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# An Investigation of the Design and Construction Problems in Nigeria

Problèmes de projet et de construction au Nigéria

Entwurfs- und Ausführungsprobleme in Nigeria

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#### SUMMARY

As with Nigeria, the author presents the particular problems of an oil exporting developing country, in the face of a gigantic construction programme. The problems of delay in construction following an insufficient infrastructure and the explosion of construction costs caused by inflation are also considered.

### RESUME

A l'exemple du Nigéria, l'auteur cherche à présenter les problèmes particuliers d'un pays en voie de développement, exportateur de pétrole, face à un gigantesque programme de construction. Les problèmes de retard dans les délais d'exécution, à la suite d'une infrastructure insuffisante sont évoqués, de même que l'explosion des coûts de construction occasionnée par l'inflation.

## **ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

Am Beispiel von Nigeria versucht der Verfasser, die besonderen Probleme eines ölexportierenden Entwicklungslandes bei der Bewältigung der zahlreichen, grossen Bauaufgaben darzustellen. Besondere Beachtung werden dabei den Problemen der zeitlichen Verzögerung der Bauzeit infolge ungenügender Infrastruktur und der Explosion der Baukosten infolge Inflation geschenkt.



#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Before discussing the problems of the building industry in Nigeria, it is necessary to mention some of the fundamental geographical features which may have a direct or indirect influence on this subject matter.

With an area of around 92 million ha., the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Fig. 1, is the largest country on the west coast of Africa. Based on the 1963 census figure, the projected population of about 80 million in 1976 makes it the most populated country in Africa. There are three areas of high population density.

It lies between longitudes  $2^{\circ}$  and  $15^{\circ}$  east of the meridian and latitudes  $4^{\circ}$  and  $14^{\circ}$  north of the equator. Owing to its latitudinal extent, Nigeria has varied physical conditions, human types and economy. In general, rainfall diminishes from the south-east and south, towards the north and north-east. In the south-east there is an excess of rainfall all the year; in the north there is adequate rain only in two or three months of the year. There is also a corresponding vegetational range.

There is a great variety in human outlook and organisation. This is evident between the four main groups - Hausa and Fulani in the north, Yoruba in the southwest and Ibo in the south-east. The size and variety of the Federation is likewise reflected in its varied economic resources. She is one of the few large timber exporting countries of West Africa, and is rich in mineral resources.

### 2. BOOM IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AND PRESENT PROBLEMS

As the world's eighth largest exporter of crude petroleum, Nigeria as well as other members of OPEC benefited from the recent increases in world oil prices. The so-called "oil-money" has reflected in the economic strength of this fast developing country. With the large revenue available in the country, the need for its inhabitants to acquire improved housing and living conditions are growing rapidly. The Federal Government has recognised these needs and is making every attempt to improve the present situation. As a result of this, the Third National Development Plan, 1975-1980 (Table 1), has called for a total investment of about £20 billion. Almost half of this will be spent on construction.

Naturally, the sudden boom in the construction industry of Nigeria is creating various problems. Although these problems are numerous and diverse in nature, the most serious ones are discussed in this section.

### 2.1 Demand for Foreign Expertise

Although Nigeria has numerous highly qualified indigenous Contractors, Engineers, Architects, Quantity Surveyors and other allied professionals, the present construction boom calls for additional foreign expertise. As stated in the Plan, "while serious effort will be made to assist indigenous contractors to improve their skill, it will be necessary during the Plan period to continue to attract a good number of reputable foreign contractors into the country to augment the overall construction capacity". The shortage of indigenous expertise could also be illustrated by a keynote address to the Commonwealth Association of Architects' Conference held in Accra in 1976. Speaking at this occasion, the Nigerian president of this Association, Mister Oluwole Olumuyiwa, said that the quality of



African architectural expertise was as good as anywhere else in the world, but pointed out that, while it is true that there is acute shortage of architects in Africa, it might not be correct in respect of quality. Although his reference was to Architects, the situation is the same for most Nigerian construction and design expertise.

