

Policy Brief
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Developing Data-Driven Social Inclusion Policies and Strategies

The panacea for achieving social inclusion in Nigeria

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Executive Summary

While more attention has been paid to data as a driver of development across the world, gauging social progress through the provision of social inclusion data remains a major challenge in Nigeria. In this policy brief, we identified the relevance of data-driven social inclusion policies and strategies in Nigeria with emphasis on the role of data in influencing, tracking and measuring the progress of government policies on improving the quality of life. In particular, the brief identified the following key areas of action: establishment of National Social Inclusion Board (NSIB) to work with National Social Investment Programmes (NSIP) office and National Statistics System (NSS) for managing and implementation of social inclusion policies and data initiatives; establishment of innovative financing mechanisms as new funding stream to improve capacity and performance of social statistics production in Nigeria; assigning priority value to social inclusion data in solving social exclusion and gauging the progress of government intervention.

Introduction

Perhaps one of the crucial cornerstones of economic development enquiry is how economic opportunities created in the growth process are distributed. The poor are generally disabled to take advantage of new economic opportunities due to market failure. As a result, growth is more beneficial to the non-poor, leading to poverty, income inequality and unemployment. Therefore, to achieve growth that delivers poverty and unemployment reduction as well as equitable distribution of income, the pace and pattern of growth must be altered to ensure the average citizens contribute and benefit from the growth process. In this order, economic growth process becomes inclusive when it is broad-based. The narrative of equal access to economic process accentuates the dire need for an economic environment that allows individuals and groups to partake in the growth process. In this case, social inclusion strategy becomes inevitable in the equation of growth and development. Thus, development of human capabilities in terms of equal access to quality education and health care is crucial to achieving inclusive growth.

A glimpse into Nigeria's economic development pattern reveals an interesting scenario typical of a non-inclusive economy. Between 2000 and 2010, Nigeria's GDP growth trajectory exhibited strong momentum averaging 8.4%. In the same

period, unemployment experienced a steep increase and poverty level deepened. For example, while the number of people living below the poverty line increased to 112.5million in 2010 from 69million in 2004, unemployment and underemployment rates surged to 21% in 2010 from 12% in 2006. As expected, with the average GDP growth rate of -0.4% between 2016 and 2017, unemployment/underemployment rate soared to a record level of 40% in 2017. This narrative including evidence from other social-economic indicators¹ during these periods stresses the need for an economy that is socially inclusive.

How do countries measure and benchmark social inclusion without efficient data generation process? Gauging social progress through the provision of social data has become crucial in recent times as it reveals the status quo and improves the decision-making process. Not only does accurate, adequate and timely social data aid policy decisions by providing evidence, it also helps in evaluating the effectiveness of social and economic policies and programs. Thus, economic and social inclusion policies and strategies become as efficient as the data generating processes, scope and depth. To this end, in advancing the debate of social inclusion, more attention has been paid to data as a driver and accelerator of development.

¹Nigeria has a high infant and under-five mortality rate at 69.4 and 108.8 per 1000 live births respectively even as life expectancy stands at 57 years as at 2016. Furthermore, the challenge of a growing population (which is expected to reach 399 million by 2050) poses a serious threat to the development of the country, as demand for jobs and social services increase.

Having established the role of data in social inclusion benchmarking and strategy, this policy brief seeks to underscore the relevance of data-driven policy scoping for social inclusion in the case of Nigeria. Key questions are pertinent for this brief:

- What is the role of data in influencing government policies on social inclusion?
- To what extent do data help in measuring and tracking the progress of government policies on improving quality of life?
- What are the imperatives of credible, quality and accurate data for social inclusion?

In addressing these questions, the brief delves into why social inclusion data matter for effective policy. It also briefly reviews the state of social inclusion data in Nigeria and the challenge and policy options for developing data-driven social inclusion strategy for Nigeria.

