

Toward Agenda 2030: Integrating Nigeria's Social Interventions and Economic Plans within an Integrative Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework

**Bassey Ekpenyong
Anam**

*Institute of Public Policy &
Administration,
University of Calabar, Calabar*

Article DOI:
10.48028/iiprds/ijsrhlir.v8.i1.15

Keywords:

Agenda 2030,
Nigeria's Social
Interventions,
Economic Plans,
Integrative Social
Development and
Sustainability
(ISODS) Framework

Corresponding Author:
Bassey Ekpenyong Anam

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-9762-6816

Abstract

This study investigates the intersection of Nigeria's social intervention strategies and national economic plans in the pursuit of the United Nations Agenda 2030, proposing an Integrative Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework developed by Bassey Anam (2024) as a holistic response to the country's development challenges. Tracing the evolution of social interventions from pre-independence to contemporary times, the paper critically analyses how successive Nigerian governments have attempted to align social protection, poverty reduction, and inclusive development with broader economic visions. Through qualitative thematic analysis of major policy instruments—including the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the Seven-Point Agenda, the Transformation Agenda, the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), and the National Development Plan (2021–2025)—the study reveals that although social objectives are frequently embedded in economic plans, implementation remains fragmented, under-resourced, and weakened by institutional and political inconsistencies. These gaps underscore the need for a more integrated policy architecture. The ISODS Framework is presented as a strategic model to harmonise social and economic policy efforts, enhance inter-sectoral coordination, and promote sustainability in national development planning. The paper concludes that realising Agenda 2030 in Nigeria requires a paradigm shift from parallel policy approaches to a unified framework that embeds social development within the core of economic planning and governance systems.

Background of the Study

Nigeria's trajectory in social intervention strategies, initially rooted in communal support systems and now expanded through state-led programmes, reflects a sustained – albeit uneven – effort to enhance citizen welfare. These efforts run parallel to the evolution of national economic plans, which aim to stimulate growth, reduce poverty, and build resilience across various sectors. Together, these two pillars of development policy – social and economic – constitute the foundation of Nigeria's endeavour to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the United Nations' Agenda 2030. The 2030 Agenda, adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, outlines 17 interconnected SDGs and 169 targets. It represents a global call to action to end poverty, safeguard the planet, and promote prosperity for all. Centred on five core pillars – People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership – the Agenda seeks to transform systems of governance, economics, and human development. For a country such as Nigeria, aligning national strategies with this vision necessitates both inclusive economic policies and institutionalised systems of social protection.

Since gaining independence in 1960, successive Nigerian governments have consistently identified poverty eradication as a principal policy objective, second only to the protection of lives and property (Onyishi & Collins, 2019). This framing positions poverty alleviation not merely as a policy preference but as a fundamental obligation of the Nigerian state. This commitment has significantly influenced national economic planning, including frameworks such as the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the Seven Point Agenda, the Transformation Agenda, the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), and the National Development Plan (NDP 2021–2025). These plans have attempted to incorporate social concerns within broader economic visions; however, implementation gaps and fragmented programming have often undermined their efficacy.

The National Social Protection Policy (2020) articulates Nigeria's strategic vision for social protection, outlining key programmes, institutional responsibilities, and mechanisms for implementation. Yet, despite the existence of this policy framework, many interventions remain ad hoc or heavily reliant on donor support, rather than being firmly embedded within a sustainable national strategy. Consequently, many social programmes function more as short-term palliatives than as transformative instruments of structural change.

This paper explores Nigeria's social intervention strategies from their pre-independence origins to contemporary state-led programmes. It evaluates their objectives, modes of implementation, and outcomes – particularly in the context of national economic planning and global development benchmarks. In conclusion, the paper proposes an Integrative Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework as a roadmap to guide Nigeria towards achieving the targets of Agenda 2030 through coordinated, institutionalised, and long-term strategies.

Objectives of the Study

This study primarily aims to analyse the alignment and integration of Nigeria's social intervention strategies with national economic plans in the context of achieving the United Nations Agenda 2030. It also seeks to propose an Integrative Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework that addresses systemic policy and implementation gaps in Nigeria's development landscape.

Specifically, the study will:

1. Trace the historical evolution of social intervention strategies in Nigeria, from the pre-independence era to the present, highlighting key shifts and policy transformations.
2. Examine the extent to which national economic plans incorporate social protection and welfare objectives within broader economic development agendas.
3. Assess the degree of alignment between Nigeria's social intervention programmes and economic strategies with the principles and targets of Agenda 2030.
4. Identify critical challenges, policy gaps, and institutional weaknesses that hinder effective implementation of social protection and economic development initiatives.
5. Propose a strategic policy roadmap—articulated as the Integrative Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework—to enhance the coherence, inclusivity, and sustainability of Nigeria's development planning in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design aimed at exploring the intersection between Nigeria's social intervention strategies and national economic development plans within the broader goal of achieving the United Nations Agenda 2030. The qualitative approach enables an in-depth examination of policy intentions, implementation patterns, and systemic gaps through interpretive and thematic analysis of relevant documents and narratives.

Data were drawn from secondary sources, including:

- a) Official policy documents (e.g., National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the Seven Point Agenda, Transformation Agenda, Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), National Development Plan 2021–2025)
- b) Reports from federal ministries and agencies such as the National Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, and National Social Investment Office
- c) United Nations development reports and Agenda 2030 documentation
- d) Academic journal articles, institutional publications, and expert commentaries as well as international development partners' reports (e.g., World Bank, UNDP)

The data collection process involved systematic retrieval and review of textual materials published between 1960 and 2025. The selection of documents was based on relevance to social interventions, poverty alleviation, economic planning, and sustainable development. Emphasis was placed on policies that explicitly addressed social welfare, protection, and economic inclusion.

The collected data were analysed using thematic content analysis. This involved coding, categorising, and interpreting recurrent themes, patterns, and contradictions within the documents. Key themes that guided the analysis included:

- a) Policy framing, funding and discourse on social development
- b) Institutional coherence and inter-sectoral coordination
- c) Monitoring, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms
- d) Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Conceptual Clarifications

Social Protection

Social protection is increasingly recognised both as a fundamental human right and as a critical policy tool for achieving sustainable development. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), social protection encompasses policies and programmes designed to prevent and alleviate poverty, mitigate social risks, and reduce economic vulnerability throughout the lifecycle. It includes provisions for income security in cases of unemployment, old age, illness, or disability, as well as access to healthcare and family-related benefits. The ILO also emphasises social protection as a core responsibility of the state, advocating for the establishment of a *Social Protection Floor* that guarantees all citizens a minimum standard of well-being, dignity, and security. In this context, social protection becomes essential for advancing health, education, productivity, and inclusive growth – key prerequisites for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Social Intervention

Scholars such as Ojeomogha and Timiyan (2022) define social intervention as a set of intentional programmes aimed at enhancing the well-being of individuals and communities across economic, physical, and socio-emotional dimensions. These interventions include both public and private mechanisms for delivering income transfers, social services, and legal protections for marginalised groups. Social interventions serve as foundational pillars for long-term social development and equity.

National Economic Plans

Nigeria's national economic plans are comprehensive, medium- to long-term frameworks developed by the government to direct the country's overall economic and social development. These strategic blueprints articulate national visions, missions, and specific objectives to achieve sustainable, inclusive progress (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2021). Such plans typically set national goals, address key developmental challenges, prioritise strategic sectors, guide investment and resource allocation, and align domestic policies with global agendas (Economic Recovery and

Growth Plan – The State House, Abuja, n.d.). Notable examples include:

- a. *National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS)* (2004–2007)
- b. *The Seven Point Agenda* (2007)
- c. *The Transformation Agenda* (2011–2015)
- d. *Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP)* (2017–2020)
- e. *National Development Plan (NDP)* (2021–2025)

Agenda 2030

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a transformative global framework adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015. It provides a shared vision of peace and prosperity for people and the planet. At the heart of the Agenda are 17 interlinked Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets that call for urgent, inclusive action through global partnership. Building on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Agenda 2030 aims to realise human rights, achieve gender equality, and empower all women and girls, while balancing economic, social, and environmental priorities (Sorooshian, 2024). Key SDGs relevant to Nigeria's social intervention efforts include:

Goal 1: No Poverty

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being

Goal 4: Quality Education

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities (Oweibia et al., 2024)

Social Intervention Strategies in Nigeria

Pre-Colonial Communal Welfare Systems

The origins of social intervention in Nigeria are rooted in traditional communal structures and cultural values, long before the introduction of formalised welfare systems. Pre-colonial Nigerian societies maintained robust, informal social welfare mechanisms deeply embedded in local customs and religious traditions (Mbah, Ebue and Ugwu, 2017). These indigenous systems ensured care for the vulnerable—including children, the elderly, the ill, and the disabled. Issues such as child abandonment and single parenting were rare, owing to the communal nature of care and collective responsibility.

