

Public Agitation, Social Media and the Government: An Analysis of the Use of Social Media as a Catalyst for Change in Nigeria

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Abstract

Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have enjoyed a political and economic renaissance in the last 25 years. Politically, many countries have enjoyed relative democratic stability and the economic benefits that accompany democratic rule. It is generally assumed that a stable democracy is synonymous with responsible (or at least, more responsible) leadership, howsoever defined. One country that appears to deny this assumption is Nigeria. An assessment of the type of leadership that Nigeria has endured since 1999, illustrates that the Nigerian democracy does not appear to be attracting the kind of leadership that can translate political rhetoric into developmental benefits. There are several reasons for this, which include the educational constraints; the vestiges of military governance, which has limited the collective awareness of appropriate leadership styles as well as the funding mechanism for political office, which excludes the intelligentsia and the middle class from effectively participating in the political process amongst others.

This paper presents a critical assessment of public agitation for good governance, as stimulated by social media in Nigeria between 2009 and 2014. It will examine social media responses to leadership failings in Nigeria and determine whether citizen responses are able to provide a catalyst for a change. The paper will conclude with an assessment of citizen-led measures that may work, are working or have worked in Nigeria that may affect the quality and nature of leadership in Nigeria.

Introduction

Democracy in Nigeria has failed to translate to effective leadership. Cases of corruption and nepotism still plague governance structures despite the end of military rule in 1999. Several reasons might be responsible for the apparent failure of leadership, which has impacted Nigeria's development negatively. Some of these reasons include the underdevelopment of the education sector, which affects the quality of leaders and public servants generally; the culture of impunity which formed part of military rule, the remnants of which still plague democratic governance; the high costs of participation in the political process, which excludes the middle class and the intelligentsia from participation and the complex nature of the geo-political dynamic in Nigeria as well as the teething challenges that are faced by any nascent democracy.

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The lack of good governance and effective leadership in Nigeria manifests in various ways, the most obvious being poverty, crime, insecurity, economic deprivation and increased income disparities. Nigerian citizens have responded to the consequences of leadership failings in various ways, some of which have resulted in changes to government policy or action. This paper seeks to examine citizens' response to leadership failings as well as the corollaries of these responses to determine what kinds of citizen agitation works best in the Nigerian context.

The paper commences with a brief review of the literature on leadership failings in Nigeria and the manifested consequences of these failings and then examines citizens' responses to leadership failings since 2009, especially responses catalysed by technology and social media. The paper then concludes with an assessment on what kinds of citizen agitation is most effective and how best citizen can tailor their responses for better governance.

Leadership failings in Nigeria

Leadership failings can take the form of dysfunctional leadership or the inability of leaders to meet up with the expectations of the followers or masses. Kelloway et al (2004) summarised poor leadership as abusive, aggressive, or punitive, and simply the absence of appropriate leadership skills. Eims (1996) views poor leadership as one that weakens the morale and motivation of citizens or the followers as the case may be. His study revealed that in situations where the follower senses a failure of leadership or lack of responsibility of the leaders, they would become resentful and in some cases choose not to be submissive to authority.

Eims study is an apt reflection of the situation in Nigeria where many citizens are demotivated by poor political leadership and this can be seen by the lack of engagement of citizens in the political process. Ebegbulem (2012) argued that Nigerian society has never been well governed since independence from the British in 1960 because "good, strong leaders" have never been in charge. He highlighted that leadership failings can be seen in the lack of direction, neglect, insensitivity to the plight of the citizens, fraud and corruption that characterises Nigeria.

A major evidence of leadership failing in Nigeria is the inability of the leaders to meet the expectations of majority of the followers. As stated by Jamo (2013), it was widely expected that the return of Nigeria to democratic rule would bring about an improvement in development indicators. Following the return to democracy in the year 1999 after many years of military rule, citizens' expectation for good governance, efficient utilization of resources, transparency, accountability and freedom of information were at an all-time high. The return to democracy was accompanied by ambitious promises from politicians seeking election into political offices. Consequently, many Nigerians expected to reap the dividends of democracy and envisioned living

in a country that would become Africa's role model and a major global economic player with improved living conditions.

