

NOI **POLLS**

Giving People Voice
...Supporting Decision-Making

Summary of the NOI/Gallup Poll Conducted in Nigeria in February 2007

I. BACKGROUND

In many developing countries, the lack of adequate information on the needs of the population often hinders the formulation of evidence-based policies. In the absence of accurate information, government policy-makers are often unable to ascertain genuine public opinion on important economic, social or legislative issues.

The example of Nigeria provides a case in point. With a population of 140 million and a decentralized government structure of 36 states, a federal capital territory and 774 local governments, a major challenge exists in ensuring good governance at different tiers of the Nigerian government. With the re-introduction of democracy in 1999, there has been an effort to improve the quality of governance in Nigeria. However, in many instances, it is still very difficult to assess genuine public opinion in the country due to the lack of an independent opinion polling capability which could ensure that the views of ordinary citizens are heard and also factored into government decision-making and policies. In such an environment, public policy may be unduly influenced by the views of a vocal minority or even reflect the interests of a dominant elite.

To address this knowledge gap, the newly-formed Nigerian opinion polling firm, NOI Polls, partnered with Gallup Polls (of the USA) to conduct a major opinion poll in Nigeria. A few media institutions such as local television stations or GSM telecom operators occasionally conduct opinion polls. These exercises however are often unscientific and tend to cover only a limited segment of the population. With the technical support of Gallup Poll (USA), the NOI/Gallup poll aimed at providing a credible and comprehensive survey of public opinion in Nigeria.

The Nigerian poll utilized some components of the Gallup World Polls which is conducted in many countries worldwide. However, the standard Gallup World Poll framework was extended to include many other issues of interest to Nigeria such as developments in the Niger Delta and also the preferred form of government in the country.

II. THE NOI/GALLUP POLL OF FEBRUARY 2007

The first NOI/Gallup Poll was conducted in February 2007 and involved about 1000 face-to-face interviews distributed across the country. Interviews were conducted in English as well as the three major Nigerian languages (Yoruba, Ibo and Hausa). For analytical convenience, the country was divided into five main parts namely: Lagos, Kano, the Niger Delta, the North without Kano, and “rest of the country”. As noted earlier, a central objective of the survey was to seek public opinion on general issues of relevance to the country, thereby granting voice to ordinary citizens and also generating relevant data to guide policy-making.

The February 2007 survey examined a broad range of issues relevant for policy-making in Nigeria. Six main issues which were investigated are presented below:

- a. What was the most preferred form of government in Nigeria – a democratic, military or religious government?
- b. What were the feelings of Nigerians about their socioeconomic wellbeing and the economic outlook of their country?
- c. Did Nigerians think government and businesses were doing enough to support the Niger Delta?
- d. What were the views of Nigerians on past government policy achievements and government service delivery?
- e. Which business sectors did Nigerians have the greatest confidence in?
- f. How knowledgeable were Nigerians on issues relating to the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS?

III. RESULTS OF THE NOI/GALLUP POLL OF FEBRUARY 2007

Highlights of the results obtained from the opinion polling exercise are presented below.

