

Global Economic Challenges: Trade Union Growth Implications In Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria attained independence in 1960 full of hopes and aspirations to transform into a modern nation-state. Towards this end, several development plans and projects were embarked upon to enable the realisation of an improved socio-economic status. The exploration of petroleum resources later provided the much-needed finance to grow the economy. However, by the 1980s, recession had crept in, leading to distortions in macro-economic policies and a short-fall in revenues accruing to the country. The consequences of these were low production output especially in the private sector as many organisations, as a safety valve, resorted to various aberrant practices such as casualisation, right-sizing and outright retrenchment of staff. The Nigerian government then introduced various reform measures which it believed would enhance the development process in the country. Notable among these reforms are privatisation, which was meant to reduce the role and size of the public sector and encourage the participation of members of the public in hitherto government-owned enterprises, and deregulation which envisaged a substantial pull-out by the State from its overbearing participation in the nation's economic activities. All these have far-reaching implications on labour relations in the country. This paper thus examines the world/Nigerian economy and concludes that it has impacted adversely on Trade Unions' ability to organise effectively.

Key Words: Nigeria, Economy, Reforms, Trade Unions, Growth

Introduction

Globalization has remained the talking point with regard to world socio-economic development. It has taken a controversial nature as it connotes different meanings to different people. To some, it represents an instrument for accelerated development while others believe it is another means of enslavement and re-colonisation. The paradigm represents the continuing efforts towards restructuring and integrating nation-states and economies. Viewed within the prism of an interdependent and integrated world economy, the under-developed economies, especially, are to be brought to the same competitive level with those of the developed world. The urge for rapid and enduring socio-economic development has taken many countries through many experiments and processes. Growing on the heels of the failed process of ‘development project’, globalization is a post-second world war construct designed to stabilize and rejuvenate the world capitalist economies of Europe and America. Orubuloye (2005) notes that it is the “capitalist enterprise envisioning the whole world as a unified system of the area and the peripheries with the latter aspiring to adopt the political economy of the former and with gradual internalisation of the Euro-American socio-political, economic and technological failures”. Hitherto under the ‘development project’, states, motivated by trade managed their economies. The state as a sovereign had sole authority to determine and regulate the direction of the economic, political and social development within its territory. It was thus seen as a catalyst for accelerated industrialization (McMicheal, 1996). The failure of this project however led to the search for an alternative for socio-economic development process now known as globalization. Grint (1998) views globalisation as the gradual connection between different societies while the UNDP (1999) describes it as the growing inter-dependence of the world’s people through shrinking space, shrinking time and disappearing borders.

In essence the process seeks to integrate all economic, political, cultural and technological structures around the globe. This means the abrogation of the sovereign authority of nation-states in the arrangement of developmental structures. It is seen as a response to the apparent inadequacies of independent states to handle many contemporary issues facing them. Consequently nation-states forfeited their sovereignty to the global players who now extend their businesses world-wide instead of limiting themselves to the protection of domestic market (Notz, 2004). Multinational Corporations (MNCs) and the Multinational Financial Institutions (MFIs) are the vehicles for the realisation of the world integration process, wherein they no longer depend on one factory and one workforce for production.

In spite of the avowed merits of globalization, opponents see it as an ideology designed to re-enact a dictatorial unipolarism whereby only the powerful nations can control its structures and subsequently monopolize its gains. Toyo (2000), believes that globalization simply means the assertion of economic hegemony by one nation over another from which this hegemon profits.

Because the inequitable effects of globalization based on markets and profits are touching all aspects of human life and the systemic nature of the process, most non-western countries have become vulnerable to the economic vagaries of the West. This has led to a slow-down of the world economy. This paper therefore examines contemporary world economy and concludes that it has adversary impact on the growth of trade unions in Nigeria.