Why Data Matter for Social Inclusion

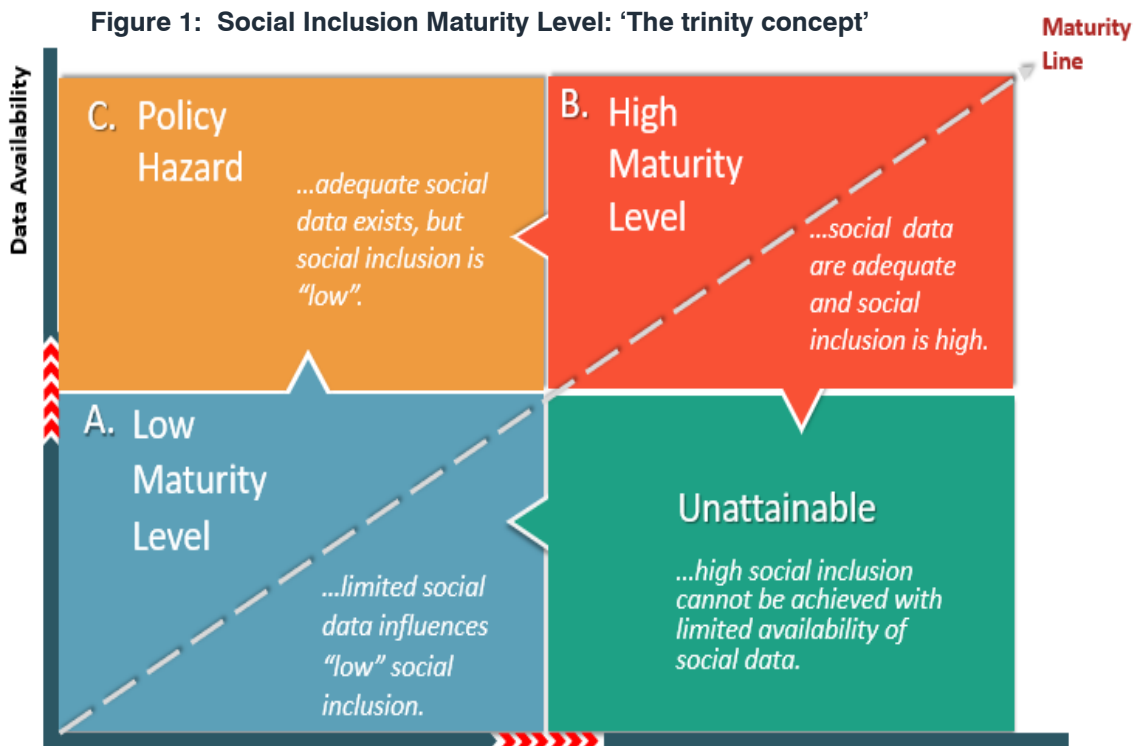
Greater access to and use of data aids development of strategies and formulation policies that address social inclusion. The role of policy, therefore, in mediating the interaction between data availability and social inclusion cannot be undermined. As shown in figure 1, data-driven policies constitute a critical pillar for achieving high social inclusion. The figure depicts the positive relationship between data availability and level of social inclusion. The relationship situates the maturity trend of countries in their pursuit of social inclusion using the four-quadrant approach. The imaginary line explains the maturity trend of the availability of data, the role of policies and level of social inclusion. The three 'attainable' quadrants (A, B, and C) explain the level of social inclusion an economy can attain as a function social inclusion indicator data conditioned by policy efficiency.

Quadrant A: This quadrant depicts the low maturity level/pedestrian region, where limited social data preclude social inclusion. In this quadrant, policy-making processes are affected by inadequate social data.

Quadrant B: The quadrant explains the high maturity level/sophistication region, where there is high level of social indicators (data) which influences high level of social inclusion as leveraged by effective policy. In this quadrant, it is assumed that data are used and considered in the policy-making process.

Quadrant C: It explains the policy hazard or data redundancy region, where adequate social data exists, but social inclusion remains "low." This reflects total neglect of data in formulating social inclusion policies. Here, there is low data driven social inclusion strategies.

Unattainable Region: This region buttresses the point that high social inclusion cannot be achieved with limited availability of social data. Here, effective policies cannot be made without adequate data.