a. Most Preferred Form of Government

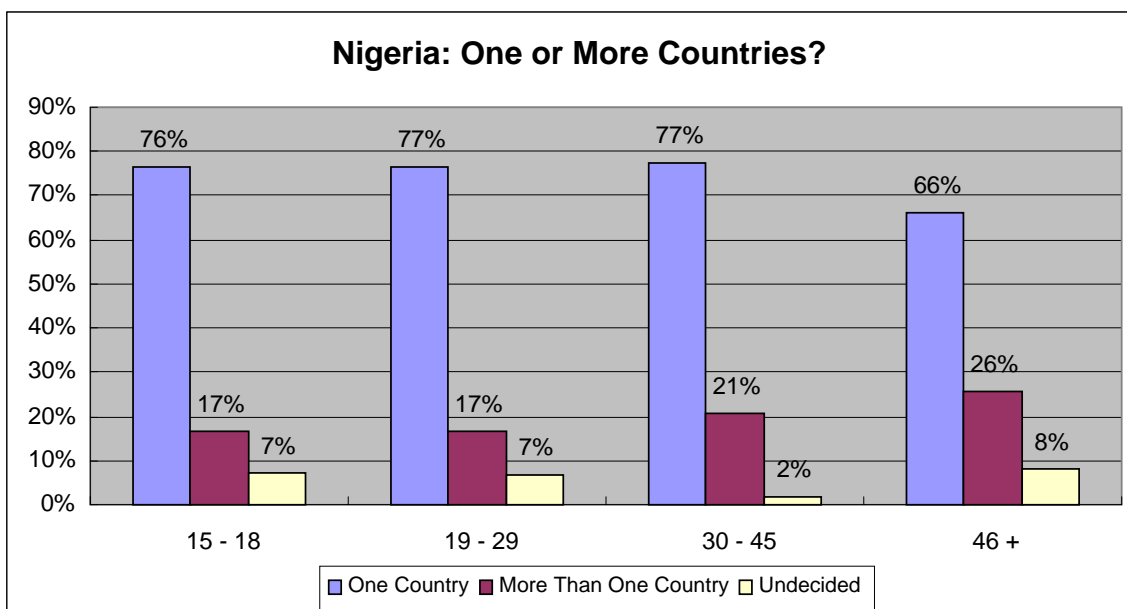
Two questions were posed in this section of the survey: first, *what form of government is best for the people of Nigeria: a democratic, a military or a religious government?*; and second, *Do Nigerians think that their country is better off as one or as two countries?*

Overall, a large majority of respondents (about 82 percent) preferred democratic rule, while 8 percent opted for military government, 6 percent opted for a religious government and 4 percent were undecided. There was no significant difference between responses from males versus females: slightly more males than females (84 percent compared with 81 percent) preferred democratic government.

These results on the preferred form of government however showed interesting variation across age brackets and geographical areas in the country. The greatest support for democratic governance was observed in the Niger Delta (at about 91 percent) while the least support was recorded in Lagos (about 72 percent). More than a quarter of respondents in Lagos opted for a non-democratic form of governance – with about 15 percent preferring the military and 11 percent opting for a religious form of government.

Interestingly, younger Nigerians appeared to provide greater support for democracy compared with the older generation suggesting a promising future for democratic institutions and processes in the country. The level of support for democracy among respondents in the 15-18 age category was 85 percent compared with 81 percent for the 19-29 age group, 86 percent for the 30-45 age group and 79 percent for respondents aged 46 years or more.

For the second question in this section of the survey, interviewees were asked whether they thought Nigeria was better off as one country or as two countries? Responses to this question indicate that the majority of Nigerians preferred the country to remain as one. About 74 percent of respondents preferred the country to remain as one, and with slightly more females (75 percent) than males (72 percent) opting for a united Nigeria. About 77 percent of respondents in the 15-45 age group preferred Nigeria to remain as one country while 66 percent of those over 46 years opted for a united Nigeria. Again, there was an interesting geographical distribution of responses: 51 percent of Kano respondents preferred a united Nigeria, compared with 89 percent of other respondents in the ‘North without Kano’. It is also noteworthy that about 75 percent of Niger Delta respondents also preferred a united Nigeria. The substantial support for a united Nigeria appears to refute some external observations that Nigeria was a fragile state which could disintegrate along ethnic or religious lines due to tensions between the predominantly Muslim north and the Christian south.



b. Personal and Socioeconomic Wellbeing

In this section of the survey, interviewees were asked to assess their socioeconomic wellbeing and that of Nigeria on a scale of 0-10. To quantify the sense of wellbeing, scores of 0-2, 3-7 and 8-10 were assigned to represent perceptions of being at the ‘bottom of the ladder’, ‘middle of the ladder’, and ‘top of the ladder’ respectively.