The principal problem in employing foreign expertise is their lack of previous knowledge of the social, climatic and economic conditions<sup>2</sup> of Nigeria. These problems range from small projects, where foreign staffs are employed as supervisors, to multi-million Naira (N) complex projects, where foreign firms or consortia are engaged as main consultants or contractors. Basically, the lack of tropical design experience and construction methodology seems to be a major handicap to most foreign personnel and firms. As a result of this, buildings which portray European or other western culture and outlook are gaining ground. The adaption of unsuitable design technique and the choice of wrong materials give rise to the design and construction of buildings which may be found unsuitable in the foreseeable years.

These problems could be alleviated by the training of more Nigerian professional and technical staff, and financial support to able indigenous firms. Where foreign consultants are engaged for massive projects, at least a two-man team of Nigerian professional experts (either from the industry or from the University) should be appointed by the Government to oversee the general concept of the project and also to provide necessary guidelines at the design and construction stages. The Nigerian professional institutes, such as the Nigerian Institute of Architects, the Nigerian Institute of Building and others, should run "induction" courses for new foreign staff joining the construction industry. These courses should provide participants with sufficient materials for tackling the differing climatic, social and economic conditions in Nigeria as compared to their country of origin.

## 2.2 Construction Delays and Inflation of Building Cost

There is a great shortage of building materials in most parts of the country. This gives rise to hoarding, inflation and the use of inferior alternatives. The Plan recognises the shortage of building materials and aims at minimising existing bottlenecks. Effort is being made to increase investment in domestic production of cement and other essential building materials. The use of local materials such as burnt bricks will be vigorously promoted under the Plan to minimise dependence on imported substitutes.

However, as the industry depends heavily on imported materials, the delay in supply and scarcity of certain materials hinders progress on most sites. From Table 2 it can be seen that a large proportion of the materials needed in the industry for implementing the 5-year development Plan, will be imported. The summary of a recent survey<sup>3</sup> of building material prices in selected towns in Nigeria is shown in Table 3. It is clear from this Table that there is a wide fluctuation in material prices. The causes of these variations in prices were attributed to the following six main factors:

- Location of the local building material manufacturing industries
- Transport costs from sources of supply and sites
- Untarred and bad roads to hinterland
- Fuel shortages
- Degree of supply and demand at each location
- Excessive profit margins of the building material merchants.



These problems have been recognised by the Federal Commissioner for Housing Urban Development and Environment, Wing Commander Mouktar Mohammed. Further serious attempts are therefore being made to increase the use of local materials. It is hoped that the extensive use of Nigerian local materials will not only provide more cheap materials, but may lead to the production and development of more suitable building components.

## 2.3 Inadequate Statutory and Scientific Guidelines

As Nigeria was previously a British colony, there has been a tendency to rely on most standards and practices which were handed down during the colonial administration. These techniques inherited by the Nigerian construction industry are not generally suited to its climatic conditions. Although the British Standards Institute's publications (Codes of Practices and British Standards) are still widely used, the recent construction failures in Nigeria have shown that the behaviour of some materials, such as concrete, in temperate countries differs in some peculiar ways from its behaviour in tropical countries.

The need for adequate statutory and scientific guidelines to suit the conditions in Nigeria has been widely recognised. For example, a symposium on a new code of practice on the structural use of concrete in building was held in Lagos in April 1976. Speaking on the occasion, the Director of the Nigerian Standards Organisation, Mr. D. O. Ogun, stressed that the boom in the construction industries in the country has prompted the organisation to establish a building and construction technical committee of experts to provide guidelines on various building materials. After considerable research, a new code of practice for concrete structures has been produced by the committee. Research work is also continuing in most Nigerian Universities and other Government agencies to produce more relevant guidelines for the construction industry.