The family unit functioned as the core welfare institution, with elders and community leaders playing vital roles in conflict resolution and decision-making. Beyond social care, these familial systems also administered economic, political, and cultural affairs, ensuring social cohesion and continuity (Mbah, Ebue and Ugwu, 2017; Irele, 2011). Collective living and mutual aid were central to community resilience. Age-grade systems regulated youth behaviour, while festivals contributed to emotional well-being and social integration (Ramsey-Soroghay, 2021). Community self-help was also widespread, involving voluntary labour for tasks such as sanitation, construction of roads, homes, and markets—reflecting a high degree of self-reliance and solidarity.

Missionary and Early Philanthropic Efforts (1842-1943)

The introduction of formal social welfare in Nigeria began with Christian missionary activities between 1842 and 1900. Missionaries established schools and health centres, provided medicines, and launched child and maternal welfare initiatives. While many of these efforts had humanitarian intentions, they also functioned as platforms for religious conversion (Irele, 2011). The Salvation Army played a pioneering role by founding *The Boys' Industrial Home* in Lagos in 1925, which offered hostel accommodation and reformatory education for juveniles deemed delinquent. Alongside missionary work, local philanthropic efforts emerged. Notably, Mrs Obasa established an orphanage for girls in 1956, later formalised as an approved school (Irele, 2011).

Following World War II, humanitarian activities intensified, especially in response to the plight of war-affected street children. Organisations such as *The Colony Welfare Services* and *The Green Triangle Club* were established by concerned Nigerians. The latter provided community-based services and shelter for destitute children. During this period, religious organisations rather than individuals were the primary drivers of voluntary social welfare efforts.

Colonial Administration's Early Welfare Services (Post-1943)

British colonisation, which began in 1884, weakened traditional welfare structures and inadvertently introduced new social challenges (Mbah, Ebue and Ugwu, 2017). Industrialisation and urbanisation led to family disintegration, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, and destitution—problems which necessitated state intervention. The British government's earliest formal welfare legislation, the *Guardianship of Infants Act*, was introduced in 1886. The first reformatory school was established in Enugu in 1932 for delinquent children, operating within the prison system. In 1943, Mr D. Faulkner, a British expatriate, was tasked with establishing preventive and curative social services, particularly to address juvenile delinquency (Irele, 2011).

That same year, the *Colony Welfare Service* was launched in Lagos. Originally focused on marital issues, its scope expanded to cover prostitution and youth delinquency. From Lagos, social welfare initiatives spread to other regions—Western, Eastern, and Northern Nigeria. These early programmes were located within the Social Development Division of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and were initially staffed by untrained personnel. Later, they were moved to the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (Irele, 2011). Post-1948, the concept of social welfare broadened into "fundamental education" or "community development", encompassing agriculture, health, transport, and infrastructure. While missionaries provided essential services, their work often supported colonial agendas, using healthcare, education, and food as incentives to pacify the population (Ramsey-Soroghay, 2021).

Reflection on the Transition to Formal Interventions

The transition from informal, community-based systems to institutionalised welfare models was directly driven by the societal disruptions of colonisation and modernisation.

While pre-colonial Nigeria had effective informal welfare systems, the arrival of Islam, Christianity, and particularly British colonialism led to the breakdown of these structures. Industrialisation and urbanisation intensified these shifts, leading to increased social instability.

The establishment of formal welfare institutions, such as orphanages and reformation schools, was thus a reactive response to the consequences of these transformations. Although these initiatives had humanitarian aspects, they also served as tools of control. Missionary activities, for instance, helped maintain colonial order by providing material incentives like food and healthcare in exchange for compliance (Irele, 2011). Similarly, government-run reformation schools were often integrated into the penal system. This duality highlights the complexity of Nigeria's social welfare history: while formal interventions were needed to address new social issues, they also reflected the controlling interests of colonial powers. These early patterns have had lasting effects, potentially shaping the top-down, state-centric approach to social intervention that characterises post-independence Nigeria.

Post-Independence Social Intervention Strategies: A Chronological Analysis

Since gaining independence, Nigeria's social intervention strategies have continued to evolve, influenced by domestic political developments, economic transformations, and international development frameworks. This section offers a chronological analysis of major programmes and their outcomes.

Table 1: Evolution of Key Social Intervention Programs in Nigeria (Pre-Independence to Present)

Era	Program Name	Key Objectives	Examples/Activities	Noteworthy Outcomes/Challenges
Pre-Independence	Traditional Communal Welfare Systems	Ensure comprehensive care for all members, maintain social stability, collective action for development.	Family care for sick/elderly, age-grade systems, community self-help for infrastructure.	Highly effective, but weakened by colonialism and urbanization
	Salvation Army (1925)	Provide formal social welfare, care for juveniles.	"The Boys Industrial Home" in Lagos, reformatory schools.	Pioneer of formal social welfare.
	Colony Welfare Service (1943)	Address social problems arising from urbanization and WWII.	Handled marital problems, prostitution, and juvenile delinquency.	Expanded scope in Lagos, early government intervention.
	Green Triangle Club	Community service for destitute children.	Built hostels, provided accommodation.	Impressive public support.
1960s-1970s	Biafra Development Corporation (BDC) & Land Army (1967-1970)	Ensure food security during Civil War.	Convert forest land for food crops, mobilize youth for food production.	Faced financial constraints, lack of inputs, logistic problems.
	Operation Feed the Nation (OFN, 1976)	Achieve self-sufficiency in food production, reduce food imports, and promote farming.	Encouraged farming by all Nigerians, agricultural education, tools, fertilizers.	Collapsed due to administrative issues, corruption, poor targeting
	Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs, 1974)	Increase agricultural production and processing.	Production of maize, cassava, horticultural crops.	Benefits often accrued to the rich, excluding the poor.
1980s-1990s	Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI, 1986)	Provide rural infrastructure, reduce absolute poverty.	Rural roads, water supply, electricity, agricultural productivity.	Overextended scope, no remarkable impact due to poor finances, apathy.
	People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN, 1989)	Extend credit to the poor, address relative poverty.	Soft loans, micro-credits to underprivileged.	Initial progress but not sustained; low recovery, loan diversion, poor supervision.
	National Directorate of Employment (NDE, 1987)	Employment generation.	Vocational skills, public works, small-scale enterprises, agriculture employment.	Existed since 1987.
	Community Action Programme for Poverty Alleviation (CAPPA, 1996)	Community-based poverty reduction.	Aimed for poor people's involvement in project design/management.	Embraced by agencies, but overall poverty remained high.
2000s-Present	National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP, 2001)	Eradicate poverty.	Youth Empowerment, Rural Infrastructure, Social Welfare, Natural Resources.	Minimal results, assisted fraction of poor, inadequate funding, politicization, corruption.
	Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P, 2012)	Cushion subsidy removal effects, invest funds in development projects.	Social Safety Net, infrastructure (roads, rail), agriculture, power, ICT.	Significant impacts in unemployment reduction, road infrastructure; faced revenue fall, need for streamlining.
	National Social Investment Programmes (NSIPs, 2016 onwards)	Reduce poverty, create jobs, and improve lives.	Home-Grown School Feeding, Conditional Cash Transfers, N-Power, Trader-Moni.	Performance described as "disastrous" by some; inadequate provisions, corruption, partisan selection.
	Home-Grown School Feeding Program (NHGSFP)	Enhance educational outcomes, nutrition, and food security.	Meals for primary school students using local produce.	Increased enrolment/retention, but challenges with funding, meal quality
	Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT)	Provide cash to the poor, promote health-seeking behaviour	Cash transfers to pregnant women for MNCH services.	Increased ANC visits, tetanus doses, positively impacted food security
	N-Power Volunteer Plan	Address youth unemployment, provide skills.	Skills acquisition, development, linking to public services.	Significant in skill development/employment, but faced irregular payment, corruption.
	Trader-Moni Scheme	Provide interest-free loans to petty traders/artisans	Initial ₦ 10,000 loans, increasing upon repayment.	Insignificant impact on poverty alleviation, criticized as political inducement
	National Social Protection Policy	National Social Protection Policy	Framework for poverty reduction, human capital, sustainable livelihoods.	Aims to improve lives, but overall GDP spend on social protection is low.
	National Social Registry (NSR)	Official registry for social assistance.	Identify and register vulnerable households, interoperability with humanitarian aid.	Aims for better targeting and coordination.