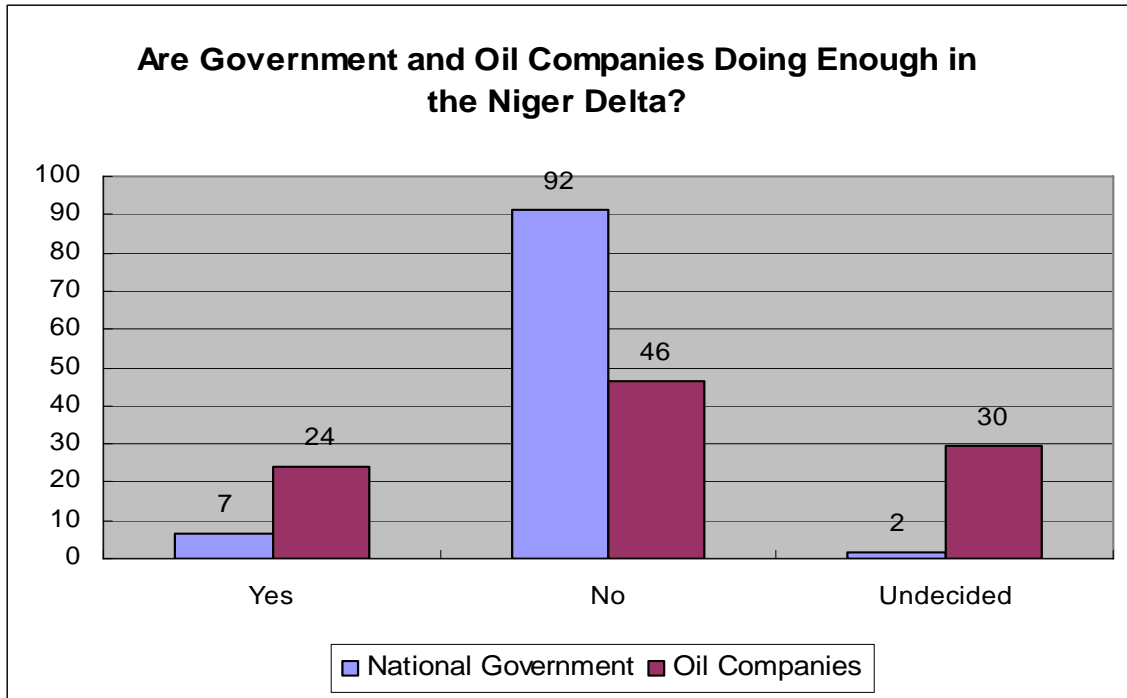
Only 6 percent of respondents identified themselves as being at the ‘top of the ladder’ five years ago and also today (i.e. at the time of the surveys). Yet, there is considerable optimism for the future with about 63 percent of respondents believing that they will be at the ‘top of the ladder’ five years hence. Perceptions on the outlook for the Nigerian economy were similarly optimistic. About 5 percent of respondents viewed the economy as performing well (i.e. at the ‘top of the ladder’) five years ago and also at the time of the interviews. However, about 69% of respondents believed Nigeria would be at the ‘top of the ladder’ in the next five years.

It is noteworthy that results on perceptions of personal wellbeing and the outlook for the economy are similar to observations recorded by the Gallup World Poll in other African countries – albeit slightly less optimistic when compared with results from Nigeria. According to the Gallup World Poll, only about 6 percent of sub-Saharan Africans identified themselves as being at the ‘top of the ladder’ today, while 41 percent expected to be at the ‘top of the ladder’ in the next five years. Similarly, only about 5 percent of sub-Saharan Africans believed their national economies were doing well today – while 40 percent believed their economies would be at the ‘top of the ladder’ within the next five years.

c. The Niger Delta

Another segment of the NOI/Gallup Poll examined the issue of political instability in the Niger Delta region which poses one of the major challenges for governance in Nigeria. In this section of the poll, interviewers posed two main questions: *Is the national government doing enough for the people of the Niger Delta?* and *Are the oil companies doing enough for the people of the Niger Delta?*

The results were enlightening: 92 percent of respondents believed the government was not doing enough for Niger Delta residents while 46 percent were dissatisfied with the performance of oil companies in the Niger Delta. About 30 percent of respondents were ‘undecided’ on whether oil companies were doing enough for the region – suggesting that there was either significant ambivalence towards activities of oil companies operating in the Delta, or that the corporate social activities of oil companies in local communities had made only a limited impact. Interestingly, the greatest dissatisfaction with the government’s record in the Niger Delta was recorded in Lagos (at 100 percent) and not in the Niger Delta itself, where a relatively lesser share of residents (about 76 percent) expressed dissatisfaction with the government.