Despite these expectations, little improvement has been made in Nigeria's development indicators. For instance, in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) released in 2014, Nigeria ranked 152 out of 187 countries and featured among countries with the lowest HDI. In addition, Nigeria's Vision 2010 plan, which was developed in 1997 and was aimed at positioning Nigeria to become a developed economy by 2010, appeared to be a fantasy. One of the objectives of the plan was to ensure that by the year 2010, Nigeria would have attained 100% primary school enrolment rate and at least 26 per cent of government budget (at federal, state and local levels) would be devoted to education. By 2010, Nigeria had the highest number of out-of-school children in the world at 10.5 million and education accounted for only 10.7% of 2014 federal government budget, suggesting a failure of Nigerian leaders to achieve the set goals. This is in addition to inadequate housing and limited infrastructure base and the rising poverty levels in the country. According to the World Bank, 33.1% of Nigerians were living below the poverty line in 2014. There are however significant differences in the poverty rate by region, and whilst the south of Nigeria has a relatively low poverty rate at 16% in the South West and 28.8 % in the South East, poverty rates in the North West and North East are 45.9% and 50.2 % respectively. (World Bank, 2014).

Despite these developmental challenges, Nigeria's vast economic potential arising from its natural endowment and huge labour force, continue to raise citizens' expectations from the government for the implementation of policies that promote inclusive growth and improve the living standards.

As mentioned above, there are various causes for the leadership failings in Nigeria, which have been documented by several scholars. Some of these include Deng (1988) who is of the view that political power in Africa is "seen as an end in itself, rather than as a means for serving the people and producing tangible results in development and nation-building". Consequently, African leaders failed to develop institutions that would translate independence into popular democracy and liberty. This therefore led to the concentration of power in the hand of individuals, thus breeding inequality, abuse of human rights, injustice and repression of the citizens. In his study, Ochulor (2011) identified some factors as causes of leadership failings in Nigeria as inter alia, the lack of intellectual training and discipline of government officials; high demand for corruption and looting of public funds; limited participation of Nigerians in politics, which weakens the demand for accountability; pressures on public servants to take part in corrupt practices; emphasis on ethnic origin (tribalism) and weak emphasis on the rule of law.

The consequences of the leadership failings in Nigeria have been far-reaching. According to Agbor (2012), the result of poor leadership in Nigeria is manifested in consistent political crisis and insecurity, extreme poverty experienced by the majority of the population, debilitating corruption at all levels and rising unemployment indices. Ogundiya (2010) revealed that the consequences of leadership failure in Nigeria include human rights abuses; political and bureaucratic corruption, which has resulted in increased poverty levels; insecurity and a high crime rate. In his findings, Ebegbulem (2012) argued that abject poverty, inadequate health facilities and unemployment pervade the land and these are borne out of corruption and the failure of leadership. Ezukamma (2009) and Agbor (2012) both highlighted the high incidence of crime as a function of poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment and the criminality that the citizens witness on the part of the leaders. Whilst the majority of the citizens languish in abject poverty and hunger, squalor, disease and destitution, Nigerian leaders enjoy a mind-boggling abundance, obtained through theft of state assets, cronyism and fraud. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed that 54% of Nigerian youths were unemployed in 2012, and that 69% of the country's population in 2010 lived below US\$1.25 a day. There is thus rising income inequality and a pervading sense of hopelessness amongst the populace.

Citizens response to leadership failings

Citizens' response to government actions is crucial in any country, as it evinces the extent to which citizens participate in government and holds leaders accountable. Citizens' responses play a significant role in the progress of governance. The reaction of citizens to leadership failings influences the present and future conduct of office holders. Thus, appropriate citizens' feedback should affect the quality and nature of decisions made by the leadership and on a larger scale, the quality of democracy in the country. Conversely, a lack of appropriate feedback can also mean that the quality of leadership does not significantly improve over time. According to the Armstrong (2013), community and citizen participation is a critical element of strengthening local, national and regional communities and increasing the bonds and restoring trust between governments, service providers and citizens.