Source: Author's survey, 2024

1960s–1970s: Nation-Building and Crisis Response

Nigeria's attainment of political independence in 1960 was swiftly followed by a tense political climate, in which poverty emerged as a significant national concern. Initially, the government's attention to healthcare and social amenities was insufficient, resulting in a regression wherein citizens often had to rely on traditional systems for welfare (Mbah, Ebue & Ugwu, 2017). The fragility of the nascent nation was severely tested by the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), which unleashed a torrent of social problems, including widespread malnutrition and starvation, particularly in the Biafran region (Mbah, Ebue & Ugwu, 2017).

In response to escalating social needs, the Nigerian government enacted the Social Development Decree in 1974, which subsequently led to the establishment of the Ministry of Social Development, Youth, Sports, and Culture in 1975 (Mbah, Ebue & Ugwu, 2017). In the agricultural sector – which was the primary source of state revenue and income for the majority of the population – policy was indigenised and regionalised in the 1960s (Korieh, 2018). The Eastern Region, for instance, regarded agriculture as the most crucial path to economic development and improved welfare, leading to the introduction of large-scale state plantations and farm settlements from 1960 onwards (Korieh, 2018). However, the Civil War necessitated a fundamental shift in agricultural policy, from export production to an urgent focus on food crop production for the survival of the population and the army. Initiatives such as the Biafra Development Corporation (BDC) and the Biafra Land Army Food Programme were launched to coordinate food production and convert virgin forest into cultivable land (Korieh, 2018).

During the 1970s, the burgeoning petroleum industry transformed the Nigerian economy, leading to a substantial increase in oil revenue. This growth was accompanied by stagnation in the agrarian economy, as government interest in agriculture waned in favour of the more lucrative oil sector. The result was reduced agricultural productivity and increased reliance on imported foodstuffs (Korieh, 2018). In an attempt to reverse this trend, the federal government intervened with programmes such as Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), launched in 1976 by the Obasanjo administration (Helen, Ezor, Bassey & Akwugioke, 2023). OFN aimed to mobilise the country towards self-sufficiency in food production, encouraging all Nigerians – from rural farmers to urban dwellers – to engage in farming. Its objectives included reducing food imports, promoting farming, creating employment, and making food affordable. While OFN did raise agricultural awareness and contributed to some reduction in food imports, it ultimately collapsed due to administrative and logistical issues, including delayed fertiliser distribution, inadequate storage facilities, corruption, and, critically, a failure to effectively target peasant farmers, who formed the backbone of agricultural production (Korieh, 2018).

Another notable initiative was the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs), which commenced in 1974. These were federally funded but state-implemented programmes tasked with agricultural production and processing. Although some ADPs were designed to support small-scale farmers, critics observed that the benefits often

accrued to wealthier individuals, marginalising the poor from access to productive resources (Korieh, 2018). The government's "quick fix" mentality and interventionist strategies often yielded counterproductive outcomes, failing to provide sufficient incentives or support for the widespread adoption of improved agricultural techniques (Korieh, 2018). The period from the 1960s to the 1970s vividly illustrates a critical paradox: that of "growth" versus "development", and the limitations of top-down approaches. The Civil War directly influenced policy, redirecting agricultural focus towards food security, and demonstrating how national crises can realign policy priorities (Korieh, 2018). However, despite the oil boom bringing significant economic growth, this did not translate into broad-based social development or food security. Programmes such as OFN and the ADPs, despite their laudable aims, largely failed due to logistical and administrative deficiencies, corruption, and poor targeting of the rural poor. This reveals a deep disconnect between macroeconomic progress and grassroots social welfare. Without inclusive planning, effective implementation mechanisms, and systems to counter corruption and reflect local realities, well-intentioned social interventions—especially in vital sectors such as agriculture—are unlikely to deliver sustainable development. This era thus foreshadowed the recurrent challenges of later decades.

Nigeria's Economic Vision and Policy Statements: A Review of Social Dimensions

Nigeria's post-independence economic planning has consistently integrated social development objectives, reflecting a recognition that economic growth must be inclusive to be meaningful. This section reviews key national economic vision and policy statements, highlighting their social dimensions.

Table 2: National Economic Plans and their Social Development Dimensions

Plan Name	Period	Overarching Vision/Goals	Explicit Social/Poverty Reduction Objectives	Key Linkages to Social Interventions
National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS)	2004-2007	Mobilize resources to break from past failures, bequeath a united and prosperous nation, position for inclusive development.	Sustainable poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation, value reorientation. Ensure access to water, sanitation, nutrition, education, health. Aimed for 5% annual poverty decrease.	Emphasized government's critical role in tackling poverty; direct link to social service delivery (Aderemi, 2013).
The Seven Point Agenda	2007	Transform Nigeria by accelerating economic growth, position among top 20 economies by 2020.	Food security (sustainable access, availability, affordability of quality food), human capital development (education, health).	Agricultural development and sustainable investment for food security; National Food Security Programme (NFSP) (Gadzama, 2013).
The Transformation Agenda	2011-2015	Reposition economy, address development flaws (lack of long-term perspective, continuity), diversify from oil, position among top 20 economies by 2020.	Job creation, addressing poverty, unemployment, insecurity. Youth employment safety net support (CCT, vocational training), improved education, health.	Youth employment safety net support, industrial clusters, curriculum review, local content policies, National Strategic Health Development Plan (Nwapi, 2024).
Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP)	2017-2020	Restore economic growth after recession, tackle corruption, improve security, rebuild economy. Aligned with UN SDGs.	Investing in people, agricultural transformation and food security. Aims to lift small farmers out of poverty. Aligns with SDGs on health, education, gender equality, water, employment, inequality.	Anchor Borrowers Programme, Growth Enhancement Support (GES), Commercial Agricultural Credit Scheme (CACS), NIRSAL (Ako, 2018).
National Development Plan (NDP 2021-2025)	2021-2025	Unlock Nigeria's potential for sustainable, holistic, inclusive development. Successor to ERGP, aligns with Nigeria Agenda 2050.	Lift 35 million people out of poverty, create 21 million full-time jobs by 2025. Enable a vibrant, educated, and healthy populace. Invest in social infrastructure to alleviate poverty and reduce unemployment. Minimize regional disparities.	Expanded poverty alleviation and social protection programs; focus on MSME growth, physical/digital infrastructure, good governance, human capital development (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2021).

National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS, 2004–2007)

The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) was formulated as a successor to the National Economic Direction (1999–2003), which had been criticised for its slow pace in implementing reforms, despite increased revenue from privatisation and rising oil prices. NEEDS was envisioned to “mobilise the resources of Nigeria to make a fundamental break with the failures of the past and bequeath a united and prosperous nation to generations to come” (Aderemi, 2013). Its social dimensions were explicit, concentrating on four core priorities: establishing a strong foundation for sustainable poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation, and value reorientation (Aderemi, 2013). The strategy targeted an ambitious annual 5% reduction in poverty from 2004 to 2007.

NEEDS also acknowledged the crucial role of government in addressing poverty, affirming its duty to guarantee every Nigerian's right to adequate water and sanitation, nutrition, clothing, shelter, basic education, and healthcare. One of its three foundational pillars was dedicated specifically to “empowering people and improving social service delivery” (World Bank, 2005). Despite these clear objectives, NEEDS did not deliver the intended outcomes, largely due to weak poverty statistics, especially concerning income poverty (Opinion, 2020).