Although the growing catalogue of building failures, now reaching serious proportions, could be seen as symptomatic of fundamental problems in the construction industry, the blame for such failure does not lie within one sector only. In Nigeria, the Building Contractor is generally blamed for most of these failures, whereas the Architect, or Engineer, could have been responsible. It is therefore essential that a thorough scientific investigation be carried out before the cause of any failure could be established.

## 3. CONCLUSIONS

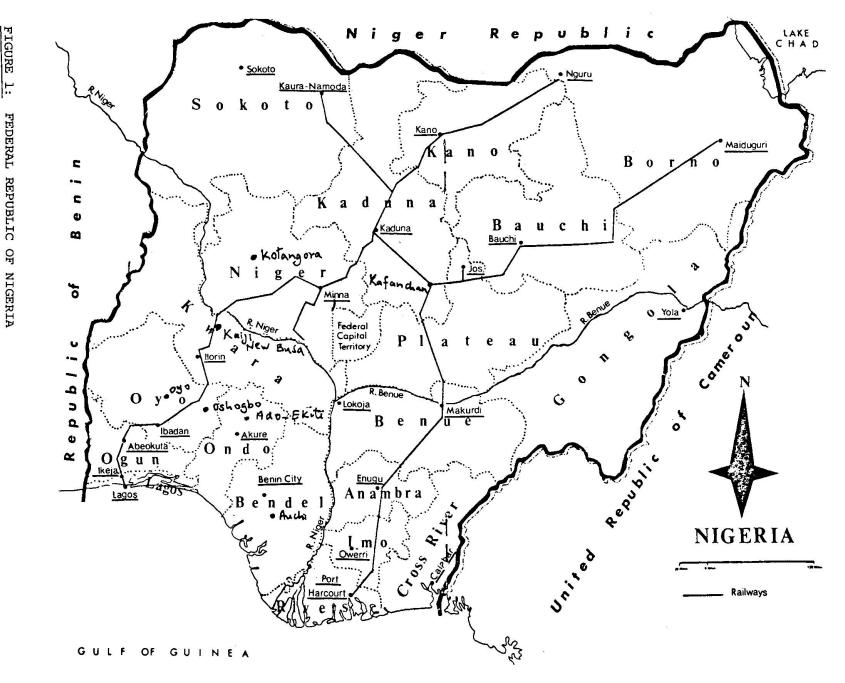
As the boom in the Nigerian construction industry has created a situation where local personnel and materials are unable to meet with the demand, it is essential that foreign expertise and materials are attracted into the country. The Government should, however, increase its efforts towards the training of local technical staff, and the use of local materials should be exploited.