Since the year 1960, Nigeria has experienced a series of citizens' movements that are in response to government actions and/or inactions. These movements have taken different forms to include riots, strikes, protests and demonstrations. In the 1970s for instance, nationwide movement such as the Ali-Must-Go protest, rallied against the increase in the cost of student meals by the military government. Also in the 1980s and 1990s, the Ekpan & Ogharefe Women's uprising, Anti-SAP (Structural Adjustment Programme) riots and the June 12 1993 riots were organised to either call for the practice of true democracy in the country or campaign for the formulation and implementation of favourable policies as well as efficient management of the country's resources. Social and economic issues usually aggravated the

different forms of civil disorder and disobedience, before and since the return to democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999.

Since the introduction of a democratic government in 1999, citizens' efforts at influencing the actions of their leaders have increased over the years and have also changed to reflect technological changes. The advent of Internet and mobile technology platforms have resulted in the increased importance of social media to citizens unrest and have engendered a structural change in the manner in which citizens react to issues of governance in different parts of the world.

The social media age brought about online activism, which involves the use of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the use of mobile apps to raise awareness, share data and map social issues. Social media has triggered the participation of young individuals in matters of governance, politics, rule of law and citizens' rights and has been viewed as the modern platform for citizens with common beliefs to share their grievances and hold the government accountable as experienced during the Arab Spring. Various studies have shown the importance of digital media to youth and their reliance on new media in contrast to traditional forms of media. According to Flanagin and Metzger, (2008) digital media use and engagement data indicate that young people make up an increasingly small share of traditional media consumers and rely more on new media to obtain their news and information. This section will examine the different initiatives developed in response to governance failings in Nigeria between 2009 and 2014, while also illustrating government reaction to the demands of citizens.

a) Enough is Enough (EiE)

Enough is Enough Nigeria (EiE) is a non-partisan coalition of individuals and youth-led organisations committed to instituting a culture of good governance and public accountability in Nigeria through advocacy, activism and the mobilisation of the youth population as responsible citizens.

The impetus towards the creation of Enough is Enough began during the period of former President Yaradua's illness in 2009. After returning from an extended medical trip to Saudi Arabia, the President did not appear in public for more than a month. This roused suspicions of a power vacuum, given the reports about his ill-health. Chude Jideonwo, co-founder of the Future Awards, sent an email titled "Where is the Outrage?" to a group of friends where he outlined the myriad issues facing the country at the time, including the missing president; the resistance of the National Assembly to enforcing the terms of the Constitution in relation to installing the Vice-President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan as acting President; the violence in Jos, Plateau State and the recurrent fuel scarcity. The email triggered a flurry of responses that culminated in the organisation of a peaceful protest to the National Assembly on March 16, 2010. This was the first of several rallies that EiE would organise in response to government actions. It was hugely successful,

recording some historic firsts – number of celebrities, number of professionals, number of unpaid youth and live streaming.

After the rallies, EiE decided to focus on citizen engagement through the electoral process as it considered that the more people are involved in the political process at various levels, the higher the likelihood that Nigerian citizens would be attentive to the actions of their leaders and hold them accountable.

Interestingly, EiE focuses on the youth demographic who are of voting age, i.e. those between 18-35, who are engaged with technology through mobile phones, the Internet and television. Using technology to spread information, EiE sends out a clear simple message urging youths to Register, Select, Vote and Protect (R.S.V.P). In 2011, EiE also organised Nigeria's first youth-centric Presidential Debate in partnership with 3 other organisations. The debate was aired live on Channels TV and streamed live through a Google/Youtube partnership.

In addition, EiE has created platforms to tackle issues that plague the election process in Nigeria. First is Revoda: a mobile phone application that turns citizens into election observers. Its unique feature is that it is tied to each user's polling unit (PU) number from their voter's registration card, which makes geo-location very easy, and allows EiE to send out messages to users that are specific to local governments, wards and polling units.