The State of Social Inclusion Data

While there have been improvements in the availability and quality of data across the world with the huge data investment by national governments and the United Nations to monitor the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), accessing data on social inclusion in some countries remains a challenging task. Nigeria is a case study. Several efforts have been made by the government to expand its data collection on development indicators but reliable and comprehensive data for monitoring the progress of social inclusion in Nigeria are absent, in most cases. Some of such data include:

- Recent data on poverty and its dimensions (risks of poverty population near the poverty line)
- Unemployment and underemployment data by states
- Educational learning outcomes across different levels
- Income inequality by states.

Lack of critical social data is a major challenge in addressing societal problems (such as poverty rate, unemployment, health, among others) as it guarantees the making of policies that are not evidence-driven. For instance, how can government measure progress towards alleviating poverty and implement the right policies when the statistics on the number of people living the poverty line is not up-to-date or readily available?

In addition, using the global dimensions of social inclusion, Nigeria needs to do more in generating data to measure social inclusion. To be more concrete, the table below shows the availability of social inclusion data in Nigeria based on the listed dimensions.

Box 1: Development of Nigeria National Statistical System: A paradigm-shift

Prior to the return of democracy in 1999, Nigeria National Statistics System (NSS) was characterized by poor statistical culture and lack of appreciation of the importance of data in the decision-making process. At this period, the demand for data was very low. However, the paradigm shifted at the return of democracy with an increasing demand for accountability from citizens. Since then, there has been a surge in the demand for data. As estimated by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), over 1 million downloads of NBS reports were recorded in 2012 compared to 48,000 in 2005.

To further improve the adequacy and functionality of statistical data in Nigeria, NSS intensified its capacity by establishing State Statistical Master Plan (SSMP) in 2006/2007 to guide states in the production of statistics with the objective of generating useful information for decision making at both local and state government levels.

In addition to government's effort in reforming NSS, five-year strategies were developed with the aim of strengthening the capacity of statistical data in the country. The National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) constituted a holistic reform that ensures integration and unification of data production system in Nigeria. This yielded a good result with a significant increase in the quantity of data and indicators that measure the progress of the country in 2017.

Table 1: Global Benchmark for Social Inclusion/Exclusion

Global Dimension	Nigeria
<input type="checkbox"/> Education and Skills	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Poverty	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Low income and Material Living Condition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Governance and Basic Right	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Employment and Access to Job Market	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Resources, Supports, and Networks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Economic and Physical Safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Natural and Living Environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Overall Experience of Life	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Source: NESG Research Compilation

Challenges of Social Inclusion Data in Nigeria

Lack of comprehensive indicator system for social inclusion

Social inclusion is a broad concept that encompasses a number of different dimensions. It encompasses the objective factors of measuring the well-being of citizen. However, it is quite unfortunate that there is no comprehensive indicator system for measuring social inclusion in Nigeria. The available indicators did not cover all the dimension of quality of life. To cite but few, exclusion from services, leisure and social interaction, housing, and overall experience of life. As a result, the aim of government to improve well-being and quality of life of the citizen as well as the attention of both policy makers and the public on key policy issues around social inclusion cannot be achieved.

Delays in the release and credibility of some social data

The timeliness and credibility of data have posed a serious challenge for social-economic development in Nigeria. There are many instances where surveys are carried out regularly and data are collected but the release of the statistics reports were delayed (e.g. Unemployment data for 2017, among others). There are several complaints that data does not reflect the real situation in Nigeria. To be more concrete, United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reported that *"since 2005 the education data sent to UNESCO Institute of Statistics were seriously flawed and the problem noticed was rooted in the quality and accuracy of the data received from state and local level Education Management Information System (EMIS)"*². In addition, the release pattern of these data are not timely making them outdated in most instances.

Lack of proper harmonization of social data

Data on social inclusion in Nigeria, where they exist, are not harmonized. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has many un-centralised social data with different frequencies (annually, quarterly, and occasionally) making it difficult to combine datasets that track the progress of government social intervention programmes in Nigeria. In fact, most of the statistical reports that relate to social inclusion in Nigeria are not well integrated (for example, poverty profile, social statistics in Nigeria, poverty assessment report, compendium of statistics on health and human service, population and vital statistics, job creation report, literacy report, social-economic survey, social wages and emoluments among others).