The Seven Point Agenda (2007)

Introduced by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, the Seven Point Agenda aimed to transform Nigeria by accelerating economic growth and reforms, with the overarching objective of positioning the country among the world's 20 largest economies by the year 2020 (Gadzama, 2013). The agenda prioritised critical areas such as infrastructure, the Niger Delta, food security, human capital development, land tenure, national security, and wealth creation. Its social dimensions were notably reflected in "food security" and "human capital development" (Gadzama, 2013). Food security sought to ensure sustainable access to, availability and affordability of quality food for all Nigerians, while also positioning the country as a net food exporter. Human capital development implicitly encompassed education and health, although the agenda was criticised for failing to address healthcare explicitly. It faced additional criticism for its limited impact on electricity, education, roads, employment, and security. Some observers described it as "beating a drum without dancers" due to a perceived lack of widespread implementation and public response. Progress was further impeded by the untimely death of the president (Opinion, 2020).

The Transformation Agenda (2011–2015)

Implemented between 2011 and 2015 under President Goodluck Jonathan, and coordinated by the National Planning Commission, the Transformation Agenda drew inspiration from Vision 20:2020 and earlier National Implementation Plans (Nwapi, 2024). Its overarching vision was to address systemic weaknesses in Nigeria's development strategy, particularly the lack of long-term planning, continuity, consistency, and commitment to established policies. The agenda aimed to steer Nigeria towards becoming an industrialised, modern state and one of the top 20 global economies by 2020. A central objective was to diversify the economy away from oil dependence towards increased contributions from non-oil sectors (Nwapi, 2024). The agenda's social components were core to its mission, with a specific focus on job creation and addressing poverty, unemployment, and insecurity. Key policy initiatives included a youth employment safety net programme (featuring conditional cash transfers and vocational training), development of industrial clusters, revision of university curricula to reflect industry demands, and the promotion of apprenticeships and local content policies. Education and health were prioritised as critical for human capital development (Nwapi, 2024).

Despite its comprehensive framework, the agenda struggled with implementation. Successive administrations were often perceived as more adept at making promises than delivering results, and frequently lacked the political will to continue the initiatives of their predecessors (Nwapi, 2024). Corruption was identified as a significant obstacle, inflating business costs, squandering resources, and resulting in poor service delivery by institutions charged with implementing the agenda (Nwapi, 2024).

Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP, 2017–2020)

The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) was a medium-term strategy for 2017–2020, developed in response to the severe economic recession of 2016 (Ako, 2018).

According to Anam et al. (2024), “The President Muhammadu Buhari-led administration in Nigeria (2015–2023) recognised that the economy is likely to remain on a path of steady and steep decline if nothing is done to change the trajectory of declining economic growth.” Building on the 2016 Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP), which addressed corruption, security, and economic rebuilding, the ERGP was also aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The plan articulated three overarching strategic objectives: restoring growth, investing in people, and building a globally competitive economy (Ako, 2018). “Investing in people” was central, reflecting its social orientation. Agriculture was given the second highest priority, with a focus on transformation and food security, aiming to achieve self-sufficiency, particularly in rice production. Initiatives such as the Anchor Borrowers Programme were designed to lift smallholder farmers out of poverty (Ako, 2018).

The ERGP's alignment with the SDGs highlighted its commitment to goals related to health, education, gender equality, access to water and energy, decent work, reduced inequality, and peaceful societies. However, critics argued that the plan shifted its focus from smallholder farmers to large businesses—a move described as a “misplaced priority”, especially considering that smallholders account for roughly 80% of Nigeria's agricultural output and the sector employs about 60% of the population. There were also doubts about the novelty and efficacy of the ERGP's strategies, as similar programmes in the past had failed due to inadequate funding and poor supervision (Ako, 2018).

National Development Plan (NDP, 2021–2025)

The National Development Plan (NDP) 2021–2025 is a medium-term framework aimed at unlocking Nigeria's potential across all economic sectors to foster sustainable, holistic, and inclusive development (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2021). As the successor to the ERGP, it aligns with the broader Nigeria Agenda 2050. The plan sets ambitious targets: achieving an average economic growth rate of 4.6% by 2025, lifting 35 million people out of poverty, and creating 21 million full-time jobs (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2021).

The NDP is built around four strategic objectives, all with substantial social relevance: establishing a resilient and diversified economy; investing in key physical, digital, financial, scientific, and technological infrastructure; strengthening security and governance; and fostering a healthy, educated, and skilled population. Additionally, it identifies two key cross-cutting enablers. The first focuses on investing in social infrastructure and services to alleviate poverty, promote inclusive economic empowerment, and reduce unemployment—particularly targeting historically marginalised groups through expanded social protection programmes. The second seeks to promote equitable development across Nigeria's regions to minimise socio-economic disparities. A notable aspect of the NDP is its participatory development process, which involved the private sector, sub-national governments, and civil society—underscoring the importance of public-private partnerships in realising its objectives (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2021).

A consistent pattern across all these major economic blueprints—from NEEDS to the NDP 2021–2025—is the repeated emphasis on social welfare. Objectives such as poverty reduction, employment generation, human capital development, food security, and improved living standards are recurrent themes (Aderemi, 2013). This consistency reflects a clear policy-level recognition that economic growth, on its own, is insufficient for national development; growth must be inclusive and address Nigeria's pressing social issues. However, when juxtaposed with evaluations of specific social intervention programmes—which frequently highlight “minimal results”, “lack of synergy”, “poor coordination”, “corruption”, “politicisation”, and “lack of sustainability”—a significant implementation gap becomes apparent. This reveals a persistent challenge in Nigerian policymaking: while the articulation of ambitious and socially aware economic visions is commendable, the capacity for effective, sustained, and corruption-free implementation remains deficient. The issue is not one of awareness or intent, but rather systemic and structural weaknesses that hinder the realisation of these goals. Consequently, while these plans are well-designed on paper, their translation into tangible, broad-based social impacts remain a significant hurdle.

The Interplay: Social Intervention Strategies and National Economic Plans

The relationship between Nigeria's social intervention strategies and its national economic plans is marked by both conceptual alignment and significant practical disconnects. There is a clear and consistent congruence in the stated objectives of these strategies and plans, as both are fundamentally oriented towards national development.

1. **Poverty Reduction as a Core Nexus:** From early post-independence initiatives to contemporary frameworks, poverty alleviation has remained a central governance objective. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) explicitly targeted annual poverty reduction (Aderemi, 2013); the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) aimed to lift small-scale farmers out of poverty; and the National Development Plan (NDP) 2021–2025 sets an ambitious goal of lifting 35 million people out of poverty by 2025 (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2021). In tandem, social interventions such as NAPEP, SURE-P, and the National Social Investment Programmes (NSIPs) were explicitly designed to address poverty (Anyebe, 2014).
2. **Human Capital Development:** Nigeria's economic plans have consistently prioritised human capital development, as evidenced in the Seven Point Agenda, the Transformation Agenda, ERGP, and NDP 2021–2025 (Gadzama, 2013). Social interventions like N-Power contribute directly to this goal by focusing on youth skill acquisition and employment (Osimen, Etoroma, Pokubo & Adi, 2025), while the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme aims to enhance educational outcomes and improve child nutrition (Mustapha, Ndafatima & Kudu, 2025).
3. **Food Security and Agriculture:** Agricultural development and food security are prominent pillars of plans such as the Seven Point Agenda and ERGP (Gadzama, 2013). Interventions including Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Agricultural

Development Programmes (ADPs), and more recently, the Anchor Borrowers' Programme under the ERGP, have directly pursued these objectives (Korieh, 2018).

4. **Inclusive Growth and Protection of Vulnerable Groups:** Economic plans such as NEEDS and the NDP 2021–2025 explicitly incorporate goals of “inclusive development” and “inclusive growth” (Aderemi, 2013). Social intervention programmes target vulnerable populations, offering support through cash transfers and advancing the rights and status of marginalised groups.