The second version of this app allows citizens report on elections, as well as 5 other critical areas: (1) Electricity – a simple interface that allows one to report when one has electricity. The data will be a powerful advocacy tool to counter official reports of electricity provided as well as allow factual dispute of the outrageous estimated bills that citizens currently pay. (2) Corruption – the app is linked to egunje.info or any other platform that tracks every day acts of corruption – police officers, court officials etc. The goal is not to name and shame but to gather data that would be useful for advocacy and reform. (3) NASS – ShineYour Eye, which is a platform to facilitate engagement with National Assembly members. (4) Emergency/Crime – provide security tips, crime trends and database of numbers for security agencies. (5) Polls & Petitions – an easy interface to respond to polls and sign petitions.

In 2013, the MacArthur Foundation awarded the organisation a \$300,000 grant for a project to increase youth participation in governance and strengthen democratic processes and institutions. The broad components of the project are: using social and traditional media to mobilise young people on governance and elections; providing new social media support to the Independent National Electoral Commission; encouraging young people's use of the Freedom of Information Act to access information and data; and mobilising young people to participate in the electoral process leading to the

2015 general elections through face-to-face meetings, debates, and public service announcements.

b) Occupy Nigeria: The January 2012 Fuel Subsidy Protests

The fuel subsidy protests also known as "Occupy Nigeria" began on 2nd January 2012 following the Federal Government's announcement of the deregulation of the Oil & Gas downstream sector on 1st January 2012. This announcement was accompanied by an immediate increase in the pump price of petrol to a prescribed average price of N140 from N65 per litre, representing an increase of 115%. The decision triggered a two week long industrial action and protests across Nigeria, causing a halt in commercial activities in many parts of the country and costing the economy an estimated N300 billion (US\$2 billion).

Although, Occupy Nigeria was initially in response to the government removal of petrol subsidy, it grew to become a platform for Nigerians to express dissatisfaction in the management of the country's resources and in turn demand for accountability and transparency in government. Prior to Occupy Nigeria, a large percentage of Nigerians were disgruntled with the level of poverty, inadequate infrastructure and level of economic hardship, despite the country's vast crude oil and mineral resources. Irresponsible practices among the political elite who assumed key leadership positions in the country were rife as well as unchecked corruption and abuse of office. Despite being the largest crude oil producer in Africa, Nigeria imports over 80% of its refined petroleum products due to inadequate capacity of local refineries. While the poverty rate remained high, income inequality was widespread even as the political class and the well-connected individuals flourished on government contracts and patronage.

The rationale for increasing the government's increase of petrol price was justified by the huge amount of public funds spent on subsidizing the domestic price of petroleum products. Under the subsidy scheme, the government issues import allocation licences to selected marketers, who are verified by the Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA), which subsequently repays the marketers the price differential over the government mandated domestic price of fuel. These payments accounted for up to 24% of the Federal Government's expenditure in 2011 (US\$8 billion) leading to a debate over the sustainability of the scheme. In addition, the lack of efficient enforcement of the scheme became public as allegations of fraud were levelled against several marketers, the PPPRA and the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) as the government intended to deregulate the industry segment in its entirety at the beginning of 2012.

However, with the growing poverty and economic hardship in the country, many Nigerians viewed the government subsidy on petrol as the only dividend of democracy, and the only real benefit derived from the government, the removal of which would result in more hardship and an

increase in inflation. Given this background, Nigerians were aggravated by the increase in petrol price, and this resulted in the Occupy Nigeria protests. Occupy Nigeria was characterised by civil disobedience; demonstrations; strike actions; uprising and online activism. During the protest, citizens gathered at designated places across the country such as Ojota, Ilorin, Abuja, Kano and other cities to express concerns over the inefficiency of Nigerian government, calling for a corrupt-free government, a reduction in the cost of governance, efficient utilisation of the country's revenue and the provision of basic amenities like power and infrastructure. In Lagos for instance, thousands of people gathered at the Gani Fawehinmi Memorial Park to stage protests regarding the price increase and demanded for transparency in government.