## 4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS IN NIGERIA

				SUMMARY	n.	c c			1076.00						
				SUMMARY	OFPUBLIC	SECTOR C.	APITAL PRO	GRAMMES:	1975-80					Nmillio	on
Sector	Total all Govts.	Federal Govt.	Total all States	Bemue- Plateau	East- Central	Kano	Kwara	Lagos	Mid- Western	North- Central	North- Eastern	North- Western	Rivers	South- Eastern	W'estern
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
A: ECONOMIC  1. Agriculture 2. Livestock 3. Forestry 4. Fishery 5. Minings and	1,645.852 344.046 109.730 101.554 2.680.425	750.845 173.176 30.014 58.561	895.007 170.869 79.716 42.993	64.768 10.314 9.055 3.367	95.408 15.227 5.355 1.398	142.556 24.682 4.610 1.600	66.303 7.299 9.300 1.700	14.824 17.090 0.500 15.451	63.521 8.383 4.975 2.289	68.139 12.280 5.826 0.100	73.754 20.801 8.438 1.397	65.441 20.080 4.530 0.751	48.150 5.700 2.000 5.538	63.526 10.648 12.701 5.639	128.617 18.365 12.426 3.763
Quarrying 6. Manufacturing and Craft 7. Power 8. Commerce and Finance	5,315.871 1,075.238 559.355	4,907 227 932.038 323.433	408.644 143.200 235.922	28.938 12.000	69.271 10.000 25.700	23.966 8.000	37.804 15.000 28.650	32.246 0.200 15.500	43.500 10.000	21.289 10.000	22.463 20.000	8.200 20.000	36.228 8.000 43.100	39.419 10.000 23.573	45.320 20.000
9. Transport 10. Communications	7,303.068 1,338.944	6.274.342 1,338.944	1,028.726	98.990 —	88.728 —	55.340 —	63.990	36.265 —	200.000	59.723 —	119.956	108.180	51.650	69.184	76.720
Sub-Total	20,474.082	17,469 005	3,005 077	244.332	311.087	276.840	230.046	132.076	344.848	191.532	286.409	237.487	200.366	234.690	315.364
B: SOCIAL  11. Education 12. Health 13. Information 14. Labour 15. Social Development and Sports	2,463.822 759.928 380.225 43.187	1,656.193 314.160 234.341 43.187 24.950	807.629 455.768 145.884	71.702 30.670 9.415	78.239 62.621 19.837 —	68.647 32.430 6.500 —	46.129 28.500 15.900	30.642 53.901 5.300 —	60.807 39.690 5.900	75.600 23.810 6.193 —	90.511 42.900 16.137 —	63.264 30.550 16.170 — 6.751	74.300 34.805 12.310 — 9.350	65.931 22.850 15.110 	81.857 43.041 17.112 — 8.614
Sub-Total C: Reg.	3,786.765	2,272.831	1,513.934	119 935	183.289	113.780	96.289	109.109	110.317	109.373	161.049	116.735	130.765	112.669	150.624
C: Reg. DeveLopment  16. Water Supply  17. Sewerage, Drainage, and Ref. Disposal  18. Housing  19. Town and Country Planning  20. Co-operative and Community Development	930.038 428.495 1,837.430 754.867	317.413 154.499 1,650.000 250.453	612.625 273.996 187.430 504.414	58.120 9.706 5.000 24.299	57.540 28.000 20.500 70.706	40.000 13.240 30.930 21.243	45.500 6.000 8.000 9.200	44.400 70.000 11.000 117.525	73.975 58.000 30.000 31.007	41.100 9.200 10.000 23.102	42.201 7.500 18.000 31.087	43.489 4.500 10.000 38.730	7.600 26.000 10.000 55.500	31.200 4.600 10.000 35.009	127.500 37.250 24.000 47.006
272				ļ — — —							23.516	16.644	1.200	13.655	10.294
Sub-Total  D: ADMINISTRATION 21. Defence and Security 22. General Administration	3,325.517 1,124.128	2,388.552 3,325.717 709.210	1,755.572	109.907	193.746 — 35.955	123.186 — 46.421	75.200 — 25.250	278.269 — 34.960	204.833	93.950 — 36.617	122.304 — 39.866	113.363 — 50.472	100.300  40.877	94.464 — 34.160	246.050 — 18.439
Sub-Total	4,449.645	4,034,727	414 918	24.809	35.955	46.421	25.250	34.960	27.092	36.617	39.866	50.472	40.877	34.160	18.439
Nominal Total	32,854 616	26,165 115	6 689 501	498.983	724.077	560.227	426.785	554.414	687.090	431.472	609.628	518.057	472.308	475.983	73.477