The sustained inclusion of these social goals within Nigeria's broader economic plans reflects a deep-seated recognition that economic growth, in isolation, is insufficient for achieving comprehensive national development. This reveals an implicit social contract: successive governments acknowledge a core responsibility to promote the welfare of citizens as a critical element of national progress. The continuity of these objectives across political transitions points to a shared foundational understanding of development that transcends gross domestic product (GDP) metrics. Such alignment provides a solid theoretical foundation for social policy. Nonetheless, recurrent implementation failures — as previously examined — expose a disconnect between policy rhetoric and the everyday realities of Nigerian citizens.

Relationship Dynamics: Synergy, Gaps, and Disconnects

While the stated intent of both social intervention strategies and national economic plans exhibits synergy, the practical interaction between them is often defined by major gaps and persistent disconnects.

1. **Synergy in Intent:** Economic plans frequently provide the strategic architecture within which social interventions are expected to function. For instance, the Five-Point Agenda for agriculture under the broader Seven Point Agenda served as a practical roadmap for achieving food security (Gadzama, 2013). More recently, the NDP 2021–2025 explicitly prioritises “investment in social infrastructure and services to alleviate poverty” as a critical cross-cutting enabler — a clear integration of social policy into economic planning (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2021).
2. **Gaps and Disconnects in Implementation:**
 - a) **Absence of a Coherent Policy Framework:** A major recurring challenge is the lack of a unified national social safety net (SSN) policy, alongside inadequate coordination and frequent duplication among agencies and programmes (Obadan, 2001). This contradicts the multi-sectoral, integrated approach envisioned in strategic documents such as the NDP 2021–2025.
 - b) **Lack of Sustainability:** Many social intervention programmes are closely tied to the administration that initiated them, often ceasing upon a change in government (Nwapi, 2024). This undermines the long-term sustainability envisaged in strategic frameworks such as Vision 20:2020 and the Nigeria Agenda 2050.

- c) **Political Interference and Corruption:** Social programmes have frequently been politicised (Anyebe, 2014), with schemes like Trader-Moni criticised as politically motivated inducements for vote-buying (Osimen et al., 2025). Corruption continues to mar implementation efforts (Onuoha & Macalex-Achinulo, 2023), directly compromising the governance and accountability goals outlined in economic plans (Nwapi, 2024).
- d) **Weak Data Systems and Targeting Mechanisms:** Poor data infrastructure has consistently undermined the effectiveness of intervention programmes, resulting in limited coverage and casting doubt on whether they constitute genuine social protection or contribute to further social exclusion. This stands in contrast to the data-driven approaches advocated in newer plans such as the NDP 2021–2025.
- e) **Inadequate Funding:** Despite ambitious targets, financial allocations to social protection have remained insufficient. In 2021, Nigeria spent only 0.14% of its GDP on social protection – significantly below international benchmarks (World Bank, 2024).
- f) **Predominantly Top-Down Approaches:** While plans such as CAPPA and the NDP 2021–2025 emphasise participatory planning and community engagement (Obadan, 2001), many programmes are criticised for lacking genuine involvement from beneficiaries, resulting in overly centralised implementation (Korieh, 2018).

The repeated emergence of “poorly designed and uncoordinated” social interventions – bereft of a coherent policy framework and prone to discontinuation with political turnover – suggests that these efforts often function as temporary palliatives rather than as embedded pillars of national development strategy (Opinion, 2020). In contrast to the ambitious, multi-year goals articulated in economic plans, social interventions often lack the institutional continuity, fiscal commitment, and political independence required for sustained impact. This results in what may be described as a “palliative trap”: successive governments recycle similar programmes without institutional learning or structural reform, thereby undermining progress towards an enduring social protection system. Consequently, Nigeria's social interventions – despite their rhetorical alignment with economic development plans – frequently fail to drive meaningful transformation. This perpetuates systemic poverty and inequality and renders long-term development visions difficult to realise. It is therefore imperative to shift from fragmented, short-term initiatives to a genuinely institutionalised, coordinated, and politically insulated social policy framework that can meaningfully contribute to national economic transformation.

Persistent Systemic Challenges in Nigeria's Social Intervention Landscape
Despite numerous efforts to implement social intervention strategies, their overall effectiveness in Nigeria has been constrained by a consistent set of systemic challenges that have persisted across successive administrations and historical eras. A critical review of Nigeria's social intervention trajectory reveals a striking uniformity in the obstacles that have historically undermined the efficacy of such programmes.¹

Funding Constraints: A pervasive challenge has been the inadequate fiscal allocation to social intervention programmes. This is compounded by weak budgeting and expenditure management practices. For example, initiatives such as NAPEP were hampered by insufficient funding, thereby limiting their reach and overall impact (Oladimeji & Said, 2012). The meagre national expenditure on social protection—only 0.14% of GDP in 2021—exemplifies a systemic underinvestment, despite the country's pressing poverty levels (World Bank, 2022).

2. **Corruption and Mismanagement:** Corruption remains deeply entrenched, undermining programme effectiveness across different eras. This issue has been noted in various initiatives, including Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), NAPEP (Anyebe, 2014), the National Social Investment Programmes (NSIPs) (Onuoha & Macalex-Achinulo, 2023), N-Power, and Trader-Moni (Osimen, Etoroma, Pokubo, & Adi, 2025). Funds are often mismanaged, diverted, or used to siphon resources, rather than achieving their intended developmental goals.
3. **Political Interference and Politicisation:** Many social intervention programmes are heavily influenced by political agendas, resulting in short-lived initiatives that often end with the tenure of the initiating administration (Nwapi, 2024). Furthermore, partisan criteria have been applied in the selection of beneficiaries (Onuoha & Macalex-Achinulo, 2023), and some programmes—such as Trader-Moni—have been criticised for serving as tools of political inducement (Osimen, Etoroma, Pokubo, & Adi, 2025). Such politicisation erodes the independence and long-term developmental objectives of social policy (Oladimeji & Said, 2012).
4. **Coordination Failures and Duplication:** There is a long-standing lack of synergy among government agencies, with frequent duplication of functions and poor inter-agency coordination (Obadan, 2001). This fragmentation leads to inefficient resource use and a dilution of impact.
5. **Poor Targeting and Data Deficiencies:** In many cases, especially in earlier interventions, programmes failed to effectively target the poorest segments of the population (Obadan, 2001). The absence of comprehensive data systems for social protection has led to inadequate coverage, raising concerns about whether these initiatives provide genuine social protection or inadvertently promote social exclusion (Opinion, 2020).
6. **Lack of Sustainability Mechanisms:** The discontinuation of programmes following changes in political leadership reflects a lack of institutionalisation and long-term strategic planning (Obadan, 2001). This undermines institutional learning, capacity building, and the cumulative impact of interventions.
7. **Inadequate Programme Design and Lack of Beneficiary Involvement:** Many programmes have adopted a top-down approach, with little or no involvement from intended beneficiaries (Korieh, 2018). This often results in limited community ownership and weak commitment from participants, reducing the likelihood of success.

Achieving Agenda 2030

Nigeria's core economic frameworks—such as the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the Seven Point Agenda, the Transformation

Agenda, the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), and the National Development Plan (NDP 2021–2025) – repeatedly articulate goals that closely align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These frameworks prioritise poverty reduction, employment generation, human capital development (particularly education and healthcare), and food security – principles that mirror the essence of Agenda 2030. For instance, the NDP 2021–2025 aims to lift 35 million Nigerians out of poverty and create 21 million full-time jobs by 2025. This vision is consistent with the government's broader objective of lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty by 2030. Similarly, contemporary social intervention initiatives – such as the National Social Investment Programmes (NSIPs) – are structured to support the attainment of SDG-related outcomes.

Nevertheless, despite this strong conceptual alignment, a critical gap persists between policy formulation and implementation, which continues to undermine Nigeria's progress towards Agenda 2030. The relationship between Nigeria's social intervention strategies, economic plans, and the SDGs can best be described as one of aspirational synergy compromised by systemic practical disconnects. While economic plans provide an overarching developmental vision that integrates social policy, the social intervention strategies intended to operationalise these visions frequently fall short. These shortcomings stem from the entrenched challenges previously discussed and underscore the need for a fundamental shift in the structure and delivery of social policy.

