Obasanjo. The Agenda was a policy direction conceptualised and articulated by the Yar'adua's administration towards the realisation of Vision 20:2020.⁴² On the agenda was a drive for food security through the utilisation of the nation's vast potentials for agriculture. The plan recommended key actions in some areas. Explicitly, the agenda affirmed about the quest for food security that:

In the ongoing reforms, the Government will ensure optimal performance of agriculture. Critical areas for intervention will include strengthening agribusiness through institution of profitability and price support mechanism, land tenure changes, aggressive development and supply of new land, strengthening of farmer support groups through commercial farmers, improvement of rural access infrastructure, and **resuscitation of the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs)** (National Planning Commission, 2011).⁴³

In the case of the RBDAs, they received a blueprint of a new policy but did not get to implement the same. Yar'adua's reforms policies did not get the political push because of his poor health as a result of pericarditis. He died in May 2010, without unfolding the content of his proposed resuscitation plan for the RBDAs. Yar'adua's death paved the way for his deputy, Goodluck Jonathan, who did not continue with the Seven-Point Agenda but fashioned a new development map called the Transformation Agenda.

3.5 RBDAs in Jonathan's Agricultural Transformation Agenda

When Goodluck Jonathan became the president, he embarked on a revolutionary transformation of the public sector. His overarching policy platform was the Transformation

⁴²The Nigeria Vision 20:2020 (NV20:2020) is Nigeria's long-term development goal designed to propel the country to the league of the top 20 economies of the world by 2020. The attainment of the Vision would enable the country to achieve a high standard of living for its citizens. See: Federal Government of Nigeria. (2011, p. 10). *Nigeria Vision 20:2020 - Abridged Version*. Retrieved from www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pdfuploads/Abridged_Version_of_Nigeria_Vision_2020.pdf

⁴³ Emphasis mine.

Agenda (TA), designed against the background that Nigeria's development efforts had over the years lacked continuity, consistency and commitment. The projects and programmes of the TA, set within a four-year (2011 – 2015) framework, read in part, that:

The critical policy thrust of governance will be to maximise the benefits the citizenry derives from governance through more effective and efficient use of public resources, proper financial management and fiscal prudence (National Planning Commission, 2011: 10).

Within the TA was the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA), which embraced agricultural productions and the water resources. The execution of the ATA showed both continuities and discontinuities with the policies of the past administration. One of such discontinuities was Jonathan's total abandonment of the Seven-Point Agenda of Yar'adua. A critical look at the ATA from the perspective of the RBDAs showed that there were many attempts to revitalise a few old policies and introduce new ones. Our focus in this work centres on the RBDAs and the policies that affected them.

3.5.1 The Verdict of the Oronsaye Committee

One of the attempts at policy continuities by Jonathan's administration was the inauguration of the seven-member Presidential Committee, under the chairmanship of Steve Oronsaye, to advise his government on the restructuring and rationalization of the federal government's agencies, parastatals and commissions. The action was in line with the practice of some administrations before him. Some notable advisory committees in the past included the Allison Ayida Review Panel on the Civil Service Reforms (1995), the Allison Ayida Panel on the Restructuring and Manning Levels of Federal Ministries, Extra-Ministerial Departments and Parastatals (1997), the Ahmed Joda Report on the Review, Harmonization and Rationalization of Federal Government Parastatals (1999), and the Theophilus Danjuma Presidential Advisory Committee Report (2010). One thing common to all the committees was their scope of work and their conclusions; they all covered the entire span of the public service, which included the RBDAs, and they all called for reforms in the public service sector.

The Oronsaye Committee recommended reforms that would involve policy continuities and discontinuities, and eventually get the RBDAs privatised. In the stream of continuities, the committee's call for the implementation of the Ahmed Joda Report and the Government

White Paper on the report. The Joda Report recommended a consistent application of the RBDAs' commercialisation process and that the FMWR took up the supervision of the RBDAs. Furthermore, within the stream of policy discontinuities, the Oronsaye Report recommended that through the newly created Department of River Basin Operation and Inspectorate (RBOI), the government could cut down the huge administrative overhead cost of the RBDAs by scrapping the arrangement of having twelve Management Boards for each RBDA, and instead "appoint a single 7-member governing board for the 12 RBDAs" (Mohammed, 2012: 557).

3.5.2 The Department of River Basin Operations and Inspectorate

The Office of the Head of the Civil Service instituted the Department of River Basin Operations and Inspectorate by a directive with reference number, OHCSF/MSO/317/VOL.1/193 on 10 July 2012. After that, the FMWR became a ministry with nine departments and six zonal offices in the six geopolitical zones of the country. The new coordinating department called the River Basin Operations and Inspectorate (RBOI) had the statutory mandate of :

supervising and coordinating the activities of the twelve (12) River Basin Development Authorities which were hitherto scattered in the various Departments of the Federal Ministry of Water Resources so as to reposition these RBDAs for effectiveness and quick service delivery that will give their operations better sectoral policy direction and priority focus (Ibrahim, 2015: 2-3).

The creation of the RBOI was to remove the bottlenecks in the operations and management of the RBDAs. The new vision for the RBDAs spelt out the functions that the RBOI would carry out as a department in the FMWR as advising the Honourable Minister and the Permanent Secretary on issues of board appointments, functions and limits of their Powers. The department would also supervise, coordinate and watch over the performances, valuations, monitoring, auditing of projects and programmes of RBDAs to keep them on track. In the same vein, it would harmonise RBDAs budget proposals, plans and project implementations in conformity with the National Policy. The RBOI is one of the unprecedented innovations in the administration of the RBDAs. The Oronsaye Reports lauded the creation of the RBOI and upheld the arrangement that:

[T]he Department of River Basins Operations and Inspectorate (RBO&I) continues to inspect, coordinate and enforce standards in the River Basin Development Authorities (Mohammed, 2012).

Indeed, the RBOI filled a gap that had existed from the creation of the RBDAs. The Decree of the RBDAs (1979) provided for the setting up of a National River Basin Development Coordinating Committee, but neither Obasanjo nor Shagari implemented it. The RBDA Decree (1987) not only stripped the RBDAs of some of their functions but also dropped the provision for a coordinating committee. Thus, the RBDAs operated without a designated coordinating unit other than the ministries where they sometimes had the status of a department or sub-department. The RBOI is, at once, the fulfilment of the original plan of basin organisation in Nigeria as outlined in the first Decree, and a break with the recent past. The RBOI redefined the administration of RBDAs, but it was only one of the many inputs of the Jonathan administration in the RBDAs through the TA.

3.5.3 Transforming Irrigation Management in Nigeria

The Transforming Irrigation in Nigeria (TRIMING) was a sub-unit of the Transforming Agriculture policy of the Jonathan government. As the name implied, the focus was the agricultural sectors, which linked the network of irrigation farming in the public and private sectors.

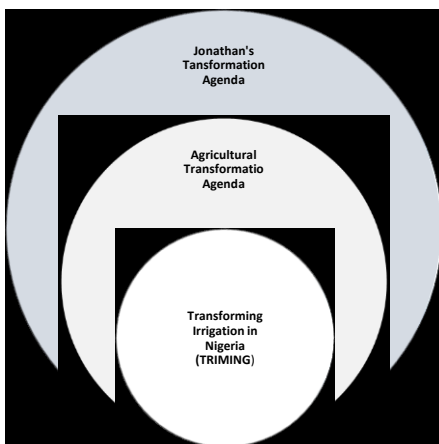


Figure 3.2. Eccentric circles relationship showing the place of TRIMING in Jonathan's Transformation Agenda. Designed by Daniel Adayi

The World Bank Report (2014) carried the general directions taken to reform the RBDAs through initiatives in the irrigation sector. The interventions in the irrigation subsector affected the RBDAs at the primary level as the Basin Authorities are the highest stakeholders in the irrigation sector.

TRIMING was a policy shift defined by the Minister of Water Resources within her capacity as provided by existing laws (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004: 14).

The aim of the policy was to boost the farmers' crop yields and the income generating mechanism of river

basin authorities while upholding the standard of international practice.

In the report under consideration, the minister mapped out new policy directions and strengthened existing policies to reposition the irrigation sector. The World Bank funded the TRIMING project. According to the report, The World Bank envisaged that:

The project will focus on three river basins⁴⁴ in northern Nigeria, which have been identified by the Government of Nigeria as priority areas. The main stakeholders in the project include irrigation Water Users Associations (WUAs), Federal Ministry of Water Resources (FMWR) and its three River Basin Development Authorities (World Bank Report, 2014: 37).

As part of the TRIMING project, the minister made far-reaching policy redefinitions which included (a) *Statement of Sector Policy for Large-Scale Public Irrigation Schemes*; (b) Delegation of Authority to Gradually Transfer On-Farm Irrigation and Drainage Facilities to Registered Water Users Associations; (c) MoU between FMWR and FMARD

3.5.4 Statement of Sector Policy for Large-Scale Public Irrigation Schemes

The statement was a six-page annexe which defined new policy directions in the management of irrigation farming. The prospects of closing production gaps and reversing the current trends included investments to raise the yield and productivity from irrigated land as a crucial strategy for food production. Towards achieving the goals of the plan, all levels of government (federal, states and local) must implement a system of devolution that involved farmers' organisation, and a greater private sector involvement. There was an urgent need to shift from the past posture, where the government was the initiator, developer and the operator of irrigation schemes to the exclusion of other stakeholders. The report deplored the system whereby:

Nigeria's water resources and irrigation sector face increasingly long-term investment and management challenges which, unless effectively addressed, will be a constraint to the country's economic development. It is therefore essential that the sector policies be reformed, use more effective institutional frameworks, improve planning and management systems, and facilitate increased beneficiary participation (World Bank Report, 2014: 107).

The report defined new policy directions that included a higher level of involvement of water users' associations in the irrigation process and a collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. Viewed against the background of Oronsaye Committee recommendations, the new policies appeared to have strengthened the RBDAs and repositioned them for

⁴⁴ The three RBDAs are Sokoto-Rima (in Sokoto state), Hadejia-Jama'are (in Kano state), and Upper Benue (in Gombe).

commercialisation as recommended by the Ahmed Joda Report. The new approach was a clear break from the past where the government had managed everything in the irrigation but had not achieved much. The appraisal in the report underscored the weaknesses of the past policies in very clear terms. It stated that:

Poor management and maintenance of the many public irrigation schemes have led to major deterioration of irrigation infrastructure and underutilization of the infrastructure and natural resource base. All public irrigation schemes are still managed centrally, many without effective Water Users Associations (WUAs), and where associations have been formed, they are too weak to manage and maintain the parts of the schemes for which they are meant to be responsible (World Bank Report, 2014: 136).

The second part of the tripartite-statement is a set of three letters addressed to three RBDAs, titled – *Delegation of Authority to Gradually Transfer On-Farm Irrigation and Drainage Facilities to Water Users Association*. The letters stated that the government would continue to construct, operate, and maintain dams, dykes, polders etc. including irrigation systems. However, the government would partner with other beneficiaries as the old approach had become unfavourable. Three RBDAs, Sokoto-Rima, Hadejia-Jama'are and the Upper Benue were used for the pilot projects (Figure 3.3). The crux of the new trend as encapsulated in the letter was that:

For sustainability of these schemes, the government is preparing (through a trial program), a gradual handover of the responsibility for the operation and maintenance of portions of these schemes to legally registered and organised WUAs by existing laws and guidelines setting them up. The objective of this policy is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the irrigation and drainage systems in general and to increase awareness among irrigation farmers (World Bank Report, 2014:113).

According to the new arrangement, first, the Ministry of Water Resources would delegate the RBDAs to establish and support WUAs to physically assume administrative and financial responsibilities for irrigation and drainage at specified hydraulic and water distribution levels of the schemes. The delegation would further set up the fees and the RBDAs would determine charges for the cost of any work associated with the provision or irrigation and drainage services in agreement with the WUAs. Second, the RBDAs would in turn, agree with the WUAs, setting out their rights and responsibilities. According to the Minister, “the purpose is for the WUAs to gradually take over the management responsibilities of irrigation and drainage facilities around their respective farm levels” (World Bank Report, 2014: 11).

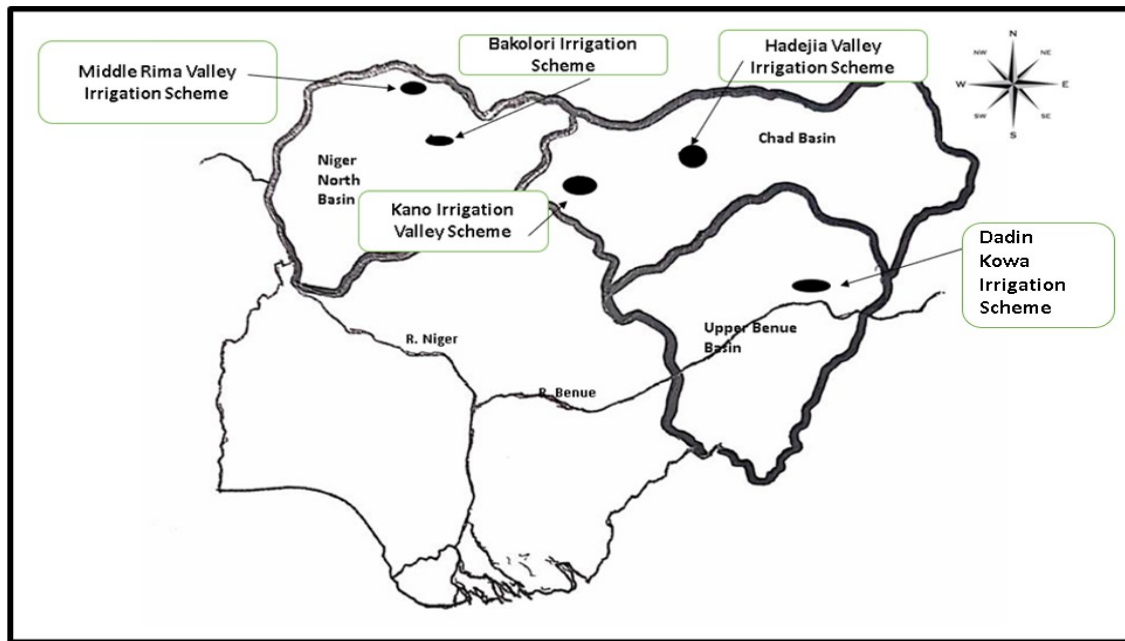


Figure 3:3 The TRIMING Project Sites and the Irrigation schemes. Adapted by Daniel Adayi.⁴⁵

Another salient aspect of the institutional arrangement for the World Bank Assisted Project in the Memorandum of Understanding between the FMA&RD and FMWR was that they were to complement each other in performing their roles towards achieving the Federal Government's quest for food security. The goals of the collaboration also included the creation of opportunities for employment, the acceleration of infrastructural development and the production of wealth for social development. The Obligation of Parties was in three parts; one for each party, with a set of mutual obligations.

Both the FMA&RD and the FMWR were committed to a different aspect of the same project. The former would complete all its on-going irrigation infrastructure, construct new dams (small and big) and make the completed dams available for fish production under best practices while the FMWR would undertake the completion of Small Earth Dams constructed under Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) projects, with added potential irrigation up to 10,000 ha (World Bank Report, 2014: 126).

⁴⁵ Source: Official Website of the Transforming Irrigation Management in Nigeria (TRIMING) Project - <https://www.triming.org/home-2/psite/>

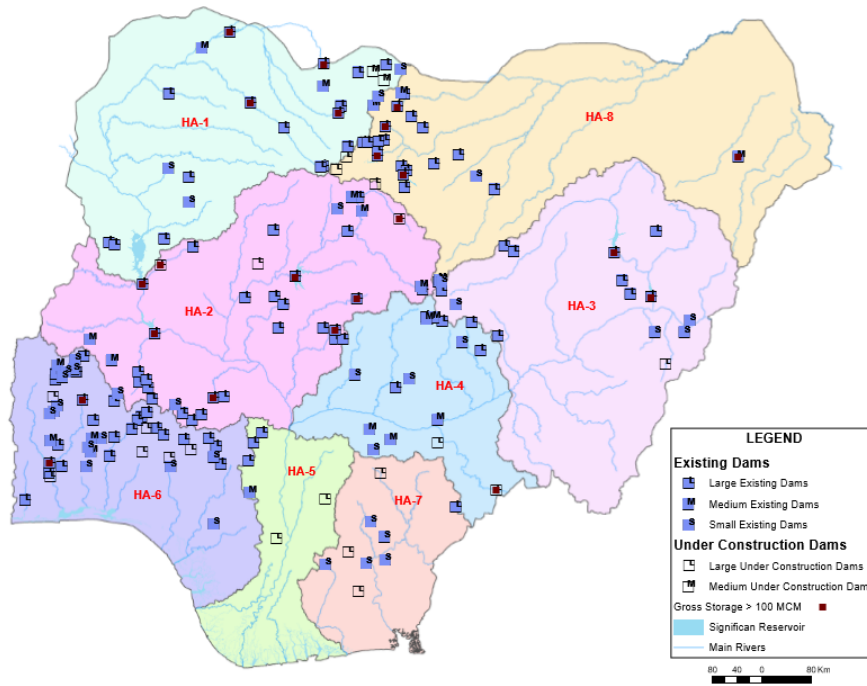


Figure 3:4 Location of Existing and Under-Construction Dams in Nigeria. Source: (*Federal Ministry of Water Resources, 2013: 7.17*)

The unusual feature about the collaboration was the integrated approach which delegated some aspects of the entire task to one agency and some others to another agency. It appeared like an effort to bring back the integrated approach to the river basin organisation which inspired the creation of the RBDAs but was later set aside definitively by reorganisation propelled by SAP during Babangida’s regime.

By the time Jonathan ended his tenure in 2015, the World Bank Assisted Pilot Project was still at the level of the first arrangement. However, a check on the official website of the project showed that activities were still ongoing at the schemes.⁴⁶ It is noteworthy that no direct connection exists between the establishment of the project and the plan to partially commercialise the RBDAs. The indicators were that the vision of Jonathan was to increase the investors’ interests and the productivity of the RBDAs. In the RBDAs, the new concept was

⁴⁶ The World Bank still published the updates on TRIMING See: Manjok, P. Y. (2018) *Nigeria/AFRICA- P123112- Transforming Irrigation Management in Nigeria - Procurement Plan (English)*. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/178421528210303187/Nigeria-AFRICA-P123112-Transforming-Irrigation-Management-in-Nigeria-Procurement-Plan> (Accessed: 18 June 2018).

about undoing unproductive policy-reversals as the minister indicated in her third-year report:

The River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) were set up to enhance grassroots development in the water sector. However, due to policy reversal, they were unable to perform optimally, and this led to a number of very laudable and people-oriented projects being left uncompleted for a long time. In reaction to this problem, the present Administration approved the reorganisation of the RBDAs to make them responsive to their mandate and accelerate the vital role water plays in the socio-economic life and wellbeing of the citizens (Ochekpe, 2014: 80).

The focus on the great stride in the RBDAs and the water sector intensified at the beginning of 2015 before the elections. However, the tune assumed a different posture after Jonathan lost the election and the whole political machinery of governance underwent an overhaul. Buhari, who got elected through a 'change' mantra as the new president, accused his predecessor of running a corrupt government and called for a change of attitude to public service. Even though Buhari's change approach faces criticism, it is still the face of his government.⁴⁷ In the water sector, the new Minister of Water Resources, Suleiman Adamu, used the change mantra which had Buhari elected, and initiated a repositioning and revitalisation of the RBDAs as part of the new reforms in the water sector.

3.6 Buhari's Post-TRIMING Repositioning and Revitalisation

The RBDAs still occupy a significant place in the Buhari government's quest to develop local ways of increasing food production for the growing population of Nigeria. The government set a target of food sufficiency by for Nigeria by 2019 (Wakili, 2018). It recognised the role that the RBDAs could play in the ever-present pursuit of food security for the nation, but the government saw the inputs in the sector as insufficient and a departure from the first mandate of the RBDAs. In the assessment of Buhari's Minister of Water Resources, Suleiman

⁴⁷ See: Ahmed, A. (2018). Elite's Brinkmanship and the Politicization of Anti-corruption Project in Nigeria : An Overview of the Anti-corruption War under the Buhari Administration. *Sociology and Anthropology*, 6(1), 74–85. <https://doi.org/10.13189/sa.2018.060107>; & Innocent, O., Chibuike, C., & Onuigbo, R. A. (2017). Political Exposed Persons and Buhari ' s Anti - Corruption Crusade in Nigeria. *Specialty Journal of Politics and Law*, 2(1), 76–90.

Adamu, the frequent policy reversals had derailed the RBDAs from the original vision and undermined its productivity. Adamu opined that:

The river basin we have now are not up to the task when compared to the original concept they were created in the first place. Over the years, there is a lot of tinkering of government policies to the extent that the original mandate has been taken away (Anonymous, 2015).

To regain the initial mandate of the RBDAs, the government adopted a policy of repositioning and revitalising for the RBDAs. It is not at once clear whether the system of repositioning would get the RBDAs ready for the partial commercialisation exercise. Notwithstanding, the Water Resources Minister created a framework to push the new agenda for the RBDAs. He affirmed in a magazine of the FMWR that:

We had taken concrete steps to resuscitate the RBDAs, the first of which was to develop an action plan and blueprint. The blueprint that includes 'quick win' interventions with the objectives of restoring mandate, building institutional capacity, maximising operations and output of the RBDAs (Anonymous, 2017).

The Minister of Water Resources appointed an eight-person committee to produce a blueprint and an action plan to strengthen the RBDAs in 2016. The design was one of the memoranda sent to both the National Technical Committee on Water Resources (NTCWR) and, later, to the National Council on Water Resources (NCWR). According to the blueprint, the RBDAs needed a particular intervention to re-equip them with the essential plant and machinery. There was an urgent need to give access roads to the authorities to help the evacuation of produce. Other measures included the placing of a moratorium on new investments on new irrigation projects for three years so that focused attention goes to the existing ones. In the same vein, the RBDAs should be the training ground for budding professionals in the water sector (Federal Ministry of Water Resources, 2016: 63-64).

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture is a partner in the revitalisation agenda and the reforms of the RBDAs. In the new policy and strategy for agriculture titled, *The Agriculture Promotion Policy (2016-2020) - Building on the Successes of the ATA, Closing Key Gaps*, the government acknowledged the critical role that the RBDAs could play in the water pricing and the irrigation sector, but noted that:

At present, Nigeria uses a system built around River Basin Authorities to allocate water in specified tracts of the country. Unfortunately, that system is yet to provide the right level of water supply across the country; it still has great potential if appropriate investments are made in irrigation systems (Federal Ministry of Agriculture Nigeria, 2016: 20).

The call for commercialising the RBDAs only recently received a reawakening from the Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, the statutory Chairman of the National Council on Privatisation and Commercialisation (NCPC). The Vice-President called for the immediate commencement of the “reform and commercialisation of the River Basins Development Authorities to revitalise the irrigation and river basin potentials for agricultural purposes” (Wakili, 2017). The wake-up call came on the heels of some public verdicts that the RBDAs were still in bad shapes, and were not efficiently and effectively utilised for irrigation and food sufficiency in Nigeria (Eludini *et al.*, 2018).

While it is still too early to make absolute statements on the outcome of the repositioning process of the Buhari administration, there are a few pointers from the interviews and reports of the Minister of Water Resources. First, the original vision of the RBDAs had the potential to be effective but was not implemented. There is a need to recapture the first vision by undoing the policy reversals that distorted it. In this regard, the collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, explored by the Jonathan administration is still relevant. Second, the target of partial commercialisation is always the desired goal and the driving force of the repositioning and revitalisation policy.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter undertook the tricky task of tracing the various attempts by different governments to bring about any kind of reform in the RBDAs because of the strategic role that the RBDAs could play in the nation’s quest for an increase in food production. Since the creation of the RBDAs, every administration recognised RBDAs as a vast agricultural potential. The approach taken by each administration meant either a continuity with an earlier policy or a discontinuity and the start of a new line of action or even a period of dormancy in which the RBDAs were relegated to the margins of economic concerns.

This chapter located the quests for reforms in the RBDAs in the broader search for the reformation of the public sector owing to the derailment of the post-civil war Nigerianization

policy of Yakubu Gowon's regime. The policy inconsistencies, continuities and discontinuities occur for different reasons, which may be immediate to a seating government or historical, preceding the coming of the administration.

In the case of the SAP policies of the IBB regime, it vindicated the verdict of some analysts who argued that the procedures in the agricultural sector were undermined by poorly conceived and uncoordinated rural development programmes. Policy inconsistencies and the lack of a political will to follow through in a determined manner hampered the effectiveness of the reforms (Kwanashie, *et al.* 1998: 34). It is true that stripping the RBDAs of the original functions and reinvesting such tasks on *ad hoc* programmes like the DFRRRI, Better Life and the People's Bank did not achieve the desired goal (Anyanwu, 1992: 16). SAP dislocated the RBDAs from their original vision and made them weaker, more disorganised than they were before the launch of the policy. SAP left the RBDAs in need of more reforms.

Some of the policy gaps and discontinuities resulted from the political instability of the country. All the massive expenditure on the SAP programme were set aside by Sani Abacha's military junta. The RBDAs and other government agencies earmarked for privatisation went into limbo. By the time Obasanjo reloaded the privatisation programme again, in a democratic government, it had become disconnected from the first phase. It required repackaging with a new vocabulary for the coordinating bodies and redefinitions of the institutional structures. Even then, the process stalled as the Vice President, Abubakar Atiku, the Chair of the Privatisation programme locked horns with Obasanjo over internal party matters which saw the latter edged out of his bid to succeed Obasanjo (Marietu, 2009: 52). By the time Yar'adua emerged, with the support of Obasanjo as the president, it was clear that the RBDAs were in a poor state since the 'resuscitation of the River Basin Development Authorities' formed part of Yar'adua's Seven Point Agenda.

However, some of the discontinuities were the result of acts of God over which human beings have no control.⁴⁸ Such were the cases of Sani Abacha and Yar'adua who died in office. The death of Abacha ended a military dictatorship that did not have any articulated policy for the

⁴⁸ Acts of God are circumstances which no human foresight can provide against, and of which human prudence is not bound to recognize the possibility, and which when they do occur, therefore, are calamities that do not involve the obligation of paying for the consequences that may result from them See: (Dellinger, 2016)

RBDAs. Abacha's regime discontinued the SAP programme; his death was the end of that discontinuity. The next substantive government that followed was a democratically elected one after a brief transition by another military leader, General Abdulsalam. For policymaking and implementation, it was a chaotic period. Obasanjo, who became president, had to begin the process again. He rated the Abacha government as deficient and wanted a clean break with it.⁴⁹

The reforms in the RBDAs began with the SAP of Babangida, in 1986, barely less than a decade after the government approved the re-organisation of the country's rivers into eleven RBDAs. As a recap, the privatisation and commercialisation policy pursued by Nigeria differ from that which some nations in the West, like Britain, France and Germany had implemented. The difference here is that, unlike the countries mentioned, where the policies were measures to boost healthy economic sectors, Nigeria did not have those options. Most of the agencies to be privatised or commercialised had reached a state of bankruptcy. From that delicate financial situation, the expected short-term result was for the PEs, not only to become self-sustaining but to become sources of funds for the government. So far, none of the PEs listed for the privatisation or commercialisation have produced the desired effect. While some of them have turned out to become stories of failed ventures, others have survived but continue to depend on the government for subventions.

Among the PEs that still depend on the government for annual allocations are the RBDAs, in the two major phases of the implementation of the policy, a programme for continuous advancement to self-funding and profitable returns was part of the package created for the RBDAs. In the Babangida phase, the complete cessation of funding for the RBDAs was to come into force in 1997, and for the Obasanjo phase between 2002–2003. However, the expected self-funding did not take place. The Oronsaye Report has details of the subventions that the RBDA received from the Federal allocation between 2009 – 2011. In 2017, twenty years after the first funding cessation deadline, the information from the Budget Office of the Federal

⁴⁹In a veiled allusion to Abacha, during his inaugural speech, Obasanjo referred to military rule as one of the nation's recent tragedies See: Obasanjo, O. (1999) *Inaugural speech by His Excellency, President Olusegun Obasanjo following his swearing-in as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on May 29, 1999*. Available at: <http://nigeriaworld.com/feature/speech/inaugural.html> (Accessed: 8 February 2018).

Ministry of Budget and National Planning showed that no RBDAs received less than one billion naira from the federal appropriation [about USD2.75 million] (Budget Office of the Federation Ministry of Budget and National Planning, 2017).

Also, the split in the functions of the RBDAs into water-related and non-water related tasks that led to the sales of some of the machinery and tractors was counterproductive, in the long run. The delay in finalising the partial commercialisation could be the reason for the negative impacts of selling the non-water sector of the RBDAs, as the requisite phase did not reach completion. Two pieces of evidence from later developments showed that the moves made in the first phase of the privatisation and commercialisation were either ill-recommended or poorly executed. When the Obasanjo government scrutinised the RBDAs for its underutilization at the beginning of the second phase of the policy, one of the reasons given was the disconnect in the operations of the RBDAs caused by the sale of the non-water assets, which made the basin authorities incapable of carrying out their earlier functions. The promised recapitalisation of the RBDAs did not take place, leaving the RBDAs stripped of their former duties and not equipped for their new roles. The second reason is the collaboration between the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMA&RD) and the RBDAs as part of the government's quest for food security during the Transformation Agenda. Prior to the redefinition of the function of the RBDAs and the later sales of their non-water assets, there would have been no need for the collaboration since the RBDAs as one corporate entity would have been able to carry out all the obligations in the MoU with very little aid, if any would be needed.

Another huge factor that affected the reforms in the RBDAs towards privatisation and commercialisation was the frequent and often unplanned redefinition of the FMWR as either an independent ministry or as part of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development. Between 1975 and 1993, the Agriculture Ministry and the Water Resources Ministry underwent three restructuring procedures involving merging and de-merging (World Bank Report, 2014: 137). Since the FMWR was created by Shagari to boost his Green Revolution policy, built around the RBDAs as a springboard, the ministry has existed in several forms. Sometimes the FMWR stood alone [Obasanjo and Jonathan era], joined to the agriculture ministry as the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources [Yar'adua regime], as part of a more comprehensive arrangement – the Federal Ministry of Agriculture,

Water Resources and Rural Development (FMAWR&RD) [Babangida era] at different times. These statutory permutations of the FMWR meant that the RBDAs received varying levels of attention, from the frontline agency for driving food production policies to different degrees of relegation. Since the RBDAs had always been part of the FMWR, each time the government merged the former with the Agriculture ministry, the RBDAs became a sub-unit under Water Resources, which was a sub-unit under FMA. The permutation and combination were significant institutional challenges to the integration of agricultural support and water management elements as a result of the bureaucratic bottlenecks that they engendered. It was expected that the creation of the Department of River Basin Operations and Inspectorate would address the instability arising from the split and combination of FMWR with the Ministry of Agriculture.

The RBOI primarily superintends the activities of the RBDAs. The arrangement is less than a decade old, but it has given the RBDAs a more organised presence in the water resources and the food production sector. The public audit of government agencies done in 2011 recommended that the RBOI take up the roles of the management boards of the RBDAs to cut the administrative cost, but the old status quo still subsists. Considering the heavy running-cost and the inefficiency of the RBDAs, it is difficult to justify why the government rejected the recommendation.

