

## Introduction and Background

Democratic governments want policies that are in the best interest of their citizens. One way of ensuring this is by learning from the experience of others, that is by basically examining one State's performance or practices in a particular area by other States.

Peer Review can be described as the systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a State by other States, with the ultimate goal of helping the reviewed State improve its policy making, adopt best practices and comply with established standards and principles. Usually, the peer review would relate to economics, governance, education, health, environment, energy or other policies and practices. Within one or more of these subject areas, a State may be examined against a wide range of standards and criteria, such as conformity with policy guidelines, or implementation of legally binding principles. Peer review can also be carried out thematically, where States are examined at the same time with respect to a particular theme. Peer review with regard to an individual State or themes, typically is carried out on a regular basis, with each review exercise resulting in a report that assesses accomplishments, spells out shortfalls and makes recommendations. At no time however is a review exercise expected to be judgemental.<sup>1</sup>

It is against this backdrop that the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) following decisions reached at the National Economic Council (NEC) resolved to peer review themselves. Upon the re-structuring of the NGF Secretariat in January 2009, the new Management was charged with the responsibility of designing a framework for the development of a Peer review mechanism for the States.

The current effort which is aimed at developing a frame work for effective peer review commenced on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2009 and is expected to be concluded by the end of the first quarter of 2010. The objective of this mechanism is to identify unique practices within States for emulation nationwide and ultimately fostering the learning of good practice, reduction of cost of operation and building an enabling environment for development. This exercise is expected to be an annual exercise.

### Methodology/Approach

Generally, the peer review exercise is supposed to cover the following:

- Visit all the 36 States and evolve a framework from the visits;
- Focus on the critical sectors of development and their influence on growing the economy, alleviating poverty and significantly reducing unemployment in the State:
  - Infrastructure Development
  - Health
  - Education
  - Agriculture
  - Education
  - Transparency/Good governance
  - Internally Generated Revenue



- Use of formal and informal methods of gathering information
  - Formal methods include
    - ❖ Physical visits to project sites and locations over a 2-3<sup>1/2</sup> day period in all of the senatorial zones in the State
    - ❖ Discussions with the members of cabinet and other senior members of government
    - ❖ Interactive session with the above-mentioned senior level officials with the governor in attendance
    - ❖ Review of State produced documents
    - ❖ Review of media reports
    - ❖ Interactions with members of the opposition
    - ❖ Contact with local press
  - Informal methods include
    - ❖ Unstructured, impromptu discussions with members of the public
    - ❖ Informal discussions with members of the cabinet
- Develop and present metrics for determining growth and development; unemployment rate
- Work with a cross functional team of Secretariat Staff, Researchers/Policy Specialists and a Press Corp.

This Report would examine in details all the States visited along geopolitical lines beginning from the North Central Zone.

## **NORTH CENTRAL ZONE**

### **BENUE STATE**

Benue State, a State in North-central Nigeria was created on February 3, 1976 from the former Benue-Plateau State and is named after the Benue River. It has a population of 5, 181, 642 people, according to the 2005 population census and its capital is Makurdi.

Benue State has twenty three Local Government Areas and has a diverse ethnic group and the major languages are Tiv, Idoma and Igede. It is a rich agricultural region and grows such crops as potatoes, cassava, soya bean, guinea corn, flax, yams and beniseed.

The Governor of Benue State is Rt. Honourable Gabriel Suswam of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

The Peer review team began its tour of Benue State on Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> of July, 2009 following a letter written to the His Excellency, Governor Gabriel Suswam notifying him of the team's impending visit to his State and his subsequent approval and go-ahead for the visit.

The Peer review team comprised of the following broad groups:

**A. NGF Secretariat Staff**

- i. Asishana B. Okauru, Esq. – Director General,
- ii. Abdullateef T. Shittu – Executive Director (Strategy & Research)
- iii. Chuku, Chijioke, Esq. – Head, Legal
- iv. Bode Aiyenimelo - Publications
- v. Ayo Daisa Andrew – Office of the Director General

**B. Policy Consultant**

- i. Dr. Dale Ogunbayo – Health

**C. Press Crew**

- i. Tersoo Zamber – Radio Nigeria
- ii. Simeon Nwakaudu – Guardian
- iii. Emmanuel Mogbede – News Agency of Nigeria
- iv. Golu Timothy- Leadership
- v. Terkula Igede – Daily Trust
- vi. Vincent Obla – Thisday

**D. Documentary Specialists**

- i. Olufemi Falade – Ideal Communications
- ii. Saeed Sanusi
- iii. Tope Anjorin
- iv. Femi Fanwo
- v. Seyi Angodiobo

**WORK DONE**

**a) Preparations for Peer review visit**

Before the letters were dispatched to the various States, a time table was drawn up for the visits breaking the 36 States into phases based on their geopolitical zones. Benue State was the first State in the North Central zone, which in turn was the second phase of the tour. The Secretariat had subsequently made calls to the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Dr. Audu Achigili, who was the point person to ascertain the convenience of the dates selected. It turned out that the SSG would be the leader of the team from the Benue State Government that took the Peer review team round the State.

