



POLICY BRIEF

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Database Duplicity in Nigeria: A Quest for Legislative Action towards Data Harmonization Policy.

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Summary

Nigeria's lack of good and systematic database has, in no small measure, affected effective national strategic planning and management of migration and crime control. The aim of this brief is to advocate for the creation of a single centralized database with the view of having effective and efficient central data management system for the country. The brief argues that there is an urgent need to pass a legislation to support the harmonization of existing disaggregated databases and creation of a central national database for the country. It therefore recommends that the National Assembly may pass a Bill to:

- give the harmonization mandate to NIMC through its NIN project; and
- allow other relevant agencies to share a pool of data they need from that platform.

I. Introduction

Being a complex society, it is not difficult to note that after 60 years of independence Nigeria has failed time and time again to make any sort of positive progress in terms of creating a central database for its citizens. The country needs a central database that will contain the necessary information about Nigerians and Nigeria, not multiple collections by many agencies for unknown or even untenable purposes. Presently, the National Identity Management Commission is trying to install a comprehensive data for the country through its National Identification Number (NIN) project. The country has witnessed data captured by different agencies like Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and National Communication Commission, NCC through the Telecommunication Industries. Also, the National Population Commission, NPC (a national demographic data agency) was supposed to have conducted National Census since 2016, just as the National Bureau of Statistics, NBS is also a data oriented agency.¹

¹ Okumoku-evrora, O. (2016). Database Duplicity in Nigeria: Any Hope for Harmonization. A Multidisciplinary Journal of Scientific Research & Education, 2(10), October



Yet none of the above mentioned agencies (in the same country) can refer to one another to obtain single accurate information. A typical example is the ongoing Police Central Motor Registry (PCMR), which is unnecessary and untenable compared with data capture that FRSC has also introduced. Can Nigeria ever come to the point where a centralized database is a reality? Can we come to a point where each agency can relate together in exchange, sharing of various attributes of an element? These are the major interrogations of that this brief will look at. Thus, the premise of this Policy Brief is to analyse the various databases that are present in Nigeria with a focus on how they can be harmonized.

II. What is a National Database?

A national database is an organized data or numerical environment where every citizen of a nation and the immigrants are uniquely identified and possesses a strong national virtual identity.² National database is a dynamic and intelligent data records system.³ It contains detailed particulars of classified information, resident citizen, the Diaspora and the foreigners including their biometrics and passport photograph. Usually, it is adequately prepared on relational database conceptuality and expansive data administration and management. National database is a centralized system, typically multiuser and distributed information systems based on hypertext with web interfaces to the central database. There is no way we can implement a database without a particular data concept. Data has been described as pertinent tools for development. Data are collected, captured, processed and produced as a finished result. Data may be valuable, quality or quantity. Without data there can be no development. Data is the property of development.⁴

III. Highlight of Issues Facing Nigeria for Lack of Harmonized Database

Nigeria lacks a real database because of the issue of duplicity; one cannot really say that every citizen of this great country is accounted for by any single database. Main issues are:

- a) The inability of Nigeria to secure a central database system continues to be a mounting challenge that the nation has been facing from independence. As such, a lot of the

² Onakoya, J.R (2011), E-commerce and the Practice. ISBN 978-978-919-338-7 First edition. Published by J2 Man-Hour Ltd, Gwagwalada. Abuja. Nigeria

³ Ibid

⁴ Okumoku-evroro, O. (2016). Op. Cit.



potential benefits that come from such a system continue to elude Nigeria and Nigerians in general;

- b) Presently, Nigeria is critically facing security challenges all because people are not uniquely identified and tagged. This situation has led to insecurity in Nigeria with different trends and dimensions from one geopolitical zone to the other;
- c) One cannot help to see how there is duplicity of the same data by almost all agencies that require them thereby wasting the scarce national resources. The same data is collected by several organizations when they can actually share from a common database;
- d) Excesses and uncontrolled issuance of national documents by fraudsters and corrupt government officials because of lack of a system that can prevent double identities, multiple applications and abuse of the services. Nigeria is too complex and as such requires the best system for accuracy. Developed countries use both iris and facial recognition database in crime detection;
- e) *Illegal immigration and ineffective control of border crime:* Nigeria is badly in need of citizenship identification, recognition and accountability. Nigeria's porous borders, corrupt police, customs and immigration officials mean we cannot control migration and crime effectively;
- f) Countless amounts of monies have been spent on planning and consultation only for these plans to become useless and waste. The government pays civil and private organisations to plan the nation's future but due to lack of simple priorities grasp and misappropriation of expertise means people are working aimlessly to achieve nothing.
- g) It is fair to say despite government claims to have goals and objectives it is not hard to notice that corruption, mismanagement, banditry, kidnapping and inadequate documentation and certification of birth/death continue to be Nigeria's biggest enemies.
- h) A lack of credible census figures which makes public funds not being managed prudently and not dispersed according to demography. In essence, a lack of near accurate count will mean poor allocation and planning of public resources. Whereas, a biometric database of citizen is automatically a census exercise and one that will be around for a long time.