Another set of factors that affected the reforms in the RBDAs are the setbacks of political instability and policy inconsistencies. Within four decades of the RBDAs operations, Nigeria had passed through four military administrations, an interim civilian government, and nineteen years of democratic rules. After a continuous period of sixteen years, with three presidents from the same political party, an opposition party won the presidential elections with a mantra of 'Change.' Tied to the many changes in government is the frequent changes in policies as new regimes try to create their legacies under new identities. In practice, this meant substantial needless costs as policies get truncated mid-way and new ones are designed to reflect the government in power. The lack of continuity affected the reforms in the RBDAs as one government discarded a reform template, only for a similar model to resurface as that of another government. A good example is the revitalisation and repositioning template of the Buhari government, which is a reloading of the original model of the RBDAs signed into law by Obasanjo in 1979. The initial concept envisaged integrated

agricultural colonies that would handle all the aspects of food production from planting to packaging.

The reforms have not been able to get the RBDAs out of the web of unproductivity that triggered the changes. The non-performing and unproductive posture of the RBDAs persists even now after the inputs of many governments and many reform templates. After many reports of positive situations by different governments of the giant strides taken in the irrigation sector, the RBDAs are still dependent on the Federal Government for funding. The obvious conclusion is that the reports are political window-dressings or the reported gains vanished in the myriad of Nigeria's political instabilities.

On a concluding note, the assertion that the reforms in the water sector of Nigeria, especially in the RBDAs have been characterised by policy inconsistencies, sudden policy-reversals and disruptions is evident in the foregoing narrative. It is also true that policy gaps and arbitrary discontinuities have undermined the goals of the reforms and rendered them inefficient and ineffective.

PART TWO: THE DYNAMICS AT PLAY IN THE LOWER BENUE RIVER
BASIN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



CHAPTER FOUR

TRUNCATED AMBITIONS: THE CASE OF THE LOWER BENUE RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Civil servants' attitudes towards economic reforms are often difficult to assess because very little data exist that allow us to measure them with any objective precision. It is important not to see state structures as monolithic. – Nicolas van de Walle.⁵⁰

The politically unstable character of Nigeria federalism and the attendant frequent changes in policies, driven more by the regional ambitions of a powerful but tiny fraction of the people, have left many of the economic sectors in a permanent state of under-performance. In the water sector, to which the RBDAs belong, this has played out as a long succession of grand ambitions that have left the RBDAs far worse. The impacts of the abrupt and unplanned policy changes on the RBDAs were the reasons for the poor performance of the sector. In 2004, an appraisal of the RBDAs by the FMWR rated their performance as very poor and attributed it to policy inconsistencies:

The performance of the RBDAs is below expectation; prior to the microeconomic reforms of 1986, the RBDAs grew to be substantial institutions with extensive portfolios of activities – in addition to irrigation – few of which were either financially or economically sound. Even in the core task of monitoring water resources and planning their development, the RBDAs have achieved no discernible success. While the reforms of 1986 forced the RBDAs to rationalise their non-water resources functions and staff, what remains in terms of numbers of staff, offices and housing is much more than required except for the professional/technical staff. Furthermore, the remaining staff are, in many cases, inadequately trained and inexperienced to perform useful functions (FMWR, 2004: 89).

Although the transmission of the policies from the echelons of government to the grassroots passed through several intermediaries, which included the Federal Ministry of Water Resources, the Boards of Directors and the Management of the RBDAs, the real theatres where the repeated failures took their tolls are the smallest units of the RBDAs – the projects. As the last points of the policy implementation chain, the projects, colonies and liaison offices are the activated agricultural and administrative complexes where the policies are

⁵⁰ Van de Walle, N., 2001. *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979-1999*. New York: Cambridge University Press. p.175.

implemented as daily routines by the staff of the RBDAs. The hypothetical thrust of this chapter is that an examination of the micro-units of the LBRBDA would reflect how the succession of grand ambitions that characterised the development of the policies of the RBDAs at the federal level, through the years, left their imprints on the smallest stable units of the LBRBDA.

The smallest stable units of the LBRBDA are the project which the Authority regularly maintains (LBRBDA, 2011: 4). The reports of the LBRBDA showed that it had performed creditably well in positioning the projects to achieve the goals of the RBDAs, despite the challenges at the federal level. The states of the projects are a critical indicator of how LBRBDA fared. About two decades ago, an annual report presented the profile of a resilient and vibrant LBRBDA, built around actively functioning projects, against all the odds:

Despite institutional and physical limitations such as frequent policy changes, dwindling subvention and obsolescence of the physical assets, this Authority has made far-reaching achievements in the past in the areas of agriculture, roads, irrigation and building infrastructure build-ups. Out of the potential 500,000ha available for development, a total of 17,000ha have been acquired and cleared for rainfed and irrigation development for the farmers. Out of this cleared area, 1,125ha have been provided with irrigation infrastructures such as pump houses, intake structures, canals and sprinkler equipment for dry season farming at Katsina-Ala, Jato-Aka, Dep, Longkat, Oguma, Ejule-Ojebe and Oforachi Projects. (LBRBDA, 2000: 2-3).

However, the recent reports of the LBRBDA did not show a proportionate upward-growth and progression for the two decades after that report. Our field trips which covered more than 80% of all the projects, including the biggest dam and the biggest irrigation project, revealed that the last two decades were a cycle of regression and decay. This chapter unravels the reason behind the observed trend. The chapter examines on a micro-scale, the subject explored on a macro-level earlier. The latter focused on the inputs of the Heads of State and the Presidents of Nigeria in the water sector, how those actions affected the RBDAs and how those outputs proved that the interventions were not adequately thought through before they came out definitively as policies. For this chapter, our hypothesis (H_4) is that:

The irrigation projects, colonies, farms and administrative units of the LBRBDA, which served as endpoints in the policy implementation chain, reflect the successions of grand but

unrealised ambitions that informed the formulations, articulations and implementations of the government policies for the LBRBDA.

This chapter aims to show that at a lower scale and in diverse ways, the dysfunctional states of the colonies, irrigation projects and farms are linked to the irregularities and the disconnects of the policies of the past governments. To achieve the goal, we shall examine the irrigation projects of the LBRBDA to see how they had been affected by the series of policy interruptions engendered by political instabilities and poor planning. The target is to provide evidence-based answers to the research question (RQ₄) of the chapter, which is:

How do the irrigation projects of the LBRBDA reflect the many policy introductions, poor implementations and sudden disruptions that characterised the succession of the grand but unrealised ambitions behind the policies of the governments for the River Basin Development Authorities?

The information for the profiles here came primarily from documents of the LBRBDA, the field trips which took us to more than eighty per cent of the projects of the LBRBDA, interaction via questionnaires and semi-structured interviews of the staff across all the cadre, from the casual workers to the Executive Directors. The official sources used are few because of the very stringent and rigorous process involved in applying for the release of internal memos and reports. In many cases, the requests for information were turned down with inexplicable silence or with factitious excuses about bureaucratic delays that dragged on without end. In some cases, the staff told the writer that the request for information was against government regulations for public agencies. There appeared to have been some orchestrated efforts to ensure that the contents of official documents could not be accessed, even when such materials were officially in circulation internally and other government departments had obtained copies. However, the sources used here include invaluable updates on the contracts awarded by the LBRBDA, within its catchment area by the FMWR or by politicians as their legislative obligations. The secondary sources of information sources include the media and published articles.

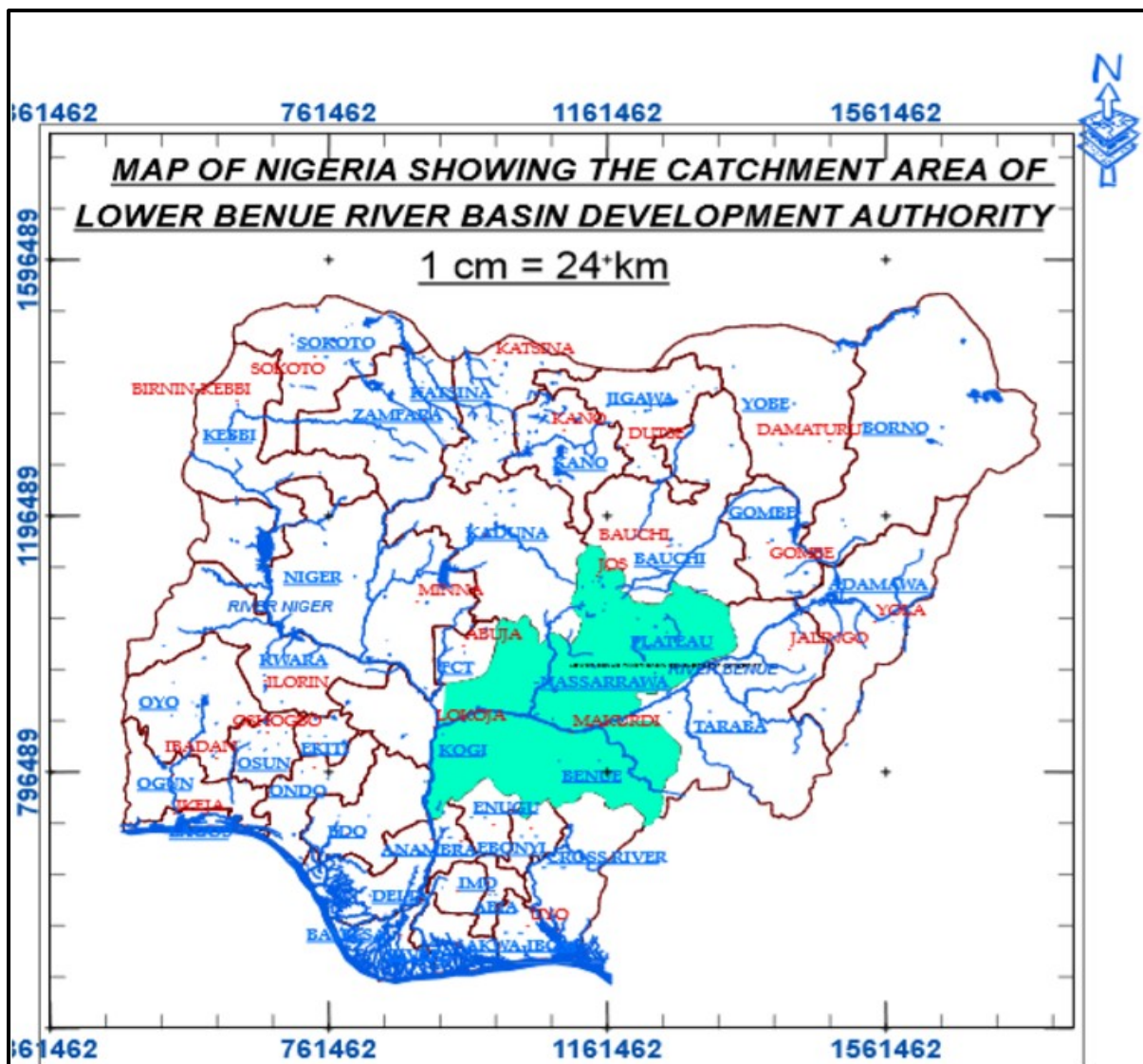


Figure 4:1 A map of Nigeria showing the catchment area of the LBRBDA (shaded). Source: LBRBDA

We could not access the irrigation projects and Area Office in Plateau State for security reasons. A wave of attacks by herdsmen made it quite unsafe to travel to Jos at the time of the field trip. Another setback that we encountered was the absence of the staff at the irrigation projects in the last two weeks of December and the first week of January. The workers took advantage of the short public holidays and stayed away from work for a more extended period than what the government had announced. The situation was also the same at the corporate headquarters of the LBRBDA; the workers returned to the usual rhythm in the second week of January.

In line with proper research ethics, a conscious and thorough effort was made to protect the identities of those who responded to the questionnaires or those who took part in face-to-

face interviews pseudonymisations. However, some of the names of the respondents have been left untouched where the views used in this research were already in public space. In some cases, the staff provided classified information and so we have gone to a greater length to protect the identities of the respondents.

Finally, by way of the method, this chapter presents some of the irrigation projects focusing on some pertinent indices and follows up with a look at the characteristic features of the project. The last part is the diagnostic analysis of the LBRBDAs from the perspective of the Irrigation Project Managers (IPMs). The IPM are regular staff appointed by the management of the LBRBDA to oversee the farm projects distributed over the catchment area of the Authority. Usually, they come from the ranks of those who have had some experience working with the LBRBDA, and they execute the action plans of the Authority and give periodic reports to the management. The IPMs are vital agents in the policy implementation chain of the RBDAs. They are the link between the irrigation farms and the headquarters of the LBRBDA. In a very profound way, they get a first-hand experience of the progress or failure of the farming activities of the authorities, which is the direct evidence of the government food security drive. Through the help of the managers, this chapter has an extensive use of original pictures which were carefully selected to aid triangulation.⁵¹ We acknowledge the old dictum that, 'appearances can be deceptive.' However, we vouch for the authenticity of the image as first-hand products of our observations which extended from the Doma Irrigation Project, with the largest dam, to Gbajimgba, the finished dam without any irrigation activity.

4.1 Doma Irrigation Project

The Doma Irrigation Project has the biggest dam of the LBRBDA. The dam lies across River Ohina which links the Ohina, Aragye, Gongon Lemu, Ruwan Bake and Umaku communities. President Babangida commissioned the dam in 1986 after six years of construction work. The dam is the heart of the Doma Irrigation Project and was expected to supply the avenue for other agricultural ventures like fisheries and animal husbandry. After the streamlining of the

⁵¹Triangulation, in the social sciences, the mixing of data or methods so that diverse viewpoints or standpoints cast light upon a topic. See: Olsen, W. (2004:1) 'Triangulation in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods Can Really Be Mixed', in M. Holborn, O. (ed.) *Developments in Sociology*. Causeway Press.

functions of the RBDAs during Babangida’s SAP in the 1980s, the involvement of the LBRBDA became irrigation and domestic water supply. Later developments shifted the duty of domestic water supply to the State Water Board, and so the functions of the RBDAs shrank even further leaving only irrigation related matters and very minimal involvement in the domestic water supply.

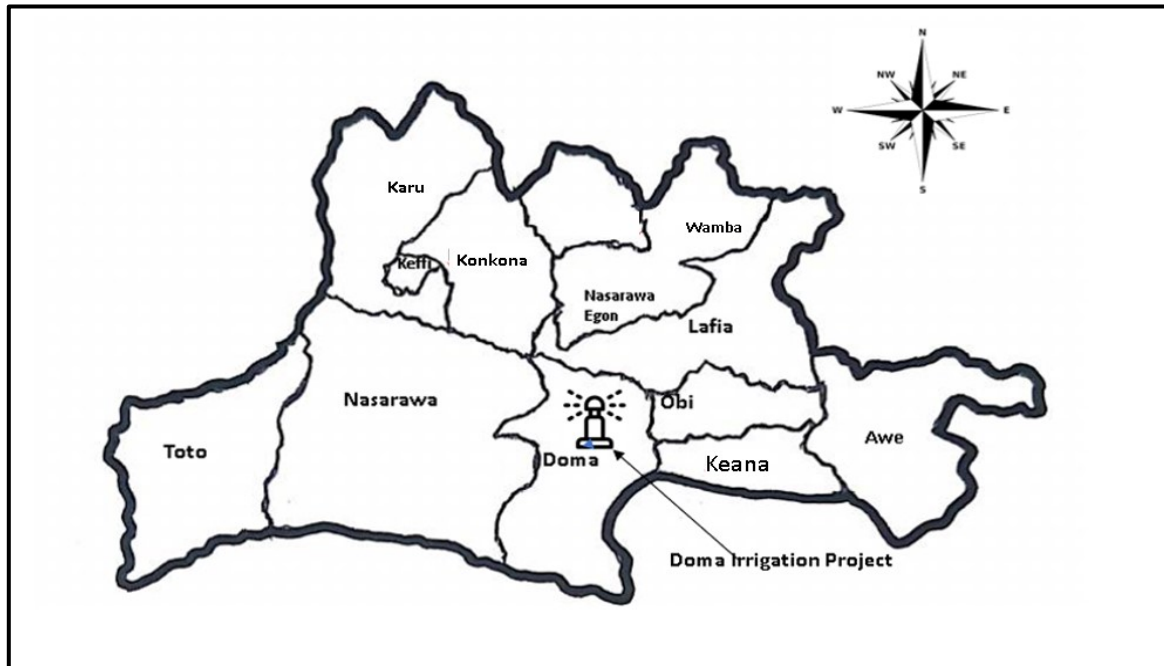


Figure 4:2 A map of Nasarawa State showing the position of the Doma Irrigation Project. Source: Adapted by Daniel Adayi from Yusuf & Akashe, (2014:89).

In an article entitled, *Doma Dam: A Long Boring Wait*, Hir Joseph of the Sunday Trust chronicled the social, political and economic challenges of the dam and the irrigation projects. President Shehu Shagari initiated the construction of the Dam in 1982 for twenty-two million naira (about USD55,000), as part of his Green Revolution programme. It was an incentive to boost food production in the Nasarawa area, which was already famous for its annual yield. The dam, which was the heartbeat of the irrigation project, began with a fanfare which was short-lived. Joseph recalled the first shock to the Doma dream thus:

When the military terminated the administration of Shehu Shagari, many on-going projects were immediately stalled. Doma Dam was one of such projects as the regime of General Muhammadu Buhari/Tunde Idiagbon had no time to attend to it before the coup that brought in General Ibrahim Babangida on August 27, 1985, ousted it. Like that of Buhari, Babangida’s administration did not look the way of Doma. The multi-national company then pulled out its engineers and sacked the local workers. The company also abandoned many of its equipment at

the various sites where work was ongoing when the coups took place (Joseph, 2010: 18)

However, Babangida's administration later came to the rescue of the abandoned project, taking everyone by surprise. As part of Babangida's reorganisation of the RBDAs, he ordered that the new ones created by Buhari be merged back with their parent RBDAs and returned to the status quo before Buhari's regime. In LBRBDA, a new contractor took up the construction of the Doma dam and the first phase of the work got commissioned in 1988. The new project was tested on a 500KVa power set. There was another fanfare at the commissioning of the new installation. However, yet again, it was short-lived! Two significant factors militated against the project. The installed pipes could not take the pressure of the water as it flowed by gravity, and many of them burst. Second, and more importantly, the LBRBDA ran short of funds and could not afford the cost of powering the functioning part of the new scheme on the diesel power generator. Some of the background factors included the policy that stripped the RBDAs of their functions and the economic measures imposed by the SAP policy of Babangida's administration. As the LBRBDA struggled with the crushing demands of SAP, the work on the dam stopped, and the people waited.

Indeed, the wait for the dam became a long, tedious wait for all the stakeholders. For the LBRBDA, it meant the long stop of its irrigation plans even though the official reports of the LBRBDA showed that the dam reached completion in 1988 with a capacity of 3.5 million cm³ (LBRBDA, 2000: 5). Since the end and commissioning of the first phase, more than five heads of the state have ruled the country and made different inputs to the water sector. However, none of them focused on getting the Doma irrigation project to run as planned. Some of the significant policies were Obasanjo's reawakening of the privatisation and commercialisation of public enterprises, Yar'adua's Seven-Point Agenda and Jonathan's Transforming Agriculture policies.

However, the interest in the dam and the irrigation were still on! President Buhari, the incumbent ruler, carried on the plan to provide a concession to the dam as part of the government's public-private partnership. The Doma dam was one of the public enterprises profiled on the website of the Infrastructural Concession Regulatory Commission (ICRC), a government parastatal set up to regulate the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) endeavours of the Federal government. The ICRC description of the Doma dam was detailed and extensive,

given to provide the stakeholders with the indices pertinent to their interests. The ICRC's webpage had a detailed description of Doma dam:

The Doma Dam is a multi-purpose dam, constructed on the Ohina River primarily to cater to the irrigation and drinking water supply needs in the vicinity. A total of 200 ha of land was scheduled to be irrigated from the waters from the Doma Dam. The salient features of the Doma Dam are: Drainage area: 258 square kilometres; Type of main and saddle dams: Earth fill dam (embankment); Length of main dam: 520m; Length of saddle dam: 320m; Maximum height of main dam: 27m; Maximum height of saddle dam: 8.5m; Crest elevation: 132m; Crest width 8.0m; Maximum width at base: 143m; On visual inspection, the dam appeared to be in a state of neglect and lack of maintenance of the dam was clearly evident. Shrubs, bushes, and undergrowth could be seen everywhere, although no structural damage or seepage of any nature was noticed (Infrastructural Concession Regulatory Commission, 2018).



Figure 4:3 Doma Dam Project: (A) Dam crest; (B) spill-way inlet (C) Downstream outlet. Source: Daniel Adayi

Sadly, the description of the ICRC was still the state of the dam in 2018 when the writer visited the irrigation project thirty years after the commissioning by General Babangida.

For the neighbouring communities and the LBRBDA, the Doma dam has been a case of unfulfilled dreams. It has been a long and tedious wait for the communities to witness the blooming of economic activities that the government promised the dam would bring upon its completion. The people have resorted to managing the facilities their way with dire consequences for the surrounding areas (Joseph, 2010: 36). However, a research carried out

by Yusuf and Akashe (2014:95) showed that the dam increased the income level of the surrounding dwellers along with a corresponding increase in the cases of water-borne diseases as the people used the untreated water from the dam for drinking purposes.

Our visit to the Dam revealed that the Doma Irrigation Project had a vast quantity of substantial infrastructural provisions, but there was no irrigation agriculture. Unlike the other Projects of the LBRBDA, Doma had pipes all laid out for sprinkler irrigation. There was an equipped pump house with all the necessary facilities. There was also a power generating set with all the connecting pipes in a good order. The facilities were dust-coated; a clear indication that they had been dormant. The main challenge was the power supply.



Figure 4:4 Doma Project: (A) Main entrance [south]; (B) & (D) Compressor systems (C) Power Generator. Source: Daniel Adayi.

Some of the staff believed that the problem of the dam was a mix of politics and corruption. Mr Vincent Adogolo, who retired from the LBRBDA as a Director, after thirty-five years, lamented the waste of resources that the dam had now engendered:

There is a lot of politics about the dam. They [LBRBDA management] use it to get money from the government. The Authority is getting a lot of attention from the government because of that dam, but we do not see how the money is spent. That dam has multiple functions: it supports Nasarawa State government, and it supports Toto for domestic use. The Lower Benue is supposed to use it for irrigation and fisheries, and even hydroelectricity. Every year there is an allocation for Doma Dam. What I am trying to say is that if that dam is properly harnessed, it will be a great source of wealth, not only to Nasarawa State but all the neighbouring states. It was a very small dam that grew to be that massive dam that you see there (Interview: Eleven, 2016)

Irrespective of the way it was perceived, the fact that was that at the Doma Irrigation Project, like all other projects of the LBRBDA, there was no irrigation farming even though the project had the biggest dam of the Authority and had all that was necessary for an irrigation farm with a big capacity irrigation, except for the power supply. According to Mr Adogolo, there was a mistake in the design of the Doma dam which should not result in the stagnation of the Doma dream. He opined that the error could be corrected. In his words:

There is an Executive Director for Planning and Design Department. That is their job, get them, “We made a mistake. We have a dam, and it costs us so much. We must pump water before we irrigate. The cost of power is too high!” If I were the Managing Director, I will just throw the work at them and allow them to struggle with it. All I want is a solution that will work and be sustainable. They must find a cheaper way to run the dam. I tell you if you challenge the Planning and Design Department that way, they will come up with options. (Interview Eleven, 2016)

Until the situation of the dam is rectified, and the hopes of the stakeholders is fulfilled, Doma, consisting of the dam and the irrigation project, stands as a reminder of how the changes in government and policy interruptions adversely affected the LBRBDA.

4.2 Oforachi Irrigation Project

The LBRBDA inventory of lands acquired for the federal government showed that the Oforachi Irrigation Project was one of the projects in Kogi State obtained for the establishment of a project office, residential staff quarters and farming. Located in the Igalamela local government, the project covered an area of 100 hectares with about 10 ha developed for irrigation. An official brief presented to Sarah Reng Ochepeke, at the beginning of her tenure as the Minister of Water Resources in 2011, indicated that the study and design of a dam for

the Oforachi Project had reached completion in 2010 (LBRBDA, 2010: 20). By 2017, the proposed dam existed only as paperwork.



Figure 4:5 A map of Kogi State showing Oforachi Irrigation Project. Adapted from Sadiq, Balogun, & Anjorin (2016: 3737)

Our findings when we visited the project showed that there were two staff of the LBRBDA on the Project; one of them was the Project Manager. There were also security men employed as casual workers, not on the payroll of the Authority. The source of water for the project was a natural stream that was still running and clean in December when many streams dried up because of the dry season. The project had no functional irrigation facilities, and the only sign was that of rain-fed farming. There was no farming activity visible as it was the dry season Harmattan period then. The government efforts there included a failed attempt at constructing a night reservoir system uphill to distribute the irrigation water by gravity. The project abandoned at a very early stage, was awarded to one Ellah Services Ltd in October 2014, for a contract sum of fifty-four million, four hundred and twenty-four thousand, six hundred and seventy-one naira (N54,424,671.00) [\$150,000]. The 2015 update on the LBRBDA contracts showed a payment of eight million, one hundred and sixty-three thousand,

four hundred and twenty-four naira (N8,163, 424) [USD22,000] and a project execution level of 15%. At the time of the field trip, the excavated earth had been washed away by rainfall, leaving heaps of soil formation which the Project Manager, Mr Kya Ochenge identified as he took the writer around the project (Figure 4:6).



Figure 4:6 Oforachi Project (A): The Manager, Mr Kya Ochenge, explains the mechanism of the repository. Left (B) latitudinal view & (C) longitudinal views of the abandoned project. Courtesy: Daniel Adayi.

Also, there was a second stalled attempt at irrigation by pumping the water directly from the stream and distributing it without storage. Some of the units of the said pumping system at the Oforachi Project included the power generating set (installed but not in use), the water canals made of reinforced concrete, an intake chamber at the waterside, not connected and at different stages of construction (Figure 4:7).

It was indicative that the latest update on the Oforachi project was in 2015, when Jonathan lost the presidential election and handed over to Muhammadu Buhari. The update was part of the handover notes prepared for the Minister of Water Resources for her submission to President Jonathan as part of his final report . Although Buhari took over in May, he did not appoint ministers until October. Within that time, the RBDAs, like other government agencies, drifted into a state of inactivity as the country awaited the ‘change’ that Buhari promised. At the basin authority level, it was a period of uncertainty as the old political appointees prepared to leave office after their party, People’s Democratic Party (PDP), lost the

presidential elections. One of the senior staff, Mr Tim Bello, told us that the delay in appointing a minister and a new management team had terrible effects on the RBDAs. He mentioned that in the past, such gaps had been exploited by the political appointees who used the window period to defraud the Authority and cover up the responsibilities that they had not carried out correctly. In this case, it was expected to be on a higher scale because Buhari had been accusing the Jonathan-led government of corruption and ineptitude.

At the Oforachi project, the change in government and the frenzy of the impending probes did not ring any bells. The Project Manager, Mr Kya Ocheng, told the author that it would take a long time before the project felt the effects of the new government. The notification that a new government was in place could be made by a contractor who would suddenly shows up to begin a new construction work or to continue an abandoned one. Otherwise, the project would continue to count the days as it waited for the rains to get busy again. The Project Manager added that the outgoing Managing Director of the LBRBDA was yet to visit Oforachi despite being sure of leaving the office soon with the arrival of a new president. He said that in his years as a Project Manager, he had noted that contractors exploited the interregnums to block any track that would lead to their indictments. He expressed hope that Buhari's 'Change' mantra would make the desired differences.



Figure 4:7 Oforachi Irrigation Project. Top (left) Power generator; Right: farmlands. Bottom (Left): chamber at the waterside; Right: the cement concrete trough. Source: Daniel Adayi.

4.3 Guma Earth Dam, Gbajimgba

The Guma earth dam, in Gbajimgba, Guma Local Area of Benue state, is one of the uncompleted irrigation projects of the LBRBDA (Figure 4:8). Built on the Baka river, a tributary of the River Benue, the dam reached completion in 1999 for the purposes of irrigation and domestic water supply. On its completion, the dam had a capacity of 6.5 million cm^3 and covered approximately 500 hectares (LBRBDA, 2000: 5). The original concept of the dam in the Annual Report of the FMWR (2000) outlined how a downstream irrigation scheme of 100 hectares would be part of the Gbajimgba project (FMWR, 2000: 125). One of the more recent reports of the Authority described the Gbajimgba dam as:

One of the projects that the Authority maintains regularly. In these projects, offices and residential buildings were developed, and the Authority's staff are posted there for their maintenance and further development (LBRBDA, 2011: 4).

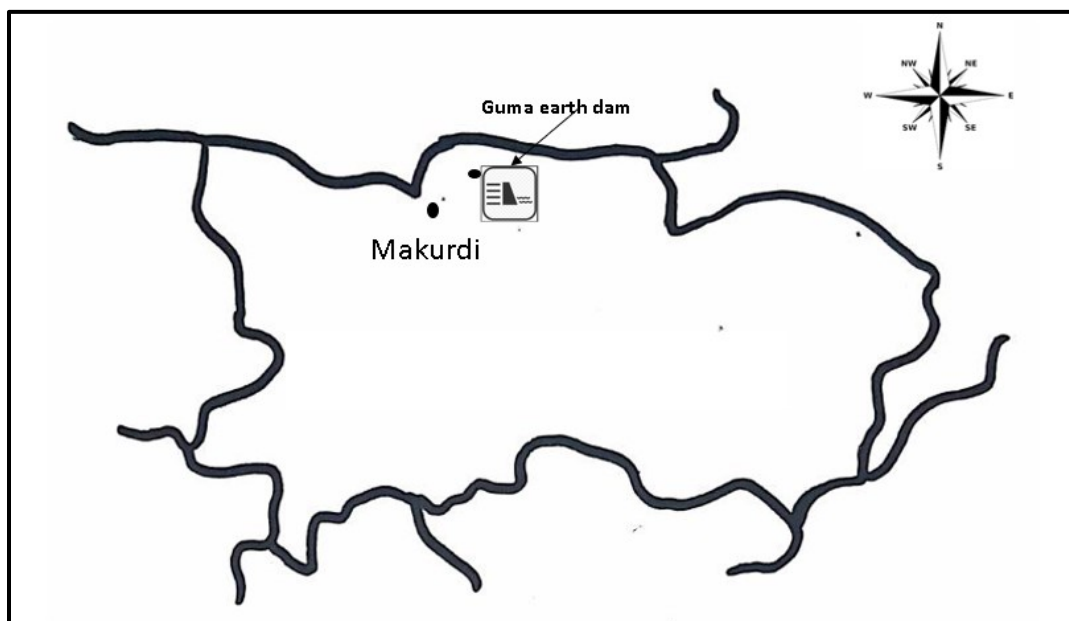


Figure 4:8 A map of Benue State showing the Guma earth dam at Gbajimgba. Source: Daniel Adayi

However, the writer, through his visit to the dam discovered that the Gbajimgba Project was different. It did not enjoy any of the supportive facilities listed above. Indeed, there was an earth dam surrounded by a lush and resilient vegetation but there was no presence of the staff of the LBRBDA, no farm or any other form of the activities of the Authority when the write visited the place in 2017. The embankment of the dam served as an active footpath connecting the villages on two sides of the dam (Figure 4:9).



Figure 4:9 The Guma Earth Dam. Notice the footpath through the crest and the lush vegetation. Courtesy: Daniel Adayi.