The severity of the strike action and protests led the government to engage in talks and negotiations with organised labour and as a result, the pump price of petrol was reduced to N97 per litre on 16 January 2012, with the government continuing to subsidize a limited proportion of the fuel costs. Many Nigerians were disgruntled as the momentum of the movement faltered after the NLC conceded to the conditions of the government. It did not turn out to be the complete subsidy reversal that the people protested for, as the people would still bear an increase in the price of fuel and the attendant inflationary costs.

The January 2012 fuel subsidy protest also triggered investigations on companies operating in the Oil & Gas downstream sector, which revealed irregularities and corruption among industry players. One of such probes was spearheaded Mr Farouk Lawan, a member of the House of Representatives. After months of thorough investigation, which saw testimonies from 130 witnesses, the committee published its report, disclosing several cases of corruption and inefficiencies in the subsidy regime from 2009 to 2011. Further investigations revealed that some marketers claimed subsidy on products not supplied, and 25 companies were indicted for fraudulent practises under the subsidy scheme. Even though the protest can be adjudged effective with respect to unveiling corruption in the sector, little progress has been made to prosecute the indicted companies.

Another major outcome of the protest is the on-going Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Program (SURE-P), which was designed to ensure proper management of the saving that would accrue to the Federal Government from the partial withdrawal of subsidy. SURE-P is targeted at providing and improving social safety nets as well as infrastructure projects. The program commenced with an initial budget of N180 billion in 2012, shared among the three tiers of government. Some projects financed by the program include the rehabilitation of Jebba-Kano road, modernisation of Abuja-Kaduna rail line and the rehabilitation Lagos-Kano rail line.

While the vision and purpose of the program is commendable, as is usually the case, in Nigeria, there is the absence of a proper framework for monitoring the use and efficacy of SURE-P funds. For instance, in June 2013, the Kaduna State House of Assembly suspended SURE-P and its activities in the state, owing to allegations of fraud over missing funds to the tune of N560 million meant for the State. Furthermore, despite the high expectations of the program given that it was borne out of the grievances of many Nigerians, the SURE-P budget recorded a low implementation rate of 48%, implying that only N86.5 billion was spent on developmental projects in its first year of implementation. However, a remarkable improvement was recorded in 2013, and the program achieved an implementation rate of 66%. Despite the setbacks, the Occupy Nigeria protest was a landmark event in Nigeria's history. Despite the vestigial memories of military suppression in Nigeria and standard government brutality towards protesters, Nigerians went against the establishment to demand for a pivotal change in government policy. The reliance on social media in coordinating the protests did not stop with Occupy Nigeria, but went on to become an integral part of future movements.

c) BudgIT

In many jurisdictions, there is a move towards more transparency in government, through the sharing of government data on open data platforms. Organisations like the Open Government Partnership (OGP) have arisen to push for government openness, transparency and increased citizen participation in governance. Unfortunately, this is not yet the case in Nigeria and it is very difficult to obtain information on government actions, especially government spending. The lack of transparency also applies to federal, state and local budgets and this lack of transparency constrains demands for accountability. The nature and recipients of public financial appropriation are important components in understanding public financial management, but this information is usually difficult to obtain in Nigeria with a limited public understanding of how government revenue is spent in the procurement of public infrastructure, debt settlement and funding of the recurrent part of the budget.

This information asymmetry led to the emergence of an open data technology start up named BudgIT. According to its founder, Seun Onigbinde, BudgIT has a core goal of making the Nigerian budget simpler and accessible for the average citizen. BudgIT converts obscure budgetary statements into comprehensible info graphics. BudgIT's website has been visited by over 112,000 unique visitors and the platform has responded to over 4,000 data requests.