An Integrative Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework: A Pathway Towards Agenda 2030

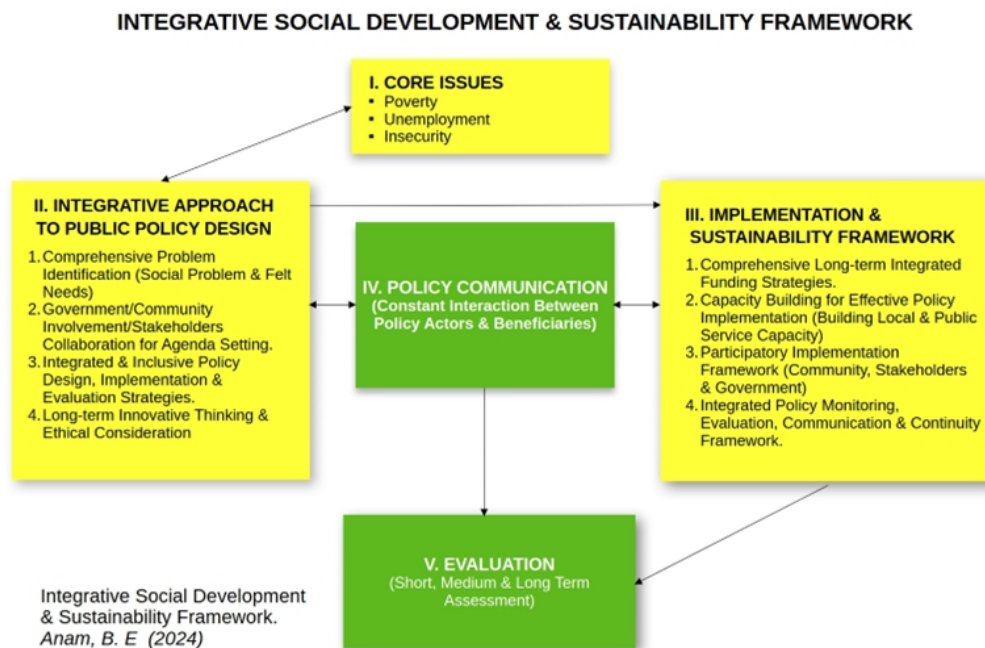
Nigeria's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presents a vital opportunity to realign its social policy framework with global development standards. The proposed **Integrative Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework**, developed by Bassey Anam (2024), offers a strategic, multi-dimensional approach aimed at addressing persistent implementation failures and delivering long-term, measurable outcomes. The ISODS Framework is specifically designed to tackle the systemic challenges that have long undermined Nigeria's social intervention efforts. Drawing on a historical analysis of past policy shortcomings and inspired by successful international models – such as Singapore's institutionalised long-term development planning – the framework seeks to close the gap between policy formulation and effective implementation by promoting:

- a) Stronger policy coherence and institutional coordination
- b) Greater political insulation and programme sustainability
- c) Enhanced beneficiary participation and ownership
- d) Robust data infrastructure for accurate targeting and rigorous evaluation
- e) Adequate and sustainable funding mechanisms

By aligning economic development plans with institutionalised, well-structured social interventions, the ISODS Framework provides Nigeria with a credible and adaptable pathway for achieving the SDGs by 2030. More importantly, it establishes the foundation

for a coherent, inclusive, and sustainable national development strategy—one that transcends political cycles and is committed to long-term societal wellbeing.

Image 1: The Integrative Social Development & Sustainability (ISODS) Framework (Anam, 2024)



This framework proposes five interconnected elements or components:

I. Core Issues: The Foundational Challenges

At the core of the ISODS Framework lie three interlinked foundational challenges: poverty, unemployment, and insecurity. The research confirms that these are deep-seated and systemic issues in Nigeria.

(a) Poverty:

The study underscores that poverty has been a major concern for Nigerian governance since independence, yet it remains critically high. Official statistics show a stark rise in poverty incidence—from 28.1% in 1980 to 46.3% in 1985. More recently, 133 million Nigerians were reported to be living in multidimensional poverty in 2022 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). This entrenched problem restricts access to basic needs and essential services, directly hindering progress on SDG 1 (No Poverty) and other related goals.

(b) Unemployment:

Particularly severe among youth, unemployment contributes to disenfranchisement and economic instability. Programmes such as N-Power were introduced to tackle youth

unemployment and provide skill development. Persistently high unemployment rates represent lost economic potential and entrench poverty, posing a significant challenge to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

(c) Insecurity:

Taking the form of terrorism, militancy, and widespread crime, insecurity disrupts livelihoods and constrains economic development. Both the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) and the National Development Plan (NDP 2021–2025) identify security as a critical priority for achieving national socio-economic goals. Insecurity fosters a volatile environment that undermines sustainable development and the successful delivery of social interventions, directly threatening SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

The ISODS Framework rightly recognises these issues as mutually reinforcing, creating a vicious cycle of socio-economic vulnerability. Any effective framework must address these core issues in an integrated and holistic manner, acknowledging their complex interrelationships.

II. Integrated Approach to Public Policy Design

This component addresses the long-standing shortcomings in Nigeria's policy design, which have often resulted in poorly conceived programmes and limited long-term impact.

(a) Comprehensive Problem Identification (Social Problem and Felt Needs):

Adopting a bottom-up development approach, this involves identifying the problem, setting clear goals, designing an evaluation plan, collecting and analysing data, and interpreting expected results. Research consistently points to the failure of previous interventions due to poor targeting mechanisms and the exclusion of beneficiaries in policy formulation. The bottom-up approach ensures that interventions are grounded in the "felt needs" of communities, rather than abstract theories. By prioritising grassroots-level insights, policies can more effectively address the multi-dimensional nature of household poverty and vulnerability. The emphasis on evaluation and data from the outset directly addresses the chronic issues of inadequate data systems and the absence of baseline information in past interventions such as NAPEP and other social safety nets. This data-driven orientation is vital for evidence-based policymaking, which is a cornerstone of Agenda 2030.

(b) Government/Community Involvement and Stakeholder Collaboration in Agenda Setting:

This entails a consultative and participatory approach to policy design. Historically, Nigeria's development strategies have been criticised for their top-down orientation, resulting in low levels of ownership and sustainability. Although the NDP 2021–2025 has taken steps towards inclusive planning by involving the private sector, sub-national governments, and civil society organisations, the ISODS Framework further insists on

embedding stakeholder participation in the agenda-setting phase. Co-creating priorities with communities fosters shared understanding, trust, and sustained commitment—central tenets of the "Partnerships for the Goals" pillar of Agenda 2030.

(c) Integrated and Inclusive Policy Design, Implementation, and Evaluation Strategies:

This addresses the need for tailored implementation strategies appropriate to each policy environment. A recurrent issue in Nigeria has been poor coordination and duplication of efforts among agencies and programmes. The Framework calls for social interventions to be embedded within wider economic and development plans, rather than existing as isolated efforts. It also acknowledges that a universal approach is ineffective; context-specific strategies that reflect local realities, cultural norms, and institutional capacities are essential. Such flexibility is critical in navigating Nigeria's complex socio-economic landscape and ensuring long-term success.

(d) Long-term Innovative Thinking and Ethical Consideration:

A significant barrier to development in Nigeria has been the lack of continuity, coherence, and adherence to established policies—often resulting in abrupt programme terminations with changing political leadership. The ISODS Framework advocates for long-term planning with decades-long horizons, similar to Singapore's development model (Lim, 2008). Moreover, embedding ethical considerations into the policy process addresses the persistent issues of corruption and mismanagement. Upholding ethics in governance promotes transparency, accountability, and optimal resource use—prerequisites for achieving SDG 16.

III. Implementation and Sustainability Framework (Interventions and Actions)

This segment serves as the operational engine of the ISODS Framework, responding directly to the enduring problems of inadequate funding, weak capacity, and discontinuity.