IV. Database Duplicity

This segment highlights four of the most important national databases with their contents and limitations. It also discuss how harmonization can be achieved and implemented. The four most important databases in Nigeria are NIN, INEC, FRSC driver’s license and the National Immigration Service (NIS). Table 1 shows

Table 1: Four Most Important National Databases that Need to be Harmonized

S/N	Database	Description of the Content	Limitations
1	Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)	INEC is the body that conducts elections in Nigeria. They have the responsibility to register eligible voters (Citizens of 18years and above). And due to this reason the commission created a database to store all of these information of voters in its voters register (voter’s database). Entries in this register include these items basically; state of origin, Local government of origin, home town, address, occupation, gender, finger print, and facial recognition. This database is unique in the sense that it has two basic security fields, the finger print and facial recognition. This makes it a very implicit database and would have been able to serve as a centralized database but unfortunately it has some limitations.	It is only for registered voters who are 18 years and above. Not everyone registers to be a voter even though they are eligible for various obvious reasons; religious and otherwise, secondly the database is not comprehensive as it does not cover the whole population so those under the eligibility age are not included. Another flaw in this database is that it could be two individuals, that is, a particular entry could have one person’s fingerprint and another person’s face taken by the facial recognition software.
2	Federal Road Safety Corps National Driver’s Licence (FRSC)	The second database is that operated by the FRSC, they are responsible for issuance of driving license for those who are either 18 years or above and have been tested in their driving abilities.	This again is limited while every person 18years or above could be captured by the INEC database FRSC captures only those who can drive and are 18 years and above. This database is limited as we find out that the number of persons on its register cannot be compared to that of those on INEC register. The entries also are the same with that of INEC.
3	National Immigration Service (NIS) -The Nigeria International Passport	Perhaps this is Nigeria’s most secured and effective database because it provides its citizens with their international passport. It uses both facial recognition and fingerprint for all fingers and signature. This is the most effective as it has no age limit that means everyone can be registered on it.	Unfortunately, International Passport is also limited until a citizen has the intention of going outside the country they do not have need for it and it is not required for any form of access within the country.
4	National Identification Number (NIN) by National Identity Management Commission (NIMC)	The National Identification Number (NIN) is a set of numbers assigned to an individual upon successful enrolment. Enrolment consists of the recording of an individual’s demographic data and capture of the ten (10) fingerprints, head-to-shoulder facial picture and digital signature, which are all	Though, all citizens and legal residents in Nigeria, from age zero (birth) and above are eligible to enrol for their NINs, however, registration is highly difficult and poorly publicised. Therefore, people have not



		<p>used to cross-check existing data in the National Identity Database to confirm that there is no previous entry of the same data. The National Identification Number (NIN) consists of 11 non-intelligible numbers randomly chosen and assigned to an individual at the completion of enrolment into the National Identity Database (NIDB).</p>	<p>really taken it serious. This would have been the best platform to harmonise all other databases for efficient and effective use of requiring agencies. But it also doesn't have a mandate to serve as platform for harmonization of other national databases.</p>
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Source: Okumoku-evroro, O. (2016)⁵

V. Process for the Harmonization among Databases in Nigeria

The aim of this brief is to advocate for the creation of a single centralized database with the view of having effective and efficient central data management system for the country. The creation of such a central data management will not only be useful for economic and strategic planning, but also for intelligence gathering, crime control, counter-insurgency and terrorism, anti-corruption campaign, amongst others. Achieving the goal of creating a central national database through the under-listed process may be considered:

- There is a need to pass a legislation to support the creation of a central national database for the country;
- Upgrade of all existing disaggregated databases warehoused with such agencies as the NIMC, FRSC drivers licence information, Nigeria Immigration Service, National Population Commission (NPC) and INEC.
- These Agencies then create a harmonized platform warehousing all available national databases to be managed by NIMC such that all relevant agencies can share from that platform;
- Upgrade NIMC through its NIN project and give it harmonization mandate from which all other relevant agencies can take a pool of data they need,

VI. Areas for Legislative Consideration towards Harmonization Process

Harmonization of our various databases would be a plus to the nation and upscale the country's availability and access to data which can be used for national economic planning, crime control, identity management, among others. It will also help in streamlining the existing information

⁵ Okumoku-evroro, O. (2016). Database Duplicity in Nigeria: Any Hope for Harmonization. *A Multidisciplinary Journal of Scientific Research & Education*, 2(10), October-2016, Volume: 2, Issue: 10



agencies into one central national database for accuracy and reliability. The various agencies such as FRSC, NIS, NPC, and NCC who are currently compiling biometric information will continue to do so in order to feed the central database for purposes of harmonisation. The following recommendation is hereby proffered:

1. National Assembly may pass an amendment Bill to the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) the central national integrated database for the country;
2. The Bill should streamline and merge the NPC and NIMC into one commission;
3. The Bill may give National Identification Management Scheme (NIMS) the power to create, coordinate and manage the central national database. This powers should be without prejudice to the powers of other agencies such as NIS, FRSC, NCC, INEC etc., to generate their data which should be fed into the central national database;
4. The Bill may provide a clause to empower other agency that requires access to the database to have their own interface that links them to the central database and gives them unique access to that entry that they require and only collect the extra information that is not given in that central database; and
5. The Bill may also provide the collection of such type of data that would be necessary for crime control, economic intelligence and terrorism.

VII. Conclusion

This brief examined some of the databases which collect identical data and reviewed their content and limitations as shown on Table 1. The brief strongly advocates for the creation of a central national integrated database, instead of the existing multiple but disparate databases created by different agencies. It is instructive to state that the proposed central integrated database could be efficiently deployed for national strategic planning, crime control, and policy implementation. Therefore, to build a reliable integrated database in Nigeria, the brief concludes that all government agencies that deal with collection of one data or the other need to be coordinated under the NIMC to create a national integrated database.



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