The start-up also plans to reach out to the grassroots using tailored communication tools such as radio, SMS and print documents. BudgIT has initiated this approach using Ekiti State as a pilot project. Working with other civic-minded organisations, BudgIT distributed over 10,000 copies of

simplified budget documents to citizens in Ekiti. According to Onigbide, citizens in Ekiti State were shocked to see huge budget allocations for their communities and the absence of any development that can be tied the appropriations. Their shock demonstrates the extent to which these communities had been defrauded of their expected budgetary allocations. Citizens' ignorance and consequent inability to demand accountability enables fraud and embezzlement. By raising awareness, BudGIT increases the level of citizen demand for accountability as citizens equipped with information stand a better chance in their call for leadership accountability.

Despite BudGIT's success at raising citizen knowledge and participation in some communities, its small size and resources limit its level of impact. As a start-up, it can only tackle a limited number of States, and further, low literacy rates and low levels of internet penetration in rural areas, limits its efficacy. Reaching the critical mass of non-literate Nigerians will be essential to creating the pivotal level of accountability necessary.

d) Bring Back Our Girls

The #BringBackOurGirls movement is another example of how online citizen advocacy can translate into offline citizen activity capable of gaining recognition on an international scale. The movement began due to tepid action from the Government after the kidnap of schoolgirls by the terrorist group, Boko Haram.

On the night of 14th April, 2014, the Boko Haram terrorist organisation, which operates in northern Nigeria, kidnapped 276 school girls from a secondary school boarding house in the Chibok Local Government Area of Borno State.

The kidnapping was followed by silence on the part of the Federal government, and a denial that it had occurred. In the aftermath of the kidnapping, the president's wife, Dame Patience Jonathan accused protesters from the Chibok community of being affiliated with Boko Haram and attempting to embarrass the President. A sense of skepticism as to the kidnap of these girls seemed to envelop the government, as many viewed it as a political detraction created to draw attention from the World Economic Forum (WEFA), due then to be hosted by Nigeria in May 2014.

This response further increased public outrage at the government's tepid reaction to the incident. Other government spokespersons politicized the kidnapping, blamed political opponents and showed a lack of willingness to take decisive military action. A few days later, the Nigerian military announced that it had rescued the kidnapped girls, and then retracted the news after it was found to be false.

On the 4th of May, 2014, the President of Nigeria in a televised presidential media chat claimed that non-cooperation from the parents of the missing girls

hampered government efforts to locate the missing girls. By then, the online campaign hash tagged #BringBackOurGirls commenced when the renowned Nigerian playwright and Nobel Laureate, Prof. Wole Soyinka on 23rd April, 2014 called upon President Jonathan to "bring back the pupils." Nigerians' expressions of outrage online soon translated into organised action offline, led by the former government minister Oby Ezekwesili and civil-society leaders, including the lawyer Maryam Uwais and Hadiza Bala Usman.

The protests garnered a lot of international attention, with prominent individuals from all over the world taking up the cause. The international media consisting of CNN, Al Jazeera and others covered the rallies. During the WEF conference in Abuja, the issue of the kidnapped girls was frequently brought up, forcing the Nigerian president to address it during the conference.

The international exposure has also successfully placed the usually secretive Nigerian military under scrutiny. The shortcomings of the military have become more obvious as the United States military have become involved in the search. The Pentagon's principal director for African affairs accused the Nigerian military of pervasive corruption, which limited the Army's ability to curtail Boko Haram. (Freud, 2014).

Due to the public exposure of the movement, the Nigerian government has been antsy on how to respond to the daily citizen protests. During one of the first days of the protests, the protest venue was filled with police officers who tried to stop the meeting and prevent more Nigerians from joining in on the sit-in. During a march to the Presidential villa to get a response from the President, police officers stopped the protesters and the President through his spokesperson suggested that the protesters direct their protests to the terrorists that stole the children.

The effort to rescue the girls is still ongoing as at June 2014 but the campaign illustrates the power of the people to force government action on an issue and has managed to keep the dire situation of these girls in the media. The immediate government response to the campaign was to establish a fact finding committee on the abduction of the Chibok girls, charged with providing information on how the abduction took place. The committee submitted its report on 20th June 2014 and concluded that 276 girls were abducted and 57 escaped and 219 are still missing.