The evidence of the presence of the LBRBDA was an old, dilapidated tent which a local farmer had converted into a place for sunning his grains, a few abandoned tanks and the cannibalised remains of some of the earth-moving machines used during the construction of the dam. Even though a source at the corporate headquarters mentioned that one staff was assigned to oversee the dam site, there was nothing to indicate that at the site during the visit of the author.

Meanwhile, the dam was on the list of projects for which the LBRBDA got allocation for their maintenance but had little or no economic application for food production by the Authority. The reports of the LBRBDA showed that in 2012, a contract for the comprehensive rehabilitation of the Gbajimgba dam for the sum of nine million, five hundred and fifty-seven thousand, six hundred and twenty-five naira (N9,557,625.00) [USD26,000], went to a firm called Parakletos Engr. Ltd. The status report showed a part payment in 2012, and that the balance was carried forward into 2013.

In a nutshell, more than a decade after the completion of the dam at Gbajimgba, the LBRBDA was yet to equip the site for any form of farming activities. While the dam awaited an implementation plan, the LBRBDA annually set aside an allocation for the maintenance of the dam. Mr John Iortiyange, the Project Manager of Naka, drew a parallel between the Gbajimgba and Obagaji projects by describing them as concrete evidence of the underutilisation of natural resources by the LBRBDA. He lamented that:

At Obagaji, no irrigation project has been designed for it since it started. Nothing! Only rainfed farming. And after some time, the Authority stopped engaging in rainfed agriculture because the projects were supposed to be for irrigation. Dry season farming was the main thing, so it affected the river basin drastically. That is what made the river basins moribund up till now. I can say that the river basins are running below their capacities. They are hardly meeting their targets, not up to 40% of their goal. They are underutilised! Some dams are constructed and, sometimes for ten years, they are called on-going projects. We have the Gbajimgba dam built over ten years now, and no attempt has been made to design any irrigation project or open a farm there. But money comes in for maintenance of the dam every year (Interview: Twenty-One, 2017).

A further similarity between Gbajimgba and Obagaji was that although both communities were hosts to large water reservoirs of the LBRBDA, they had no facilities for the supply of domestic water to the local inhabitants. The local dwellers get their water directly from the lake used by the farmers and pastoralists. In both cases, the situations had been so for about two decades, a period during which Obasanjo, Yar’adua, and Jonathan ruled the countries and floated a series of rural development programmes anchored on the RBDA’s. However, there are several differences between the Gbajimgba Project and the Obagaji project. Unlike Gbajimgba, Obagaji had a colony of neglected and abandoned houses, a Project Manager and an office at the project site. At Obagaji, there was human presence when the author went there, and the challenges were slightly different as the next section shows.



Figure 4:10 The Evidence of LBRBDA presence at Guma earth dam. Source: Daniel Adayi.

4.4 Obagaji Irrigation Project

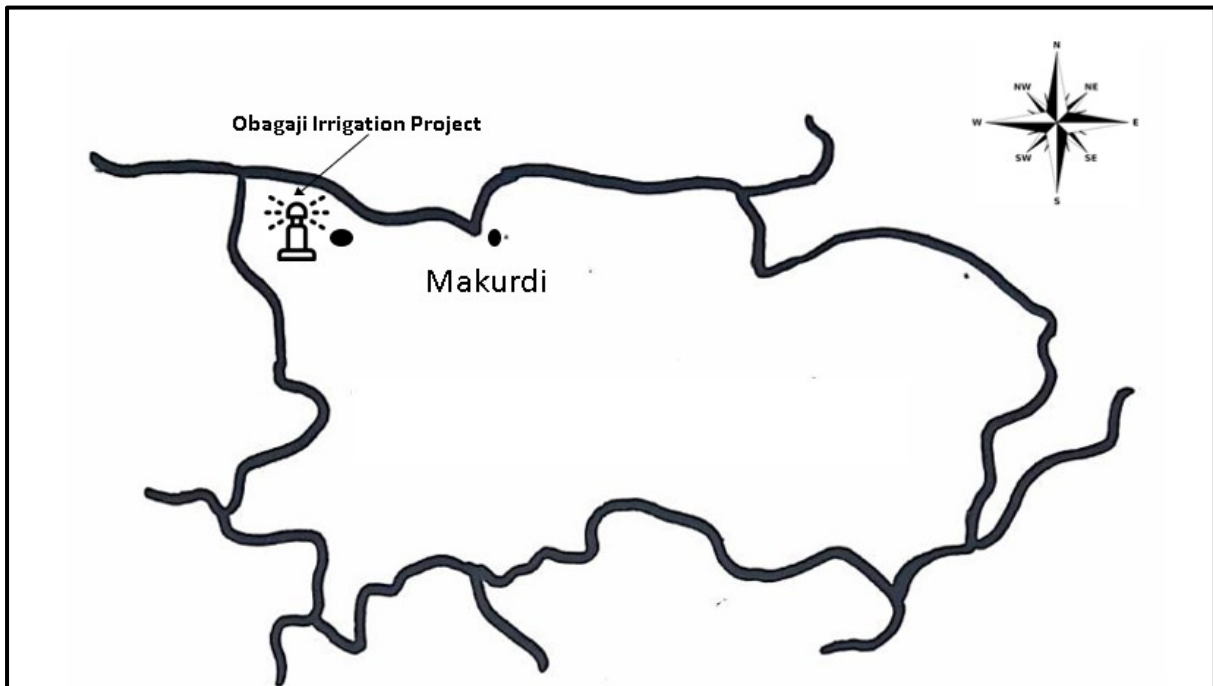


Figure 4:11 A map of Benue State showing the location of Obagaji Project. Source: Daniel Adayi

The Obagaji Irrigation Project occupied a landmass of 1000 ha in Agatu Local Government of Benue State. The source of water for the project was an inland depression into which water flowed during the rainy season and was available during the dry season. The volume varied with the seasons (Figure 4:12). The LBRBDA distribution of staff showed that the Obagaji project had only a Project Manager as the substantive staff of the LBRBDA at the site. The supporting staff were the security guards sourced by the Project Manager from the local inhabitants.



Figure 4:12: Views of Obagaji inland lake. Source: Daniel Adayi

The author visited Obagaji in January 2017. Even though the Project Manager had been notified of the visit, he was away to the headquarters in Makurdi, but he delegated one of the security men to help with a tour of the facilities. The guide took the writer and his assistants around the project, from the farms to the old housing arrangement for the staff. It was an interesting and a revealing tour.



Figure 4:13: Obagaji Project. (A) The Project Office; (B) Farmlands (C) A farmer with his harvest (D) Some of the other buildings in the colony. Source: Daniel Adayi.

There were some signs of rainfed farming but there was no irrigation farming or irrigation facilities on the project. One of the local farmers who was evacuating his yam told the writer that he and the other farmer often paid a token amount for the use of the land during the rainy seasons (Figure 14:3C). In return, the Project Manager supported them in the preparation of the farmland for the planting season.

At the residential quarters, there were many buildings at different stages of dilapidation. The housing arrangement in the colony was in an awful state, with nobody residing in the settlement, even though it appeared to have been the original plan, going by the number of housing units (Figure 4:13D). It was obvious that no one lived there. Some of the residential apartments had become make-shift offices and spaces for storage and had been taken over by the farmers (Figure 4:13C) and some had been overgrown by thick bushes (Figure 14:3D).



Figure 4:144 The proposed construction for a water pumping and distribution system at Obagaji project. Source: Daniel Adayi.

Unlike the Gbajimgba project, the Obagaji Project did not have a regular dam. The primary source of water was a natural depression, surrounded with big stones, into which the water gathered during the rainy season (Figure 4:12). There was no irrigation farming and irrigation facilities. The latest physical structure on the site was a construction that had newly started for a plant house to power the pumping of water from the reservoir (Figure 4:14). The security man explained that the installation was a new development at the project and that a water

distribution system would be installed so that water would get to the fields. The new construction was in sharp contrast with the environment. All the other structures around the new distribution system were old, dilapidated and abandoned buildings that were no longer in use and the nearest was about 50m away. The new installation would face the challenge of security especially with the recent wave of attacks by marauders suspected to be herdsmen.



Figure 4:155 Web images of Agatu crises. A: Burnt truckload of yams; B & C: Protesters with placards⁵². Compiled by Daniel Adayi.

As with the case of Gbajingba dam where the LBRBDA evacuated its staff because of security problems, Agatu, the local government area where Obagaji had been in the news because of repeated destruction of lives and properties. Many of the inhabitants abandoned their homes and fled to other towns for safety. The guide told the writer that the perilous security situation had adversely affected the activities of LBRBDA in Agatu. He added that the people had cried out and protested even to the presidency with placards, but the security was yet to improved (Figure 4:14).

As for the Project Manager, he faced the challenges of managing the unequipped irrigation site and the ever-present security threat with utmost care for his safety. He could not guarantee the safety of the properties of the LBRBDA there because the marauders often

⁵² Picture Sources: (A) <http://www.nairanaijanews.com/2016/02/photos-armed-fulani-herdsmen-attack.html> ; (B) <http://unicpress.com/2016/03/20/benue-nass-members-urge-buhari-stop-benue-killings/> ; (C) <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/05/agatu-attack-igp-dambazau-dss-herdsmens-absence-stalls-reps-probe/>

came in large numbers and overwhelmed the population. Although the LBRBDA had not suffered any human casualties, the pervading insecurity had affected farming activities adversely. In summary, Obagaji is a classic case of poor planning that LBRBDA had lived with for more than two decades and there was no plan, at least a publicised plan to have it corrected at the time that the writer visited the place.

4.5 Administrative Outposts: Keffi Liaison Office & Bukuru Area Office

The LBRBDA had two outposts which served as administrative offices and liaised with the headquarters in Makurdi. One of them was situated in Jos, Plateau State, and served as an Area Office; the second was the Liaison Office in Keffi, Nasarawa State, located between the Corporate Headquarters of LBRBDA and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja where the headquarters of the FMWR was based. The writer could not visit the Jos office during the field trip because of bloody clashes between farmers and herdsmen. However, the writer made two visits to the Keffi office. The first visit was to seek an appointment with the Resident Liaison Officer for an interview, and the second was to see the structure and interview the Liaison Officer. The officer was away on both occasions.

The Keffi Liaison Office is situated at distance approximately the same from all the farthest points of the catchment area of LBRBDA and the FMWR in Abuja. At its acquisition, the land was one thousand hectares, initially planned to have a liaison office and an irrigation project. According to the report of the TCPC, in the first wave of the partial commercialisation process, the Keffi Project and the Keffi Farm (now alienated), were tendered for sale. Both assets received partial payments for the quoted sums (TCPC, 1993: 244-5). The status of the Liaison Office was not spelt out in any of the extant reports on the LBRBDA. However, a former Liaison Officer certified that at Keffi, there was a liaison office and a project. The LBRBDA later moved the administrative duties of the Liaison Office to the Secretariat of the FMWR in Abuja.

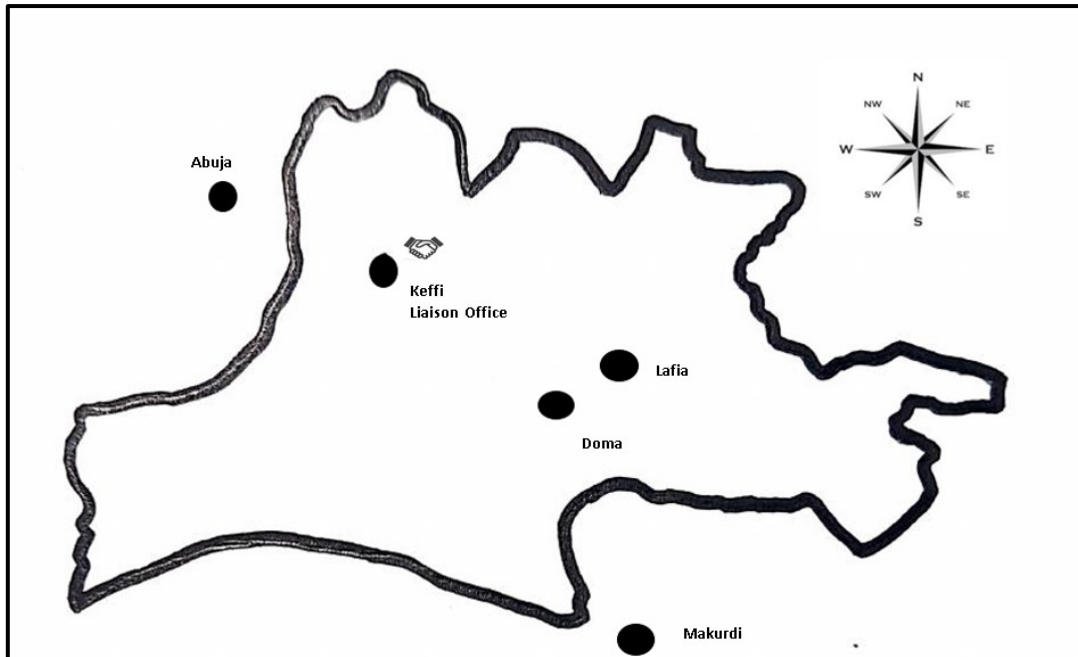


Figure 4:16 An adapted google map showing the relative positions of Abuja, Keffi Liaison Office and Makurdi the corporate headquarters of the LBRBDA. Adapted by Daniel Adayi.

When the writer visited the Keffi office/project site in January 2017, the on-site officer was absent, and there was no official presence at the liaison office. A tour around the area revealed that the project had no natural water source nearby, but about one kilometre away off from the Project Office where the farms were, there was a flowing river which was suitable for irrigation. There were no developed irrigation facilities. Instead, there were farmlands prepared for rainfed cultivations. All around the Liaison Office complex, there were farmlands at different stages of preparation in anticipation of the rain.



Figure 4:17: Pictures from the Keffi Liaison Office and Project: (A) Abandoned houses in the colony; (B) Some of the occupied housing units; (C) A greenhouse cropping project. Notice the stand for an overhead water tank for the project; (D) The front of the Project Manager's office and residence, which also served as a workshop for tools and tractors. Source: Daniel Adayi.

One eye-catching project at the Liaison Office complex was the construction of a greenhouse chamber (Figure 4:17B). From our observation, the metal framework of the structure was in place, and the ground had been tilled. Next to the greenhouse, about three meters away, there was an on-going construction of the stand for a water tank. There was no immediate source of water nearby. With the Liaison Officer away, the writer could not get any official explanation about the intended purpose of the construction. However, the structure though smaller, appeared like a similar structure that was in progress at the complex of the corporate headquarters in Makurdi at the same time. The writer gathered that the one at Makurdi was one of the pet projects of the current management of the LBRBDA.



Figure 4:18. Views of the greenhouse project at the corporate headquarters in Makurdi at the first stage of the construction. Source: Daniel Adayi.

From the perspective of strategic planning, the distance of Keffi to the farthest projects of the LBRBDA made it a significant asset. The same was true of the Area Office in the far north-east

of the catchment area which was set up to oversee the projects around Jos, which included the one at Keffi. We interviewed one of the former Liaison Officers and one former Area Manager to get some first-hand experiences of the staff on how effective the offices in question had been.

Mr Iliya Damina, who was a geographer by qualification, had worked for the LBRBDA for twenty-six years when we interviewed him. He served as the Area Manager of Jos for sixteen years, after ten years at the corporate headquarters. According to Damina, during his time as the Area Manager, he supervised the LBRBDA projects in Nasarawa and Plateau states which included those at Tede, Dep, Nonkat, Bokus, Wase, Mada, Sabon Gari, Rutu and Keffi. His job description included dealing with the administrative issues from the projects and he gave annual reports to the headquarters on the progress of the projects under his watch. He recalled that some organisational challenges made it impossible to function appropriately during the time.

As the Area Manager, Mr Damina said he had an official car to enable him to visit the projects under his care. At some point, the car was recalled to the headquarters for a 'routine check' and was never returned to Jos. In the same vein, the headquarters stopped funding his monthly impress account after ten months of his arrival. Thus, for fifteen years and two months precisely, he managed the office without any subvention. In the end, he had to fold up so many areas. He stopped attending to matters outside the immediate precincts of Bukuru where he lived. Thus, he ran the Area Office in a near comatose state for about fifteen years. Mr Damina opined that the problem with the LBRDA was the management and not the policies. The managing directors were constantly changed, without adequate care for the corporate mission of the establishment. He decried the level to which the LBRBDA had dropped owing to inept managing directors. He recalled the chaotic situation in these words:

I worked at the headquarters for ten years before I went to the area office for sixteen years. I have seen the good, I have seen the bad, I have seen the ugly of all the administrations, having worked under ten Managing Directors. The tenth one just left; the current is the eleventh. Just like I told you, the system down here has been distorted; nothing functional, nothing that you could hold onto. The Managing Directors were after was when the subventions would come. The contracts were about who you knew. The jobs were done; whether satisfactorily or not, the contractors got paid. The ones not paid were carried over to the following year (Interview: Twenty-Four, 2017).

When asked about what he felt about the area office, he admitted that his presence at the office did not make a difference since all the contracts awarded at the areas under his supervision were coordinated from Makurdi, including the renovation of the flat in which he lived. His conclusion was that the brilliant idea that led to the creation of the area office had gone moribund.

The second person interviewed in connection with the outposts of the LBRBDA was Mr David Ugabe, who served as the Liaison Office under three Managing Directors. Ugabe had worked with the Authority for thirty-four years, with one year left for his retirement. He explained that as the liaison officer, he was the bridge between Abuja and the Authority, but he had to 'force' his way back to the Makurdi as he was no longer getting any subvention for the running of his office. Before then, the arrangement was that he ran the office from his personal fund and always got refunded. Things came to a standstill when the third managing director refused to either pay the Liaison Office or refund the expenses of the office under the guise that there was no money. He mentioned that the claim was the same even when he knew through his position that Abuja had released the allocations for the LBRBDA. Mr Ugabe blamed the practice of appointing politicians to the management positions. He recalled that the first three Managing Directors under which he worked were technocrats and the Authority grew steadily under them. According to him:

[T]hings began to go wrong when politicians began to take the helm of affairs. It was wrong. You know that in foreign affairs, they have always insisted a career diplomat should lead the embassies. So, why is it different here? Why do the career personnel, professionals not head this place, and not politicians? (Interview: Twenty-three, 2017).

Neither the interview with the former officers nor the trips to Keffi created an impressive picture of the administrative outposts of the LBRBDA. Although it was not possible to visit Bukuru, Keffi was like any of the other projects visited (Figure 4:19).



Figure 4:19 Front and side-views of the residential quarters of the Liaison Officer at Keffi. Source: Daniel Adayi

Strangely, we noticed that residential quarters of the Liaison Officer required maintenance even though the reports of the LBRBDA showed that there was a renovation carried out not long ago. The 2007 – 2010 report on capital projects of the LBRBDA, No. 10, revealed that contracts for the repairs of the residence and the office at Keffi went as Contract LBR/CON/118/07, to three firms - Cash & Carry Carpet & Furniture, Moag Nig. Ltd and Vicat Engineering Services Ltd – for sums that totalled to about three million naira [USD8000] (Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority, 2010). The states of the buildings suggested that the renovations were either not done at all or not done correctly. The writer could not find out the official position owing to the officer's absence but there was a clear gap between what the look of the Liaison Office suggested and what the reports claimed.

However, the politics that enveloped the terminal illness of Yar'adua beclouded the LBRBDA report which was one of those released after his death. While the terminally ill Yar'adua sought treatment abroad, the country drifted into an unprecedented political uncertainty because he did not formally delegate his power as required by the law. The novel 'Power Vacuum' saga, got even to the Federal High Court. It only ended with the death of Yar'adua and the taking over by Jonathan, who was the Vice President (Anonymous, 2010). Then followed the presidential order that all government agencies and parastatals should give the reports of their status. The LBRBDA report was part of the submissions to the presidency.

Expectedly, the reports which the parastatals sent were marked by irregularities which were overlooked because the country wanted to put the bitter events of Yar'adua's last days behind. The reports were uncritically admitted, without verifications. Jonathan, the new president emboldened the break by abandoning Yar'adua's Seven Point Agenda and launching his Transformation Agenda.

In the long run, it was not easy to for the writer to decide whether the grey areas were in the figures produced in the reports of the LBRBDA, whether the reports on the renovation of the Liaison Office reflected what happened, or it was tailored to benefit some official of the LBRBDA. Notwithstanding the speculations about the context of the report and the weak states of the renovated structures, what the writer saw and heard about the Liaison Office and the Area Office did not differ from the data gathered from the other projects.

4.6 Katsina-Ala Irrigation Project

Located in Benue State, the Katsina-Ala Irrigation Project, lying within the fadama strip of the Rivers Dura and Katsina-Ala confluence, began as the Katsina-Ala River Basin before the creation of the RBDAs (LRBDA, 1979:4). The project occupied a landmass of one thousand hectares in the plains of Katsina-Ala River which flowed from the Bamenda Highlands in the north-western Cameroon, as its source of water (Figure 4:20). The volume and flow of the river were stable enough to provide water for the irrigation plan of the LBRBDA.

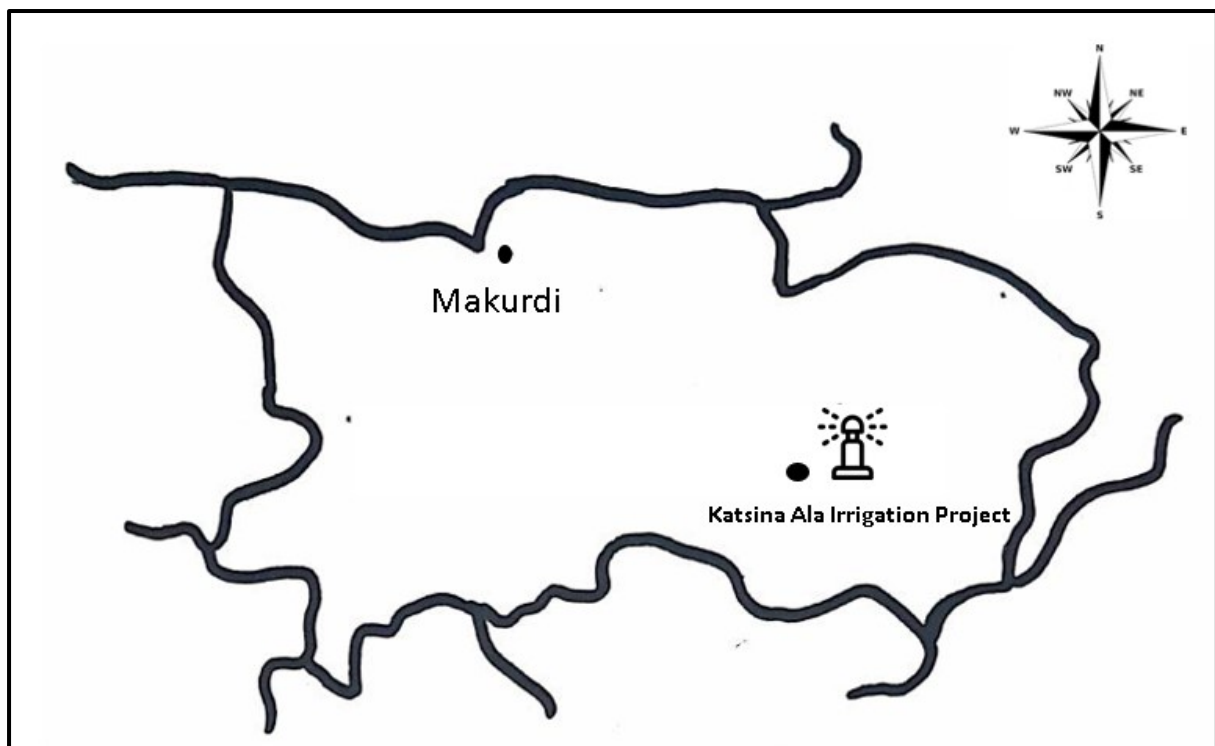


Figure 4:20: A map of Benue state showing the positions of Katsina Project and Makurdi. Adapted by Daniel Adayi.

During the writer's visit, the project manager, Mr Kenneth Ulia, pointed out that there was an old and abandoned provision for water distribution to the farms by gravity. A machine

pumped water from the river into a distribution chamber from where it then flowed to the farm beds for the plants but all that was in the past. There was no irrigation farming on the project since the irrigation facilities were old and in dire need of maintenance (Figure 4:21). However, the local farmers are busy with some activities throughout the year, with the help of the Project Manager. The pumping facilities are old, and the waterways have become silted. The Project Manager was optimistic that things would improve if the headquarters came up with more logistic supports. In the interim, the project actively engaged only in rainfed agriculture.

Mr Kenneth Ulia, the Project Manager, joined the services of the LBRBDA in 1992. Before taking up his present assignment at Katsina-Ala, he had worked as a project manager at Naka and Makurdi. In all, he had worked as a PM for ten years. When he asked what challenges faced the project, Mr Ulia mentioned that the project was understaffed. The people working there were few, and their areas of specialisations were not the necessary ones. He recalled that at some point, the headquarters posted a statistician and a fireman to him. It was challenging to get the men meaningfully engaged because the needs of the project were more basic than the kind of abilities that the men possessed. In the end, he sent them back to Makurdi, to the headquarters. He also lamented about the handling of projects by the headquarters. The management awarded contracts on the project without any reference to him as the manager. He recalled a rather unfortunate incidence:

In one case, a man was supposed to clear 100 hectares of land. Three days after he started the work, he asked me for some certification to put forward a claim for what he had done. He wanted me to attest that he had already finished 20 hectares, but what he had done was not up to 2 hectares. Why would I have to sign that he had done 20 hectares? I refused to sign his payment voucher. The man was not happy, so he went back to my HOD (Head of Department) and said I was proving difficult. Surprisingly, my HOD did not hear my part of the story. He just took the report from the contractor, okayed it and posted another person to go and supervise the job. I was relieved of that duty even though I was the Project Manager at the site (Interview: Eighteen, 2017).

Ulia lamented that he did not know the criteria which they used at the headquarters to decide the contracts which were to be awarded, how much was paid, which contractor got the job, and how long the execution of the project would take. He said it was difficult in such a state to talk about making progress as all. It was all a political hype! On a final note he said, he addressed the writer in these words:

Go, go and make a good report of your research, and tell them (referring to those who would read this work) that what is happening here is lip-service. If they want a turnaround, there should be a change in our way of thinking. Let them study what happened in Israel as far as irrigation is concerned. Let them examine what Egypt did with its irrigation! Those people sustained themselves with irrigation and even exported! (Interview: Eighteen, 2017)



Figure 4:21: Pictures from the Katsina-Ala Irrigation Project showing (A) the vast fadama plain (B) the Author with the Project Manager; (C) A staff explains the hydrometer to the Researcher; (D) Water intake pipes by the river. Source: Daniel Adayi.

4.7 Common Challenges

The field trip through the projects also revealed some common features that ran through all the irrigation projects of the LBRBDA. All the profiles presented here have identifiable leitmotifs. This section condenses and highlights some of those motifs which testified to an assertion made by one of the sectional heads, Mr David Kum, that the loud ‘newspaper, radio and television talks’ of the politicians about how the RBDA’s would change Nigeria’s fortune had no concrete referents in visible reality. All the evidence here all come from the LBRBDA.

All the projects of the LBRBDA had reliable water sources. Some of them were flowing rivers while others were inland lakes. With varying abilities, all the water sources lasted throughout the year. Some of the inland lakes like the ones of Okete (Otukpo) (Figure 4:22) and Obagaji projects (Figure 4:12) were small but the absence of dry season irrigation left their limits untested. None of the existing reports on the challenges faced by the LBRBDA alluded to a shortage of irrigation water as a problem.



Figure 4:22: View of the lake at the Okete (Otukpo) Irrigation Project. Source: Daniel Adayi.

All the LBRBDA projects showed evidence of rainfed agriculture carried out by aiding the local farmers with machines for clearing the fields and tilling the ground for planting. The projects had vast expanses of lands which were recently harvested, and for some of the projects, the farmers were still busy with their yields (Figure 4:23).



Figure 4:23: Harvest activities at the project colonies: (A) Preparing harvested rice at the Makurdi project; (B) The Project Manager evacuating bags of maize at the Okete Project; (C) Cassava drying in front of the Katsina-Ala Project Office; (D) A farmer evacuating his yams at the Obagaji Project. Source: Daniel Adayi

All the irrigation projects had less staff than they needed to run optimally. In most cases, the project managers were the only staff of the LBRBDA present, with one or two other staff with him/her. The rest were usually security guards sourced locally by the project managers as casual staff. The only exception to that trend was the Dep Project where there were up to twelve staff on the roll and eleven security men. Considering the sizes of the projects and the different functions that required personnel, ranging from the project manager to tractor officers, clerical officers to gauge readers and meteorological officers, it was impossible to effectively manage the projects with the current level of staff distribution in the LBRBDA.



Figure 4:24: The author in snapshots with some of the staff at the Dep Project Office. Arrowed (top left) is the Project Manager, Mr Godwin Karbe. Source: Daniel Adayi.

One easily observable trait that cut across all the projects was that irrigation farming as envisaged in the original plan (the enabling Decree) and the restructured plan (the streamlining of the functions of the RBDAs) were not taking place on any of the projects. None of the projects engaged in agriculture throughout the year on a substantial scale. The writer saw two outstanding efforts during the field trips. At the Dep project, there was a form of irrigation with water drawn from hand-drilled holes (Figure 4:25B). The irrigated area was small, and the effort was only able to support the production of vegetables by the side of the Dep River. The proximity of the river meant that there was a shallow waterbed and water available throughout the year, since the river flowed the entire year even though its banks were prone to erosion (Figure 4:25A).



Figure 4:25: The challenges of the Dep Irrigation Project: (A) The erosion-prone Dep river [Notice the silting]; (B) A hand-drilled hole used as water source for irrigation; (C) A view of the vast irrigable land at the Dep Project; (D) A vegetable farm using irrigation. Source: Daniel Adayi.

The second effort at irrigation farming was the Okete Project. The farmers pumped water through long flexible plastic pipes from the inland lake. During the writer's visit to the project, a farmer set up his machine and the flexible hose and had a young man who held the end and directed the spray as the water flowed out (Figure 4.24). However, the cultivated land was small, less than a hectare, and the lightly tilled beds suggested that they were meant for vegetable cultivation only.

Besides the two instances, there was also the case of Katsina-Ala, where the farmers' group had just concluded their meeting with the project manager when the author reached the project office. The project manager, Mr Ulia, later explained that the meeting was in anticipation of the rainy season and the collaboration between the farmers' association and the LBRBDA in the areas of mechanised assistances like tractors.



Figure 4:26: Okete Irrigation Project. Left to right: The bank of the lake [notice the size of the pumping machine]; sprinkling using the flexible hose; the Project Manager discusses with the farmer. Source: Daniel Adayi.

4.8 Conclusion

The LBRBDA, as one of the twelve river basin authorities in Nigeria, enjoyed some amount of autonomy as provided by the enabling laws, but it was dependent on the federal administrative structures for its policies and funding. The ever-increasing food demands of Nigeria’s growing population made the RBDAs a recurrent point of reference in national debates about how to move the country forward in food production. The RBDAs had access to the two essential factors of the agricultural output – water and land. As a federal agency, the RBDAs were under the presidency which determined not only the policies’ direction but also appointed all the keys officers, from the minister of water resources to the executive directors of the four departments of the RBDAs. Thus, the RBDAs could not develop beyond the policies and administrative framework of the Federal Government. The pivotal role that the RBDAs played in the water resources and agricultural sectors drew them into the cycle of repeated policy changes, as new governments abandon the plans of previous governments, whether the policies were good or bad, in a politically driven bid to achieve personal goals.