(a) Comprehensive Long-term Integrated Funding Strategies (Budgetary and Non-Budgetary Sources):

The research highlights that insufficient and inconsistent funding is a major hindrance, with Nigeria allocating only 0.14% of its GDP to social protection in 2021. The Framework proposes a shift from overreliance on unstable government budgets to diversified funding strategies that include corporate social responsibility initiatives, strategic loans, and international grants. Drawing from global best practices, such as Singapore's long-term infrastructure financing (Lim, 2008), this approach ensures more resilient and sustained financial support for Agenda 2030 goals.

(b) Capacity Building for Effective Policy Implementation (Public and Community-Level Capacity):

Past failures often stemmed from a shortage of qualified personnel and implementation problems. The ISODS Framework responds by advocating comprehensive capacity building, both within the civil service—through continuous training in project

management, data handling, and governance—and among community members. Empowering communities with relevant skills not only enhance their economic independence (linked to SDG 8) but also boosts their ability to sustain development efforts independently.

(c) Participatory Implementation Framework (Community, Stakeholder, and Government Collaboration):

Evidence suggests that the absence of beneficiary involvement and widespread rural apathy were major factors in the collapse of past programmes like DFRRI. The ISODS Framework champions a shared implementation model, where communities are actively involved in shaping and executing interventions. This shared responsibility fosters ownership, which is vital for programme longevity and community resilience, even beyond electoral cycles.

(d) Integrated Policy Monitoring, Evaluation, Communication, and Continuity Framework:

Weak monitoring and evaluation, a lack of impact assessments, and inconsistent follow-through have historically undermined policy success. The ISODS Framework recommends the creation of integrated systems for tracking progress, assessing outcomes, and feeding findings back into policy design. A "continuity framework" institutionalises successful programmes and protects them from being discontinued with political change. This learning-oriented model supports continuous improvement and is critical for meeting long-term Agenda 2030 targets.

IV. Policy Communication

Policy communication is a frequently overlooked yet vital component of development success. As noted in the research, initiatives like Trader-Moni were misinterpreted as tools for electoral inducement due to a lack of effective communication. The ISODS Framework posits communication as an ongoing process, embedded from the design phase through to implementation and evaluation. Communication must go beyond merely informing; it must engage, persuade, and solicit feedback. Effective communication across the short, medium, and long term can:

- a. Build trust and legitimacy by transparently conveying objectives, methods, and outcomes;
- b. Promote understanding and foster stakeholder engagement by clarifying the relevance and benefits of policies;
- c. Manage expectations by setting realistic goals and timelines;
- d. Enable feedback, facilitating adjustments and promoting responsiveness throughout the policy cycle.

V. Evaluation

The final pillar of the ISODS Framework—evaluation—is indispensable for accountability, learning, and continuous improvement.

(a) Defining Clear Objectives:

Policies must begin with specific, measurable goals—something many past Nigerian programmes lacked.

(b) Gathering Information on Impact:

Systematic data collection is essential to assess both intended and unintended effects, addressing the chronic issue of poor data infrastructure.

(c) Analysing Data and Drawing Conclusions:

Evaluation should reveal what works, what doesn't, and why—helping refine approaches for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

(d) Informing Future Policy Decisions:

Crucially, evaluation should inform future planning and avoid repeating past mistakes. A robust evaluation culture breaks the cycle of launching new programmes without learning from previous ones. It ensures that investments are well-targeted and adjusted over time to maximise impact, thus facilitating sustainable progress towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

The Relevance of the Integrative Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework in Achieving Agenda 2030 in Nigeria

The Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a global blueprint for ending poverty, reducing inequality, and ensuring sustainable development. For a country like Nigeria—marked by persistent poverty, institutional weaknesses, and development disparities—there is an urgent need for a robust, adaptive, and context-specific framework to realign national strategies with global development targets. The **Integrative Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework**, developed by Anam (2024), emerges as a relevant and transformative tool for achieving these goals, particularly within the complex socio-economic landscape of Nigeria.

1. **Addressing Institutional and Policy Fragmentation:** One of the key obstacles to Nigeria's progress on the SDGs is institutional fragmentation and a lack of policy coherence. The ISODS Framework promotes stronger inter-agency collaboration and integrated planning, ensuring that social protection policies are not executed in isolation but are aligned with broader economic and development strategies. This coherence is essential for achieving interconnected SDGs, such as SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality).
2. **Promoting Sustainable and Inclusive Development:** The ISODS Framework supports inclusive development by placing strong emphasis on beneficiary engagement, community participation, and ownership of programmes. This bottom-up approach ensures that interventions reflect the actual needs of the people, particularly the poor and marginalised. By aligning development with

- local realities, it addresses SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).
3. **Embedding Long-term Development Planning:** One of the failures of Nigeria's social protection strategies has been their short-term focus and political volatility. The ISODS Framework draws on the success of long-term institutional development models (such as Singapore's) to promote policy continuity beyond political cycles, thus enhancing programme sustainability and long-term impact—a key requirement for achieving Agenda 2030.
 4. **Ensuring Equity through Targeted Social Protection:** The framework proposes the development of a robust national social registry and evidence-based targeting mechanisms. This ensures that interventions reach the most vulnerable populations—such as rural dwellers, women, children, and people living in conflict-affected areas—thus directly supporting the achievement of SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), as well as closing regional development gaps.
 5. **Strengthening Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability:** ISODS introduces a structured approach to monitoring and evaluation, including the use of real-time data systems to measure progress and impact. This enhances transparency, improves public trust, and provides reliable feedback loops for policy reform—key components of SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).
 6. **Securing Sustainable Financing Mechanisms:** A major challenge in Nigeria's development efforts is the lack of adequate and consistent funding. The ISODS Framework advocates for innovative and diversified financing options, including public-private partnerships, development finance, and domestic revenue mobilisation. Such financial sustainability is critical for maintaining long-term interventions aligned with the SDGs.
 7. **Tackling the Structural Drivers of Poverty:** Most Nigerian interventions focus on symptoms rather than root causes. ISODS tackles structural barriers such as governance failure, inequality, and exclusion—issues that lie at the heart of persistent poverty. This structural focus directly supports SDG 1 (No Poverty) and provides a platform for sustainable development that is both socially and economically inclusive.

The Integrative Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework represents a paradigm shift in how Nigeria approaches development. By embedding coherence, inclusivity, sustainability, and accountability into national policy and programme design, ISODS offers a holistic strategy to not only meet but potentially exceed the targets of Agenda 2030. It is a timely and necessary innovation for a country seeking to escape the cycle of poverty and underdevelopment in a globally competitive world.

Conclusion

This study has critically examined Nigeria's social intervention landscape in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting the systemic challenges that

have hindered progress towards Agenda 2030. Central to these challenges are poverty, unemployment, and insecurity—interconnected issues that persist despite numerous policies and programmes. The Integrative Social Development and Sustainability (ISODS) Framework proposed in this paper provides a holistic, data-driven, and context-sensitive model designed to overcome the shortcomings of past interventions.

The ISODS Framework is built around five key pillars: Core Issues, Integrated Public Policy Design, Implementation and Sustainability Mechanisms, Policy Communication, and Evaluation. These elements are not only interrelated but also essential for a functional, inclusive, and forward-thinking approach to national development. Crucially, the framework recognises that without inclusive policymaking, sustainable funding, community participation, robust monitoring and evaluation systems, and effective communication, social interventions will continue to fall short of their transformative potential.

Nigeria stands at a critical juncture. With less than a decade remaining before the 2030 deadline, a paradigm shift is required—one that not only reforms existing systems but also reimagines social intervention as a collaborative, long-term investment in people and institutions. The ISODS Framework offers such a roadmap by embedding inclusivity, adaptability, ethical governance, and sustainability into every phase of the policy process.

Policy Recommendations

1. Adopt an Integrated National Framework for Social Development (ISODS):

The Nigerian government should institutionalise the ISODS Framework at federal, state, and local levels. This would ensure that social intervention programmes are holistically designed, inclusive, and aligned with Agenda 2030 and national development priorities.

2. Strengthen Grassroots Participation in Policy Design and Implementation:

Social interventions must be rooted in community needs through a bottom-up approach. This involves extensive stakeholder consultations, participatory agenda-setting, and co-creation of programmes to foster local ownership, legitimacy, and sustainability.