Global Economic Environment

With the sovereign debt crisis, the declining GDP, low manufacturing output in Europe and growing US debt, it was apparent that the world economy was on a down-turn. This impacted on growth in the industrialised countries particularly the Euro Zone. According to Steinberg (2012), the European economy contracted due to years of austerity measures which pushed recession and depressing income and consumer spending across the continent. This led to the record sharpest deceleration of world trade from 13.3 percent advance in 2000 to just 0.2 percent in 2001 (The African Development Bank, 2002). The U.S. investment in equipment declined by 4.5 percent after growing by 11 percent in 2000, leading to the collapse of investment demand. Recent features of the European economy are (Steinberg, 2012):

- In the 4th quarter 2011, the economy contracted by 0.3%; Italy, Spain and Greece fell by 1.3%, 1%, 7%, respectively.
- The Bank of England asked the government to pump another €50 billion into the economy.
- Sweden, one of the most stable economies in Europe slashes its economic growth forecast for 2012.
- Private sector companies in Europe's biggest economies- Germany, France, reducing their workforce.
- German companies plan large-scale restructuring of their operations, involving new redundancies. Many have declared bankruptcy, as thousands of workers are sacked.
- Czech Republic slipped into recession.
- In France, Europeans second largest car maker Peugeot, announced plans to slash spending by 1 billion Euros to offset huge losses incurred in 2011.
- Official unemployment rate; Greece, 20%; Spain, 23% and Portugal, 14 %.
- Greece on the brink of bankruptcy.

This general decline has led to the destruction of the means of livelihood of millions of workers across Europe, creating unemployment levels not seen since the 1930s in some of these countries. Furthermore, Beams (2012) notes that the world economy was on the brink of another major slow down, as output growth slowed down considerably in 2011 and only an “anaemic growth in 2012 and 2013”

Elsewhere in the world, various other countries are experiencing economic recession albeit at different levels. The Indian economy is buffeted by mounting crisis as it is faced by a sharp decline in economic growth, falling domestic and foreign investment, a depreciating currency, large trade and current accounts deficits, huge stock markets losses and near double-digit inflation (Jayasekera and Kumara, 2012). Similarly, Japan's economy contracted in 4th quarter 2011 by an annualized 2.3 percent, leading to overall yearly contraction of 0.9 percentage and a first trade deficit in over 30 years (Watanbe, 2012). The spread of the economic and financial turmoil in Europe to other countries especially the developing ones and those hitherto thought to be immuned, practically means that the whole world was in recession. For the developing countries, it was a matter of time because of strong linkage of their economies to the Euro Zone and the US. The volatility of the international capital flows on the under-developed economies led to persistent inflation, rise in interest rate, lagging wages and falling consumer demand. They also experienced fall in investment, a decline in GDP as well as increasing unemployment to herald a period of recession. The value of EU-27 imports from Africa fell by 33 percent and EU-27 exports to Africa also declined by nearly 10 percent. The consumer prices in Africa increased by 25 percent between 2005 and 2008 and by 38 percent between 2005 and 2009 while the corresponding figures for the EU-27 were 9 percent and 10 percent, respectively. The adherence to the basic rules of the global system reduced their ability to implement internally cohesive macro-economic policies of their own. For Nigeria, the impact of the global recession was direct and hard (See Table i). As a player in the global market, she is at a competitive disadvantage being a largely mono-product economy with a weak currency, shrinking indigenous industrial space, mounting debt profile, corruption-infested political and economic climate (Iyoha, 1992; Aina, 2006).

Nigeria Economic Performance

With a population of over 160 million people Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa (NPC, 2011). Its vast land area is complemented with many natural resources, petroleum being the most prominent. Nigeria is the largest producer of crude oil in Africa and the seventh in the world with a proven oil reserves estimated at 36.2 billion barrels. Petroleum plays a very significant role in the economy by contributing 40 percent of the Gross Domestic Product(GDP) and 80 percent of government's total earnings. Oil revenue as a proportion of total federal revenue, increased from 26.3 percent in 1970 to 82.1 percent in 1974 and 81.4 percent in 1979. The foreign reserve also expanded from the 1960 base of US\$7146.5 million to US\$9,957.2 million in 1980 (Obadan, 1996). The expansion in crude oil production brought enormous earnings to the country and eased availability of money for developmental purpose. In recent times she has attained a middle income status, emerging as the 2nd largest economy in Africa (World Bank, 2011).

The country's natural gas deposit is also estimated at 174 trillion cubic feet (the equivalent of 30 billion barrels of oil) and is estimated to last for over 100 years at current rate of exploration (National Planning Commission, 2004). The country is also blessed with abundant agricultural resources and products such as cocoa, cassava, palm products, yam, groundnut and several others. Most of these are being exploited and are contributing substantially to the national economy; 26.8 percent of GDP and two-thirds of employment (Wikipedia, 2011).