For the LBRBDA, the constant policy changes left a trail of truncated investigations of the natural resources of the catchment area, a long chain of unfinished construction works and underused project managers. The executives and low-rank officers cut corners and change

figures for personal gains from the system weakened by inept management and corruption. The gross cost was a system that appeared to be incapable of checking financial leakage.

For the LBRBDA, the abandoned grand ambitions of former Heads of States, Ministers of Water Resources and Ministers of Agriculture now littered the catchment area as ill-equipped and non-functioning irrigation projects that do not carry out irrigation farming at all. They stood as dams constructed with no irrigation projects built around them for more than a decade, and they did not look like anything would change within the next decade. They stood as large built-up colonies with many housing units at different stages of dilapidation. The frequent and haphazard policy changes created officers who did not expect new policies to outlast the governments that introduced them. They had seen the pattern repeated so many times that it had left them with a negative mindset about the intentions of the government and its oft-quoted rhetoric of impending change.

The cumulative effect was that the irrigation projects of LBRBDA became monuments of broken dreams, run by project managers who were actively carrying out rainfed agriculture but did not engage in irrigation farming which was the principal mandate of the RBDAs. The projects parade managers whose ambitions of making fulfilling careers as civil servants became inextricably interwoven with the broken dreams of the LBRBDAs. The irrigation projects of LBRBDA, in their current states, were tangible reminders of policy instabilities engendered by often well-articulated but poorly executed political ambitions of different shades. Figuratively, the irrigation projects of the LBRBDA are colonies of unfulfilled dreams.

CHAPTER FIVE

ONE BASIN AUTHORITY; MYRIAD OF INTERESTS

In the management of the water sector, politics must come to play there. The government design the policies, but when they get to implementation, it is either there will be no funds to execute such strategies, or there will be a delay in the release of the funds for such procedures. That hitch has dramatically affected the productivity of the river basin. Because the Federal Government solely sponsors the river basin; there is bureaucracy. If it were in the hands of the private sector, we would have registered more progress. Samuel Kusa - Executive Director, Planning and Design, LBRBDA

The river basin authorities were theatres of political ambitions as they were tools for agricultural development for the country. Some scholars have argued that the institutionalisation, that is, the setting up of the governance structure for river basins is 'inherently political' and that the politics is scaled. The scales are 'spatial concepts of socio-political phenomena, whose continuous construction, deconstruction and reconstruction express a social struggle for power and control' (Houdret, Dombrowsky, & Horlemann, 2014: 2393). In Nigeria, the struggle for power and control in the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) follow the dynamics of Nigeria's fragmentary federalism. The cycles of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction in the RBDAs mirror the turmoil that shaped the trajectory of Nigeria's fragmentary federalism (Chapter Two). The Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority (LBRBDA), as a basic unit of the RBDAs, is an exemplification of how the scalar politics played out in a micro-context. The chapter explores the LBRBDA as an exemplar of the RBDAs, a micro-level illustration of Nigeria's fragmentation federalism.

At a micro-level, at the level of the RBDAs as separate entities, the fragmentary federalism marked by military interventions, political disruptions, struggles over control of state-owned resources and creation of more states and local government bodies have left their imprints on the management of the RBDAs. The critical components of the LBRBDA under focus here are its politics and polity. The application of the term 'politics' in this chapter follows the definition by the Department for International Development (DFID) presented in its 2001 paper: *Making Government Work for Poor People – Building State Control*. This document defined politics as, 'the way power in the state is acquired and how people and groups inside and outside government influence the use of that power' (DFID, 2001: 11). The definition

resonated with the use of the term by the respondents during our field trip around the LBRBDA catchment.

On the other hand, polity refers to the political setting. The classic piece on the topic, *Polities, Identities and Change*, by Ferguson & Mansbach (1996), defined polity as follows:

A group of people who are collectively united by a self-reflected cohesive force such as identity, who have a capacity to mobilise resources for political purposes and are organised by some form of institutionalised hierarchy (1996: 34)

In the catchment area of the LBRBDA, many political fragmentations have taken place with impetus from the breaking up of the bigger federal units. The fragmentations of the polity defined by the LBRBDA catchment area have created new identities with parallel hierarchies and more stakeholders. The number of stakeholders has increased, but the natural resources, water-related ones, have remained fixed. The fragmentation of the LBRBDA followed the pattern of Nigeria as a polity; the difference lied in the scales at which the two fissures occurred, and the human agencies involved.

As a follow-up, this chapter strengthens the evidence already adduced to show that the development of the RBDAs is a classic reflection of the turmoil of Nigeria's federalism. The resources used here come from the LBRBDA only, and our hypothesis (H₅) is that:

The LBRBDA as a basic unit of the twelve federal RBDAs reflects in its development trajectory the political dynamics that shaped Nigeria's fragmentation federalism.

At the micro-level of the LBRBDA, the key actors and the other variables differed from the ones considered at the macro-level in terms of the political powers they wielded. In this case, the actors were subsidiary agents, but the dynamics were the same. The actors at the micro-level played out the scripts of the government in power as the latter reserved the powers to appoint the arrowheads. At the micro-level, the human agency of the government officials carried the imprints of their ambitions, the party affiliations and the pulls of their ethnic allegiances at a more remote distance from federal influence. Therefore, against the backdrop that the development of the RBDAs mirror, the turmoil of Nigeria's federalism, and the hypothesis, our Research Question (RQ₅) for this chapter is as follows:

As one of the micro-level units of the twelve federal RBDAs, how has the Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority (LBRBDA) mirrored the development trajectory of Nigeria federalism?

To show the mirror phenomenon, we shall begin by examining how the causes and effects of Nigeria's federalism such as the resultant shifts in the polity and political blocks affected the original concept of the LBRBDA. Subsequently, a political sounding will be taken which gauges how the staff of the LBRBDA felt about the interferences of partisan politics in the management of the Authority. The following sub-section presents two cases in which the LBRBDA became an open theatre for political ambitions. After the discourse on political goals, we shall examine how policy discontinuities, unfinished and abandoned projects became tools for desperate strategists. The last section presents the different challenges relating to the structure of the LBRBDA such as the absence of irrigation farming, the problem of land ownership and its lack of estate surveyors. The other aspects considered are the constituency projects scheme as a mixture of benefits and burdens for the LBRBDA. The evidence for this chapter came from the data gathered during the field trips. The primary goal of this section is to show that, in its own way, the LBRBDA embodies all the challenges that bedevilled Nigeria because of its poorly negotiated federalism.

5.1 Shifts in Politics and Polity

Following the trajectory of the Nigerian states, the LBRBDA has undergone several shifts since its creation in 1976 through the RBDAs Decree. At this point, it is pertinent to recall that the military regimes of Gowon and Murtala-Obasanjo established the RBDAs across the country before the requisite pilot studies could be conducted. Obasanjo signed the RBDAs Decree (1979) signed into law two days before he handed over to Shehu Shagari. While Obasanjo was an army General with the absolute powers of a military Head of State, Shagari was democratically elected and had all the checks and balances of democracy. Therefore, from the beginning, the LBRBDA emerged as a product of the military to be developed by the first civilian administration after thirteen years. From the beginning, the LBRBDA had the historical burdens of political structures such as the States within its catchment areas, political instabilities and the fragmentations of both the politics and demographics of those States.

According to the RBDA Decree, the catchment area of the LBRBDA shall be 'the whole of Benue and Plateau States'. (FMG, 1979: sec. 6(e)). The two states were created in 1976 by a split of the former Benue-Plateau State. The Nigerian Constitution refers to a state as 'one of the parts of the Federation' and lists thirty-six of them, with the political units recognised as the local government areas of those states. Both the states and the local government areas are constituent units of Nigeria's political structure. In the case of the LBRBDA, the fragmentary federalism of Nigeria led to several new socio-political realities. The most prominent was that the catchment area of the LBRBDA, previously made up of two states (Benue and Plateau), now has four states (Benue, Plateau, Kogi and Nasarawa). The fragmentations occurred between 1976 and 1996 (Figure 5:1).

All the creation of the new states took place under the military regimes through decrees. The decrees also provided the number and names of places to be recognised as local government bodies. The *fiats* of the military Heads of State were the final words even though some form of advisory dialogues preceded the creations. Therefore, the army created the states as political expedencies on the recommendation of panels of 'experts' who were more concerned with validating actions of the military government than addressing the real challenges of the nation. The new states were responses to agitations from minority ethnic groups and their goals were to balance the sharing of the federal revenue that went to the states and local government areas.

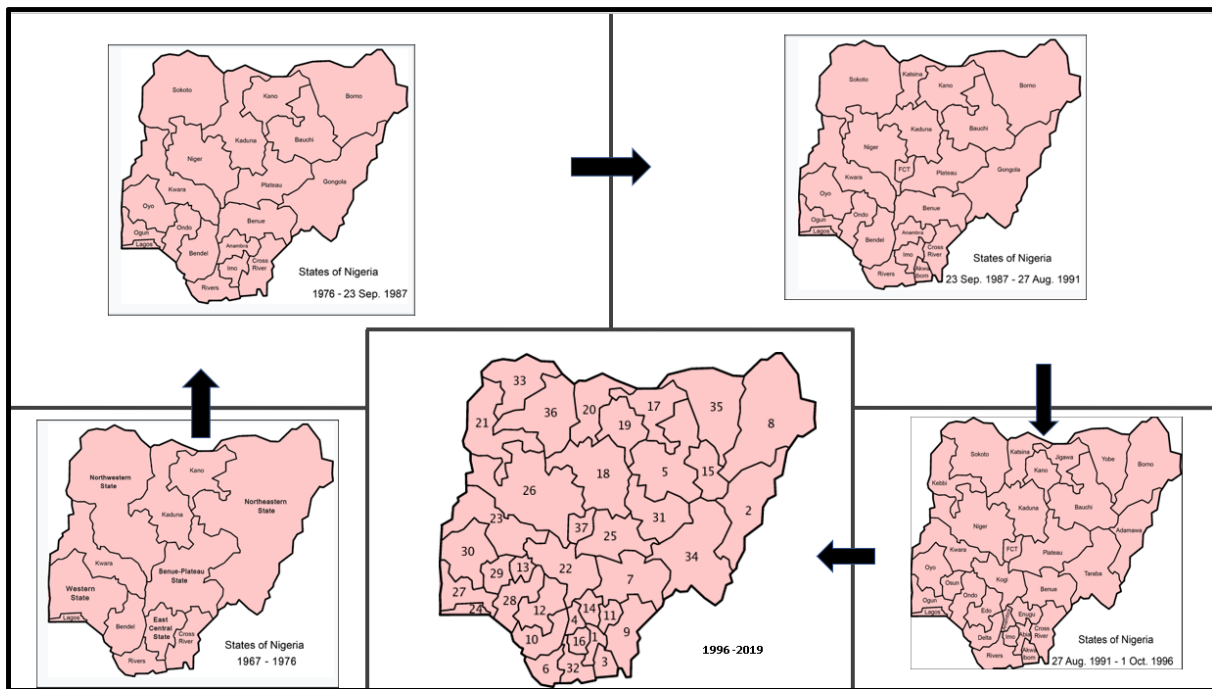


Figure 5:1 Stages in the fragmentation of Nigeria, from 1976 to 2019. Maps from Wikipedia adapted by Daniel Adayi.

Once the military created a state or a local government area and named it, it placed the new unit on par with all the existing states or local government areas respectively. Effectively, what this meant for the LBRBDAs was that it became accountable to four state governments. With the return to democratic rule, it then included all the senatorial zones within the catchment area. The brief presented to the former Minister of Water Resources, Sarah Reng Ocheke, during her familiarisation tour of the LBRBDA at the beginning of her tenure in 2011 provided the spread of the stakeholders as follows:

Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa states, and the eastern part of Kogi State. It covers 10 Senatorial Districts; 3 each in Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa State, and one from Kogi. The LBRBDA has 25 projects sited in 12 LGAs of the catchment states (LBRBDA, 2011: 1).

By the composition above, three states have all their Senatorial Zones within the catchment area of the LBRBDA while (Kogi) has only one (Kogi East) [the other two senatorial districts belong to the Lower Niger River Basin Development Authority (LNRBDA)]. The Kogi State section of the LBRBDA is the Igala-speaking section carved out of the old Benue State and joined to a part of the former Kwara to form the Kogi State (5:2).

Following the current political structure of Nigeria, the breakdown of the stakeholders of the LBRBDA by national reckoning is as shown in Table 5. In addition, there are also federal and

state agencies such as FMWR and the RBOI, State Water Boards and the immediate local communities around River Benue and its tributaries in the long chain of stakeholders.

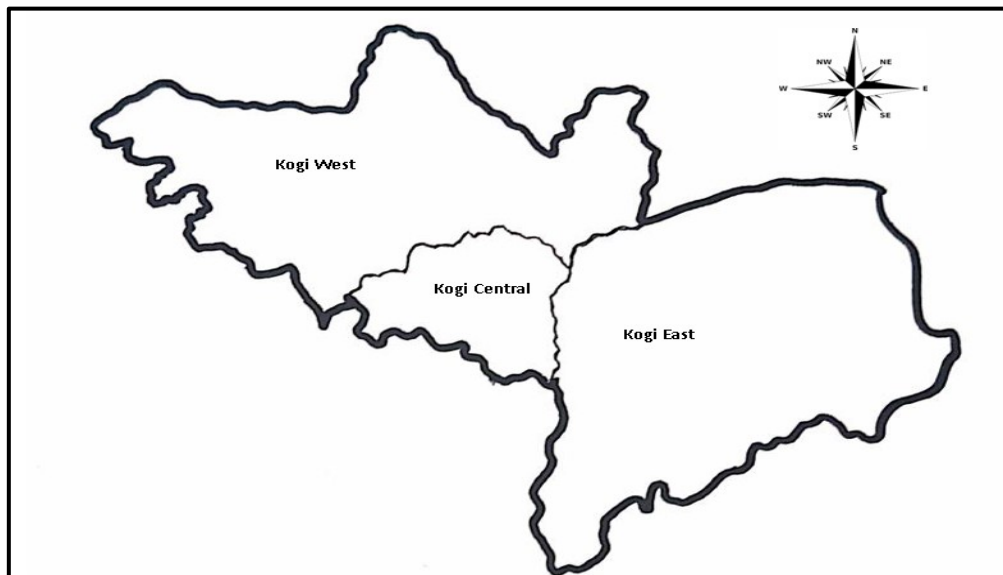


Figure 5:2 Senatorial Zones of Kogi State. Only Kogi East is part of the LBRBDA. Adapted by Daniel Adayi.

Table 5 The current major stakeholders of the LBRBDA at the states' level.

Catchment States	Catchment LGAs.	Governor Stakeholders	No Federal Senators	No of House of Rep. Members
Benue	22	1	3	11
Plateau	17	1	3	8
Kogi	9	1	1	3
Nasarawa	13	1	3	5

Altogether, there were about twenty-five tribes in the catchment area of the LBRBDA. In a country where ethnicity and regional identity have been at the root of many violent conflicts, the LBRBDA's burden of ethnicity increased over the years as more central units were created from the existing ones by fragmentation. The response to the ethnicity burden led to certain twisted applications of the letters of the Federal Character Principle (FCP) which was against

the spirit of the FCP, and only served the narrow interests of certain ethnic groups or persons as we will examine later.

5.2 Echoes from a Political Sounding of the LBRBDA

In our quest to gauge the effect of partisan politics on the management of the LBRBDA, we included some propositions on the topic in the preliminary survey which involved all levels of the staff randomly chosen across the cadre of the junior senior staff. For the junior team, we distributed 120 questionnaires at the headquarters complex in Makurdi. They returned ninety-six of the survey pieces (See Appendix). For the senior staff, we used semi-structured interview and interacted with thirty-nine workers at different locations – the FMWR in Abuja, the corporate headquarters in Makurdi, some managers at the irrigation projects and former liaison officers. We spent 20.16 hours on the interviews. Both sets of data proved very insightful. The responses to the proposals supplied our first insight into the challenges of partisan politics in the LBRBDA. In the feedback from the questionnaires, there were varieties of opinions which were very revealing.

More than half of the respondents (67.7%) agreed that partisan politics had adversely affected the operation and management of the river basin. To the proposition, *If the influence of party politics is reduced or removed, the LBRBDA will progress faster and yield better results*, more than 80% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed. They also believed that political party allegiance had been a stronger force than staff expertise in the implementation of the partial commercialisation policy in LBRBDA. In our interviews, the staff explained further that all those who occupied the strategic positions, such as the Managing Directors and Executive Directors who joined the LBRBDA as political appointees had no prior experience of the river basin management. The respondents pressed their position further by asserting that the appointment of political affiliates should be discouraged because it had proven counterproductive. Approximately 88.60% of the respondent supported the notion that political appointees were less productive than their corresponding career counterparts of the same ranks. They argued that the appointees usually came with their own or their party's agenda, which often ran against the flow of the corporate mission of the LBRBDA. In practice, the respondents said, the appointee relegated the organisational task for their agenda. Many of them also felt that political appointments encouraged corruption. The appointees came

into the management and made decisions about technical issues without a clear understanding of the nitty-gritty of the system. The career staff who were often more experienced and informed, and not necessarily less qualified, were obliged take orders from them or face official punitive measures. Second, the stability of the appointed personnel was dependent on the administration that made the appointment. They mentioned that whenever there was a change of the central government, the appointees were relieved of the posts and new ones were appointed. In the past, many of the appointees had concentrated more on attempting to obtain as much as they could from the treasury of the LBRBDA before the end of their tenures. They also had to pay royalties to their political parties for their appointments. Furthermore, an overwhelming 97% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposition that political corruption had adversely affected the corporate mission of the LBRBDA.

Overall, the sounding through the survey unveiled a widespread dissatisfaction with the high degree of partisan politics in the administration of the LBRBDA. The staff felt short-changed and handicapped as they recounted how they had to take instructions from heads that hardly knew the demands of their work. They recounted instances when the political appointees were more ‘politician’ than professional. Among the illustrations that the staff presented are the two cases examined in the following section.

5.3 Great Ambitions and Ambiguities

After the political sounding, we conversed further with the workers for more evidence to substantiate some of the weighty responses to the propositions in the questionnaire. On further discussions with the staffs, some of them delved into the events that prompted their answers. This section presents two instances when the LBRBDA became an open political theatre; the lead characters in both cases were the Managing Directors, and the plays were their own ambitions orchestrated as the official demands of their offices. Both cases were recent, and most of the staff had their own perspectives to the stories as eyewitnesses to the sagas.

5.3.1 A Consummate Politician or a Seasoned Technocrat?

The first incident centred around the political ambition of the only woman who had occupied the position of the Managing Director of the LBRBDA since it was established in 1976, who

allegedly acquired the post on the strength of her political prowess, and when she felt the moment was ripe, left the LBRBDA to continue her original pursuit. She was a perfect representation of the interference of party politics in the management of the RBDAs.



Figure 5:3 List of Managing Directors of the LBRBDA from 1977 – 2015. Source: LBRBDA

The memorial board of the past leaders of the LBRBDA visibly displayed at the entrance porch of the corporate headquarters in Makurdi listed Engr. Dr (Mrs.) R. A. Change (MNSE) as the twelfth managing director of the LBRBDA (Figure 5:3).⁵³ Known popularly as Ada Change, she was the General Manager of Benue State Water Board before her appointment as head of the LBRBDA. She described her appointment as based solely on her excellent records. She recounted that an official team of President Goodluck Jonathan scouting for technocrats spotted her through her work at the State water sector. A former Minister of Water Resources led the team. Ada Change reminisced that:

They came to Benue and went around the Greater Makurdi Water Works, which was under construction by Dr Gabriel Suswam’s administration. When they asked his Excellency for the brain behind the great works, he told them I was the one. Again, when the 36 speakers of the Houses of Assembly from across the country came to Benue, they visited the same site to assess that job. His Excellency again told them that the person behind such great work was no other person than Engr Dr (Mrs) Ada Change. So, it was the governor, by God’s grace, that nominated me for the federal appointment that the president bestowed on me. I became the

⁵³ MNSE: Member Nigeria Society of Engineers

first female Managing Director of one of the twelve River Basin Development Authorities in Nigeria (Samuel, 2014).

At the time of Chenge's appointment as the Managing Director, she belonged to the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) as the incumbent President of the Republic and the incumbent Governor of Benue State, Gabriel Suswam.

However, some of the LBRBDA staff believed that her appointment was a political compensation for aiding the governorship bid of Suswam. They recalled that Chenge contested the 2011 elections on the platform of the PDP but did poorly in the party's primary elections. Mr Tim Bello, one of the senior staff, took pains to explain that Chenge's appointment was a compromise arrangement. He alleged that Chenge accepted the office of the managing director and threw her weight behind the candidacy of Suswam; it was Suswam's second and last term in office, Chenge would have her turn in 2015. Bello held that that was why Chenge remained the Managing Director for only one tenure, just long enough to enhance her plans.

Furthermore, Bello opined that Chenge's appointment as the managing director of LBRBDA was strategic and had more to it than the excellence of her performance as she claimed. He was of the conviction that:

It was because she (Chenge) contested for governorship and she got only one vote. The party was trying to settle those that contested for the governorship. She was Water Board General Manager, where she had been for some time. There was a crisis in Lower Benue and Suswam cashed in on that to settle Ada. It happened that Ochigbo and Atema⁵⁴ were both appointed Acting-Managing Directors at the same time. The Permanent Secretary of Water Resources appointed John Ochigbo, and the Director of the River Basin Operations and Inspectorate appointed Tarza Atema. It led to a crisis. It was their fight that became a crack on the wall which led to the appointment of Ada Chenge, because Suswam was looking for how to edge the woman out of the way. When he saw the crack, he seized it (Interview Ten, 2017).

Contrary to Bello's opinion, Chenge saw her appointment as a departure from an old practice where politicians without any background in the water sector became the Managing Directors. She came on board with a wealth of experience with an enviable track record to

⁵⁴ John Ochigbo and Tarza M. Atema were both senior career staff of the LBRBDA

back it up. She was a departure from the old practice and that was obvious. During her interview, she emphatically declared concerning her appointment that:

The Presidency appointed me the Managing Director, and it was a purposeful appointment. Mine was a case of, 'let's do something new'! Most of the times, the people that headed the river basin were either civil servants who graduated from one grade level to the other. Then the time came when the government decided to get real technocrats, those who were professionals, who knew about water, restructuring, of mechanisation, of agriculture and the rest. So, the government policy brought some of us in. It was the same thing nationwide; a lot of professionals came together to form the new management of the river basin authorities (Interview Three, 2017).

Chenge managed the LBRBDA for about forty-two months and resigned just in time for the governorship election of 2015. This was in line with the regulation that prospective contestants holding federal appointments must leave their positions at least one month prior to the elections. In October 2014, she took the governorship form which the party sold for eleven million naira each [USD 30,000] (Anonymous, 2014a). Thus, she joined the race again and became a governorship candidate under the PDP. In anticipation of how she would make herself accepted for the exalted office of the State Governor, Chenge worked strenuously to create a very positive image as the head of the LBRBDA. During the electioneering campaigns, she always held up her achievements as Managing Director of the LBRBDA as proofs of her ability. Before the governorship primaries, she repeatedly patted herself on the back for her many firsts:

There have been a lot of firsts in my life – I am the first female Managing Director of the Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority, LBRBDA, having served, before then, as the first female General Manager of Benue Water Board. And by the grace of God, I will be the first female Governor of Benue State. I remain the only female governorship aspirant contesting on the PDP platform. Relying on my experience at the commission, I believe that the sinking of over 900 hand pump boreholes, 450 motorised boreholes, 120 solar boreholes and construction of eight earth dams in four states to boost agriculture and mitigate flooding will sway the delegates at the PDP primaries (Samuel, 2014).

However, her party representatives did not throw their weight behind her even though she stood out among the candidates as the only female contestant. Although she was able to garner some streams of supporters among woman politicians and young bloggers who, like her, felt it was time for a woman governor in Benue State, but Chenge did not win the election (Godwin, 2014). Her party suffered defeat in both the presidential and governorship

elections. Nevertheless, unrelenting in her pursuit and dissatisfied with how PDP conducted the polls in 2015, she crossed over to the All Progressive Congress (APC) in 2016 and soon became the party's women zonal mobiliser. Sadly, Chenge did not become the APC governorship flagbearer for the 2019 elections, but she ended up as one of the bigwigs of the APC in Benue State.

At the LBRBDA, another senior staff, Barr Ojepa, supported the thrust that Chenge's political ambition was her primary driving force as the managing director. He said she seized every opportunity to make a political statement even if she needed to bend the rule. He backed up his claim with the story of how the new perimeter wall ended only on the front side of the headquarters. As a member of the management board, he had drawn the attention of the management to the encroachments on the lands of the LBRBDA by the local farmers and suggested that the corporate headquarters and the staff quarters be fenced round with a wall. The proposal received both approval and funding. However, the managing director decided to build the wall on the expressway side of the land, which was not under any threat of encroachment. She started by demolishing the entire length of the existing fence. This move gave the impression that some work of vast size was going to be executed. In the end, only the side bordering the expressway got fenced and the side that was under threat of encroachment was left undone. In his words:

I suggested that a low fence be made around the back side of the complex because that was the problem side. At the front side of the complex, the boundary is the express road, and the risk of encroachment was not there. But when they came to for the work, they pulled down the entire length of the old wall, including the excellent quality fence built in the early eighties. When it was finished, it was only the front side that was built. I was on leave then. When I returned, I raised a memo in one of the meetings, and the MD⁵⁵ quipped that they who are politicians are interested in what people will see. That is the mentality of the politicians! I discussed it with my colleagues and wanted to make a case out of it (not out of righteousness) but because it was objectively wrong! After considering everything, I concluded that I would not be able to work with her. So, I took a long leave of absence. I was away for about four and a half years (Interview Twenty-Five, 2016).

⁵⁵ Ada Chenge

In all, many of the staff held that the appointment of politicians to head the LBRBDA had mostly proven to be counterproductive. In the case of Chenge, some of them felt it was evident that party politics and personal ambition came before the mission of the LBRBDA. According to Abel Ugabe, the Executive Director of Engineering, the appointment and tenure of Chenge served to validate the experience-based claims of many of the staff, that political appointees tended to come with a long list of personal ambitions. He opined that :

The appointment of MDs from the basin authority career workers ensured that the arrowhead was someone who had a good knowledge of the system, a professional civil servant and not a political appointee with affiliations to service. Politics also brought in the federal character problem into appointments and promotions became a quota system issue and not by merit (Interview Five, 2016).

While Chenge vehemently insisted that she personified the forward-looking and seasoned technocrats which the LBRBDA required to re-embark on the path to recovery, the manner of her exit from the management of the Authority spoke volumes. She resigned before the end of her tenure to prepare for the governorship elections, a move that bolstered the assertion that she might have been a technocrat but her time at the LBRBDA was a stopgap in the power expedition of a consummate politician. Summing up her stance against those who shared a different perspective, it is logical to say that she was neither one nor the other, but a synthesis of the two. Ada Chenge was an astute technocrat who played the game of politics and seized the opportunities that came her way even though she could not control all the variables.

5.3.2 Government Magic?

The second narrative is about the next Managing Director after Ada Chenge, Ovie-Angbazo and the launching of the initiatives of Buhari's government to boost the production of food through the Graduate Youth Empowerment Scheme (GYES), in LBRBDA. Designed in partnership with a firm, the Songhai Nigeria Partnership Limited, it was an integrated agricultural scheme that was to cover the 109 Senatorial zones of the country. The Minister of Water Resources described it as a strategy for food security and job creation. By the end of 2016, the Minister had launched GYES in seven other RBDAs.

The turn of LBRBDA came in 2017 when the Minister was at Doma for the flag-off of the seventh scheme in the series. Both the national and state media covered the event and reported it as one of the success stories of the Buhari's administration in the water sector, but none of the reports mentioned that the ceremony did not include the demonstration of

the irrigation process. The display would have shown the young graduates and the gathered crowd the workings of the scheme in practice, but it did not take place. The press did not say anything about that part of the schedule, but it was in the picture and only dropped off in the build-up to the flag-off.



Figure 5:4 The launch of the GYES at Doma. Top (left): The Minister addressing the press; Top (right): The Minister addressing the occasion; Bottom (left) Nasarawa State Governor addressing the event; Bottom (right): The Minister tours the dam. First left is Ovie Angbazo, the LBRBDA Managing Director. Sources⁵⁶

At the LBRBDA, the staff consider the failed demonstration from different perspectives, but many of them considered it one of the instances when the political ambition of the person at the helm of affairs took the centre stage. The staff's side of the story came from the semi-structured interviews and was a mixture of facts and interpretations.

The story of how the organisers excluded the demonstration came as an illustration of the extent to which political appointees could go to score political points with their positions. Initially, the organising team announced that the LBRBDA launching of GYES would be at Tede Irrigation Project, one of the farm projects of the Authority. In line with the managing director's instruction, work began at Tede. The contractors mobilised tractors and other

⁵⁶ <http://adeniyiyavoola.blogspot.com/2016/11/>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxdG4vGe81w>

earth-moving machines and cleared a vast expanse of land, but the engineering team pointed out some technical issues. Tede lacked the irrigation facilities for the display that would go with the launching of GYES.



Figure 5:5 Pictures from Tede Irrigation Project. Source: Daniel Adayi.

The Tede Project, located on an approximated 500ha of land, had the potential for a dam and hydropower generation (LBRBDA, 2000:4). Our visit to Tede revealed that the project had enjoyed considerable attention in the past. There was a large colony with many abandoned housing units (Figure 5:5). Moreover, the cleared expanse of land was uncultivated because it was in the harmattan period of the dry season. There was a stable flowing stream of clean water. Overall, Tede had the potential for the grand hosting of the GYES launching programme; the only issue, and a serious one too, was that preparing Tede for the August occasion would be capital intensive. However, the engineers promised to work with the allocation they received for the work. After clearing the land, they brought in large pipes, constructed a stand, and ordered for the water storage tank; all of these indicated that this was a feasible venture. For the power supply, there was a 5KVA set.