**b) Entry Visit**

There was no entry visit with HE because the team arrived very late in the night of 15<sup>th</sup> of July, 2009 but he was ably represented by the SSG who ensured that the team was comfortably accommodated. The SSG briefed the team on the activities and achievements of the Suswam-led administration and assured of the readiness of the administration to open up the State to the team to ensure a proper assessment.



The tour however kicked off earnestly on Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 and the team visited the following sites and places, sectorally captured hereunder:

**i) Infrastructural Development**

• **Housing**

In the administration's bid to provide decent accommodation for the State public officials and civil servants, the government was at the time of the visit about to complete a 500-unit Aper Aku Housing Estate for civil servants.

In addition to this, the administration was seeing to the construction and renovation of the following houses:

- ± A new lodge for the Governor comprising a 700-capacity Banquet Hall, 6-self contained guest rooms as well as a living quarters for domestic staff, estimated at a contract sum of N1.4billion;
- ± Re-construction of the Governor's Office complex comprising the Governor's office, the First lady's office, 3 conference halls, a 300-capacity banquet hall among many other offices all estimated at N327m;
- ± Renovation of the cabinet office which accommodates the office of the SSG, the vice president's lodge and other buildings for senior government officials within the Commissioners Village.

• **Roads**

Upon inception of the Suswam Administration on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2007, it embarked on a massive construction of roads, beginning with the State capital, Makurdi, so much so that by November of that same year, the roads were ready and were commissioned by President Umar Musa Yar'adua.

In Makurdi, the administration constructed over 33.4 kilometres of well finished dual-carriage roads, all complete with concrete walkways with drainage facilities and solar-powered street lights. The governor did not restrict himself to township roads. Over 600 kilometres of rural roads have been opened up across the State linking the different communities as well as neighbouring States like Enugu and Ebonyi. The aim was to open up the roads in the rural areas in the largely agrarian State to facilitate the evacuation of farm produce especially for commercial purpose. These roads include:

- ± Otukpo-Utonkon-Agila Road
- ± Eke-Elengbencho-Ugbokolo-Otukpa-Orokam-Okpoga-Utonkon (65km)
- ± Ugbokpo-Oshigbulu Oweto (47km)

- ± Ge-Ikyobo-Agbeede-Amua-Ashagba, Atser-Korinya, Vandeikya-Kotiyough-Adikpo, Adikpo-Ikyogen-Jato Aka (65km)
- ± Ayiin-Ugba-Amaafu-Abaji (7.36 km), Zaki Biam-Afia-Gbebi, Annune-Jerboagundu, Daudu-Gbajimba.

Whilst some of these roads have been completed, others are at different stages of completion.

- **Water**

Well aware of the gross inadequacy of the 18, 000 cubic litre capacity water works constructed in 1975 to serve the needs of the then provincial capital, the administration of Governor Suswam designed strategies to ameliorate the hardship occasioned by acute lack of water. On the Benue River Front, a massive modern 100, 000 cubic litres capacity Greater Makurdi Waterworks is being constructed by an Israeli Company, Gilmore Nigeria Limited at a cost of N4.9b, which is expected to serve the teeming populace in the State Capital and neighbouring towns for the next 15 to 20 years.

In addition to this, there are two other big water projects in Katsina-Ala and Oturkpo being put together to serve the needs of the people of those communities and their neighbours at a cost of N2.6b and N1.5b respectively.