The exploration of petroleum resources however meant a neglect of the agricultural sector, consequent upon which the country lost its prime position of a major exporter of many agricultural products, and now imports a large quantity of food products. The Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Adesina recently disclosed that Nigeria spends 1.3 trillion Naira yearly on food import (The Guardian, March 16, 2012, p.3). The emphasis on crude oil exploration which produced an oil boom and the consequent neglect of the agricultural sector brought some fundamental changes to the economy that impacted on production and consumption. Government became the prime mover in the economy as it was involved in virtually all sectors. Despite the huge inflow of external resources arising from enhanced crude oil sales, government also engaged in borrowing from both domestic and external sources to finance its budget deficits. By the early 1980s it had become obvious that the Nigerian economy was in a great crisis as it could not absorb the devastating shocks from the global economic environment which reflected in recession, declined capital flow, collapse in crude oil prices and increased protectionism by developed economies. The global economic crisis adversely affected the nation's revenue and led to large fiscal deficit, huge external current accounts deficits and rapid depletion of foreign reserves (Iyoha, 1992). Other manifestations of the economic crisis were recession, inflation, rising unemployment, abandoned projects, factory closure, acute shortage of essential commodities and high external debt burden.

Government's response was to initiate a demand management economic policy which resulted in the promulgation of the Economic Stabilisation Act (1982), the Austerity Programme of 1984, the National Economic Emergency measures of 1985 and the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986. The failure of these interventions led to the worsening of an already deplorable economic situation. This manifested in the economic and social lull making overall uncertainty more apparent. This also exacerbated the poverty situation with the population of Nigerians in poverty range increasing from 39.2 million in 1992 to 67.1 million in 1996 (FGN, 2000). Thus after over fifty years of independence and economic management, the Nigerian economy has suffered from fundamental structural defects and mismanagement. This has led to a weak production system and rise in the inadequate utilisation of the factors of production and attendant factory closures. A reform programme was introduced to revamp all sectors of the economy- tourism, minning and quarrying, banking and finance, agriculture, manufacturing and so on. It became obvious that under this new economic regime, the prime mover was the private sector. This have far-reaching implications for various sectors and areas of the economy , one of which is trade unionism.

Trade Unionism In Nigeria

Modern industrial relations in Nigeria started in 1912 with the formation of the Nigerian Civil Service Union. This marked the beginning of a rapid development of trade union activity in the country (Yesufu, 1984). Trade unions are organisations to which workers belong and which collectively dialogue with employers on behalf of the employees. They therefore emerged from the efforts of workers to see an improvement on existing working conditions through collective action (Schermerhorn, 1986; Visser, 1991; Kelly, 1998; Fajana, 2006). Thus their objectives devetail in improving the terms and conditions of employment of their members by the employer through the process of collective bargaining. As an organisation of workers, they come together to fight all forms of molestation, oppression and deprivation in order to fulfill their upper-most desires of:

- Protecting themselves (as workers), their families as well as the society,
- Exercising adequate control over their working conditions, and
- Bargaining over the power of demand and supply of their labour.

Trade unions are the combat organisations of the working class primarily built to advance and defend the interests of workers against their employers. They therefore have the capacity to disrupt production through their mass action as their *raison detre* as a pressure group, is the improvement of the working conditions of their members. Trade unions like other organisations within the larger social system, have a vital role to play towards launching the economy on a steady path to industrial growth and development.

The unions grew rapidly such that by the end of fiscal year 1970/1971 there were 751 unions registered in the country with a membership of 705,712 workers. This was about 3 percent of the labour force and about 58 percent of the wage-earning population (Fashoyin, 1981). By 1975/76, the number of unions had risen to 1170 and a membership of 881,198. The first central labour organisation- the Trade Union Congress (of Nigeria) (TUCN)- emerged in 1942 and was made up almost exclusively of public sector unions. Spurred by the growing economic crisis of post-second world war, the TUCN was organised to alleviate war-time social and economic problems. A major restructuring of the trade unions was done in 1978 which pruned down their number from more than 1000 to 70 unions as shown in Table ii. The structuring exercise also led to the formation of the Nigeria Labour Congress by government as the only labour centre. As of today there are two labour centres – Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUCN) as the year 2000 figure shows.