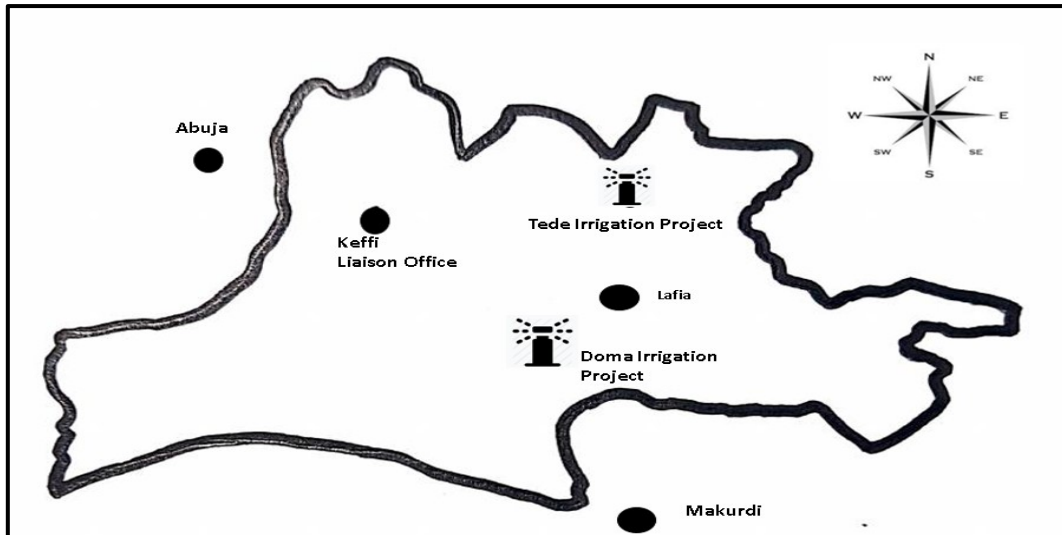


Figure 5:6 A map of Nasarawa State showing the relative positions of Tede and Doma Irrigation Projects. Adapted from Google Maps by Daniel Adayi

The work progressed steadily, but the workers soon discovered that they would require more money. In their haste, they underestimated the overall cost of the installations. A new demand for the fund was sent to the headquarters, but the team was told to deliver the task with the amount it had been provided.

With no money coming from the headquarters, the preparatory work slowed down and eventually stopped. As the date for the inauguration drew closer, the Managing Director instructed that the preparation be moved to Doma as the project had irrigation facilities and



Figure 5:7 The Tede Project: Top(right): Water chamber under construction for the later transferred GYES launching; Top (left): Stand for water storage tank under construction by the waterside; Bottom (right) Power set; Bottom (left) connecting pipes with the stand at the background. Source: Daniel Adayi

would only need a power supply. Thus, the work stopped at Tede, and the Doma team was told to prepare for the programme launch.



Figure 5:8 Signposts leading to the Tede Project. Source: Daniel Adayi.

With the preparation for the GYES programmes moved from the Tede Project to the Doma Project, new challenges appeared. Doma had all the facilities for sprinkler irrigation, but the preparation ran into a hitch at the last moment. So, the launch of the GYES programme took place without the demonstration to show the young graduates, the beneficiaries, the operations involved. After many long speeches by the Minister and the Governor of Nasarawa state and other dignitaries, the programme was considered launched. Apart from the Managing Director, the other members of the LBRBDA management were conspicuously absent from the launching; not even the Executive Director of Engineering or that of Planning & Design was there.

During our field trip to Doma, the project manager Mr Albidu Kindiri recalled the failed exhibition as the kind of 'drama' he had seen severally as a civil servant. He said it was a massive setback for the Managing Director who wished to impress the Minister and the audience but did not allocate enough fund for adequate preparation. Kindiri stared into the distance with an expressionless face as he remembered how it all happened:

There was no demonstration. We ploughed, laid all the pipes, and did everything, but we were disappointed by the main pump. The Minister did not even get to the pump site on that day. Now hear this! The initial venue for the launching was Tede. The team went there and began preparations! They cleared 100 hectares of land at Tede Project and bought a new pump. There are no canals there. The machines purchased are still there uninstalled up till now. The work was

underfunded. When the workers heard that there was no money, they quickly changed to this place. On our part, we requested for three hundred thousand naira [USD800] to refurbish our pump and purchase diesel. We cleared the site (you can see for yourself), but the headquarters told us that there was no money. (I am sorry that I am revealing our secret to you). The Minister came here; what he wanted to accomplish failed. The Managing Director wanted to make a show, but he did not succeed (Interview: Fifteen, 2016).



Figure 5:9 Mr Kindiri shows the intake point of the Doma irrigation structure that needed repairs for the GYES launching demonstration. Source: Daniel Adayi

At the LBRBDA headquarters and the irrigation projects that we visited, the launch of the GYES at Doma was a recurrent point of reference. The staff often highlighted the event as one of the many instances when the political ambition of those appointed to lead the LBRBDA at the management level was disguised as the pursuit of the Authority's vision and mission. Some of the staff alleged that the Managing Director, Engr. Ovey Bala Angbazo, who once served as a commissioner in the Nasarawa, his home state, had his eyes on elections after the completion of his tenure at the LBRBDA. So, he wanted to make a political statement before his people and thus chose a project in his political constituency. However, he miscalculated and did not achieve the level of impact he had intended. Nonetheless, the media only obtained a fraction of the Doma GYES story. They published the rising involvement of the Buhari government in the RBDAs through the creation of a new programme for young graduates.

However, the real story was that the GYES launch was a theatrical political propaganda with very little substance. The entire saga was the kind of travesty of governance that the late Nigerian Afro-music maestro, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, satirically referred to as 'Government Magic'. It was a hoodwinking in which government officials deceived the people to believe that there was so much when there was nothing. They turned green into white and turned red into the blue and deceived the masses with lies and empty rhetoric⁵⁷

For the career staff, the twists of the LBRBDA's goal to achieve the political ambitions of managing directors or executive directors appointed because of their party affiliations, as exemplified by the tenures of Ada Chenge and Ovey Angbazo, were common leitmotifs. All the people we interviewed had their own perspective regarding the political intrigues displayed by political appointees in the execution of their duties, and none were positively disposed towards them. One of the management staff whimsically described tenures of politically appointed executives as a 'theatre of great ambitions, made up of ambiguous drama scenes.' He stated that unlike regular staff, those appointed were craftier and more daring because they were guided by a different set of rules.

5.4 Discontinuities as a Political Strategy

One of the explanations we got for the many unfinished and abandoned projects that littered the LBRBDA was the sudden and frequent changes in government policies. That was the narrative presented by the media and journal articles. However, corrupt workers have exploited the narrative of irregular and sudden policy interruptions as diversionary rhetoric and turned it into a fertile ground for the furtherance of personal interests and the siphoning of public funds. The field trips and the interviews conducted for this research revealed that the oft-repeated narrative that abandoned projects reflected sudden and unplanned interruption of policies was only a fraction of the entire story. In fact, project abandonment occurred often for a wide range of reasons. The staff advanced several reasons to explain why it had remained entrenched in the public service. Mrs Julie Simsim, an officer with the Public

⁵⁷ 'Government Magic' is explained in the chorus of Fela Anikulapo's satirical piece, "Unknown Soldier" (1981)

Relations Unit, referred to the ever-abiding presence of abandoned projects as an 'institutionalised strategy' that would prevail because it was deliberate (Interview Eight, 2016). Some of the insights shared by the respondents were quite revealing.

However, the accusing fingers pointed in the direction of the political appointees because the career staff saw those appointed as opportunists who lived by a different set of rules. One point raised many times was the desire of the appointees to create a legacy. When a new Managing Director was appointed, which was usually for a tenure of three year or four years, renewable only once, s/he would set out to leave a legacy of his/ her presence at LBRBDA. In that bid, they would discard some existing projects and embark on new ones. Even when such schemes did not reach completion before the end of their tenure, the documentation gave credited it to them. Moreover, the evidence of new projects was a negotiating power for the management when the annual budget proposals were sent to the national assemblies.

Furthermore, there was the ever-present demand to remain a loyal party-person through substantial financial donations to the coffers of the mother political platform that helped the appointment, and also to save for the cost of the next political height. Sometimes, the political parties demanded as much as forty-five million naira [USD124,000] for a nomination form (Anonymous, 2018b). Furthermore, the attainment of a new public status such as that of the managing director or the executive director came with unrealistic social and financial burdens for the occupant. The new appointees got invited to public fundraisings and launches where they were expected to make large donations that could not be supported by their regular allocations. The public expects the public office holders to meet the bloated social demands, but to shun corruption. It is a paradoxical but real encouragement of crime; one embedded into the political and economic logic of the state that 'while they disapprove of oppressive corruption, Nigerians nonetheless expected state officials to distribute money and gifts to loyal constituents - something no civil servant could do on the meagre state salary' (Hurlbut, 2018 179).

One of the ways that public officers used to fund living beyond their legitimate incomes was to resort to the use of discontinuities as a political strategy. This strategy was layered. At one level, it involved complete abandonment of on-going projects and beginning of similar ones under phoney claims. Even though the goals were identical, they generated a reason for starting new ones. It was either blamed on a damaged machine component that was difficult

to replace or a need for another implement of a higher capacity. Such decisions did not usually involve the estate management unit. The LBRBDA had a barely visible estate management unit, and for many years, it was not there at all! Therefore, new implements were acquired, and the old ones abandoned or alienated at the discretion of the sectional heads. In the LBRBDA, this application of discontinuities led to several abandoned machines, tractors, cars and power generators at the headquarters and the irrigation projects (Figure 5:10). Many of the tractors destroyed at the headquarters in Makurdi by the 2016 inferno had only minor faults and were eventually abandoned because of bureaucratic bottlenecks.



Figure 5:10 Abandoned power plants and tractors at the LBRBDA projects

Sometimes, the project abandonment strategy was to ignore units that were obscure and to concentrate on the obvious ones even when they were of far less value. We found a classic example of such work units in the LBRBDA library, a part of the Planning and Design Department. The room set aside for the library was twenty-four square meters. It was crowded with electrical appliances and could not seat eight people working at the same time. The room had poor lighting, and the air conditioning unit was bad. The library did not have a supply of current journals or new books, and there was no modern library equipment like computers or recording systems. On the shelf, there were only old survey sheets and contract notes of the LBRBDA from the 1990s and earlier years. At the time of the fieldwork, there were two library staff, none of them trained as a librarian. The chief librarian was a technician

at the telephone exchange but suffered hearing difficulty and was moved to the library on the grounds of mercy. The assistant librarian joined the LBRBDA about a year ago. A third person, also not a trained librarian, was often available to cover for the others in their absence. When asked whether the librarians present the miserable situation of the library to the management and made requests for funding, the answer given by one of them was that:

We request for fund, but we are told there is no money. See the chair that I am using? It was a damaged chair that I got from a refuse dump and restored so that I can have something to use. The people who come here use old materials only! The chairs in here had become old, worn out or damaged, but were not replaced. You can see that the door has no locks. That air conditioning unit was fixed but it never worked. I do not even have an entry book for record keeping. There is no light, so no one can read inside there, and it is a library! It is now eight years since I raised a request for five thousand naira [USD14] so that I could fix the lights in the library and repair the keys, but it has not been granted, for more than eight years now! (Interview: Twenty-eight, 2016).

The librarians stated that periodic reports from other RBDAs and conferences organised by the water sector were sent to department offices where they were either left on office shelves or were taken away by officers. The LBRBDA library did not have current information on the RBDAs. It is instructive that while the LBRBDA allowed its well-hidden library to rot away, it did not hesitate to reconstruct the fence by the roadside which passers-by could see.

Another layer of how discontinuities were used as political tools was through convenient neglect whereby, in the estimation of the management, the project was not exposed to public view. In such cases, the management continued to include the project on the recurrent allocation list under maintenance. The only time that such aspects of the LBRBDA got some attention was during seasonal celebrations or annual inspections. The irrigation projects suffered this neglect the most. Some of the Managing Directors left office with only reported knowledge of the projects of the LBRBDA. During the field trip, at the Oforachi irrigation the Project Manager reported that the Managing Director who just handed over did not come to the project site throughout her tenure. In the same vein, the current managing director was yet to pay a visit even though he was in his second year. Due to convenient neglect, some of the assets of the LBRBDA received little or no attention at all and wasted away, leading to the sharp contrast between the assets in terms of maintenance and presentability (Figure 5:11).



Figure 5:11 Contrasting picture of the LBRBDA. (A) & (E), Headquarters, Makurdi; (B) Tede; (C) Project Manager's residence at Ejule-Ojebe (D) Project signpost at Ejule-Ojebe. Source: Daniel Adayi (2018).

The third layer of discontinuities was the one arising from policy inconsistencies and disruption. In this case, the management allows the asset to slip off its list of priorities or to get it attached to the job definition of an already overloaded officer. Such assets rarely get mentioned because they do not generate income. For the LBRBDA, such assets might include the primary school within the precincts of the headquarters (Figure 5:12).



Figure 5:12 Views of the LBRBDA Primary School. Source: Daniel Adayi .

Some of the workers who attended the primary school recalled the lost glory of the LBRBDA Primary School. It was the pride of the satellite town of the newly created state capital. Those days of the school were now history; the school was now a mere shadow of its former self. The only renovated block was the result of the general donation of the government; it had the colours yellow and black that distinguished all the blocks renovated with the government education trust fund. The remaining sections of the school were unclean, and the playground consisted of only metallic structures, many of them broken down. The school began its downward spiral as the uncertainties of the commercialisation policy increased. In this case, LBRBDA did not put up the school for partial commercialisation nor did it continue to provide it with the kind of attention it enjoyed at the early stage. The Authority conveniently relegated the school on its list and left it in the care of one of the directors.

5.5 Miscellaneous Indices

This section which concludes the profile strings together further evidence of how the fragmentation of the LBRBDA led to an increase in the number of stakeholders and more conflicts of interests. The pieces are different and small, all relating to one or more of the ills observed at LBRBDA; thus, their descriptions are as miscellaneous indices. The indices are joined together by their common points of impact – the LBRBDA – but they differ from the already mentioned challenges of the Authority by the brevity of their discourse. They are short but the impacts of the subject matter on the LBRBDA are enormous. By classification, all the indices belong to the structure of the Authority, that is, they are the consequences of how the RBDA started and how the LBRBDA, in particular, organised itself within the sphere of its semi-autonomy.

There are five indices within this chain. The first is the surprising discovery of the inadequacy of the LBRBDA structure in terms of the management of its physical assets. At the time of the field trip, there were only two estate surveyors even though the assets of the Authority spread across four states, comprising of large colonies with lands, machines and built environments. The second is an examination of the LBRBDA projects without execution plans. The third is the effect of Nigeria's intractable issue of dual land ownership in which the same piece of land belonged to both the federal and the state governments. The fourth is the political straitjacket which constrained all the RBDA spread across different vegetational belts, ranging from

Savannah grasslands to mangrove rain forests, to follow a uniform irrigation policy. The final index is the mixed blessings of the LBRBDA's involvement in the execution of the Zonal Intervention Project otherwise known as 'constituency projects' by which the legislators sought to get to the grassroots. All the indices have one thing in common; they all affected the LBRBDA adversely, from the absence of estate surveyor to the mainstreaming of constituency projects.

5.5.1 Estates Without Surveyor

The LBRBDA has twenty-five project sites spread across four states in twelve local government areas. The projects have massive lands allocated to them with residential quarters, administrative offices and irrigation infrastructure, but there were only two estate surveyors in the employment of the LBRBDA. Given the role that estate surveyors and valuers play in the management of properties, it was a significant gap in the readiness of the LBRBDA to respond adequately to the need of its corporate mission.

According to the website of the Nigerian Institute of Estate Surveyors and Valuers (NIESV), its practitioners specialise in a wide range of interests concerning acquisition, alienation and maintenance of properties. Some of the interests directly associated with the undertakings of the LBRBDA included the valuation of interests in lands, building environment about acquisition and compensation. Others were feasibility and viability appraisal, auctioning and environmental survey, analysis and assessment.⁵⁸ With the only two estate surveyors stationed at the corporate headquarters, all the project sites and the satellite offices operated without any. How did the Authority overcome its needs of estate surveyors? The functions of the surveyors were split between the Admin. Department and the Engineering Department. In an internal memorandum to the Executive Director of Planning and Design on the inadequate situation of the LBRBDA in 2012, the Senior Estate Surveyor highlighted the situation and called for urgent action.

⁵⁸ Website of Nigerian Institute of Estate Surveyors and Valuers (NIESV): <https://niesv.org.ng/index.php>

The memo, in part, read as follows:

In an organisation like the Authority where we have lots of landed properties which include land/building. It should be the duty of the Estate Unit to manage these properties and ensure that the right management practices are put in place as regards all occupants in the government quarters such as the selection of tenants, i.e. both staff and non-staff, by ensuring that residents do not misuse government properties in the quarters. In the same vein, landscaping could be done to enhance the aesthetic beauty of the quarters (Interview: Twenty-Six, 2016).

More than half a decade later, the status quo prevailed. The management later moved the Estate Unit to the Engineering Department, but the number remained two with both based at the corporate headquarters. When asked to comment on the challenges created by the gross shortage of estate surveyors in the Authority, Shima Paul, the senior officer in the unit explained that:

Poor maintenance of the structures and even the plants and machinery because the valuation of the plants and motors are also part of the work of the estate's surveyor. When the plant depreciates, a valuer must advise management on what to do, either to auction them and procure new ones or to carry out refurbishment but the machines are just there, no checks. It is the same with the plants at the projects because there is nobody to check what the managers are doing. Sometimes, they engage the services of non-professionals to operate some of their machines like the tractors. Sometimes, they do not involve the real staff because they are not there; they lack staff. So, they get quacks to handle the machines anyhow! (Interview: Twenty-Six, 2016).

Therefore, the Authority operated with the barest presence of estate surveyors, but it was only a part of the many lacks the LBRBDA addressed at the level shown here. One effect of not acquiring the required number of estate valuers involved in the planning and execution was the completion of projects without a plan for their utilisation such as the cases of Gbajimgba, Doma and Obagaji Dams (Figure 5:13).

5.5.2 Projects Without Mission Plans

The LBRBDA spent a large amount money to support its irrigation projects every year. The annual appropriation always had allocations for the maintenance of one project or the other. The financial allocations came regularly because they are essential for the Authority to work pursue the mandate of the RBDAs. However, some of the irrigation projects on the maintenance list of the LBRBDA seemed to have no plans for their systematic utilisation or commercial purpose because they had been in the same state for more than a decade.

According to the 22nd Annual Report of the LBRBDA, the basin authority completed the construction of the Gbajimgba Dam in Guma Local Government Area of Benue in 1999, with a capacity of 6.5 Million cm^3 . The primary purposes were irrigation farming and domestic water supply (LBRBDA, 2000:5). However, the downstream of the dam was still undeveloped when we visited the dam in 2016. One of the project managers who had internal knowledge of the enormous cost that LBRBDA paid for the maintenance of the dam, decried the state of Gbajimbga dam as a financial burden:

The dam is underutilised. The river basin constructs dams and, sometimes, for ten years after they are still on-going projects. The Gbajimgba dam is about ten years now, and no attempt has been made to design any irrigation plan for it or open a farm there. But we all know that the federal government remits money for its maintenance every year. Where does the money go and what is preventing the use of the dam (Interview: Twenty-One, 2017).



Figure 5:13 Some water reserves of the LBRBDA. Source: Daniel Adayi.

Similarly, there were cases of completed irrigation projects not in full use like the Doma dam completed in 1988 with a capacity of 35 million cm^3 . Twenty years after its completion, the LBRBDA was yet to realise the dream of an irrigation project at the site. The Obagaji Project was also in the category of projects without a utilisation plan. Obagaji did not have a dam but had a water reserve that grew enormously during the rainy season, with a landmass of about

1000ha. While the LBRBDA continued to present these projects on paper as its assets, they were indeed liabilities, draining the scarce resources of the federal government.

5.5.3 The Latent Predicament of Nigeria's Dualism of Title to Land

Like all the other RBDAs, the LBRBDA was part of the federal government privatisation and commercialisation effort. The sustained impression was that the effort was in progress, but there were certain inhibiting factors. We found this claim to be valid, but not the whole story. One of the latent predicaments of RBDAs is the ownership of the land. The difficulty arose from the Dualism of Title to Land found in the landholding and management system of Nigeria. The Land Use Act (1978) Section One, upheld by the Constitution (1999), stated that:

All land comprised in the territory of each state in the Federation are at this moment vested in the Governor of that state and such land shall be held in trust and administered for the use and common benefit of all Nigerians in accordance with the provisions of this Act (*Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004*).

By this provision of the Act, the governor of a state is the owner of all the lands in his state even if the properties are in the use of the federal government. The latter can only exercise limited rights as a tenant which does not include the alienation of the land. However, arguing for the federal government, Oretuyi (1982) opposed that view:

It is not entirely correct to say that the Federal Government has no land of its own. For although section 1 of the Act vests all the land in the state in the Governor, section 49 indeed creates an exception. It provides that nothing in the Act shall affect any title to land developed or undeveloped held by the Federal Government or any agency of the Federal Government before 29th March 1978 and that the land shall continue to vest in the Federal Government of the agency concerned (Oretuyi, 1982: 75).



Figure 5:14 Daniel Adayi in a chat with the Director of River Basin Operations & Inspectorate (centre) and his aid at the Federal Secretariat Complex, Abuja.

In a minority recommendation expressed by Garrick B. Leton as part of *The Report of the Presidential Commission on Revenue Allocation, Volume IV*, Leton pointed out the problem with regard to the mineral laws. He highlighted the issue with the provisions of the Land Use Decree as follows:

The Governor (and thus the Government) of the State has, therefore, a perpetual interest on the land it allows a company or any agency of the Government of the Federation to use (Leton, 1980: 7).

Leton contended that the dualism of ownership and control made the Nigerian situation intriguing because, in other federations, the ownership is vested either in the state (Australia) or in the individual landowner (USA). In such cases, the central government taxed the minerals as it deemed necessary and adequate. Leton advised that the federal government should review its land laws considering the cited examples:

In that way, it (the federal government) loses nothing and yet, apart from providing necessary legislation, does not get itself involved in the complexity and cost of mining and marketing the minerals. Nigeria may have something to learn here; because, if we take the Nigerian situation to its logical conclusion, a landowner may not farm on his land without a federal permit. The soil consists essentially of minerals (nitrates, sulphates, etc.) which are needed for plant growth. By farming, therefore, the landowner is indirectly using up or stealing Federal Government property. This type of situation ought to be resolved (Leton, 1980:7).

The view expressed by Leton when the decree was issued still perdured because the Land Use Act still subsisted as the reference point for the Nigerian Constitution in the form that it appeared as a decree in 1979.

Meanwhile, the dualism of ownership of land remain a point of contention between the State governments and the central government. According to the Director of RBOI, the state governments must remove the barriers to the use of land for the RBDA's to enable it to open its doors to investors as the partial commercialisation policy demanded. The realisation of food security for the country would be difficult if the encumbrances on land ownership and acquisition persist (Anonymous, 2018e).

With the change in the political configuration of the LBRBDA catchment area from two states to four, the owners, on the part of the governors, have correspondingly increased. Indeed,

the situation worsened with the fragmentation of the states and the struggle for control of natural resources between the states and between the states and the federal government.

According to Ada Chenge, in her time, the Authority only engaged in certain low-level activities. The ownership of land was a long-standing problem that required sorting out before the LBRBDA could give the partial commercialisation a realisable head start. She maintained that:

The major problem was that the land for farming and housing by the river basin authorities belonged to the state government. So, the properties were still under the state government but leased to the federal government. That was the reason why it became clumsy when we talked about privatisation. When we gave out the land to a private investor who wanted to produce sugar cane in a mechanised way, we clashed with the state governments that had other plans. In the beginning, the federal government started this (*LBRBDA*), and the state governments gave out parcels of land for mechanised agriculture. It is now a problem because when privatisation is complete, the private owners would use the land to make a profit. The government will not control them, and the new situation might not be what the local communities want (Interview Three, 2017).

However, the predicament of the Dualism of Title to Land is not peculiar to the LBRBDA, but over the year, it became more complicated as the catchment area fragmented into more states and local government areas. Paradoxically, it was hardly mentioned officially among the challenges facing the Authority. However, the presence of the Benue State Government in the undeveloped downstream of the Gbajimgba Dam and the Nasarawa State Government at the Doma indicated the predicament of the Dualism of Title to Land portended for the LBRBDA.

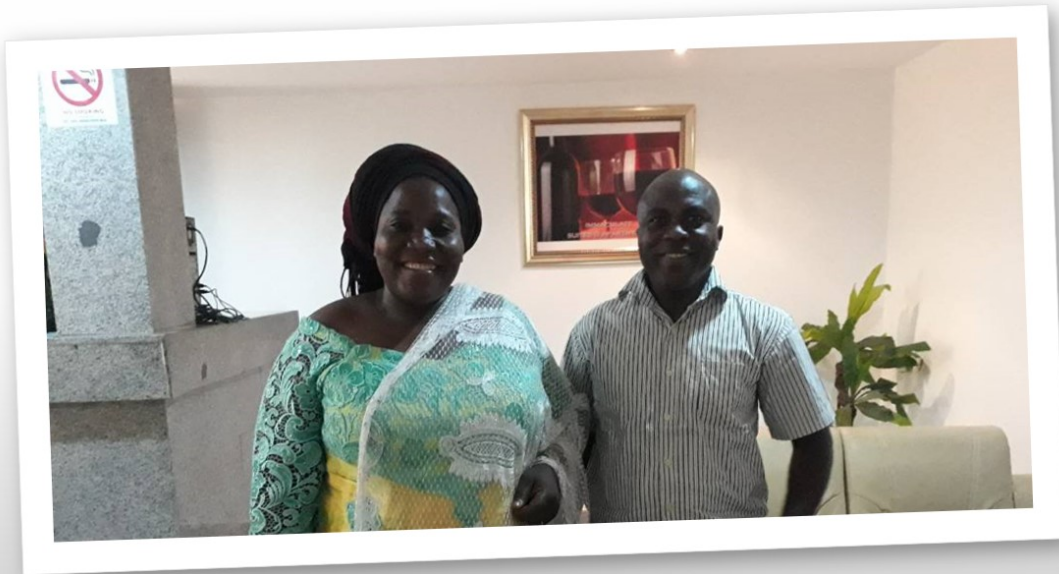


Figure 5:15 The author with the former Managing Director

5.5.4 The Problem of a Uniform Policy for All

One oft-repeated opinion of the LBRBDA staff was that the Lower Benue Belt did not require dry season irrigation. All-year-round farming went on in the region without the need of irrigation. Benue State was nicknamed the ‘Food Basket of the Nation’ because of the quantities and varieties of food that came from the local farmers. Most of the respondents believed that part of the challenge of the LBRBDA was the policy constraint that recommended dry season irrigation farming for the naturally endowed basin. The local farmers harvested different fruits throughout the year by merely shifting from one crop to another as the year progressed.

According to Chenge, she had heard it said several times that ‘her river basin activities’ needed a reconsideration. On one occasion, according to her, someone quipped that, “the Lower Benue is one place where you don’t even need irrigation to grow crops; with rain only, we can enough food grows here!” Ada proudly supported the appellation of the ‘Food Basket’ given to the Benue State headquarters of the LBRBDA because she believed that the tag aptly described the agricultural capacity of the region. When asked to explain how the all-year-round farming could be possible as the Lower Benue Belt did not get rainfall throughout the year, Mr Jiji Kerbi, the Sectional Head of the Technical Unit, enthusiastically painted a colourful picture:

Our rainy seasons last for seven months, and that is enough to give two cycles of crops within a year and keeps the farmers very busy on their farms! Let me give you an example; At Doma, in January, they harvest yam and melon; by February, yam and cassava processing; by March, they prepare the land for melon; May, they harvest maize and other cereals. By June through July, they enter the heat of farming activities; August, they are collecting melon, maize, and groundnut – the first cycle of the crops. Then, Beni seed takes off in August, and that continues through September and October. In November, they are into harvesting rice, the second cycle of crops! So, throughout the year, they harvest without irrigation. When the government came up with irrigation, that you have to control water to give you a higher yield, the local farmers saw it as absurd and a waste of time (Interview: Twenty-seven, 2016)

Notwithstanding the natural endowments of the LBRBDA, it has performed very poorly in food production and appeared to have recorded a high level of regression in its development. In comparison, the RBDAs in the far north were better in many aspects. The head of the River Basin Directorate and Operation (RBOI), one-time managing director of the LBRBDA, thought the answer lied in the attitude and politics:

The reason why they have done so much is that they do not have water as we have in the central areas. Due to the arid nature of those places, they have bigger dams which they utilise effectively for irrigation and production. The case is different in the central areas, nature is more favourable to us, and the people are more relaxed; those at the river basins in Sokoto, Kano, Chad, are more serious about irrigation. The ones down (South) like Cross River, Niger Delta, for them, irrigation is politics. We do not see what they are doing beyond the politics of resources control (Interview: Two, 2018).

While certain local peculiarities of the LBRBDA aggravated the negative constraints of the one-policy-fit approach, the counter-productivity of forcing all the RBDAs into the same hard-cast mould affected other RBDAs too. Akpabio and Ekanem (2009: 45) asserted that the imposition of ‘uniform mandates and functions’ on all the RBDAs with their variations in local hydrology and water resources conditions hindered the implementation of the integrated management of water resources in Nigeria. For the LBRBDA, it was a situation where the everyday need for water was not a priority. It was even more so when the government stripped the RBDAs of ‘non-water-related’ services. For optimal output, the LBRBDA must design a template that is in tandem with its natural habitat.

5.5.5 Constituency Projects

The Zonal Intervention Projects, that is, ‘constituency projects’, so named because they come from the members of the Legislative Chambers are part of their official obligations to bring

political dividends to the electorate at the grassroots (Udefuna, Jumare and Adebayo, 2013). Our interviews led us to some unpleasant applications of the scheme at LBRBDA. Indeed, the involvement in the Constituency Projects of the legislators had both positive and harmful impacts. In addition to the noble objective of the scheme, it became a significant source of distraction for the LBRBDA.

The politicians manipulated the awarding and execution of the contracts for their own benefits. The politicians pushed the projects through the budget list of any ministry of their choice; they decided the government agency that would execute their projects and which contractors would receive the same. They also determined who got how much out of the money and, ultimately, they got the LBRBDA to issue clearance certificates for the project. The LBRBDA staff described the constituency projects scheme as opposed to the vision of the Authority, but they proffered reasons why it continued to thrive. Mr Ugbaje, the Executive Director, Engineering, acknowledged that the constituency project increased the income of the LBRBDA but noted that it had also increased cronyism and sharp practices. He spelt out the scenario in these words:

Under the guise of the zonal interventions' projects, the politicians come to manipulate the river basin for their benefit. They push their projects to the river basin because they know that we are semi-autonomous. When they send their jobs here, we know how to manipulate it as they want, and their jobs go to their cronies and selected contractors. They ask the contractors for any amount they want from the awarded contract. That is the greatest thing we do now as a river basin. Our regular budget is small. It is through the constituency projects that we generate the fund to keep operating as a basin authority (Interview: Five, 2016).

Ugbaje lamented how easily the politicians manipulated the river basin authority for their ends. He recalled that in the past, he attended meetings with the legislators on budget defence and was horrified at the manners in which they made corrupt demands from the river basins management. In one case, the legislators requested 50% of the contract sum for the contract to be approved for LBRBDA and be inserted in the federal budget for that year. This implied that 50% of the money released by the federal government would go to the legislators who approved it and ensured that it was included in the budgetary allocations for that year.

Similarly, under the drag of the constituency projects, the LBRBDA took up works outside its regular schedule, such as the renovation of old school blocks and electrical installations because the legislators promised rich rewards to both the individuals directly involved and to

the Authority. The political fragmentation of the original catchment area into more states, senatorial zones and legislative districts meant that there are now more political interests for the LBRBDA, and these interests are often at variance with the corporate mission of the LBRBDA.

The different indices of the LBRBDA revealed here reflects the spectrum of harmful practices that have bedevilled the RBDAs and the Civil Service as a whole. Some other noticeable features of the LBRBDA workplace included the presence of husbands and their wives, on the employment of the Authority, both living and working at the Makurdi headquarters complex, for instance. In many of the observed cases, the husbands were in the departments that needed professionalism such as Engineering and Planning & Design, while the Admin Department recruited the wives under various job descriptions because the latter was a more diversified section. The result was an overcrowded Admin Department while other departments had staff shortages.