Although not necessarily a direct outcome of the Bring Back Our Girls campaign, the Safe Schools Initiative (SSI) was launched at the World Economic Forum on Africa held in Abuja in May 2014 in response to the abduction the girls in Chibok and increased level of insecurity in educational institutions due to insurgency, particularly in Northern Nigeria. Supported by the United Nations Special Envoy on Education and Nigerian business leaders, the SSI "will invest an initial \$20 million aimed at creating safer learning environments in Nigeria. This includes reinforcing school

infrastructure such as building boundary walls, deploying armed guards, training staff as safety officers and implementing rapid-response systems". The SSI, which was launched with a US\$10 million private sector commitment and recently supported by the Nigerian government with another US\$10 million, will feature pilot projects involving six schools in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States.

I. Conclusion

As discussed earlier, leadership failings in Nigeria have been blamed for many failings, including the low living standards and the failure to achieve key socio-economic goals like the Vision 2010 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

However, as can be seen, citizen pressure in Nigeria is proving to be an effective mechanism, to check the actions and/or inactions of the Nigerian government and in some cases hold government accountable. Although, the January 2012 fuel subsidy protests and the current Bring Back Our Girls campaign may not have resulted in total adherence to citizens' demands, these events have and continue to show that citizens can set change in motion. They have also proven to be one of the effective methods of conveying the citizens' concerns to the government, given their associated economic costs and government desire to prevent economic losses. The opportunities presented by social media if complemented by offline activism may be able to propel the desired change that is needed in Nigeria, and ensure that policymakers understand that citizens' interest should be a priority and at the centre of policymaking.

The discourse on leadership will improve when citizens understand that they have an active and obligatory role to play in governance, not only during elections, but in the conduct of leadership, and it is the responsibility of the people to hold their leaders to account. Although, substantial changes may not occur overnight, an improvement in leadership may result when and if a critical mass of Nigerians comprehend the importance of citizen action.

As has been seen, the effects of citizen-led measures are mixed and many might not yield positive outcomes in the short to medium term. However, the rapid rate at which these movements arise demonstrates a positive trend in the development of Nigeria's democracy. The measures taken by citizens constitute the initial steps towards a more active and participatory democracy. By creating the foundation through which citizens can effectively critique, influence and drive discourse on the activities of the government, these citizen-led measures pave the way for bolder and stronger citizen engagement with the government.

In response, a more proactive governance style is beginning to develop. Some state governments are more open to critique and assessment of their activities. In February 2014, the Ekiti state government invited social media

activists to assess the infrastructural developments that had been made in the first tenure of the then governor. They were allowed to present any question or comment to the governor himself, irrespective of how controversial. These questions were answered without reservation and a report of the assessment by these social media activists was then posted online.

Although, citizen action in Nigeria cannot ultimately change the system from within, it influences the decisions government makes in certain occasions. It is less certain if the effects of these citizen actions have permanence to them. Permanent change might require citizen action from within the government; a goal that is notoriously difficult to attain due to the byzantine nature of the political system. Instituting critical change from within government has to be done from a level of high authority, and even then the scandal surrounding Nigeria's former Central Bank governor, who alleged financial impropriety at the highest level in March 2014 and was suspended as a result illustrates that opposition will still exist.

Finally, citizen engagement with the government in Nigeria must evolve from a constantly reactive one to a proactive approach- an approach that influences the decisions of government before they are made and one that spurs the government into making good decisions. That is the true essence of a democratic government: one where a synergy exists between the government and its citizens and citizen participation is a permanent feature of governance. In addition, citizen engagement in Nigeria has largely been a class-segmented affair made up of a middle-class majority. As a nation with a larger lower-class base, citizen-led engagement must extend to the majority of individuals. Citizen-led movements should aim to bolster the level of the masses inclusion through advocacy, education and enlightenment of the populace on their rights as Nigerian citizens. Closing the language and literacy barrier will also improve the rate at which information reaches the masses and will significantly improve the effectiveness of citizen action in Nigeria.

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