Since their formation, trade unions in Nigeria have contributed immensely towards the political and socio-economic development of the country. In addition to their traditional roles of improving the terms and conditions of employment of their members, they have also addressed some of the deep-rooted inequalities in the society.

As one of the largest and most influential special interest groups in the country, trade unions stood up for workers and the ordinary Nigerians especially during the various repressive military regimes. Much as government tried to suppress them by arresting their leaders and replacing them with government appointees and threats of proscription, labour stood its ground and this eventually helped contribute to the transition to democracy. As noted by Iyayi (2008) “the Labour contributed immensely to the resolution of major economic issues, development of appropriate national economic policies and prevention of more severe economic consequences for the country”.

Although generally regarded as a vehicle for resolving some fundamental issues (Briskin, 2000), trade unions have been challenged on several grounds. They are faced with poor leadership, internal squabbles, inadequate funds and their mismanagement, inactivity and insensitivity to members interests (Fashoyin, 1984). Trade unions are facing perhaps their greatest challenges as manifested in the globalization process and the enabling legislations and activities that accompany it. The main source of labour power has been the strike weapon. This weapon has been whittled down in recent period by the Nigerian State through inhibiting legislations (see Trade Disputes Act, 1976 and Trade Union (Amendment) Act, 2005, in Nigeria). This weapon has further been blunted by the new structure of production. This new structure engenders transnational corporations (TNCs) to no longer depend on one factory and one workforce for production. As noted by Sklair (1995), this new international division of labour has become more flexible such that capital migrate in search of cheap labour while preventing labour from holding capital to ransom through a strike action. This new problem has defeated labour as it has considerably reduced its power to organise locally.

The TNCs have been able to achieve this because they have become not accountable to government (Scholte, 1993). They decide where to deploy their capital for maximum profits and what forms of employment policy they prefer. Export Processing Zones (EPZs), are established for this purpose and union activities are prohibited. By this, the TNCs create an adaptable or flexible workforce so that they can respond quickly to change in market demands. Employees are therefore expected to accept job rotation and multi-skilling. Management is encouraged in this circumstance to overcome any form of worker’s resistance to technological changes perceived to pose a threat to job or to question management prerogative (Scholte, 1993). They regard strong trade unions and tough laws protecting workers from unemployment as obstacles. In pursuit of their desire to cheapen labour costs, TNCs have been found to relocate the more intensive aspects of their businesses to ‘safe’ labour enclaves with low wages and unorganised workers. For example Michellin Tyres Nigeria Ltd and Dunlop Nigeria PLC, relocated from Nigeria in 2007 and 2009, respectively, complaining of high cost of production (www.nairaland.com).

The stability of tenure of workers has therefore been questioned by the process of globalization as they can be more easily substituted for each other internationally. The TNCs also ensure that lower labour costs are attained by reducing the proportion of workers eligible for regular wage increase by virtue of their long period of service or who are qualified to enjoy say, pension, sickness and unemployment benefits. As this category of permanent employees shrink they are substituted with casualised workers made up of part-time, temporary and seasonal workers. Recently the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) picketed some organisations found engaging in casualisation of workers. The casualisation of the workforce has led to segmentation between a core of permanent workers and casualised majority. The latter do enjoy few, if any rights and are also exposed to the constant risk of unemployment. These organisations also subcontract more of their manufacturing processes to other specialised firms while others lease or outsource certain operations, transportation, for example, to small agencies. The urge and the surge of transnational corporations towards ever cheaper workforce and ever-larger profit margins have led to a corporation mobility in the past few decades that is unprecedented in history (Notz, 2004).