The big picture was similar: the headquarters complex had excess staff while the irrigation projects had scarcity of hands. The statistics of the LBRBDA reproduced in the 2010 Annual Report showed that out of the 344 people employed by the Authority, 244 were at the headquarters complex (LBRBDA, 2011a: 13). By these figures, 2/3 (70.93%) of all the staff were outside the irrigation projects where the Authority had its main work.

Indeed, the challenges described here as miscellaneous indices were not immediately visible but were choking the LBRBDA and preventing it from applying its workforce to the vast material resources of the Lower Benue Belt. The quality of the workforce was compromised and so was its corporate goal. The people were not employed on the basis of what they could contribute to the growth of the Authority but on the basis of who they knew and who they were their relative. The quest to rehabilitate LBRBDA must involve a comprehensive review of these indices and a reversal of the trends.

5.6. Conclusion

Like all the other RBDAs launched after the pilot programme which preceded the creation of the first ones in the northern part of the country, LBRBDA did not carry out a precise mapping of its potentials. Moreover, like the country Nigeria, the catchment area of the LBRBDA

underwent fragmentations which redefined the first structure and brought in more stakeholders. The presence of more stakeholders strengthened the socio-political fault lines of the LBRBDA and increased the struggle for the control of the limited resources as the country's population continued to grow. The conflicts manifested themselves as a hydra-headed chain of improper practices that mirrored those engendered by the fragmentation federalism of the country.

As analysed in this chapter, the problems of LBRBDA are multi-scalar, i.e. it shares in the macro-level challenges of the RBDAs directly linked to federal policies and their implementations. Furthermore, LBRBDA had its own internally generated problems which were peculiar to the basin but reflected the chaotic state the national policies. The two are interdependent. All the items on the list of the indices had those characteristics. The shortage of estate surveyors where there were many landed assets across four states for a very long period revealed significant aspects of the structure supporting LBRBDA. Similarly, the dams were completed but left unused for years while the basin authority continued to pay for their maintenance. Why do they go on? What kind of report went to the FMWR to justify such projects? There are indeed many questions that LBRBDA must address internally and seek answers to, along with other RBDAs.

Even though the controversial issue of the dualism of land ownership deepened with the fragmentation of both polity and politics in the LBRBDA catchment area, its solution lied beyond the local capacity. The articulation of the privatisation policy will continue to be clumsy and impracticable if the land ownership complications remain. Similarly, LBRBDA must design a blueprint that highlights its peculiarities. Within the federal uniform policy, there must be a recognition of the diversities of the RBDAs across the different vegetation belts for an authentic response to the food scarcity issue. The same principle of a differentiated approach must apply in shaping the challenges emanating from the Zonal Constituency Project scheme.

To summarise, all the ills bedevilling the growth of LBRBDA are small-scale derivatives of the challenges that Nigeria faces as a federation of many ethnic groups created without structures for consociationalism. The nation still echoes with the fragmentation of its polity and politic triggered by the absolute decrees of military generals. By the fragmentation of its catchment area, the consequent increase in the number of significant stakeholders, the oft-vested

political ambitions of its leaders who parade as detribalised nationalists and the dysfunctional conditions of the irrigation projects, the LBRBDA mirrors the fragmentation federalism of Nigeria and its multi-faceted trapping of burdens.

CHAPTER SIX

THE STILLBORN BLUEPRINT ON COMMERCIALISATION

I think the government is just paying lip-service to the whole thing, right from day one. You do not just privatise or commercialise if you are not ready. Chief Tarza M. Atema (Late Director, LBRBDA).

The success or failure of public policy includes what the articulated strategy translates into concrete terms in the polity. The history of Nigeria is replete with cases of plans that did not accomplish their end goals for reasons ranging from poor articulation or irregular implementation to outright abandonment because of political disruptions. Initially, the policy of privatisation and commercialisation of public enterprises appeared like a panacea for the development and economic malaise that faced Nigeria. The privatisation policy would, among other things, start the process of gradual cession for the private sector of the public enterprises that by the nature of their operations are best managed by the private sector. The Technical Committee on Privatisation and Commercialisation (TCPC) earmarked the RBDAs for partial commercialisation as we have examined in the implementation roadmap of the policy in the earlier sections of this work.

Thirty years after Babangida's administration launched the policy as part of a Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), the Nigerian government still struggled with its implementation. With the release of the Final Reports by the TCPC in 1993, the RBDAs and other PEs were to 'behave and act as commercial enterprises' (TCPC, 1993: Vol 3, 15). In line with the requirement of the TCPC, the LBRBDA had articulated a Corporate Plan of how the Authority would run within the proposed framework of partial commercialisation (LBRBDA, 1990: 1.3). According to the TCPC report, the design of the Corporate Plan to be developed by each basin authority would, among other things:

Pay attention to long-range financial planning, soundness of the financial structure of the enterprise, maintaining adequate working capital, financing expansion from earnings, borrowings or by the issues of shares, where applicable. (TCPC, 1993 Vol 1: 155)

The Corporate Plan would be used for negotiating with the government, creating evaluation criteria, identifying and implementing the concept of strategic business units, enhancing financial and commercial discipline, and positioning the enterprise at a competitive advantage in their respective industries and catchment areas. Three decades after the

publication of both the Corporate Plan of the LBRBDA and the final report of the TCPC, the LBRBDA carries many imprints of attempts to implement the privatisation in its catchment area but it has been a litany of failed efforts.

This chapter, made up of three sections, examines the LBRBDA as a public enterprise in the light of the privatisation policy. The first section is a brief recap of the federal government policy on privatisation and commercialisation and it focuses on how the privatisation policy of the TCPC was adapted by the LBRBDA and implemented. The second section of the chapter centres on the LBRBDA and is further sub-divided into two parts. The first section explores the Corporate Plan drawn up by the LBRBDA in 1990, and the second sub-section examines the current state of things. All the materials for this section were obtained from the field trip that covered the accessible catchment areas of the LBRBDA.

As a follow up to the literature review which applied a macroscopic approach to the policy of privatisation and commercialisation as it affected the entire RBDA, this chapter adopts a microscopic approach which isolates the LBRBDA to show how the examined factors played out in the setting of one RBDA. Our hypothesis for this chapter (H_6) is as follows:

The blueprint for the implementation of the policy on the partial commercialisation of the LBRBDA was stillborn and the implementation process has been below expectation.

The findings of the fieldwork informed this hypothesis. Some of the responses during the interview painted very dismal and frustrating pictures of the LBRBDA. One such reaction came from a retiring director who had just completed his statutory thirty-five years of civil service. His interview was conducted in his last week in the office as a staff. For a senior officer who joined the LBRBDA three years after its establishment, his assessment of the river basin was disturbingly blunt and disheartening:

If I have the power, I will scrap river basins like Lower Benue and Upper Niger! I will discard them because they are not profitable. Honestly, we are not doing anything here, and if you know the kind of money that comes to this place, you will weep for this country (Interview Eleven, 2016).

The same feeling of despair echoed in the conversations with other respondents. A serving Executive Director, Engr Ugbaje who was about to retire after thirty-five years, was more pictorial in his assessment of the policy, but not less factual:

It has not started; we are planning it. You know that the river basins are still 100% funded by the government. They tried it, and it did not work, so they stopped it! That is why you see that some of the young staff do not come to the headquarters complex up to three times a month. At the end of the month, they get the bank alerts that their salaries have been credited to their accounts. For river basins like the Lower Benue, it is not going to be possible! You can only expect people to come and invest in something that there are sure of reaping some returns. There are no prospect of returns here (Interview Five, 2016).

Against the background of such opinions, and to either substantiate the hypothesis or negate it, this chapter will answer the research question(RQ₆) which runs thus:

What were the responses of the LBRBDA to the federal government policy on the privatisation and commercialisation of public enterprises?

The aim is to show through concrete and verifiable referents that for the LBRBDA, found in one of the most fertile and weather-friendly belts of Nigeria, the implementation of the partial commercialisation policy has remained a far cry from the projections in the final reports of the TCPC and the Corporate Plan of the LBRBDA. It is still paperwork, yet to become translated into the increased agricultural output at the level of the river basin. To paint the big picture, we shall begin with a brief look at the partial commercialisation policy as it affected the LBRBDA and the response, called the Corporate Plan, drafted to guide the river basin into the new era. The next segment examines how the LBRBDA departed from the path charted in the Corporate Plan, and the alternative it adopted. This segment examines the available evidence from three perspectives: deficient irrigation projects, inadequate workplace infrastructure and the desperate but official resort to window dressing by propaganda and half-truths to give the impression of a river basin that was actively pursuing its corporate goal. Next, follow more inputs in the form of diagnoses of the LBRBDA by current workers and some retired staff. The last segment of this chapter expounds on the rhetoric of whether the LBRBDA is now partially commercialised.

Before we embark on the complete analysis of the issues, it is noteworthy to recall that the privatisation and commercialisation policy received significant inputs from Babangida's administration which launched it as part of the SAP package and from Obasanjo's administration (1999–2007). However, in this literary exposé, we have not included any deliberate distinction between the inputs of the two governments in the LBRBDA because the

subsequent efforts by Obasanjo did not alter the failure-bound course of the policy. This overview draws primarily from Babangida's reforms as the first concept. The policy also received inputs from the administrations after Obasanjo, but they did not make any radical change to the initial plan for the RBDAs either. The changes were associated more with terminologies than design.

The first section, which follows immediately, is an examination of the blueprint for the partial commercialisation policy and draws mainly from the reports of the TCPC and the LBRBDA. It details the preliminary works carried out by the privatisation committee on all the RBDAs and the roadmap designed by the LBRBDA as a response and a beacon to guide its local implementation process.

6.1 LBRBDA and the Partial Commercialisation Policy

The Technical Committee on Privatisation and Commercialisation (TCPC) documented the first phase of its work as part of the SAP as a tripartite report. There was the *Main Report*, a summary of the whole report, *Volume Two* which covered privatisation and *Volume Three* which dealt with commercialisation. For the RBDAs, the relevant parts were the *Main Report* and the third volume, which included only the commercialisation aspect under which the LBRBDA fell. The TCPC listed the LBRBDA as one of the 24 public enterprises for partial commercialisation by Decree No 25 of 1988 (TCPC, 1993a: 48). The *Main Report* also indicated that all the eleven RBDAs signed the performance agreement, which officially committed them to the reform package. The performance contract ensured that increased autonomy would not be misused. It erected legal boundaries that would consistently keep the commercialised agencies within the goals mapped out by the government. In the post-commercialisation era, the map for the financial relationship between the federal government, the board of directors and the management of the LBRBDA and the TCPC (or its successor) was to be the performance contract. Accordingly, the TCPC demanded that all the agencies draw up a Corporate Plan with long-term view of operations, especially in the area of growth in profitability or generation of surpluses (TCPC, 1993a: 153-5).

On its part, the management of the LBRBDA employed the services of a consultancy firm, Financial & Investment Consultant Company, to articulate its privatisation pathway. In 1990, the Authority released the framework titled the *Corporate Plan for LBRBDA Within the*

Framework of Partial Commercialization. The Corporate Plan mapped out a vision of the ultimate position that LBRBDA wanted to occupy in the new future (LBRBDA, 1990: 6.1). The plan set ambitious targets which specified the critical objective of the Authority to be the development of the water resources within its catchment. The Corporate Plan stated that:

Partial commercialisation will involve, in the main, the restructuring of LBRBDA and its operation to enable it to operate as profit-making or surplus net incremental revenue generating enterprises. Restructuring the LBRBDA and its operation to gear it towards commercially oriented operation will involve setting out a corporate mission and programmes, strategies and tactics to achieve the basic objectives in a commercially oriented way without draining the treasury of needed funds for other social projects (LBRBDA, 1990: 2.3).

To ensure the sustenance of the corporate mission, the plan set out the functions that would constitute the focus of the LBRBDA. Among other duties, the Authority was to undertake surface and groundwater development, the construction of earthen and other major dams, the collection of hydrometeorological data and erosion control. It was also to develop and manage irrigation infrastructure and watersheds. The engineering and maintenance section would undertake the plant hire scheme and the extension services (LBRBDA, 1990: 2.1). Moreover, the plan contained strategies that would safeguard its lofty vision because the LBRBDA was to become an unprecedented trailblazer. According to the Plan, when repositioned:

[The LBRBDA would become] an expected industry leader in its catchment area. The Authority as a development corporation is to work towards acceptable decrease of the country's dependence on natural rainfall for agricultural production by rapidly increasing size of irrigation whilst providing specialized engineering services at commercial rates to the public (LBRBDA, 1990: 6.4).

As a map of the pathway, the Corporate Plan set out under twenty headings the preparedness of the LBRBDA for the policy, the tailoring of the reform package, including the services to be provided, projections of income and expenditure and marketing strategies. It also contained the risk analyses and other influential factors of the post-commercialisation era. The outlines formed a step-down of the federal government policy for the river basins. They would also serve as an operational framework through which the LBRBDA could achieve the objectives of the system in its catchment area.

To ensure a smooth implementation of the policy by the listed agencies, the TCPC rolled out a recapitalisation plan. It placed the LBRBDA in Group B, which was to continue to receive 33.33% of their recurrent subvention from the federal government for two years – 1993 and 1994 (See Table 2). This was the duration adjudged long enough for the RBDAs in that group to be completely self-sufficient. Subsequently, the LBRBDA was expected to become financially self-supporting, to declare surpluses and to pay a return on investment not less than 5% per annum. Furthermore, like the other RBDAs in Group B, the LBRBDA received a mandate to set up the new administrative structure for the board of directors which allowed a membership of seven people, including the chairman and a representative of the Ministry of Water Resources. The TCPC ensured that it paid the proceeds of the sales of the non-water assets to the accounts of the LBRBDA. The move was to ensure that the cessation of funding by the federal government did not undermine the partial commercialisation process. According to the report of the TCPC, the step was ‘in recognition of the fact that these assets were part of the investments of the RBDAs, slated for commercialisation rather than privatisation’ (TCPC, 1993b: 102).

Moreover, in the Corporate Plan, the LBRBDA anticipated that it would encounter competitions from other firms that would be providing the kinds of its proposed services, but it planned to stay ahead with strategies that would guarantee a competitive edge. The Plan recognised strategies as a scheme that incorporated the concept of an opponent. In a nutshell, it spelt out that:

Strategies represent making in advance competitive action, certain policies, standards and objectives, tactical decisions and practical approaches in carrying out these strategies. Strategies are executive functions and are very essential in a competitive world (LBRBDA, 1990: 8.1).

In this regard, the plan outlined some corporate and functional strategies. It also recommended that the various departments develop production, marketing and fund management strategies that would ensure that the LBRBDA remained the preferred destination for consumers and marketers alike. The departments must also come up with competitive counterattacks on industry leaders within the catchment area in any product/service delivery by whittling down its operation cost, adroit resource management and the introduction of glitzy innovative products annually. It also prepared many mini-frameworks and appendices made up of schedules for the major departments.

However, the implementation was a far cry from the projections. Even though an exhaustive review of the factors that undermined the privatisation and commercialisation policy is beyond the scope of this work, it is pertinent to state that institutional failure was a key factor. At the national level, General Babangida lost acceptability as the years went on, and his promises of revamping the economy were left unfulfilled. He came under local and international pressure to handover to a democratically elected government. He bowed to pressure, organised elections and annulled the results. In the long run, he was forced to 'step aside' in a move which showed that he had lost control of the political situation even before that time. In the interim, the structural adjustment policies he launched suffered and many failed. The story of how the LBRBDA fared at that difficult period reflects the national picture. The next section chronicles the travail of the LBRBDA when the grandiose mission of the TCPC stopped suddenly. The policy bore the seed for its failure because it was stillborn.

6.2 The Aftermath of the Faulty Start

For the LBRBDA, the introduction of the measures imposed by SAP took the wind off its sails. Following its creation in 1979, the basin authority enjoyed the favours of Emmanuel Yahaya Atanu who was the Minister of Water Resources under Shagari's regime. Atanu hailed from the old Benue State. According to Mr Adogolo, a retired director who joined the LBRBDA in 1982, the duo of Atanu and Mr B. Adeka, who was the first managing director of the LBRBDA, ensured that the Authority had enough tractors and housing arrangements. Atanu considered the LBRBDA his pride and ensured that it received all the allocations from the FMWR. When Babangida stripped the RBDA's of their non-water assets, the LBRBDA suffered its first shocks. By the time, the TCPC completed its report and handed over the responsibility for the remaining assets to the Authority, the LBRBDA was not in a position to implement the new policy.

Even though the LBRBDA drew up a corporate plan as demanded by the TCPC, it included the fear of the recurrence of sudden and random interventions by the federal government as risk factors. The plan predicted that the policy would fail if the government persisted on its known track of suddenly setting aside policies or changing the goals after their inauguration.

Unambiguously, the plan mentioned the following to be its worst fear:

Government change of mind on the corporate objectives of RBDAs; this has occurred several times in the past. It is a likely event. In this case, if it happens, products/services may change, the marketing of the products/services may change, the pricing of the products/services may also change. This will adversely affect the Corporate Mission (LBRBDA, 1990: 16.1).

As predicted, the government did not change its ways. Moreover, the LBRBDA had internal structural struggles which were aggravated by the loss of support from the federal government. The Corporate Plan highlighted some of the internal challenges. First, the evaluation of the LBRBDA in the Corporate Plan noted sadly that the Authority had 'only posted losses throughout its years of existence.' It was over-staffed with non-productive workers but was capitalised with fixed assets which could earn income if efficiently and effectively utilised. The Plan rated the LBRBDA as fully prepared for the take-off of partial commercialisation but that it lacked the funds to rehabilitate and repair existing physical assets and put them to productive use. Second, the Plan recommended that identified risk factors be insured, and the uninsurable critical risk factors be anticipated as far as possible through annual budgets and long-term plans.

Furthermore, at the final stage, the work of the TCPC suffered the ripple effects of Babangida's poor rating and the political uncertainty, that pushed him out of government. In the chaos that ensued, the federal government lost the will to enforce the policy it had set in place. Babangida's regime ended unceremoniously in 1993 when he was forced to 'step aside' and handover to an Interim National Government (ING), headed by Ernest Shonekan. The ING came under attacks about its unconstitutional status. As tensions rose, the rate of inflation soared. General Sani Abacha cashed in on the situation, overthrew the ING and enthroned a 'legacy of national paralysis' (Okechukwu, 2004: 283).

For the LBRBDA, the sudden end of the administration that midwived the policy and created the framework effectively was a devastating blow. The abandoned funding plan left the LBRBDA high and dry. The year 1993 was the dateline set for the LBRBDA to become self-sufficient but that did not happen. While Abacha's government battled for acceptance, the LBRBDA watched its partial commercialisation blueprint go moribund. Left with no other option, the LBRBDA began again, but this time it had three significant defects. First, the cannibalised and unsold assets went back to the LBRBDA, and they continued to be listed as

assets. Second, none of the assets were assessed for risk or had any insurance cover as recommended by the Corporate Plan. Third, the entire process of attempting to commercialise the RBDAs did not address the problematic questions of land ownership in Nigeria vis-à-vis the alienation of the irrigation projects of the RBDAs. The implications of these setbacks for the already stripped river basin were far-reaching. The post-SAP LBRBDA lacked the financial wherewithal to annul the effects of the setbacks and so it drifted into a decline. In the next section, we shall examine how the triple-negative drawbacks affected the LBRBDA even decades after Babangida's regime.

6.2.1 Stripped Projects: Unsold, Not Refurbished but in Operation

The TCPC report showed that the LBRBDA received nine hundred thousand naira (N900,000)[USD2500] from the fully paid projects sold; the projects partially paid for amounted to one million naira (N1,000,000)[USD2,760], and had one million, four hundred naira due (N1,400,000)[USD3,870] (TCPC: 1993b: 236). Moreover, the report listed all the assets offered for sale that ended up with incomplete payments or no payments at all. One of the flourishing irrigation projects that got incomplete payment was the Katsina-Ala Farms. When the researcher visited the farm, he observed that no proper irrigation facility had been put in place even though the farm was on the bank of the Katsina-Ala River. The existing irrigation infrastructures had fallen into disuse (Figure 6:1).



Figure 6:1: Katsina-Ala Project irrigation facilities showing the pump house [January 2017] (top-right); the water suction pipes at the edge of the river (left) and the distribution chamber (bottom-right). Courtesy: Daniel Adayi.

Following the same trend, Oforachi irrigation project was unsuccessfully put up for sale. By the time we visited Oforachi as part of the field trip, there was no irrigation farming taking place there either, but the LBRBDA continued to support it the on the funds of the federal government. We also noted that the project was near a river which flowed throughout the year with good water. There was an array of abandoned projects at different levels of construction (Figure 6:2). All that Oforachi required was a means to pipe water from the adjoining river onto its fields. One of the recent efforts at Oforachi was the development of a 60ha central pivot irrigation farm system listed officially as LBR/Const./Sec/11/09. One contractor named Waste Management and Environmental Solution got the contract for the sum of N101, 535, 638.00 (one hundred and one million, five hundred and thirty-five thousand, six hundred and thirty-eight naira) (LBRBDA, 2010). The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (FMAWR) remitted the cost. By 2010, the contractor had not mobilised to the site. The pictures below show the state of the irrigation farm system in 2016 (Figure 6:2). Oforachi was a classic monument of the doomed policy of commercialisation in the LBRBDA.



Figure 6:2 Oforachi Irrigation Farm System. Top-right: waterway; top-left: the water stream; bottom left: water intake channel; Bottom middle: power set; Bottom left: water channel. Courtesy: Daniel Adayi

Nonetheless, the post-commercialisation profile of the LBRBDA encompasses more than what happened to the assets put on sale, but were either partially sold or unsold, and later returned

to the Authority. Contrary to the recommendation of the Corporate Plan, the recovered assets did not get any of insurance covers. With the change of policies by the government, the assets of the LBRBDA got entangled in a double tragedy: they had no insurance policies and the security outfits, sourced on the initiative of the Authority, were not sufficient to guarantee the safety of lives and properties.

6.2.2 Double Vulnerability: No Insurance Coverage and No Security Cover

The Corporate Plan of the LBRBDA recognised certain variables that might affect the projections of the Authority. In a section titled *Risk Element Critical Factors and Sensitivity Analysis*, the plan recognised that:

The risk of not meeting corporate objectives, mission or annual plans and programme due to some external/internal factors critical factors exist in any business. The identification of those external factors that are likely to adversely affect the corporate mission is a management function. Those factors that can be identified could be insured. Those that are not easily identified or cannot be foreseen cannot be insured (LBRBDA:1990:16.1).

Although the plan recommended the setting up of certain defensive strategies in anticipation of probable but unforeseeable occurrences, that did not take place. The sudden disruption of the commercialisation process became the first of such unforeseen adversities. The LBRBDA, not equipped for the cessation of funding and without any prior insurance cover, sank. The situation worsened as the LBRBDA became embroiled in communal conflicts and its properties were looted or vandalised. Our field trip which covered three of the four states in the catchment area of the LBRBDA revealed that there was no systematic approach adopted by any of the constituent units towards safeguarding the structures from direct attacks or for their replacement in case of disasters. We noticed two very negative trends as we travelled through the projects and interacted with the staff. There was an absolute absence of any reference to an insurance policy cover for any of the infrastructure and the projects did not have adequate security structure. Contrary to the existing practice, the TCPC recommended, as part of the reforms measure, that RBDA's 'cover themselves for normal business insurance risks for their various assets including motor vehicles' (TCPC: 1993b: 97). The only exceptions were dams and water reservoirs.

In our discussions with the staff, none of them consciously or inadvertently made any reference to the insurance policy as a practice of the Authority either at Makurdi or any of

the project colonies. We also carefully examined the official documents of the Authority (annual reports, briefs prepared for the incoming and outgoing Ministers of Water Resources, budgets tendered by the Authority, the budget appropriation and internal memos) but there was no mention of insurance coverage for any of them, except in the Corporate Plan where it appeared as a recommendation. The gap indicated that the implementation of the Corporate Plan did not go far, if it began at all.

In addition to the lack of insurance coverage, we also observed that the irrigation projects did not have organised security outfits even in places with assets of significant value. The situation was the same at the headquarters where the security unit was understaffed and ill-equipped to respond to security challenges. The LBRBDA sourced the security men from private security outfits because of the federal government policy, which stated that the security be contracted out to private firms. The plan came into effect during Obasanjo's administration as a civilian president. Like most policies of the government for the RBDAs, the implementation has been problematic. One of the LBRBDA staff who oversaw the security unit as a liaison person between the basin management and the security outfits described the situation thus:

Since we began to follow the policy of Obasanjo, it has been one difficulty after the other. We are having some difficulties because they (security men) are no longer paid directly by the government. Now, they are paid from the overhead allocation of the staff. That should not be the case. The overhead allocation is supposed to be for infrastructural maintenance. When we include a request for their payment in the bill, it is dropped! So we have resorted to sneaking it into the bill under headings that are not obvious (Interview Fourteen, 2016).

What this implied in effect was that the LBRBDA employed the guards directly as casual workers and paid them from its monthly allocation for maintenance. The guards remained without salaries whenever the national distribution was delayed or drastically reduced. In addition to the difficulty regarding wages, the guards were provided only torchlights as security implements. They got uniforms once in a long while. The state of the security unit was in disarray. The security scanners at the main entrance were dust-coated and out of function. When we asked the liaison person about the equipment for the security unit and its readiness for emergencies, he sighed first and said:

At one time, we organised security training for them through some security companies about three years ago. The last ones were in 2011 and 2015. We have

something for defence, but they are only at the headquarters, not in all the projects. We have battens; you will see some at the reception. We have some metal screeners too. Those are all the security gadgets that we have. Now, the metal screeners are not working because they have no batteries. The only problem with them is just money for the cells. For now, we have dumped them here because I cannot provide cells from the salary I get from the Authority. It was not like this before! (Interview Fourteen, 2016)

The lack of a proper security arrangement caused the LBRBDA substantial financial losses. Some of the most recent included the vandalism of the Dep Project in the 2012 – 2014 wave of ethnic crises in Nasarawa state (Anonymous: 2014). The staff abandoned the office complex and fled for their lives, and thieves looted the project and carried away the valuable machine components. According to a private mechanic who had been helping at the project, the lootings were carried out weeks after the clashes occurred:

It has affected them (referring to the project management) very much because they had just received some new tractors. The tractors were stolen during the crisis because, after the disaster, nobody was around to look after the place. The vandals just came and cleared the things - machines, generators, tractors, anything! During that period, the whole area was just like a dead zone (Interview Fourteen, 2016).



Figure 6:3 Pictures from the Dep Project. Top-left: vandalised and abandoned tractors at the Office complex; Top right: Houses destroyed during the crises; Bottom left: Signpost to the Project Office; Bottom-Right: the researchers with staff in front of the Project Office (20/12/2016). Courtesy: Daniel Adayi

The project manager attributed the recent woes of the Dep Project to the ethnic crises and blamed them on the sparse security arrangement available to him. In a brief dated 21st September 2015 prepared by the project manager, he cited poor security as one of the significant factors responsible for the deficient state of the project:

The project colony housing the official and residential buildings and pumps houses need armed security personnel to support our security personnel to prevent the losses incurred by the Authority during the 2014 ethnic crises in the area in which government and staff properties were destroyed and vandalised. There is also a need for motivation for the security through regular payments of their salaries and provision of their boots and coats (Interview: Thirty-nine, 2016).

A more recent incident was the fire that engulfed part of the premises of the headquarters complex in Makurdi in December 2016 during our research. According to the local media reports:

The inferno which started around 9.40am ravaged the premises and destroyed properties worth millions of naira. Most of the properties destroyed were, however, abandoned equipment that littered the premises. Neighbours around the company, it was gathered, tried in vain to put out the fire. It was gathered that the fire came from an electric spark in the powerhouse of the company and spread to other areas. It was further gathered that the burning furnace lasted about one and a half hours before the fire service could put out the inferno. One of the workers of the company, who spoke to our correspondent but did not want his name in print, said, "I live around the quarters here, and we noticed the flame around 9.45 a.m., but it went out of control" (Charles, 2016).

The publication became the public story and the basis for the official report by the LBRBDA. However, the publication was selective in what it chose to highlight. The destroyed properties were not merely 'abandoned equipment' as evident in the pictures of the same equipment which we took a few days before the inferno (Figure 6:4). The fire started from a minor electrical fault and spread because proper measures were not taken to avert it. The inferno had both immediate and remote causes: the immediate cause was the small electrical fault, and the remote causes included the ineptitude of the security outfit and the fire service unit.



Figure 6:4: Pictures of the later-destroyed equipment of the LBRBDA taken on 05/12/2016, three weeks before the inferno. Courtesy: Daniel Adayi.

The incident occurred on Tuesday, the second day of the public holidays for Christmas when there should have been more security men on duty but there was none. The fire service unit was not functional. The fire spread through the dry harmattan grass, aided by the wind, and ended up as an inferno. The short dry grass appeared in the pictures taken before the fire incident (Figure 6:4).



Figure 6:5 Picture of the tractors and other implement destroyed by the fire on 29 December 2016, two days after the fire incident. Courtesy: Daniel Adayi.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Compare the charred mango tree in Figure 6:5 with the luxuriant look of the same tree in the picture of Figure 6:4. The damage was a collateral one, that also affected trees, plants and land.

Some of the staff of the mechanical workshop interviewed after the fire incident blamed the disaster on the remote causes and the unpreparedness of the Authority to fulfil its responsibilities. One principal officer, a resident of the staff quarters, regretted the loss as the figurative, 'penny wise, pound foolish' case. He witnessed the fire and described it vividly:

It was an electrical spark from a pole. It went up a tree. Many people were there. We all saw it. We were there, including the chief electrician and the firemen. We thought the fire would not spread, but it did, with the aid of the wind. The fire would not have been like that. The grass there had not been cleared since the beginning of the year. This disaster could have been averted with a minimal amount. We have people here who cut the grass; they could have used herbicides every two months since the rains began in June, and there would not have been any grass to spread the fire. But they always say that there is no money!

That was a disheartening insight into the operation of the LBRBDA and revealed a lot about the readiness of the Authority to respond to the food and economic requirements of the country as stipulated in the enabling decree of the RBDA and the partial commercialisation policy. With no insurance coverage, the incident would go into the annual report of the LBRBDA as loss of assets to bush fire. There were also similar cases at Gbajimgba and Dep. Although the incidents were recent, the remote causes were systemic and dated back to the rashly truncated policy that left the LBRBDA comatose.

A curious twist to the story of the LBRBDA was that that despite the internal challenges, it projected a picture of an establishment that was doing well. The annual reports were filled with projects awarded at the headquarters complex and the irrigation projects completed by the river basin (LBRBDA, 2009; LBRBDA, 2016). The annual report of 2011 listed more than 100 projects that had reached 100% completion by the time of the report (LBRBDA, 2011a). The same positive returns characterised the statements issued to government officials who visited the headquarters. At the resumption of office Sarah Ocheke, as the new Minister of Water Resources in 2011, a part of the brief of the LBRBDA presented to her as a working document, had the following excerpt:

The Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority, Makurdi, has projects covering ten Senatorial Districts, three each in Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa States, and one from Kogi. There are altogether twenty-five projects of the Authority which are sited in twelve LGAs of the ten Senatorial Districts in its catchment states. These are projects that the Authority maintains regularly. In

these projects, offices and residential buildings were developed, and the Authority's staffs are posted there, for their maintenance and further development (LBRBDA, 2011b)

Four years later, the status report of the LBRBDA, presented at a stakeholder's workshop made even bolder claims:

[The LBRBDA] has been involved in the provision of farm machinery, imputes, agro-chemicals at subsidised rates to our farmers thus helping them to increase their crop output, prevent rural to urban migration and making available more food for our teeming population. The Authority is equally not lacking in the area of fishery, livestock and poultry production. These activities have helped to improve the protein intake of our people. The health conditions and economic status of the populace have also been enhanced (LBRBDA, 2014: No. 5) (*sic*).