- **Electricity**

The administration has demonstrated its commitment to industrialising the State by embarking on the electrification of the state. Since inception, it has connected Agan, Tomahar/Angough, Terwase/Agabadu, Abuku, Ogodumu, Ushongo, Mchia/Wende, Yander and 115 other villages and small towns to the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) grid.

ii) **Economic Development**

- **Industrialisation**

Efforts are currently on to resuscitate many of the State-owned industries which have declined as a result of inefficient management. The administration is employing the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) as part of its efforts at revitalising and rehabilitating the following:

- ± Ultra-modern International Market, Makurdi
- ± Taraku Mills Limited
- ± Mabatiar Cement
- ± Igumale Cement
- ± Agro Millers
- ± Benfruit (Nigeria) Limited



- ⌚ Oturkpo Burnt Bricks
- ⌚ Fruit Juice Factory, Gboko
- ⌚ Coal Powered Plant, Owukpa
- ⌚ Benue Tomato/Mango Processing Plant, Annune

The administration is also holding talks with foreign investors from South Africa, China, United States of America and South America with a view to partnering with it in the bid to industrialise the State.

- **Tourism**

Conscious of the immense revenue-generating potentials of tourism, the Suswam administration has embarked on infrastructural developments to boost tourism in the State. For instance, the government has concluded plans to reactivate Ikyogen Cattle Ranch, Ikwe Wild Life Park, Makurdi Zoological Garden, Makurdi Zoological Garden, Makurdi Golf Course, Makurdi International Hotel and Benue Hotel.

Cognisant of the proximity of Makurdi to Obudu Cattle Ranch in Cross River State, the Benue State Government is determined to make hotel accommodation attractive to tourists to the Ranch.

- **Agriculture**

Benue State, also known as "The Food Basket of the Nation" enjoys a vast arable land not to mention favourable climate, which gives it a comparative advantage over other States in Agriculture. The State is rich in such farm produce as yam, mango, orange and tomato and there are plans to take advantage of these in growing the revenue of the State.

There is however a downside occasioned by the excess yield in such fruits as mango and orange, which makes waste inevitable. The government is ensuring that these extra produce are put to valuable use in order to maximise the generation of revenue.

As a further effort to encourage its citizens in agriculture and enhance mechanised agricultural practice, the State government whilst refurbishing forty four (44) existing tractors had ordered hundred (100) new ones, thirty of which had, at the time of the visit been delivered.

The government had also procured fertiliser in large quantities for the use of farmers and had complemented the efforts of farmers to repel crop diseases by purchasing five hundred (500) Knapp Sack Sprayers for the control of weeds and pests and selling them to farmers at subsidised rate.

### iii) **Human Resource Development and Empowerment**

- **Education**

Prior to the Suswam administration, there was a massive neglect of the Education sector resulting in massive



infrastructural collapse at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Outlined hereunder are some of the achievements of the administration in the education sector:

- ⊕ N300m was released for renovation and improvement of facilities of learning in primary and secondary schools;
- ⊕ Another sum of N500m was released for the payment of June/July 2005 salary arrears of teachers in the State;
- ⊕ N193m was also released to tertiary institutions in the State to prepare them for accreditation of their courses;
- ⊕ Over N200m paid to students of Benue origin to assist them in paying their tuition fees;
- ⊕ Comprehensive renovation of Special Science Secondary School, North Bank, Makurdi;
- ⊕ Provision of overseas scholarship to Medical Students of Benue origin;
- ⊕ Construction of Permanent site for Command Secondary School, Makurdi;
- ⊕ Payment of counter part funding to enable the State access the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Fund;
- ⊕ Supply of computers to most secondary schools in the State;
- ⊕ Development of 4 sites in the 3 Senatorial Zones for Education Tax Fund (ETF) sponsored school net projects;
- ⊕ Supply of Science laboratory equipment and chemicals to 17 designated post-primary schools in the State;
- ⊕ Recruitment and promotion of staff of the ministry and its parastatals received a great attention.

- **Poverty Alleviation and Youth Empowerment**

The administration had equally identified the need to empower the teeming youth in the State by creating job opportunities for them as well as providing them the capital that would enable them to be self-employed. For instance, the government of Benue State has insisted that companies and firms operating in the State should engage local manpower in executing their contracts in the State. The administration had also recently concluded arrangements with the Bank of Industry (BOI) to provide N1 billion for youth empowerment.

Another measure employed by the government to alleviate poverty was the procurement through, Public Private Partnership (PPP) of 1000 taxi cabs and buses to provide jobs for the unemployed youth as well as ease the transportation challenges confronting the people.