Generally, therefore, the globalization process has spawned several factors that have in turn adversely impacted on work itself, the worker, and collectivities within the workplace. For some, it has meant job losses, reduced hours of work, and increased work-load in the workforce. Situations such as casualisation of employment, part-time work, out-contracting, employing women to replace men but paid lower wages, non-payment of wages and non-remittance of check-off dues to trade unions are now the order of the day. Globalization as presently pursued, has the potential to permanently displace workers from the manufacturing and service sectors. The implications of this transformation, termed 'postmodernism' (Oechslin, 1997; Kelly, 1998) are:

- (i) A decline in trade union membership, density and influence across the capitalist world.
- (ii) Absolute or relative decline in numbers of male, manual, full-time individual workers and the use of female non-manual, part-time and service workers, leading to a long-term erosion of the traditional base of the labour movement.
- (iii) A decline in trade union movement as a unified political actor which seeks to represent the interests of more or less class conscious members alienated from society by relative deprivation and lack of skills.

Hence, worldwide, union membership is on the decline. This has been attributed to changes in the type of industry, growth in part-time jobs, the legal system, globalization, employers offensive and union rigidity and bureaucratization (Schaefer, 2004).

Global Economy And Trade Union Growth In Nigeria

The fall-out of the economic crisis in Europe and America was that other countries of the world also caught up with it. Mostly affected were the economies of the developing countries because of their dependency nature. The immediate impact of this was that capital flow into these countries were affected. There was a considerable slump in global foreign investment flows to these countries. Aid flows were also discriminately applied as the West increased security spending and allocation of aid to strategic allies to fight global terrorism. The collapse of the primary commodity prices also affected adversely the currencies of the developing countries leading to depreciation against trading currencies especially the US dollar. Developing countries whose financial sectors and economies had been highly dependent on financial aid and borrowing from overseas suffered greatly. All these slowed down the pace of socio-economic development and accentuated poverty through out the developing world.

For Nigeria, the impact was severe since as a mono-product based economy, instability in the world oil prices became more apparent. Generally the performance of the economy was very low and the country scored very low on all the indices of development. Government responded by introducing structural reform in all sectors of the economy to stem the tide and to fast-track socio-economic development. Between 2003 and 2007, government instituted an economic reform programme called the National Economic Empowerment Development (NEEDS). Its purpose was to raise the country's standard of living through a variety of reforms which include macro-economic stability, deregulation, liberalisation and privatization, among others. The ultimate was that it would lead to the creation of over 7 million new jobs, diversify the economy, boost non-energy exports, increase industrial capacity utilization and improve agricultural productivity. The reform programme was replicated at the state and local government levels (APRM, 2008). Although the poor performance by the public sector was attributed for the new reform drive, it soon became obvious that this private sector-led economic growth would not make the desired impact due to the high cost of doing business in Nigeria occasioned by the need to duplicate essential infrastructure, the lack of due process, the threat of crime and non-transparent economic decision making process notably in government contracting.

The effect of all these streamed down to impact not only on the national economy but also many sectors/institutions including the labour movement. Labour had always opposed measures that would adversely affect its members. It had the view that globalization, the harbinger of privatization, deregulation and liberalisation, leads to down-sizing and out-sourcing which means unemployment. This in effect means the dismantling of the welfare state. Labour also opposes globalization because it believes it will make for de-centralisation or abolishment of collective bargaining. This means the weakening of minimum wage regulation, promotion of individual over group contract and the neglect of tripartite decision-making organs. To Labour therefore,

Capitalist restructuring have posed serious threats to trade unions worldwide since the mid-1970s. De-industrialization, labour market flexibility, managerial assault on labour process, virulent anti-union policies embedded in new managerial practices and unfavourable labour laws. This context has been conducive to a process of atomisation and segmentation of the labour force that has severely affected trade unions' capacity to recruit and mobilize workers and represent their interests both at the workplace and in society (Atzeni & Ghigliani, 2007).

For the labour movement in Nigeria its ability to organise and grow has been curtailed by various policies and activities of government and employers of labour. The ITUC in its 2011 annual survey of Nigeria posits as follows:

- Anti-union attitudes persist in the oil industry,
- Union members lost their jobs as part of cost-cutting exercise,
- Collective Bargaining ignored in different sectors,
- Electricity workers arrested for protesting against privatization plans,
- Law does not specifically protect workers from anti-union discrimination,
- Right to Collective Bargaining recognised by law but strickly regulated,
- Restrictions on the principle of free and voluntary bargaining,
- Authorities' approval of freely concluded Collective Agreement required,
- Every agreement on wages in the private sector must be registered with the government,
- The right to strike is recognised by law but strictly regulated,
- Excessive long prior notice/cooling-off period as union must give 15 days notice for a planned strike,
- Compulsory recourse to arbitration,
- No strike in essential services,
- No strike or lock for 10 years after a company begins its activities in a given Export Processing Zone(EPZ),
- PENGASSAN and NUPENG (Oil industry unions) report that prominent oil and gas servicing companies resist union attempts to obtain recognition for the respective unions with a view of negotiating collective bargaining agreement,
- NUPENG members were made redundant, while some others were dismissed in January 2010,
Striking health workers were threatened with dismissal in February 2010 by Kaduna State government,
- Chevron sacks union leaders,
- 43 teachers dismissed (15-October-2010).

The federal government in 2005 promulgated the Trade Unions (Amendment) Act as its policy of restricting trade union activities. The law, among several provisions, criminalises strike action to protest against government's social or economic policy (Uzoh, 2011). It is difficult to get official figures of workers that have been retrenched since the economic reforms by government suffice to say that hundreds of thousands have been affected thereby depleting the ranks of the unions. Under the fiscal, monetary, income, trade and debt policies, government had stated that efficiency in the use of resources by effective privatisation, rationalisation, elimination of wasteful expenditures and the proper channeling of scarce resources to the most rewarding areas of the economy shall be the practice (FGN, 2000). The immediate fall out of this is that many organisations in both public and private sectors started to rationalise their resources including the workforce under the guise of "right-sizing" and 'down-sizing'. For Example

- *Access Bank sacks 1,500* (The Punch, Jan. 28. 2012, p.7)
- *Airtel dismisses, 3000* (Nigerian Tribune, October 7, 2011, p.8)
- *Federal government to harmonise ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), reduce workforce by 28,000 in 2013* (The Nation. Feb 29, 2012, p. 14)

Arising from the monetization policy of government several lower cadre workers like messengers, drivers, cooks, cleaners and many others have been retrenched. Considering the fact that government is the highest employer of labour, these lay-offs are of great importance to the labour movement. This is because they mean a loss of membership by the unions concerned with the attendant implications of reduced union income and capacity for mobilization.

In response to these seemingly anti-union policies, labour and employers have been involved in series of industrial disputes (See Table iii). The table shows that there had been a steady growth in the number of the items of dispute between 2002 and 2007, with some respite in 2004. This is in spite of the constraints placed on the path of unions in organising strikes. This increasing number of disputes with many leading to work stoppages and loss of many days, also shows that collective bargaining as institutionalized negotiating relationship between labour union and employers has not been effective.

Concluding Remarks

Nigerian trade unions like their counterparts all over the world have always shown their strength and relevance in the socio-economic development of their environment. They have contributed to the stability and development of their societies. They act in particular to represent the interest of their members with a view to improving their welfare and work conditions through collective action. This they have always done through the process of collective bargaining.

Hence they are regarded as agents of social and economic changes as they act as the catalyst for an harmonious industrial relations system. However in recent time, trade unions in Nigeria have been experiencing some stress arising from government's response to declining economic fortunes. This in itself is a reflection of the down-turn in the global economy especially that of Europe and the United States. The Nigerian government has thus put in place various policies and measures (although aimed at revamping the economy), which have adversely impacted on the organisation and development of trade unionism. The Nigerian government in a frenzy to turn around the economy seems to see labour as a cog in the wheel of progress and must be discarded. The State as the sovereign has continued to whittle down the power of labour in order to attract and retain transnational corporations (TNCs) as investors and movers of the economy.

These TNCs in concert with the State have created adaptable workforce that can make them to swiftly respond to changes in market demands. Employees are therefore bound to accept job rotation and multi-skilling. Management has therefore been encouraged to overcome any form of workers resistance. On a free-fall, employers have devised various methods of not only reducing the staff strength but also curtailing the activities of their organisations. This means casualisation of employment, part-time work, out-contracting, employing women to replace men but paid lower wages, non-payment of wages and no-remittance of check-off dues. Employers have also discarded the collective bargaining process and instead resorted to unilateral change of terms and conditions of employment at will, a return to the Master-Servant relationship in the work-place. As it is rampant in Nigeria, even where collective agreements have been reached and even signed by the appropriate officials, they are hardly implemented as and when due. This has led to incessant but avoidable trade disputes culminating in many lost man-days.