However, there was a stark contrast between the reports and the actual situation at the site. One of the first-hand cases was the power outage at the headquarters for three months during our field trips. The headquarters was unable to pay its power bill and so the supplier disconnected the entire complex from the national grid. Many of the staff skipped office hours and those who turned up only gathered in groups and exchanged banter. Some other gathered in open offices and discussed about the government and politics. Some of the days, the workers gathered to sing and pray to ward off the ill-luck that had befallen the establishment and after that returned to their bantering and idle talks. A small capacity power generator served the office of the managing director so that he could work in some comfort whenever he was around. The scenes stacked up against what the report on the LBRBDA mentioned and prompted us to investigate further through two means. First, we interviewed the staff who were at the final implementation point of the federal government reforms. Second, we conducted a comparative analysis of the content of some official reports and the data from our observations of the projects. The next section examines the opinions of the staff regarding the partial commercialisation policy and the assessment of the implementation process.

6.3 Vox Populi: The Insiders Perspective of the LBRBDA

The LBRBDA staff, like other Nigerians, were aware of the privatisation policy, and they had access to more information on the policy than the average Nigerian. The implementation of the policy required that the staff be adequately informed because their employer, the federal government, was a significant stakeholder. To ensure that stakeholders were informed of their roles in the implementation process, the government set up a piece of communication machinery as a part of the structures. According to the *Handbook on Privatisation*:

A coordinated and integrated communications programme has been developed to ensure that the concept of privatisation, the processes adopted, and the affected enterprises are marketed in such a way that all stakeholders participate effectively in the programme. This is with a view to building a better Nigerian society for the optimisation of the economic resources. Extra effort will be made to mobilise and sensitise the grassroots (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2001:49).

Although the staff were not systematically trained as recommended by the handbook, many of the interviewees showed that they understood the kernel of the policy through training, seminars, internal memos and circulars and through posters pasted at strategic places within their workplace.

Expectedly, most of the respondents were not enthusiastic about the partial commercialisation policy and considered it 'still largely a paperwork' because there were no structures to help the plan. More than 80% of the respondents indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed that the policy helped the LBRBDA to grow better and stronger. They argued that the process had only led to more economic challenges and dependency. Engr Chenge, who led the basin as a managing director, twenty-five years after the TCPC submitted its reports, sided with the opinion that LBRBDA was yet to be commercialised:

The privatisation of the river basin is yet to take place. Only minor services are rendered to the public to keep the expensive machines going so that they do not pack up. The privatisation policy of the river basin that was the dream child of the government was how most of the infrastructures and how most of the machines and most of the basic things like the dams would be privatised, but then it had a significant problem. The state governments owned most of the land used by the farmers. The lands are still under the state government and were only leased to the federal government. So, it is a little clumsy to talk of about the privatisation in that situation (Interview Three, 2017).

Closely linked to the view expressed by Chenge was that of Vincent Adogolo who had worked for the LBRBDA for thirty-five years. Adogolo said that the policy was a setback for the river basin. He compared the current state of the LBRBDA (2016) to when he joined the staff in 1982 and noted regretfully that the commercialisation policy had been a downturn. The TCPC did not prepare the Authority for the enormous task of sustaining itself economically. As he recalled his early days as a fresh graduate, newly employed, and the state of the LBRBDA then, he stated that the commercialisation policy had been a big mistake on the part of the government. With a voice laden with anger, said without mincing words:

What I am saying is that the partial commercialisation policy adversely affected the fortunes of this river basin. It did not profit the Authority at all! It must be seen for what it was: one of the big mistakes made by the federal government at that time! Do you know that the Authority was very viable before then? If that tempo were sustained, the Authority would have long attained the desired self-sustainability (Interview Eleven, 2016).

Many of the staff agreed with Adogolo and called for a reversal of the fortunes of the LBRBDA using a thorough review of the policy under an administration with the political will to face the implementation hurdles objectively. When asked to explain what 'political will' translated to in practical terms, Mr. David Kum, a staff of the Engineering Department explained that the political will was the visible commitment of the political leaders to achieve what was best for the people because the people collectively entrusted their fate into their hands. He illustrated his understanding of the political will worked:

The push will have to come from the top. If the President called the Minister and mandated him with clearly defined goals. The Minister would go all out to ensure that he achieved them by activating the necessary machinery. How long has Buhari been in office after the election before he appointed ministers?⁶⁰ The Minister of Water Resources only came here for the first time when he visited the Doma Project. If the Minister wanted the river basins to work, what stopped him from going around the different river basins at the beginning of his tenure? Why did he not go around to see what was going on and what could be done? He sits in Abuja and says that such and such is going on. But all those things he talks about are radio talks; nothing is happening (Interview Thirty-nine, 2017).

⁶⁰ It took six months after his inauguration before Buhari appointed the ministers (*The Economist*, 2015)

When confronted with the analysis of Mr Kum, his departmental head, Engr Abel Ugbaje agreed with the picture painted by the former unreservedly. He mentioned that Kum's illustration was apt, that he did not need to look beyond the headquarters complex. He motioned to the staff loitering in groups under the trees because of the enforced power failure, shook his head regrettably, and recalled that he had seen us conversing with them. Then he looked pointedly and said that the men under the trees were a live painting of the absence of a thriving political will. He whimsically quipped that:

When you talked with the staff, what were their comments? Did you hear any cheering feedback from them? You must have noticed that they look and sound dejected. Some of them have not been given any duty since they were employed. They have never received any challenging thing to do. All they know is that at the end of the month, their salaries will come; that is not enough motivation. No one cares whether they signed-in for the day, whether they are within the complex premises. The federal government often talk of developing the river basins, but the truth is that the political will is not there yet. That waste of human resources demonstrates the absence of a political will (Interview Five, 2016).

Ugbaje traced it all back to the failed commercialisation process. He recalled that in 1995, the TCPC instructed that the RBDAs surrender their non-water assets. The follow-up was that the LBRBDA retrenched all its extension workers and sold its tractors. He lamented that some of the equipment sold were water-related assets. The officials executing the instructions sold the tractors and bulldozers of the LBRBDA to themselves. Furthermore, the government dissolved the FMWR only to reinstate it later when the policy makers saw that the first move was a grave mistake. Although the government brought back the FMWR, the damage was irreversible. Recalling the adverse impacts of that mistake, Ugbaje wondered aloud:

Now that the Ministry of Water Resources has been restored, the government is now emphasising on irrigation agriculture, but where is the money to build back what they have destroyed already? In some of our projects now, because we stopped irrigation agriculture for a long time, people started using our canals for farming. The abandoned canals are more fertile than their ordinary farmland. Herdsmen, too, started using the waterways for grazing, so they have destroyed the channels and everything. Now, the money for rehabilitation is not there! (Interview Five, 2016).

In conclusion, Ugbaje, who was in the last month of his thirty-fifth year with the LBRBDA, declared unequivocally that the policy could only be said to be in the planning stage. It was yet to be implemented because the government still funded all aspects of the RBDAs operations.

Through the response to the questions that dwelt on whether the commercialisation policy had helped the LBRBDA and its level of implementation, more than 98% of the respondent agreed or strongly agreed that a review of the policy was imperative. On the same issue, T. M Atema, who served in various management positions, lambasted what he referred to as government gimmicks. He agreed with the opinion that the policy was doomed because there had never really been a policy. He decried the commercialisation policy as a sham:

I think the government is just paying lip-service to the whole thing, right from day one. You do not just privatise or commercialise if you are not ready. Commercialisation – whether partial or full – means you are saying to the public firms, “Get the money yourself; do not depend on government.” The policy of commercialisation could be a good one, but this whole thing is lip-service! (Interview: Thirteen, 2016).

Atema asserted that it was evident from the beginning that the policy was failure-bound because it was more about politics and propaganda than a focused resolution to change the ways that the RBDAs were operating. The structures to sustain privatisation of the public firms were not present, but the government continued to announce that the policy was on course and that things would soon change. The LBRBDA was in its early stage, yet to reach stabilisation after its creation but the privatisation policy destabilised the nascent foundation. The LBRBDA did not recover from the shock created by the wave of the exercise before Atema retired. He said that he watched the LBRBDA grow from bad to worse until he ended his service with the Authority. Throughout his time in service, he recalled that he wondered if the whole policy had been worth the cost of the resources allocated to it by the government. Now in retirement, after living through it, Atema affirmed categorically that the commercialisation policy was a stunt that the federal government sustained with all the tools of propaganda at its disposal.

The question that neither Atema nor the other respondents attempted to answer was whether the propaganda was limited to the central government only. Our findings indicated that the LBRBDA had seamlessly networked itself into the federal propaganda apparatus and had through the same sustained the impression that it was carrying on very well. To show how the LBRBDA used propaganda machinery to craft a very policy-compliant image contrary to the real situation, we shall examine the contradictions between the official reports and our observations from the visits we made to LBRBDA establishments.

6.4 Authority Errors or ‘Authority Stealing’?

In the 1980s, Fela Anikulapo Ransom-Kuti, Nigeria’s legendary music maestro and social activist released one of his criticisms of the Nigerian society. The piece titled *Authority Stealing* took a swipe against the nation that publicly humiliated and even killed petty thieves but turned a blind eye to corruption in the high places. Some people were burnt to death in a manner too gruesome to put into words, while some were executed for crimes as trivial as pickpocketing while top government officials got away with massive loots. Fela drew a contrast with the level of stealing that took place in the government workplace.⁶¹

Lyrics	Translation
Authority people them go dey steal	Those in power steal
Public contribute plenty money	The people gather their money together
Na Authority people dey steal	Those in power steal them
Authority man no dey pickpocket	The top official does not pick pockets
Na petty cash him go dey pick	He picks petty cash
Armed robber him need gun	The Armed robber needs gun
Authority man him need pen	The official needs a pen
Authority man in charge of money	The official oversees the money
Him no need gun, him need	He needs no gun, he needs a pen
Pen got power gun no get	Pen has power, the gun has not
If gun steal eighty thousand naira	If the robber steals eighty thousands naira,
Pen go steal two billion naira	The official will steals two billion naira

Corruption did not require guns or the cover of darkness but the pen and signature of the government officials. Fela referred to the top officials as ‘authority people’ and their manner of stealing as ‘authority stealing’. With the lyrics, he explained what he meant. Thus, the term authority stealing took on a life of its own in Nigeria’s social space and came to represent those who looted the treasury in the ‘civilised style’ and do more damage to the common good than the publicly humiliated petty thieves and armed robbers. Both the full name of LBRBDA and the phrase ‘authority stealing’ have the word ‘authority’ as a homograph.

Our quest here is to establish whether the disparities between some of the reports of the LBRBDA and our observations from the field are the Authority’s errors or pointers to authority stealing. In the first case, it refers to the inadvertent human errors in the information that the LBRBDA sent out. Such errors could have been the results of the unplanned, but the

⁶¹ The song is in Pidgin- English, a version of the English language commonly spoken in Nigeria

inaccurate presentation of figures, readings from deficient mechanisms like the tools in the meteorological stations or typographical error or information published before proper collation. In this case, they are the Authority's errors because the LBRBDA as a basin authority is responsible for all information disseminated by its staff. The second case is that of 'authority stealing' which takes a cue from the phrase popularised by Fela and refers to the conscious and coordinated efforts by highly placed officials of the LBRBDA to siphon money from the treasury by falsifying figures and publishing misleading reports. In the latter case, the discrepancies are the result of deliberate errors because they are rooted in authority stealing. Thus, the title of this section - where do we place the blame for the misleading corporate disclosures of the LBRBDA; is it the Authority's errors or authority stealing?

One of the inflexible responsibilities of the management of any corporate firms is the issuance of periodic reports, otherwise known as corporate disclosures, of its undertakings to all its stakeholders. Corporate disclosure is a channel through which the existing and potential shareholders can obtain valuable information about the firm. It is a link that binds corporate insiders with the full spread of stakeholders. The profit-oriented networks of corporate firms demand that if there is new information; it cannot remain undisclosed but must be circulated either mandatorily or voluntarily (Omran & Abdelrazik, 2013: 95). Corporate disclosure was one of the responsibilities of the RBDAs spelt out as the goals of commercialisation. The TCPC, in its final reports, stated that for the RBDAs to operate as purely commercial enterprises, they must:

Undertake a comprehensive review of the accounting and information system in the RBDAs with a view to installing modern and effective accounting system which will produce promptly and accurately the necessary data for monitoring financial operations and performance (TCPC: 1993b: 94)

The corporate disclosure of the LBRBDA, in the forms of reports given to the Minister and the legislators, annual reports and briefs were usually restricted in their circulations. The reports presented the LBRBDA as doing well and fulfilling its goals, but the field trip confronted us with realities that painted a different profile of the LBRBDA and cast a very dark shadow over its popular image. The evidence presented here is limited to a few documents painstakingly sourced, but they are enough to prove the claim of disparities between reports and reality in the LBRBDA. The LBRBDA library had no monthly or annual magazine of the basin authority, so all the sources come from internal documents, not in public circulation.

6.4.1 Development of Irrigation Infrastructure at Jato-Aka Project

One of the traceable instances appeared in the update titled *2012 Capital Projects Utilization*. The report showed that the contract for the development of irrigation infrastructure at Jato-Aka went to one firm, Larry King International, for the sum of two million, one hundred and ninety thousand, seven hundred and six-naira, seven kobo (N2,190,706.07)[USD6,000] (LBRBDA, 2013). It also showed that a payment of about fifty per cent of the contract sum (N1,110,000.00) was made and that the execution of the project had reached 35%. However, there was no evidence of the commencement of the said project when we visited Jato-Aka on 17/01/2017 at about midday (Figure 6:6). The project there still depended completely on rain-fed farming only for its production, and there was no irrigation farming.



Figure 6:6 Pictures from Jato-Aka Project. Top (left to right): warehouse, old power generating sets. Bottom: Left to right) An old power generating set; a view of the vast land of the project with abandoned residential quarters in the distance. Courtesy: Daniel Adayi (2017).

6.4.2 Renovation of Office/Residential Building at the Doma Project

Another case was that of the Doma Project, the *2008 Capital Projects Implementation Reports* showed that the LBRBDA awarded the contract for the renovation of the workshop and office to one contractor, Amau Global Concept Nig Ltd for the sum of two million, four hundred and thirty-five thousand, three hundred and fifty-two naira, fifty kobos (N2,435,352.50)[USD6,700]. The report also showed that the contract reached 100%

execution (LBRBDA, 2010). The pictures in Figure 6:7 are snapshots of the allegedly renovated workshops showing the heavy-duty machines outside the roofless buildings.



Figure 6:7 Pictures of Doma Project workshops. Courtesy: Daniel Adayi

Within the same report, the Rehabilitation of Doma Dam access roads (LBR/Const/Sec/661/07) was awarded for the contract sum of ten million, four hundred and thirty-two thousand, four hundred and forty-five-naira, ten kobo (N10,432,445.10)[USD28,800]. The report showed that the work had advanced to 30% execution by 2008. It was difficult to access more reports on the stage-by-stage progress of the work, but we saw that the renovated roads had no provision for water evacuation during the rainy season. When we visited the project in 2016, we saw too that erosion had worn off some part of the roads. The main gates from both ends of the project were sorry sites (Figure 6:8). Obviously, the rehabilitation work done at so high a cost did not include the gates, and it did not stand the test of time!



Figure 6:8 The two main gates leading to the Doma Irrigation Project. Left: south end, (insert): north end. Courtesy: Daniel Adayi (2016).

Also, the report on the Implementation of 2011 Capital Budget showed that E.O. Ogidi and Sons Nig. Ltd got the contract for the renovation of the project manager's office for the sum of nine million, twelve thousand, five hundred and seventy-five-naira, thirty-nine kobo. (N9,012,575.39)[USD24,900]. The LBRBDA awarded it in November 2011 for a two-month duration, and it reached 100% completion at the end of that budget year. When we visited the Doma Project on 21/12/2016, the office of the project manager was painted, but that appeared to be all! The glazing was incomplete, and the interior of the office was weather-beaten and very dusty. The costs must have been quite high because there was still a lot of work to be done (Figure 6:9).



Figure 6:9 The Office of the Doma Project Manager. Courtesy: Daniel Adayi (2016).

6.4.3 Naka Irrigation Project

About Naka Project, the LBRBDA update on awarded contracts showed that the contract for the supply of office equipment for the office of the project manager of Naka was awarded to Jessaza Global for a contract sum of six million, four hundred and eleven thousand, seven hundred and seventy-six-naira, forty-two kobo (N6,411,776.42)[USD17,700] in October 2012. The payment continued into 2013 even though the work was finished in 2012. The status of the contract said it reached 100% completion. Also, in 2013, a contract for the supply of one 100KVA power generator for eight million, eight hundred and fifty-nine thousand, three hundred and seventy-five naira (N8,859,375.00)[USD24,500] went to a firm, Envy Chrisso Int. Ltd. The status statement read that the LBRBDA made the final payment for 100% completion. Within the same period, Pivot Petroleum Services Ltd got the sum of two million four hundred and ninety-three thousand, seven hundred and fifty naira (N2,493,750.00)[USD6,900] for the 'supply of diesel and two drums of engine oil.' In total, a sum of about seventeen million naira (N17,000,000)[USD47,000] was spent on the Naka Project between 2012–2013. While the sum might not be too high for an irrigation project that covered an area of 500ha, the peculiarity is that there was no record of irrigation farming at the Naka Project. Finally, although there had not been any irrigation farming at Naka in the past ten years, that records of the LBRBDA showed that in October 2012, the contract for the construction of a 20ha irrigation system went to True Vine Synergy for the sum of two million, three hundred and eighty thousand and thirty-five naira (N2,380,035). According to the records, the contract reached 100% execution by December 2012. On the ground at Naka, there was no evidence of a completed irrigation system. Even the project manager denied any knowledge of the contract. At the site of the irrigation troughs that had not been used for more than a decade, a board conspicuously displayed that a rehabilitation of the irrigation facilities had been awarded to E.O. Ogidi & Son Nig. Ltd, but there were neither men nor machines on the site. (Figure 6:10D).



Figure 6:10: Views from the Naka Irrigation Project: (A) the Naka Project Office; (B) A view of the Naka Dam; (C) abandoned Power Generator near the Project Office; (D) Abandoned contract of rehabilitation the irrigation canals. Source: Daniel Adayi.

6.4.4 Processing/Registration of Land Title Deeds

The Implementation of the 2011 Budget Report showed that the LBRBDA had assessed as executed to 100% completion the processing of title deeds for the land at the Bokkos Project in Plateau state and Oguma Project in Kogi State. The former was awarded to Bertola Investment Ltd in December 2010 for six months, and the latter to Rebdas Surveys in December 2007. The 2010 reports remarked that both contracts reached 100% completion and the Authority paid the outstanding balances from the 2010 budget. A subsequent report on the inventory of the lands of the LBRBDA, showing the status of the properties acquired for federal government use by the LBRBDA, released in 2014 suggested that for the Bokkos and the Oguma Projects, the title deeds are 'under processing'. Without further information, like all the other cases, it was challenging to make a definite statement on the title deeds because of the conflicting reports. It was disturbing to discover that this was a recurrent trend. Even though our attention was inadvertently drawn to the conflicts between the official statements and actual situations on the ground, and access to the relevant accounts were denied, the available reports suggested that the lingering problems of Nigeria land tenure system were exploited to siphon money from the coffers of the federal government.

6.5 Conclusion

Faced with the apparent poor performance of the LBRBDA, it was pertinent to raise questions regarding the disparities between written reports and the actual state of the projects. Two scenarios are possible as explanations to the corporate misinformation in the public disclosures of the LBRBDA, and both are scary. The first is that the discrepancies were errors of judgement arising from insufficient information, poor communication between those responsible for the reports, inadequate supervision and vetting, or a corporate lack of competent hands, but not a deliberate effort to twist or distort facts. If this was the case, it lent credence to the oft-repeated remark that the Authority was a drainpipe for wasting public fund due to its incompetence. Furthermore, this position calls to question the competence of the entire organogram of the LBRBDA, the monitoring bodies such as the RBOI and the FMWR and indeed the presidency that appoints the arrowheads.

The second explanation is equally scary! In this case, the discrepancies between report and reality are symptomatic of what the late Nigerian social activist and music maestro, Fela Ransome Kuti labelled 'Authority stealing'. According to Fela, authority stealing was carried out through the pen and not through the gun like armed robbery, in a 'civilised style', by government officials dressed in suits and well-ironed uniforms. The obnoxious practise was dressed-up in 'nice-sounding words' like as 'misappropriation', 'maladministration', 'mismanagement' and 'public enquiry' to hoodwink and deceive the people. It was stealing that involved far more than the gun could dare, but for which nobody raised an alarm, and nobody was tried or imprisoned even though there was enough evidence of fraud. Fela's words echoed as we interviewed some of the respondents. Some of the staff believed that the LBRBDA situation bore the trappings of authority stealing as outlined by Fela. One of the project managers lamented that contracts on the project that he oversaw were concluded without any reference to him. The work began and finished without his involvement. Later on, he was asked to sign the completion of work statement. He said he always signed so as to keep his job because it was a case of "giving to Caesar what belonged to Caesar". Distancing himself further from the reports on the contracts executed in his project, he said of the many falsified completion of work certificates that he had signed in the past, even for legislators:

I do not know what they wrote, but nobody queried them, and no one was sacked because of that saga. They too (referring to the legislators) fixed their

constituency projects in Authority here. Some of them sent people to come and execute their contracts and got their cuts from there. Some of the people who came from the presidency were corrupt. They saw many of the illegal practices and reports that were false, but they just turned their eyes the other way. It is corruption and really sad! Sometimes, the Minister would send people to come and pick up contracts which never get executed after they collect the money (Interview: Twenty-One, 2017).

While one or all the explanations proffered might be the reasons for the gaps pointed out between the reports on the LBRBDA and the actual state of things, our inference is that these gaps exist truly as can be seen from the preceding narratives. The evidence amassed from the field is not enough to declare that they are either attempts at covering up authority stealing or that they are recurrent but inadvertent errors of judgement. They are presented here as an undeniable aspect of the LBRBDA's current profile.

As corporate actions of the LBRBDA, that is, official disclosures by the management, the reports are constitutive narratives of how the Authority keyed into the partial commercialisation policy. The officers who presented the reports or endorsed them for dissemination to the public sent out the signals that the LBRBDA was sufficiently functional, but nothing could be further from the truth. The poor state of affairs at the LBRBDA, that is, the absence of functional irrigation infrastructures and the degenerate states of the irrigation projects were glaring evidence that the narrative of the LBRBDA as a thriving Authority lacked substance. Instead of embarking on a gradual but genuine pursuit of its goal, the LBRBDA reports were made up with untruths and falsifications. Whether such falsehoods were signs of 'Authority stealing' or unavoidable errors is a question that cannot be exhaustively explored in this work. If they were and the practice persists, one can echo Fela's outcry for mass action against authority stealing:

*Authority stealing pass armed robbery
We Africans we must do something about this nonsense
We say we must do something about this nonsense
I repeat, we Africans we must do something about this nonsense
Because now Authority stealing pass armed robbery (Kuti, 1980)*

However, the scale of information gathered from the documents of the LBRBDA, the questionnaire distributed among the junior staff and the semi-structured interviews of the senior staff overwhelmingly support the assertion that the LBRBDA got derailed from its Corporate Plan. We have shown through analyses that the reasons behind the failure included

both external and internal factors. Among other reasons, the policy commenced poorly because the TCPC did not fulfil its task before issuing its final report. The LBRBDA could not sell the assets passed to it by the TCPC as recommended, and the assets became those of the Authority even though it had been previously stripped them all. The political atmosphere of the early 1990s ushered in a new military dictatorship that had a different agenda and did not prioritise the partial commercial policy. Consequently, the beautifully articulate blueprints by the TCPC and the LBRBDA became stillborn. The LBRBDA has not recovered from this false start. Like many of the staff believed, the solution might lie in a fresh start with a new blueprint that reflects the current social, economic and political realities of the Lower Benue Region of Nigeria. The resort to image laundering propaganda is both misleading and condemnable, but it reinforces the call for a complete review of the existing blueprint because it was stillborn and doomed from the start.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, we have explored the dynamics of politics as an essential factor in the development of river basin organisations. We have contextualised the universal claim that the organisation of river basins is inherently political to show how the peculiarities of Nigeria's federalism shaped the development of the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs). We have also graphically exposed the connections between the ills that bedevilled the RBDAs and the turmoil that characterised the politics of Nigeria's fragmentation federalism. The exposé approached the issue both at the macro-level and the micro-level in six main chapters guided by the relevant hypotheses and research questions, to narrate the story of the RBDAs in Nigeria. This section recaps the main points of the six chapters which form the core of the work, followed by a discussion of the limitations of this research and the scientific contributions that this work makes to the existing corpus of knowledge, and its implications for policy formulation and implementation for the water sector in Nigeria. The final section presents some suggestions for further research.

Chapter One strung together a long chain of how different leaders of Nigeria left their footprints on the development of the RBDAs since they were established to the current administration of Muhammadu Buhari. In one way or the other, all the lofty plans and promises ended up as unrealised grand ambitions. The chapter opened with a discussion of the factors that pushed for river basin reorganisation in Nigeria. The immediate factors were the aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War, the Sahelian droughts and the impetus of the publication of the United Nation Research in 1969. General Gowon cashed in on the prospects of increase in food production and hastily inaugurated the first three RBDAs and also launched his pet programme, the National Accelerated Food Production Programme. By the time he was forced out of office, none of the initiatives had reached maturity. Next came the Murtala-Obasanjo regime; the former died in a violent coup attempt, but Obasanjo signed the RBDA Decree before he handed over power to a civilian government. He also launched the OFN, but neither the RBDAs nor the OFN registered any significant progress before he left the government in 1979.

Shagari who took over from Obasanjo ingrafted the RBDAs into the Green Revolution, a political agenda of his party, the NPN, and the results were disastrous. The military threw Shagari out in coup and began a long period of military regimes that included those of Buhari,

Babangida and Abacha. All the military dictatorships had their grand designs for the RBDAs which they pursued with the absolute powers of their office. Buhari increased the number of the RBDAs, Babangida reverted it, and Abacha created one more by a fiat but did not gazette it. Of the three military leaders, Babangida made the most drastic changes. As part of SAP, he stripped the RBDAs of their original functions and created many parallel agencies to take up the associated duties. He also attempted to implement partial commercialisation in the RBDAs for a move that did not reach completion. By the time that military era was over, the RBDAs were in dire need of rehabilitation.

Obasanjo returned to government again as an elected president in 1999 and prioritised the rebuilding of the RBDAs but by the time he left eight years later, the situation was not different. With the second coming of Obasanjo began a period of democratic rule that saw Yar' adua, Jonathan and Buhari, the current president, take the helm of the leadership of the country. Like their military counterparts, they too had grand designs for the RBDAs, but none of them made the proper impact envisioned for the RBDAs. In summary, both military and civilian leaders only succeeded in leaving the imprints of their grand ambitions on the RBDAs, and in most cases, they left the RBDAs worse than before.

Chapter Two adopted literary parallelism to examine the RBDAs in light of the turmoil that characterised Nigeria's fragmentary federalism. The section began by exploring the concept of federalism as a political system and arrived at the finding that Nigeria's federalism was peculiar. The ethnic nationalities did not negotiate the terms of federalism at the beginning of the amalgamation or independence, and military interventions and sustained military governance shattered the fragile foundations laid by the founding fathers of the nation. The military created the states and local government areas by fragmentation and also midwifed the birth of federal mechanisms such as all three post-independence constitutions and the doctrine of the FCP. In tracing how the development trajectory of the RBDAs mirrored the turmoil of Nigeria's federalism, the chapter examined four factors namely the thorny and volatile Minority Question, the roles of the military and oil, the FCP as a mechanism of consociation and the recurrent discontinuities of governance and public policies. The parallels revealed that the RBDAs' trajectory of development mirrored the turmoil of Nigeria's federalism.

Chapter Three is the concluding segment of the first part of the thesis and it focused on the reforms introduced by different administrations and how they affected the development of the RBDAs. The challenges encountered by the RBDAs began with Shagari's administration, but the first attempt at introducing reforms to reposition the river basins began with Babangida's structural adjustment measures. The chapter explored the details of the framework devised for the partial commercialisation exercise with definitions of certain key concepts, the steps taken to get the RBDAs ready for the policy, the recapitalisation process and the timeframe for the RBDAs to become self-financing. The entire exercise was set aside when Babangida bowed to public pressure and 'stepped aside' from his seat. Later reforms included some minor moves during Abacha's draconian regime as encapsulated in the Rolling Plans of the 1990s and the reloading of the privatisation and commercialisation policy when Obasanjo returned as a civilian president.

Notwithstanding the renewed vigour with which Obasanjo confronted the decay in the RBDAs, he could not actualise the partially commercialisation before his second tenure ended. When Yar'adua took over, he introduced a new seven-point economic agenda, but his untimely death led to the plans not being realised. However, Goodluck Jonathan, who stepped into Yar'adua's shoes and was his deputy and financial adviser, set aside the seven-point agenda and began his transformation agenda. The RBDAs were part of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda and were the direct beneficiaries of the Transforming Irrigation Management in Nigeria (TRIMING). Despite the funfair and the media publicity that surrounded the transformation policy, Jonathan lost his bid for a second term. Buhari, who unseated Jonathan, cruised to victory with a 'Change!' war cry. Buhari casted an enormous shadow of doubt over Jonathan's transformation agenda and began a post-transformation policy. For the RBDAs, Buhari initiated a post-TRIMING repositioning aimed at returning to the original plan of the RBDAs. Buhari's first tenure is over and a second one has begun, but he has not commercialised any RBDA. Thus, the long string of reforms has not achieved the singular target of enabling the RBDAs to become self-financing after more than three decades.

Chapter Four is the first of the tripartite second section, which is a micro-level exploration of the LBRBDA. It focused on how the dynamics examined in the first section played out in an actual context of one RBDA. The chapter used the observations from six irrigation projects, the Liaison Office and the Area Office of the LBRBDA. The trip covered all of them except the

last. The concluding section of the chapter discussed the characteristic features of the irrigation projects. All the irrigation projects had abundant natural resources such as vast lands and access to water, and they were all found in very fertile plains, but they were dysfunctional and had become public liabilities. We concluded that at the LBRBDA, the constant policy changes left a trail of truncated engagements of the natural resources of the catchment area, a long chain of unfinished construction works and project managers who were at their wits end.