TABLE 1

SOURCE: FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

THIRD NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 1975-80

	222		Estima	TES OF M	laterial.	INPUTS REG	QUIRED FO	or Implem	ENTING TI	HE PLAN					
	2.0	Unit Quantities, Public Sector													
			Housing Barracks Prisons	Offices Hotels etc.	Stores Ware- house	Facto- ries Shops	Schools	Hospitals	Health Centres Clinics	Roads Bridges Tarmac	Water and Sewerage	Miscel- laneous	Public Sector Total	QUANT Private Sector Total	TTIES Total Plan
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
1.	Cement	million tons	3.48	1.19	.38	.67	4.68	.42	.28	6.71	.85	.95	19.61	3.46	23.07
2.	Reimbursement	million tons	.92	.86	.01	.05	1.19	.11	.05	1.36	.24	.17	4.96	.92	5.89
3.	Construction Timber	million cu. ft.	42.89	10.88	.28	.70	32.23	26.80	1.42	10.00	-	11.59	126.79	21.73	148.52
4.	loinery Timber	million cu. ft.	14.38	2.15		.28	16.49	.80	2.03	_	_	02	36.18	5.74	41.92
5.	Structural Steelwork.	thousand tons				80.5	.1	-	-	460.0	45.0		585.6	195.0	780.6
	Galvanised Pipes	thousand tons	45.8	8.9		1.1	38.0		.7	_			99.6	23.0	122.6
	Copper Pipes	thousand tons	- 15.0	2.9				2.0	1.3	_	_	-	6.2	1.9	8.1
	Extruded Aluminium							-17	•				U.2		0
	Section	thousand tons	.8	8.9	<b>.</b>	_	_	1.0	1.5	_	_	-	12.2	7.0	19.2
9	Rolled Steel Section	thousand tons	179.2	2.9		2.5	68.0		_	_			254.6	34.2	288.8
	Asbestos Cement Pipes	thousand tons	144.6	2.9		1.8	33.1		_		_	3 <u></u>	183.4	29.5	212.9
	Pipes (Cast Iron)		-			_	-	-		_	81	_	81		81
	Pipes (Steel)	thousand tons	_	<u></u>		<u></u>	_	1_0	-	_	63		63	_	63
	Roofing														
	(i) Felt	thousand tons	35	3	3 –	_	38	2	2	_	_	_	80	6	86
	(ii) Asbestos Cement						50	-	-					•	•
ı	Sheets	thousand tons	42	_		7	233	5	7	_	_	_	294	16	310
1	(iii) Aluminium Sheet	thousand tons	7	18		70	15			-		-	113	235	348
14	Air-conditioning		15	19		-	51		15			_	294	147	441
	Electrical Installation	200	308	35		70	322		41	=		-4	1,370	435	1,805
	Flexible Floor and Wall	.viegawatts	306	33		70	344	200	41	-	the last	•	1,570	433	1,805
1	cov	thousand sq. yds.	6.877	709	a		338	201	308	_	_	7	8,440	2,903	11,343
17	Ceramic Floor Tiles	thousand sq. yds.	12,500	5,679		910	3.354		5,848			53	29,390	8.046	37,436
	Ceramic Wall Tiles		8.223	7.96		210	4.120		446		_	74	21,748	6.885	28,633
	Fibre Ceiling Sheets		6,216	3.43		210	17,996		1.047	_	_	33	29,207	4,980	34,187
20.			36,830	17,279		1,575	60,434		2,430		_	156	122,484	25,118	147,602
21.		thousand gallons	1,639	310		210	2,658		122	_	_	3	5.169	1,068	6,237
	Sanitary Wares	thousand Banons	1,039	310	7 70	210	,2,036	101	122		_	3	3,109	1,008	0,237
	(i) Lavatory \														
l	Basins	thousands	165	5*		14	398	5	18	-000000			660	100	768
1	(ii) Sink	thousands	64	3		7	398		3			1	108		
ı	(iii) Water Clay	mousanas	04		, –	7.	8	21	3	_	_	-	108	19	127
1	Closet Ware	thousands	105	54	4 3		349		11				602	109	711
1	(it) Urinal Bowls		103	12		14				_	· -	_			711
1	(v) Shower	thousands	-	1.	2	2	190	1	2		_	-	209	16	225
l		A Comment											-		_
l	Tray	thousands	88	7		_		Į.	1		· ·	_	2		2 400
1	(vr) Steel Sink	thousands	58				5,478	. 1	-	-	-	_	5,568	21	5,589
I	(vu) Steel or Cast Iron		^-												
	Bath	thousands	85		3 –	-	4,895		_			***	4,984		5,016
	Birumen	million tons		-		_			_	3.96			3.96		3.96
24.	Aggregates	million cub. yds.	10.4	3.6	5 1.1	2.0	12.6	1.3	.8	144.2	4.9	5.5	186.4	10.3	196.7