It is important for trade unions to reverse this decline. This is because today, they are the only source of organised power that can resist attack, from both the State and employers of labour, on the welfare of their members. Today in Nigeria, the labour movement is the only window of opposing views as was demonstrated in organising the anti-fuel subsidy protests in January this year. It is therefore important for the movement to also engage non-traditional members especially in the informal sector, the non-union workers and those not employed. Particularly union should engage female workers as active members of the union (this involves imbibing the policy of gender equity). This is because women are not only part of the development process, they appear to hold the future for union growth.

The unions should install credible leadership at all levels. The unions now need strong leaders more than before who are above board that can adequately represent the interests of their members moreso that now, government particularly prefers to impose self-serving leaders on the unions. In realising that their continued existence and relevance is contingent upon the development of the larger parent organisation, trade unions should engage the employers on steps to take to sustain productivity, progress and stability of the system.

Unions should interact with employers of labour on work-place reforms in such areas as multi-skilling, management flexibility, job design, training and development, total quality management, and human resources planning, through the process of collective bargaining. They should also interface and collaborate with other civil societies in the country as well as parliamentarians to ensure that the minimum labour standards for the stability and overall development of the country are attained. More importantly such interaction should lead to the reversal of the obnoxious laws and policies especially casualisation, that tend to stunt the growth and development of trade unions in Nigeria.

Table I. Nigeria Economic Trend 2009 – 2011

Real GDP Growth (%)	2009 (Q 1)	2010 (Q1)	2010 (Q2)	2010 (Q3)	2010 (Q4)	2011 (Q1)	2011 (Q 2)	2011 (Q 3)
	7.0	7.9	7.7	7.9	8.4	6.6	7.7	7.4
Merchandise Trade (US\$)	2009 (Q4)	2010 (Q1)	2010 (Q2)	2010 (Q3)	2010 (Q4)	2011 (Q1)	2011 (Q2)	2011 (Q3)
Export	7.9	50.5	57.7	38.6	34.2	40.8	52.7	50.7
Import	16.4	6.0	23.3	29.6	32.1	45.3	40.3	34.7
Inflation Rate (Consumer Prices %)	2009 (Q4)	2010 (Q1)	2010 (Q2)	2010 (Q3)	2010 (Q4)	2011 (Q1)	2011 (Q2)	2011 (Q3)
	12.7	14.9	14.0	13.4	12.6	12.0	11.3	9.7
Exchange Rates (Per US\$, Period average)	2009	2010	2011 (Q3)	2011 (Oct)	2011 (Nov)			
	148.9	150.3	151.92	151.21	153.66	–	–	–
Money Aggregate	2009 (Q4)	2010 (Q1)	2010 (Q2)	2010 (Q3)	2010 (Q4)	2011 (Q1)	2011 (Q2)	
	14.4	21.5	20.2	19.3	9.3	9	–	–
International Reserves (Billions of US\$)	2009 (Q4)	2010 (Q1)	2010 (Q2)	2010 (Q3)	2011 (Q1)	2011 (Q2)	2011 (Q3)	
	44.7	42.9	39.9	37.1	34.9	35.8	–	–

Source: Africa and Global Economic Trends (2011)

Table II. Structure of Trade Unions in Nigeria 1978-2000

Type of union	1978	1986	1988	1990	1996	2000
Industrial Unions	42	42	41	41	29	29
Senior Staff Ass.	15	18	21	20	20	20
Employers Ass	09	22	22	22	22	22
Professional Unions	04	04	04	04	04	04
Total	70	86	88	87	75	75

Source: Fajana(2006)

Table III Summary Of Industrial Disputes, 2002 – 2007

Items	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
No. of Disputes	52	77	36	149	189	250
No. of Disputes resulting in strikes	25	28	26	57	63	79
No. of Disputes resolved	22	57	32	110	79	212
Duration of Disputes (days)	410	645	277	675	910	1264
No. of Workers involved	49, 155	249697	127377	280606	208,589	414,543
Total Man days lost	2,578,692	5,690,952	2,737,399	4308013	7,785,993	13,227,957

Source: National Bureau of Statistics, (2009).

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