Chapter Five discussed the impacts of fragmentary federalism at a micro-level, detailing how the conflict of interests metamorphosed as the number of stakeholders in the LBRBDA increased. The chapter answered the question of how the LBRBDA mirrored the trajectory of Nigeria's federalism. Accordingly, it presented illustrations from the structural fragmentation of the LBRBDA catchment area. From the two states mentioned in the decree during the creation of the RBDAs, there were now four states and ten senatorial zones at the federal level. At the basin level, the chapter presented cases when the LBRBDA became a political platform as chief executives used government facilities to enhance their political pursuits. In addition, the chapter examined how the LBRBDA struggled with its challenges that are rooted in the turmoil of Nigeria's federalism such as the problematic Land Use Act and the recently created Constituency Project package. The chapter concluded that these setbacks were the ripple effect of Nigeria's poorly negotiated federalism.

Chapter Six, the final chapter, focused on how the LBRBDA responded to the partial commercialisation policy of Babangida, the renewed efforts by Obasanjo and the administrations that followed. The chapter opened with exploration of the framework that was created for the commercialisation policy by the federal government and the response articulated by the LBRBDA. The Corporate Plan strategically mapped out how the LBRBDA would stand out as a giant in the competitive market, but the design was stillborn. The subsequent sections of the chapter assessed in detail the reports of the field work to substantiate the conclusion that the LBRBDA blueprint referred to as the Corporate Plan was unsuccessful. Some of the evidence included the dysfunctional states of the unsold irrigation projects that the LBRBDA later took over their management, the lack of insurance covers for the assets of the basin authority and the insufficient security arrangement. In light of the preceding, the last section of the chapter exposed the desperate official efforts to window-

dress the LBRBDA by misrepresenting facts and figures in the reports sent out on the basin authority, and the chapter ended with the verdict of the LBRBDA from the perspective of the staff who have served there in various roles.

Despite the substantial information obtained for the two levels of analysis undertaken by the researcher, this thesis has limitations. First, the researcher faced suspicion from many of the civil servants at the administrative offices such as the Federal Ministry of Water Resources and the headquarters of the LBRBDAs as well as the outposts such as the irrigation projects and the Liaison Office. The civil servants were unwilling to allow access to official information because the contents were different from other publications on the same issues. It was like to divulging information that would indict the government. Although in some places, some officials gradually shifted their grounds and gave access to official records after finding out that the researcher was not a journalist, but a Catholic priest and that the information was for an academic research; the difficulty of obtaining official documents was a significant limiting factor. Second, the dangerous security situation in Nigeria was also a significant limitation. The researcher was unable to go to any of the LBRBDA establishments in the Plateau State because of the upsurge of attack by marauders on the roads leading to Jos the state capital. Even though some efforts led to interviews with officials who have worked in the Area Office, we had no personal observation of the physical structures like we did with the projects in the other three states. The third limitation was a specific one, revolving around the identity of the researcher as a Catholic priest. The researcher dressed as a clergyman, either in the traditional habit of the Holy Ghost Fathers or a clerical collar which presented him as an ordained man. This limitation was circumstantial because it depended on the respondents. While some religious-minded ones were more open, and some did say that they went the extra mile because they felt that they were doing a semi-religious duty, others kept a safe distance and would not give any help. It was challenging to map where the religious angle played out as a booster or an inhibitor. The experience was a mix of the two.

Notwithstanding the limitations, the data and the analyses have revealed certain new dimensions of river basin management in Nigeria, which will be helpful for policy formulation and implementation in the water sector and other public sectors. Some of the such key findings underscore the primacy of politics in development. The development of the RBDAs has the elements of conflict, cooperation and negotiation as evident in the crisis at the Dep

Irrigation and the agreement to use the Doma Dam as a source of water by the LBRBDA and the government of Nasarawa state. Politics refers to all the activities of conflict, cooperation and negotiation involved in the use, production and distribution of resources at all levels of human associations (Leftwich, 2000: 5). We have shown the primacy of politics in the development of the RBDAs, from the grand ambitions of the presidents, the fissiparous fragmentation of federal units, the politics that initiated the different reforms and powered them, and how they played out in the political space of the LBRBDA. We have also demonstrated that politics in the RBDAs had a distinctive quality which comes from the turmoil of Nigerian federalism. In the quest to reposition the RBDAs, the consideration for politics must always be considered in the context of the impact of the federalism. Furthermore, the analysis highlighted that it was counterproductive to continue allocating authorities to the river basin without ensuring that the necessary structure to administer the funds effectively and check leakages were efficient. General Gowon's misguided approach to river basin organisation when Nigeria allegedly had more money than problems continues to trouble the RBDAs. Although, this thesis contributes to the debates on the review of the RBDAs and how to make them work optimally, through its analysis from a political economy perspective, the integrated management of the must address some issues only mentioned briefly in this work. The LBRBDA had some peculiar needs. The LBRBDA had gaps when examined in light of the current best practices in the management of river basin organisations. Three areas of concern that would contribute significantly to the comprehensive repositioning of the LBRBDA were – gender mainstreaming, climate change and environmental management. All three elements are essential to the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) adopted by the National Council on Water Resources as the prerequisite for best practice in Nigeria's water sector.

As part of its effort to entrench an integrated approach in the management of the water resource, the National Council on Water Resources (NCWR) directed all stakeholders in the water sector to adopt the IWRM because Nigeria signed the United Nations Water Charters. In the *Memorandum on the Mainstreaming of the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in Water Sector Reforms*, the Council acknowledged that the IWRM approach would address the nation's water-related development issues more effectively and efficiently than the traditional methods. The memo stressed further that it would help minimise, if not

eliminate, the lives lost, the money wasted, and the natural capital depleted because of fragmented decision-making. The memo encouraged the stakeholders to adopt the IWRM because it would ensure that both current and future water demands accord due considerations to environmental sustainability (NCWR, 2013: 3). Following the directive of the Council, the LBRBDA set up a division for the IWRM. The IWRM division, along with Agricultural Services and Commercial Services formed the Services Department. Despite the primary role of the IWRM division and the clarion call by the NCWR, the division was only at the headquarters in Makurdi. In the library at the headquarters, there was no literature on the new approach to water management. At the project sites, none of the projects in the basin engaged in any form of power generation. Even at Doma, where the absence of power supply was the major setback, no effort had been made to generate hydropower. The project managers carried on as much as the resources available to them allowed because they did not seem to be following any coordinated plan. The idea of an integrated approach for the management of water resources is yet to get adequate attention at the LBRBDA.

In the same vein, the LBRBDA must even the disparity between the number of men and women in its workforce. The observations from the field trips revealed that all the project managers were men. No woman had handled the Liaison Office at Keffi or the Area Office at Jos. The records of the LBRBDA revealed that the positions of the Directors and Executive Directors had been the exclusive reserve of the male folks. Out of the fifteen people that led the basin authority from 1977 as Managing Directors, either in the acting capacity or as substantive appointees, only one was a woman. During the tenure of this female Managing Director, she was the only woman in the Management Committee which she headed. Within the same period, she was one of the two women in the seven-person board of directors led by a man (LBRBDA, 2011b: 2-3). The trend of gender gap mirrors the same trend in public service. According to the report of the World Economic Forum (2018) on the gender gap, Nigeria continued on a downward trend with a difference above the world average, to reveal a larger-than-before gender gap among legislators, senior officials and managers (World Economic Forum, 2018: 17). In the Sub-Saharan region, Nigeria fared better than only four other countries. At the LBRBDA, the women all belonged to the lower labour cadre with a large proportion in the Finance and Administration Department. The LBRBDA must embark on gender mainstreaming as part of the bid to optimise the potentials of its catchment area.

The third area of concern was the response of the LBRBDA to the global climate challenge. In the Engineering Department, the three constitutive sections – Construction, Hydrogeology, and Operations and Management – were all involved in the management of the environment and response to climate. The department gathered data from the projects and the dams to facilitate its construction and maintenance work. However, we saw in our field trip that the meteorological stations were ill-equipped for data collection. In fact, some of the stations had fallen into disuse. The Dep Irrigation Project had no functional data collection centre, even though it had been encountering the challenge of erosion for the past three decades. The Dep River had filled up with silt and continued to pose a significant threat to crops on the adjacent farmlands. The same was true of Katsina-Ala Irrigation Project where there was a station, but the equipment was obsolete. Some of the project sites had neither a station nor staff for data collection. At the headquarters complex in Makurdi, there was a meteorological station, but it did not differ from the one at the project sites. Overall, the preparedness of the LBRBDA for data collection was unsatisfactory because it lacked the necessary tools. Again, the LBRBDA's state of readiness mirrored the overall situation of the RBDAs. In a communique issued at the end of a recent regional training workshop on *The Effect of Climate Change on Water Resources Management in Nigeria*, the FMWR admitted that the national response had been inadequate (Federal Ministry of Water Resources, 2019). The communique identified some of the challenges as inadequate sensitisation, the scarcity of data for effective planning and the lack of political will on the part of the stakeholders to address the problem of climate change. Further setbacks to the response included lack of cooperation and collaboration among stakeholders, inadequate funding for the process and the lack of appropriate technology for effective response. For all the difficulties at the higher level of implementation, the LBRBDA's state of the readiness for climate change adaptation and mitigation was grossly inadequate and would constitute a major setback to the repositioning of the river basin unless it is put in focus and properly addressed.

On a final note, we acknowledge that the limitations of this research work serve as openings for further research. A notable aspect is the politics of differentiated allocation from the treasury of the federal government to the various RBDAs. Research findings indicate that there are no correlations between the sizes of the RBDAs and the allocations that they obtain from the federal treasury. A second area for further research is the details of the political

dynamics that sustained the faulty structure of the RBDAs for more than four decades. Why does the country continue to support one policy for the RBDAs in the northern Savannah and those in the evergreen mangrove forests of the south? Is there a correlation between the size of the 'political north' and the RBDAs in the North vis-à-vis the political south and the dimensions of the RBDAs there? The ancillary to what kind of is driving the proposed splits of the RBDAs that went to the national Assemblies: Sokoto-Rima RBDA into Lower Sokoto-Rima and Upper Sokoto-Rima RBDAs, and Anambra-Imo RBDA into Imo RBDA and Anambra RBDAs? Is it a politics of food production or one of the resurgences of the Minority Question? Sokoto-Rima is about three times the size of Anambra-Imo RBDAs.

Similarly, the LBRBDA has many unanswered questions that if systematically investigated, will shed more light on the plight of the river basin. Some of the areas for further research include the critical examination of the disparities between the basin's annual budget performance evaluation and the states of the projects on the ground; what were the feedback processes through which the LBRBDA reported to the Minister of Water Resources and the National Assemblies? What check factors were there to ensure accuracy and transparency and to reduce the draining away of public funds with reports that appeared to be tailored? What were the political implications of the having only one senatorial district from the Kogi State while all the other states (Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau) had three senatorial districts each? What will be the political implications of the lopsided arrangement when examined critically through the prism of the Federal Character Principle?

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APPENDIX I: STATISTICS OF LBRBDA (JANUARY 2017)

S/N	GRADE LEVEL (GL)	NO OF STAFF ON LEVEL
1	17	5
2	16	5
3	15	5
4	14	29
5	13	17
6	12	4
7	10	24
8	09	19
9	08	99
10	07	67
11	06	14
12	05	22
13	04	29
14	03	29
15	02	16
16	01	7
		Total = 387

APPENDIX II PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR THE RBDAS PRESENTED TO THE SENATE IN 2011

Name of Authority	States of Operation	Headquarters
Anambra RBDAs	Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi	Enugu
Owena RBDA	Ekiti and Ondo	Ado Ekiti
Chad Basin BDA.	Borno and Yobe	Maiduguri
Hadejia-Jama'are RBDA	Jigawa, Bauchi and Kano	Kano
Cross River RBA	Akwa-Ibom & Cross River	Calabar
Imo RBDA	Abia and Imo	Owerri
Lower Benue RBDA	Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau	Makurdi
Lower Niger RBDA	Kwara and Kogi	Ilorin
Niger Delta RBDA	Rivers, Bayelsa	Port Harcourt
Ogun RBDA	Lagos and Ogun	Abeokuta
Upper Sokoto-Rima RBDA	Katsina and Zamfara	Katsina
Upper Benue RBDA	Adamawa, Gombe & Taraba	Yola
Upper Niger RBDA	Niger, Kaduna, and the Fed. Cap Territory	Minna
Osun RBDA	Osun and Oyo	Osogbo
Lower Sokoto-Rima RBDA	Sokoto and Kebbi	Sokoto
Benin-Warri RBDA	Edo and Delta	Benin

APPENDIX III: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Researcher's Declaration

This interview is part of a research for a Ph.D. dissertation at Lisbon School of Economics and Management (ISEG, University of Lisbon, Portugal). The participants are chosen from the Staff of the Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority (LBRBDA). Participation in the survey is on a voluntary basis. You may withdraw at any stage. All responses will be treated with absolute anonymity and confidentiality. The data collected is solely for academic purpose and will be handled following the Research Ethics and Regulation of the University of Lisbon, Portugal.

Respondents' Data

Gender	[Male]	[Female]		
Grade Level	[01-06]	[07-14]	[Other]	
Years of Service	[1-10]	[11-20]	[21- 30]	[31-35]

Instructions

Please kindly provide the answers that you think accurately represent the situations described below

Part I: [Government Institutions for the management of water resources in Nigeria]

- 1) _____ **The institutions, laws and agencies set up for the management of water resources in Nigeria are sufficient to achieve the objectives of the LBRBDA in its catchment areas**
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree

- 2) _____ **LBRBDA performs better under the Ministry of Water Resources than under Min of Agriculture and Water Resources or Min of Agric, Water Resources and Rural Development**
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree

- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

3) _____ **The creation of the River Basin Operations and Inspectorate as a department in the Min of Water Resources has enhanced the performance of the LBRBDA and other basins**

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

Part II: [Influence of Partisan Politic on the operations and management of the LBRBDA]

1) _____ **Party politics has positively affected the operation and management of the LBRBDA and help it to grow**

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

2) _____ **If the influence of party politics is reduced or removed, the LBRBDA will progress faster and yield better results**

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

3) _____ **Party politics has more influence in the policy implementation of the LBRBDA than the expertise and opinions of the regular workers of the Water Sector**

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree

- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

- 4) _____ **The appointment of political appointees into the management cadre of the LBRBDA should be discouraged because it is counter-productive**
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree

Part III: [Impact of military governments on the development of the LBRBDA

- 1) _____ **The LBRBDA progressed faster under the Military Governments**
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree
- 2) _____ **Policies were more easily made and implemented under the Military Governments**
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree
- 3) _____ **Military interventions created discontinuities in policies, projects and**
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree

_____ e. Strongly agree

Part IV: [Impact of partial commercialization policy on the LBRBDA]

- 1) _____ **The Partial commercialization of the river Basins has helped LBRBDA to grow stronger and better**
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree

- 2) _____ **The partial commercialization is still largely a paperwork because the structures for its actualization has not been put in place, at least here in the LBRBDA**
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree

- 3) _____ **There is an urgent need to review the commercialization policy with regards to the river basin authorities and back it up with a stronger political will**
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree

Part V: [On the impact of the water resources policy, water resources bill etc. on the management of the LBRBDA]

- 1) _____ **The National Water Resources Bill and the National Water Resources just got approved. The absence of such codes has not really been a major setback in the water sector**

- _____
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree

- 2) _____ **The National Water Resources Bill, the National Water Policy, the Water Roadmap and the Masterplan are the long-awaited solution to the water sector problems**
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree

Part VI: [Evaluation of the performance of the LBRBDA]

- 1) _____ **The LBRBDA has been operating at its full potentials in terms of land, staff strength, and budget allocation**
- _____
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree

- 2) _____ **How do you rate the LBRBDA for performance, productivity, impact in its catchment areas of Benue, Nasarawa, Kogi and Plateau States**
- a. Very good
 - b. Good
 - c. I withhold my rating
 - d. Poor
 - e. Very Poor

3) _____ **LBRBDA compares favourably with other River Basins in terms of facilities, staff welfare and motivation, and performance output.**

- _____
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree

Part VII: [Impact of the Oil Sector on the development of the LBRBDA]

1) _____ **Nigeria has used the money from the oil sector to develop the Water resources sector.**

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

2) _____ **The River Basins, as they are now, can supply for the deficiency that Nigeria is passing through as a result of the collapse of the oil market.**

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

3) _____ **The effort of the LBRBDA accounts for most of the food produced in Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau States**

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree

Part VIII: [Corruption, Godfatherism, and Ethnicity]

- 1) **The operation and management of the LBRBDA have been greatly affected by corrupt practices.**
- a. Strongly Disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Agree strongly
- 2) _____ **Godfatherism has been a very challenge to efficiency and professionalism in the LBRBDA.**
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree
- 3) _____ **Ethnicity has greatly affected staff promotion, placement and transfers in the LBRBDA and thus affected staff morale and productivity.**
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Disagree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Agree
 - e. Strongly agree

Part IX: [Factors militating against the development of the LBRBDA]

1) _____ **Poor management is one of the main challenges facing the LBRBDA.**

- a) Strongly disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Neither agree not disagree
- d) Agree
- e) Strongly Agree

2) _____ **Party politics and the interference of the political class in the management of the LBRBDA affect the motivation and morale of the regular staff.**

- a) Strongly disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Neither agree not disagree
- d) Agree
- e) Strongly Agree

3) _____ **Political corruption has adversely affected productivity and growth in the LBRBDA.**

- a) Strongly disagree
 - b) Disagree
 - c) Neither agree not disagree
 - d) Agree
 - e) Strongly Agree
-

APPENDIX IV: THE QUESTIONNAIRE FEEDBACK

Respondents' Data

1. Gender

Gender	Male	Female
Frequency	61	29
%	67.78	32.22

2. Grade Level

Grade Level	01 – 06	07- 14	others	Null
Frequency	23	60	5	2
%	25.56	66.67	5.56	2.22

3. Years of Service

Years of Service	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-35	Null
Frequency	5	16	43	21	5
%	5.56	17.78	47.78	23.33	5.56

Part I [Government Institutions for the Management of Water Resources in Nigeria]

- The institutions, laws, and agencies set up for the management of water resources in Nigeria are sufficient to achieve the objectives of the LBRBDA in its catchment areas

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
10	38	2	32	8

- LBRBDA performs better under the Ministry of Water than under the Min. of Agriculture and Water Resources or Min. of Agric, Water Resources, and Rural Development

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
7	42	7	27	8

-

The creation of the River Basin Operations and Inspectorate as a department in the Min of Water Resources has enhanced the performance of the LBRBDA and other basins

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
48	6	4	26	6

Part II: [Influence of Partisan Politic on the operations and management of the BRBDA]

1.

Party politics has positively affected the operation and management of the LBRBDA and help it to grow

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
14	14	2	19	46

2. If the influence of party politics is reduced or removed, the LBRBDA will progress faster and yield better results

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
0	9	1	12	68

3. Party Politics has more influence in the policy implementation of the LBRBDA than the expertise and opinions of the regular workers of the water sector

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
8	4	0	7	66

4. The appointment of political appointees into the management cadre of the LBRBDA should be discouraged because it is counter-productive

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
5	2	3	8	70

Part III: [Impact of military governments on the development of the LBRBDA]

1. The LBRBDA progressed faster under the military governments

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
0	8	6	38	35

2. Policies were more easily made and implemented under the military governments

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
0	7	3	43	36

3. Military interventions created discontinuities in policies, projects and their management

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
5	18	45	17	5

Part IV: [Impact of partial commercialization policy on the LBRBDA]

1. The Partial commercialization of the river Basins has helped LBRBDA to grow stronger and better

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
26	48	7	7	1

2. The partial commercialization is still largely a paperwork because the structures for its actualization have not yet been put in place

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
0	0	2	55	33

3. There is an urgent need to review the commercialization policy with regards to the river basin authorities and back it up with a stronger political will

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
0	5	0	59	23

Part V: On the impact of the water resources policy, water resources bill etc. on the management of the LBRBDA

1. The National Water Resources Bill and the National Water Resources just got approved. The absence of such codes has not really been a major setback in the water sector

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
6	10	4	60	9

2. The National Water Resources Bill, the National Water Policy, the Water Roadmap, and the master plan are the long-awaited solutions to the water sector problems.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
3	8	17	52	8

Part VI: [Evaluation of the performance of the LBRBDA]

1. LBRBDA has been operating at its full potentials in terms of land, staff strength, and budget allocation

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
18	52	3	11	5

2. How do you rate the LBRBDA for performance, productivity, impact in its catchment areas of Benue, Nasarawa, Kogi and Plateau States?

Very good	Good	I withhold my rating	Poor	Very Poor
4	35	22	19	9

3. LBRBDA compares favourably with other River Basins in terms of facilities, staff welfare and motivation, and performance output.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
15	50	13	8	3

Part VII: [Impact of the Oil Sector on the development of the LBRBDA]

1. Nigeria has used the money from the oil sector to develop the Water resources sector

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	7	12	67	2

2. The River Basins, as they are now, can supply for the deficiency that Nigeria is passing through because of the collapse of the oil market.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	24	1	57	6

3. The effort of the LBRBDA accounts for most of the food produced in Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau States.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
7	51	20	7	3

Part VIII: [Corruption, Godfatherism, and Ethnicity]

1. The operation and management of the LBRBDA have been affected by corrupt practices.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	6	6	10	65

2. Godfatherism has been a very challenge to efficiency and professionalism in the LBRBDA

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
2	1	7	18	61

3. Ethnicity has affected staff promotion, placement, and transfers in the LBRBDA and thus affected staff morale and productivity.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
0	9	2	23	56

Part IX: [Factors militating against the development of the LBRBDA]

1. Poor management is one of the main challenges facing the LBRBDA

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
2	2	6	12	68

2. Party politics and the interference of the political class in the management of the LBRBDA affect the motivation and morale of the regular staff.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
0	3	1	18	65

3. Political corruption has adversely affected productivity and growth in the LBRBDA

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	4	0	21	62

APPENDIX V: QUESTIONS GUIDE FOR INTERVIEW OF SENIOR LBRBDA STAFF

Declaration

This interview is part of a research for a **Ph.D. dissertation** at Lisbon School of Economics and Management (University of Lisbon, Portugal). The participants are from the Management cadre of the Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority. Participation in the survey is on a voluntary basis. You may withdraw at any stage. All responses will be treated with absolute anonymity and confidentiality. The data collected is solely for academic purpose and will be handled following the Research Ethics of ISEG, University of Lisbon.

Interviewees info

The Respondent is kindly required to state how long he/she has been working in the Water Sector, how long in the management cadre and How long on the staff of the LBRBDA. What is the respondent's current work status in the LBRBDA?

Interview Questions

1. What is your assessment of the existing institutional structure for the management of water resources in Nigeria? How has it impacted on the LBRBDA?
2. How has party politics affected the operations and management of the River Basin Development Authorities?
3. How have political instabilities caused by military interventions in government affected the management of the RBDAs?
4. The process of partial commercialization of the RBDAs began almost three decades ago. What has been the impact of the policy on the management and productivity of the LBRBDA?

5. A National Water Resources Policy and National Water Resources Bill have just been approved. The Policy and Strategy on Irrigation and Drainage got through last year; how has the absence of such clearly defined policies affected both the management and the performance of the LBRBDA?
6. How do you think that party politics, political interference and/or lack of political will have affected the management of the LBRBDA?
7. How do you assess the LBRBDAs in terms of the funding it gets from the federal government and what it remits to the government annually?
8. How do you rate the LBRBDA generally in term of the objectives for which it was created along with other RBDAs about forty years ago?
9. What do you think are the greatest factors militating against the performance of the LBRBDAs?
10. Do you see a connection between the oil sector and the water sector in Nigeria? How has the LBRBDA been affected by the booms and collapses of the oil sector?
11. Any other question, comments or suggestions

APPENDIX VI: FORMER PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO'S INTERVIEW

The interview took place in Obasanjo's house in Abeokuta, in the same building that housed the Library. We contacted him through a former member of Christian community who lived with the in the same community with the Obasanjo family. The interview took place at about 1pm after Obasanjo returned from a function. They were about nine other people present during the interview. It lasted for about 17 minutes.

Adayi: Gowon started the river Basins as pilot programmes. The RBDAs were created by three governments; by that I mean Gowon, Murtala and yourself eventually.

Obasanjo: interrupts... I think you can take Murtala- Obasanjo as one government. When they write about us, they refer to us as the Murtala-Obasanjo regime. Strictly speaking, I would say Murtala-Obasanjo as one government.

Adayi. I agree with that. Thanks for the correction. Looking at how the river basins have performed; would you say they have fulfilled the aims for which they were created?

Obasanjo: Well... let me tell you the background. The background is that you cannot talk of agricultural development without talking of management of water. If all our agricultural business... agricultural development... agricultural production will be based on rainfed water, we are not going to succeed as much as we should succeed. So, if that is the position; which is the position for our own government , and I believe even when Gowon started the pilot programme, that Gowon did not go for eleven river basins. (interjection- he went for three). It was to see, 'how can we harness our water resources to help our agricultural production?' And the only way is to make sure that your rainwater which collects in valleys and river schemes are not just drained straight into the sea and the ocean. So, how can you do that? Through management and management means creating the river basins and damming the basins for three things. First, irrigation 2) water supply 3) environmental management. So, if you have these at the background, how have they succeeded or not succeeded, then I can take it from there.

One of the persistent problems we have in this country is lack of continuity. When a government comes into power, you will hear, "for the first time ever" as if it had never happened before. The three things I said we wanted to derive from the water basins management; let me take the one that is very close to me – the Ogun-Osun River Basin here. It was meant to provide potable water for Abeokuta and for Lagos, in addition to irrigation for rice production in Mokolokin and also to beautify the basin. Of course, there was also hydropower generation. When the river basin was ready, Lagos, under Lateef Jakande, said they would go for what they called mini water works; digging holes. So, they were not interested in taking water from the dam and having large water supply; Abeokuta did that although Abeokuta did not do enough but there was enough water in the dam for what we projected as the population of Abeokuta and Lagos up to the year 2050. So, to the extent that we made provision, it is there to serve the purpose. That that purpose is not been served is because some government along the line decided not to follow that up. That is on water

supply. On irrigation, if you go to Mekolokin area today, you will see something. It is just a little bit of what can be done, a little bit for rice production in that area which is in the same belt as what they call Ofada. You can plant any type of rice but the Ofada rice has become a trademark of its own. It is very popular here but there is no follow up. The beautification and environmental thing have not even been touched at all. And that is the situation of all the river basins.

Adayi: One other problem is that you launched the Operation Feed the Nation, which became a parallel programme. What was the plan? One would have thought that the OFN...

Obasanjo: (interrupts)... Hey... listen, you are a Catholic Priest, are you not? (Adayi answers in the affirmative). It was not parallel programme. It is a complementary programme. There is a difference between a parallel programme and a complementary programme. Complementary, they work together; parallel they do not meet. Now, if I say to you that you cannot have agricultural production and agricultural business without water and you then say that with the complementary programme, you want to raise awareness about agriculture by making everybody do something about agriculture, even at the back of their houses. That is what OFN was about? Were you old enough at the time of the OFN?

Adayi: I was born in 1969

Obasanjo: You were just a baby! (all laugh). It was not a parallel but a complementary programme.

Adayi: Part of why I raised the question is that, in like manner, later government launched pet-agricultural programmes?

Obasanjo: That is what I said to you earlier that in Nigeria, continuity is our problem. When Shagari came, the people with him said Operation Feed the Nation is a military thing; as a civilian you have to start something new. So, he started Green Revolution. Eventually, what he started was neither a revolution nor was it green.

Adayi: You signed the Decree that created the River Basin Authorities; how did you expect the incoming civilian government to execute a military decree? What was the plan for that?

Obasanjo: My dear brother, government is a continuity and it is when you stop government from been a continuity that really start failing. When you come in as a government, you inherit all the assets and liabilities of the earlier governments. When I was signing the Constitution of 1979, I included NYSC in that constitution. NYSC was not started by me; it was started by Gowon, but I considered it very good for Nigeria. I put it in the Constitution; just like I put the Land Use Act. So, government is a continuum. So, it does not matter who makes the law. If the law is useful, it can be implemented.

Adayi: it is five decades now since the basins were created and we are still importing food heavily. Food export has not amounted to much. It has been said that the river basin is one of those grand ambitions.... (interruption)

Obasanjo: Anybody who says that is an idiot... and if you say that, you are an idiot too! Now, what happened, when this Buhari came as a military government, what did he do? He sold all the equipment of the river basin, all of them!

Adayi: ... that was the first time he came

Obasanjo: Yes, the first time he came! And they were very heavily equipped...he sold them. When I came back, I said well, what has been sold has been sold but now let the river basin be a PPP (Public Private Partnership). Let the public side be the provision of water; let the private side be the utilisation of water. If we have that ... (interview interrupted).

Adayi: I thought it was the Babangida's Federal Character Principle that sold the equipment.

Obasanjo: No, it was under Buhari!

Adayi: Your Excellency, your farms have succeeded largely. You got into farming long ago. What do thing we can take from your farms into the public management of farms, especially the irrigation sector?

Obasanjo: First, government is a bad manager and bad producer! Never you put government in the position of producer. You have cited my farm; a good friend of mine, Andy Young, went to my farm and we were at 6 pm. He said to me, just like you have said now, " you seem to be doing reasonably well as a farmer, why are government farms not doing well?" I said, "Look, look at your time! It is now past 6pm. Government farms and government workers will close at 4pm. You can see I have pigs, some sows trying to produce piglets and one is running into difficulty, so I have to stay there to help the sow to deliver safely. If that were a government farm, nobody will be there at 6pm and if anyone is there at 6pm, he/she will get queried for loitering around. So, let's give government what it is capable of doing; providing the conducive environment, the incentives for the private sector to produce, and more so, in the Agric business.

Adayi: You talked about government providing the conducive environment; that is about policy matters. (Obj. agrees). What policies would recommend, especially for the irrigation sector that has not done well, against the projections of the Murtala-Obasanjo government up to the current Buhari government, the importation of food would have dropped?

Obasanjo: But I have just told you now that there is no continuity. So, the problem is that government cannot be a good producer because there is no continuity. The first thing that happens in a government business is that once the government money goes down, they look for way to reduce investment. In the private sector, if I reduce investment on my farms, my workers will go away, so I have to make sure that the farms are running. There was time, at my Ota Farms, the economy was down, my own workers themselves volunteered that they will reduce their salaries by 20% until the economy picked up (I did not ask them). You will not get that with the government. What you are asking; agriculture is a business, it is not a government business; it is a private sector business and it must be treated as such, not a development project.

Adayi: Thanks very much, your Excellency

APPENDIX VII: DEP PROJECT IN PICTURES



APPENDIX VIII: DOMA PROJECT IN PICTURES



APPENDIX IX: EJULE OJEBE PROJECT IN PICTURES



APPENDIX X: GUMA EARTH DAM/PROJECT, GBAJIMBGA IN PICTURES



APPENDIX XI: JATO-AKA PROJECT IN PICTURES



APPENDIX XII: KATSINA-ALA PROJECT IN PICUTURES



APPENDIX XIII: KEFFI LIAISON OFFICE/PROJECT IN PICTURES



APPENDIX XIV: MAKURDI PROJECT IN PICTURES



APPENDIX XV: NAKA PROJECT IN PICTURES



APPENDIX XVI: OBAGAJI PROJECT IN PICTURES



APPENDIX XVII: ODOLU PROJECT IN PICTURES



APPENDIX XVIII: OFORACHI PROJECT IN PICTURES



APPENDIX XIX: OKETE (OTUKPO) PROJECT IN PICTURES



APPENDIX XX: TEDE PROJECT IN PICTURES



APPENDIX XXI: LBRBDA HEADQUARTERS MAKURDI IN PICTURES