3. Ensure Sustainable and Diversified Funding Mechanisms:

Move beyond short-term, budget-dependent models by establishing long-term funding streams that include Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), international grants, strategic loans, and public-private partnerships. Institutionalise a social protection fund managed transparently and independently.

4. Enhance Public Sector and Community Capacity:

Regularly train public service personnel on project management, data analytics, ethical leadership, and impact evaluation. Simultaneously, invest in community-based skill development to empower local populations to become active partners in development.

5. Improve Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Systems (MEL):

Establish a centralised, transparent, and independent evaluation body with the mandate to track all social intervention initiatives. Develop baseline data systems, continuous impact assessments, and feedback loops to allow for adaptive policymaking.

6. Promote Policy Continuity and Ethical Governance:

Design interventions with long-term vision and cross-administration continuity. Embed ethical standards and anti-corruption measures at all stages of programme design and execution to rebuild trust in public institutions and development efforts.

7. Develop a National Policy Communication Strategy:

Craft and implement a communication plan that educates, persuades, and engages citizens throughout the policy cycle. Use clear, culturally relevant messaging to dispel misinformation, foster buy-in, and promote behavioural change aligned with SDG targets.

8. Align All Social Intervention Programmes with SDGs:

Conduct regular SDG impact audits of ongoing social intervention programmes. Restructure or phase out those that do not meaningfully contribute to poverty reduction, decent employment, gender equality, or institutional reform.

References

- Aderemi, T. (2013). An appraisal of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy I (NEEDS I) in Nigeria: The educational perspective. *Journal of Economics and Behavioural Studies*, 5(10), 718–729. <https://doi.org/10.22610/jebbs.v5i10.445>
- Ako, R. M. (2018). Economic Recovery and Growth Plan and agricultural development in Nigeria. *Operational Research in Management, Social Sciences & Education*, 4(1), 96–107.
- Anam, B. E. (2024). *Poverty, unemployment and insecurity nexus: Public policy options for social protection interventions in Nigeria by 2030* [Institutional lecture series]. Institute of Public Policy and Administration, University of Calabar, Nigeria.
- Anam, B. E., Ijim, U. A., Ironbar, V. E., Otu, A. P., Otu, D. O., & Eba, M. A. (2024). Economic recovery and growth plan, economic sustainability plan and national development plan (2021–2025): The Nigerian experience under President Muhammadu Buhari. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.XXXXX> (Note: Add correct DOI)
- Anyebe, A. A. (2014). Poverty reduction in Nigeria via National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP): Two decades of policy failure. *Journal of Social Science for Policy Implications*, 2(2), 19–35.

- Atakpa, O. E. (2024). The subsidy Re-investment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) as a palliative policy in Nigeria: An impact. *ResearchGate*. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.36128.35846>
- Baba-Ari, F., Eboreime, E. A., & Hossain, M. (2018). Conditional cash transfers for maternal health interventions: Factors influencing uptake in North Central Nigeria. *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*, 7(10), 934–942. <https://doi.org/10.15171/ijhpm.2018.56>
- Economic Recovery and Growth Plan – The Statehouse, Abuja. (n.d.). <https://statehouse.gov.ng/policy/economy/economic-recovery-and-growth-plan>
- Eluwa, T. F., Eluwa, G. I. E., Iorwa, A., Daini, B. O., Abdullahi, K., Balogun, M., ... Lawal, A. (2023). Impact of unconditional cash transfers on household livelihood outcomes in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Policy*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0047279423000533>
- Ezeh, D. C. (2023). *The impact of the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) on rural development administration in Nigeria: A case study of Enugu State, 1986–1993*. CODESRIA.
- Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning. (2021). *National Development Plan (NDP) 2021–2025*. https://nationalplanning.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/NDP-2021-2025_AA_FINAL_PRINTING.pdf
- Gadzama, I. U. (2013). Effects of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's 7-point agenda on agricultural development and food security in Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*, 9(32).
- Helen, D. C., Ezor, K. I., Bassey, P. E., & Akwugio, A. J. (2023). Social intervention programmes and rural development in Nigeria: A study of Federal Government's TraderMoni initiative in Cross River State. (Title needs source details – journal name or publisher)
- Irele, A. O. (2011). The evolution of social welfare and social work in Nigeria. *LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research*, 8(3).
- Isah, A. (2018). Evaluation of the effects of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) on the wellbeing of rural dwellers in Niger State. *Lapai Journal of Economics*, 2(2), 80–94.
- Korieh, C. J. (2018). The Nigeria-Biafra War, oil and the political economy of state-induced development strategy in Eastern Nigeria, 1967–1995. *Social Evolution & History*, 17(1), 76–107. <https://doi.org/10.30884/seh/2018.01.05>

- Lim, H. (2008). Infrastructure development in Singapore. In N. Kumar (Ed.), *International infrastructure development in East Asia: Towards balanced regional development and integration* (pp. 228–262). ERIA Research Project Report 2007-2, IDE-JETRO.
- Mbah, F., Ebue, M., & Ugwu, C. (2017). History of social work in Nigeria. In U. Okoye, N. Chukwu, & P. Agwu (Eds.), *Social work in Nigeria: Book of readings* (pp. 1–14). University of Nigeria Press Ltd.
- Mustapha, N. M. B., Ndafatima, N. A., & Kudu, N. H. (2025). An assessment of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) on the primary education. *International Journal of Educational Research and Library Science*, 7(8). <https://doi.org/10.70382/tijerls.v07i8.028>
- Nwapi, R. (2024). Transformation agenda and sustainable development in Nigeria: A study of Goodluck Jonathan administration, 2011–2015, *International Journal of African Research Sustainability Studies*.
- Obadan, M. I. (2001). Poverty reduction in Nigeria: The way forward, *Economic and Financial Review*, 39(4), 9.
- Ojeomogha, T. O., & Timiyan, J. (2022). Social intervention and socio-economic status of artisans: A prerequisite for sustainable development in Lagos State, *International Journal of Innovative Technology Integration in Education*, 6(2), 40–49.
- Oladimeji, L. A., & Said, H. U. (2012). Public service and poverty eradication in Nigeria: An assessment of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), 2001–2011. *Public Administration Research*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.5539/par.v1n1p94>
- Onuoha, P. C., & Macalex-Achinulo, E. C. (2023). National Social Investment Programme and poverty alleviation in Nigeria, 2016–2023. *South-South Journal of Humanities and International Studies*, 6(3), 215. <https://ssjhis.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/14.-National-Social-Investment-Programme-and-Poverty-Alleviation-in-Nigeria-2016-2023.pdf>
- Onyishi, A. O., & Collins, O. (2019). Social intervention programmes and rural development in Nigeria: A study of Federal Government's TraderMoni initiative. (Title needs journal or publisher info)
- Opinion. (2020, July 8). Thinking through Nigeria's social protection programmes, *Punch Newspapers*. <https://punchng.com/thinking-through-nigerias-social-protection-programmes/>

- Osimen, G. U., Etoroma, O. M., Pokubo, I., & Adi, I. (2025). N-Power program and youth empowerment in Nigeria, *Cogent Social Sciences*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2025.2466786>
- Oweibia, M., Elemuwa, U. G., Akpan, E., Daniel, E. T., Oruikor, G. J., Tarimobowei, E., & Babatunde, A. (2024). Analyzing Nigeria's journey towards Sustainable Development Goals: A comprehensive review from inception to present. *Qeios*. <https://doi.org/10.32388/8o5qeg>
- Ramsey-Soroghay, B. N. (2021). Community development in Nigeria: History, current strategies and its future as a social work method. *People Centred – The Journal of Development Administration*, 6(4), 133–141.
- Sorooshian, S. (2024). The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations: A comparative midterm research review, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 453, 142272. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2024.142272>
- Timothy, S., Hamis, D., & Joshua, R. (2024). Impact of Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) on poverty alleviation among youth in Gombe State, Nigeria, *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 8(2), 1421–1430. <https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2024.802099>
- World Bank. (2005). *Nigeria – National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy and joint IDA-IMF staff advisory note* (English). World Bank. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/234301468290438608>
- World Bank. (2022). *Social protection expenditure and budget management in Nigeria*.