- **Budget**

The State's process of formulating budget is unique in that the State government organises retreats for commissioners, senior

officials in the State as well as Non-Governmental Organisations and civil societies to deliberate and make input into the budget planning. There is usually a mid-term review of its budget to assess the level of implementation. The result is that deficit is quite low at N5b and there are moves to increase the internally generated revenue (IGR) base of the State.

iv) **Internally Generated Revenue (IGR)**

The State had made significant progress in growing its IGR since the advent of the Suswam administration. From N100 million in May 2007, its IGR had grown to N3 billion in 2008 and the 2009 target was N5 billion even though this ambitious target had been somewhat affected by the global economic meltdown.

v) **Local Government Administration**

The State had recently amended the Local government law which the State House of assembly passed into law in January 2008. The amendment sought to enable the State and the LGAs operate a joint account fund. The government also carried out Local Government Staff Audit to get rid of ghost workers and ascertain the authentic Local Government Staff and Wage bill and by so doing saved the government about N1 billion.

c) **Health**

Upon assumption of office of office in 2007, the new administration undertook a tour of the State to assess the state of the health facilities and found the facilities at the primary and secondary levels of healthcare in a state of total disrepair.

While touring the State, the Peer review clearly observed that the Primary Healthcare (PHC) system in the State was in dire need of urgent repair. Over 80% of the PHCs in the rural localities were shut with no staff in sight. The only one visited that was working and accessible, Comprehensive Health Centre, Otukpa, was dilapidated in structure and in operation, in spite of its status as a quasi PHC referral point and a stop gap between General Hospitals. The team noticed departmental labellings that were rather ambitious but upon exploration of the facilities found nothing to justify the labels. There were no medical doctors and the last doctor that worked there was a Youth Corper who had since passed out. The team found out that:

- ± There were 3 nurses, 8 Community Health Extensive Workers (CHEWs) and 2 Junior CHEWs;
- ± There was neither a laboratory Scientist nor a Scientist;
- ± There was no ambulance and pregnant patients in frequent cases of referral were expected to flag down taxis from the main road;

The early tour by the administration had however set things rolling in the Health sector and prompted the development of a comprehensive renovation plan for the rehabilitation of the old generation hospitals. To complement the



renovation of the general hospitals, drugs and equipment worth about N1.5billion were procured and delivered to some hospitals across the State.

Also, it was noticed that the World Bank assisted Health System Development-II had delivered some benefits to the Health sector. The release of counterpart funds by the State enabled the building and equipping of 8 PHCs in Naka, Buruku, Lessel, Ayaka, Anyiin, Owukpa, Alaglanu and Idekpa.

The tertiary level of healthcare was being addressed with the near completion of the Benue State University Teaching Hospital currently at about 60% completion. The total cost of the project was put at N4.98 billion. Also, the re-accreditation of the School of Health Technology, Agasha and improvement in the teaching capacity and capability of the Schools of Nursing and Midwifery in the State should boost the supply of Health personnel in the State.

Currently, the Governor had given approval for the employment of 21 doctors, 14 pharmacists, 14 radiographers and 10 Laboratory Scientists and the remuneration package of health personnel had been increased to ensure attraction and retention of the right calibre of medical personnel to the State.

The team observed that too much attention appeared to be placed on procurement processes for contract and less attention on design of ingenious processes for the development of the health system in the State. There is an apparent dearth of the required level of intellectual input in the health delivery design of the State. It is advised that the management cadre of the Health Ministry be reviewed, with capacity building implemented where possible, and personnel replaced where applicable.

The solution to the poor management of the PHCs by the LGAs is an increase in the involvement of the State Government since the achievement of Health Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is predicated on a strong and functional PHC. The plan of the State Government to establish a State Primary Healthcare Development Agency is a step in the right direction.

d) **Exit Visit**

Owing to the Governor's absence on some official commitments, the interactive session took place without him. The Governor subsequently arrived and met very briefly with the team and held a further meeting behind closed doors with the Secretariat management.

e) **Findings**

The Governor's readiness to assume the helm in Benue State was very obvious. His take-off plan is inimitable. Within 6 months of assuming office, the roads constructed in Makurdi, the State capital were commissioned by the President.

Massive infrastructural deployments were evident all across the State – road constructions, water treatment, intervention in schools, efforts to revive moribund factories etc



In the Health sector, the team observed that too much attention appeared to be placed on procurement processes for contract and less attention on design of ingenious processes for the development of the health system in the State. There is an apparent dearth of the required level of intellectual input in the health delivery design of the State. It is advised that the management cadre of the Health Ministry be reviewed, with capacity building implemented where possible, and personnel replaced where applicable. Also, the State's determination to develop its IGR potentials was striking-from an IGR base of N100m in 2007 to N3 billion in 2008.

f) **Recommendations**

g) **Conclusion(s)**

h) **Appendices**