TABLE 2 SOURCE: FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA
THIRD NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 1975-80

			LOCATION AND PRICES (prices quoted in Naira)															
				Lagos State			Oyo State			Ondo State			Anambra State	Rivers State	Bendel State	Niger State	Kaduna State	Kwara State
	Materials	Unit/ Size/ Quantity	Suru- lere	Igbobi	Ebute M <b>e</b> tta	lkega	Ibadan	Onog- bo	Oyo	Akure	Ado- Ekiti	Owo	Enugu	Port Har- court	Benin Auchi	Minna Konta- gora	Kafan- chan	Kainji New Bussa
1	Load of sand	1 tipper	34.00		34.00	23.00	20.00	12.00	12.00	11.00		12.00			25.00	12.00 12.00		
2	Load of gravel	1 tipper				75.00	40.00	17.00	18.00	28.00		30.00			70.00	34.00 34.00	9	
3	Ton of cement	1 ton	60.00	47.00	70.00	50.00	56.00	58.00	80.00	85.00	66.00	90.00	69.00	72.00	70.00 80.00	70.00 84.00	84.00	57.00
4	Roofing timber	cu. ft.					5.35	3.70	6.00	2.80		3.00	5.50	4.00		3.40 3.50	3.50	
5	Asbestos roofing	6' long	5.00	3.00	4.60	5.00	4.40	2.65	4.00	5.50			6.85		6.80	6.50		
6	Asbestos ceiling	4' × 4'	3.00	1.50	2.60	4.50	2.10	3.00		7.00		3.00	,	e :	2.30 2.70			
7	Flush door			11.00	18.00	15.70	13.65	13.00	15.00	14.00			15.00	16.00	15.00	18.00		
8	Bath tub	5′ 6″	85.50	80.00	70.00		90.00	25.00			72.00	80.00	88.00	60.00	64.00	115.00		
9	W/C	1 No	44.50	45.00	42.00	45.00	50.00	54.00	45.00	45.00	52.00	58.00	52.00	40.00	48.00	55.00		
10	Kitchen sink	1 No	46.00	48.00			46.00				42.00	40.00	45.00		50.00			50.00
11	Emulsion paint	1 gallon	6.50	10.45	7.50	5.50	9.95	9.90	8.00	9.50	8.00	11.00	5.50	9.50	7.50 6.50	8.00 8.00	8.00	10.50
12	Gloss paint	1 gallon	7.50	12.60	9.50	6.50	12.00	12.00	7.00	11.40	7.00	12.00	8.50	10.50	9.00 7.50	9.00 10.00	11.50	12.00
13	M.S. Iron rod	Ton		360.00		350.00	300.00	370.00	360.00	360.00	390.00	380.00	356.00		358.00	504.00		380.00
14	Iron nails	Cwt.				27.00	32.20			8)			38.00	32.00	32.00 32.00	16.50 16.50	32.00	27.00
15	Chubb mortice lock	1 No		6.00		5.20							7.30	7.50		2.50		6.50
16	12-in. Gal. steel pipe	3 m.	6.00	5.00	4.50	6.00	6.00	6.00	7.00	7.00		6.00				5.50		5.50
17	Plain louvre blades	150 mm.	0.97	0.80		1.22	1.25	1.06	1.25	1.16	1.50	0.90	1.22		1.22	1.30		0.95