Weak dissemination of statistical outputs and data

Although NBS has improved slightly in the dissemination of statistical data, with the use of advance release calendar to inform the public about the release date of specific data, majority of statistical outputs and data, specifically, data on social inclusion are not well disseminated. Stakeholders in all part of MDAs are not informed about the state of social inclusion in Nigeria creating a mismatch between what data shows and government initiatives.

Limited funding of statistic production

Poor funding of statistics production remains an issue to NSS³. Even when funds are available, they are unsustainable and inadequate. As a matter of fact, the coverage, hence, performance is grossly undermined by limited funds. As noted by NBS, the production of statistics at the state level and the flows of such information among agencies are low as a result of limited funding. If this problem persists, producing comprehensive data that track the progress of government social intervention will be difficult.

Poor statistical advocacy

One of the problems affecting social inclusion in Nigeria is weak statistical advocacy in driving policies. The importance of statistics is still not well appreciated by government's Ministries Department and Agencies (MDAs). This has led to poor policy design, uninformed decisions, inability to monitor implementation of policies, projects and programmes as well as inability to evaluate the success of government initiatives. Specifically, there are several cases where baseline data relating to a sector were not gathered by newly elected or appointed government officials. This invariably affects government intervention in addressing social-economic problems in Nigeria.

² UNESCO 2012 b, p.40 and Owhotu (2013)

³ Check Box 1

Policy Options

Establishment of Nigerian Social Inclusion Board to manage and implement social inclusion data initiative

In spite of the existing social programmes in Nigeria, integrating social inclusion policies and programs with the global agenda for social inclusion remains a challenge. This lack of integration creates a dichotomy between data and social inclusion policies and programs in the country⁴. In achieving social inclusion data initiative, it is recommended for the Nigerian government to create a department that will work with National Social Investment Programmes (NSIP) office and NSS in overseeing the development of social inclusion in Nigeria. A model of this department is the Australian Social Inclusion Board (ASIB). The ASIB was established to engage government departments in keeping social inclusion at the forefront of their agenda. The Board consults widely with all levels of government to connect knowledge, experience and best-practice in a range of policy areas on social inclusion in Australia.

Prioritisation of social inclusion data for achieving government programmes on social inclusion

For social inclusion to take place through policies and strategies, availability of data on social inclusion is very crucial. Currently, the Nigerian government aims at reducing poverty through its Economic Recovery Growth Plan (ERGP) by initiating social investment programmes such as Government Enterprises and Empowerment Programme (GEEP), N-power, National Homegrown School Feeding Programme (NHSFP) and Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (CCTP) in Nigeria. However, the most recent data on poverty was produced in 2009, which create risks and consequences for social intervention planning. To promote social inclusion in the real sense, the government needs to assign priority to social inclusion data, in tracking the progress of its intervention.

Establishment of innovative financing mechanisms as a new funding stream

To fund the production of statistics, innovative financing helps to bridge the gap between what is available (in term of budget allocation for statistics production) and what the statistical agency needs to reach as its production level. This approach proposes the mobilization of funds through sovereign donors like multilateral and national development bank to achieve funding objectives. An example of this funding model is the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building, a multi-donor that provides funding to improve the performance and capacity of statistical agencies in developing countries to produce and use statistics with an overall objective of supporting policy decision making for development. Additionally, government collaborating with private sectors in producing social inclusion data may also reduce funding constraints and create a new funding stream for statistics production.

⁴ Absence of data-driven social inclusion policies and programs.

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About NESG

The NESG is an independent, non-partisan, non-sectarian organization, committed to fostering open and continuous dialogue on Nigeria's economic development. The NESG strives to forge a mutual understanding between leaders of thought so as to explore, discover and support initiatives directed at improving Nigeria's economic policies, institutions, and management.

www.nesgroup.org | Info@nesgroup.org

THE SUMMIT HOUSE

6, Oba Elegushi Street, Ikoyi, Lagos. P.M.B 71347, Victoria Island, Lagos.
ABUJA LIAISON OFFICE: 3rd Floor, Right Wing, Unity Bank Tower, Plot 785,
Herbert Maculay Way, Abuja

Contact

For more information about the content of this report and other research services, please contact:

NESG Research Team

Email: research@nesgroup.org

Tel:

+234-01-295 2849

+234-01-295 2003



Nigerian Economic Summit



@nesnigeria



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@nes_group