

- FOREWORD -

My career as a teacher of Economics, Consultant and Policy Advisor has served to strengthen my conviction as to the importance of timely, accurate and wide-ranging data. In its 7th May, 2020 edition, the Economist Magazine had written *“it is hard to help the poor if you don't count them”*. Obvious as this statement by the Economist is, the political economy of data cannot be ignored. Indeed, I contend that the political economy of data explains why, more than six decades after independence, we have only estimates of Nigeria's population. Yet we expect to make progress!

The absence of credible, relevant, timely data enables the creation of 'alternative realities'. These alternative realities, inaccurate as they tend to be, then become the basis for policy errors with consequences that, at the very least, hinder progress. Beyond collection, meaningful analysis of data becomes the next hurdle to be surmounted. Too often have I been involved in or observed discussions that show participants either have no sense of what the data is nor have they bothered to undertake proper analysis to arrive at meaningful insights. It is important to state that I am not unmindful that data and analysis thereof can be subjective. For me, this is no problem if the data collector and analyst are fair-minded enough to make their perspective/assumption(s) to users.

Data and its analysis represent light provided by information and knowledge, without which no meaningful development can be achieved. Therefore, any country which does not encourage adequate and continuous investment in data collection, compilation, storage and analysis in a manner that enables policymakers – public or private - to make sense of them will perforce deny itself development and growth.

“Nigeria in Figures – A Socio-Economic Databook” is a timely contribution to finding a solution to the challenge of analysis. The book provides - in the form of charts, graphs, and figures - an extensive picture of Nigeria's Fourth Republic from its inception in 1999. The book is a prototype with essential features to serve as a compendium as well as a companion to Researchers, Policy Advocates as well as Policymakers in their quest to achieve their goals. Moreover, it provides information and insights that will aid the provision of answers relevant to our socio-economic questions.

The scope of this work is to be commended very highly. Data used is taken from the best and most reliable sources. The range of data coverage spans the sub-national tier at one end to the global level at the other. This gives needed confidence in terms of quality. Being an effort of a private establishment is also worth commendable in that it further buttresses the commitment of the private sector to expend resources, on not only creating private goods but also those that are public in nature.

As I commend Dr. 'Folabi Olowookere - with whom I have worked for more than a decade - for the effort and resources which have been committed to the production of this book, I hope it provides inspiration for others to venture into this area of work. I therefore recommend and present “Nigeria in Figures – A Socio-Economic Databook” without any reservation.



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