How could the government and oil companies improve relations with residents of the Niger Delta? The majority of respondents identified *job creation for the youth* as a highly desirable and potentially effective solution for tackling restiveness in the region. About a third of all respondents believed that both the government and oil companies could do more to create jobs in the region.

In a related question, respondents were asked to vote for various potential uses for government oil revenue savings. Five options were listed and each received varying levels of support. About 90 percent of respondents indicated a preference for infrastructure investments, 66 percent suggested various public investments in the Niger Delta, 60 percent opted for direct cash transfers to Nigerians, while 55 percent suggested that the funds should be saved for future expenditures.

d. Past Government Policy Achievements and Service Delivery

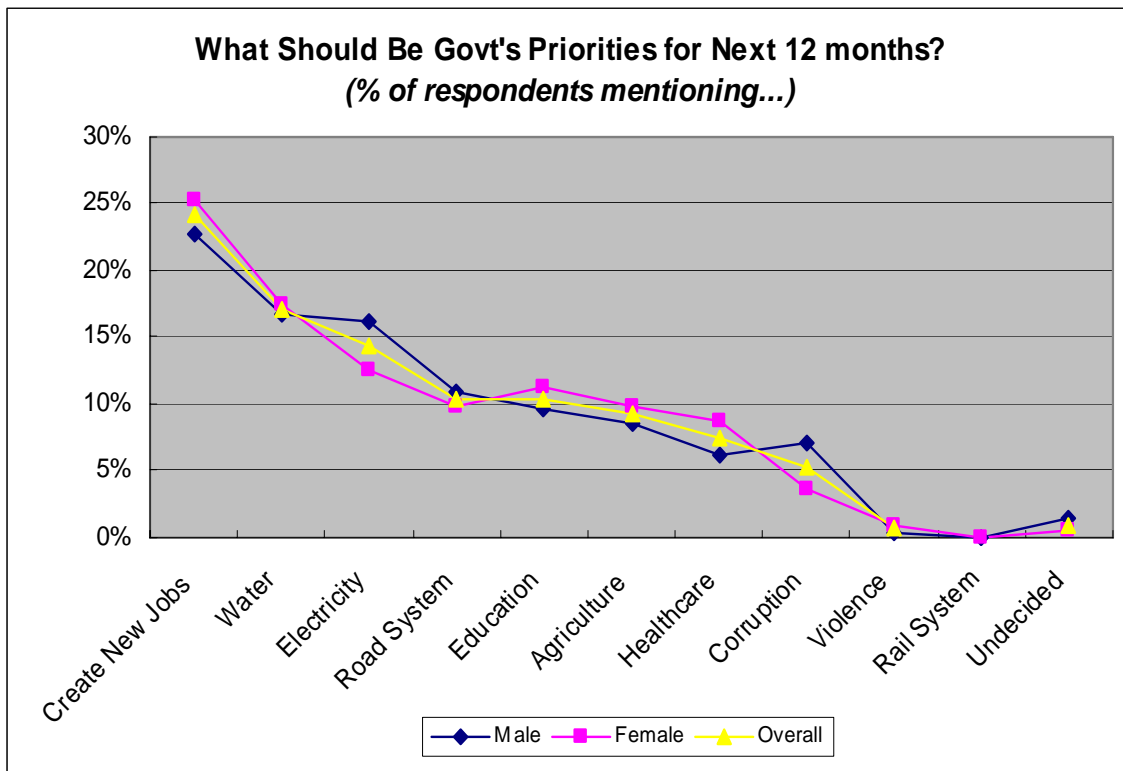
The fourth section of the NOI/Gallup poll examined perceptions on recent government policy achievements and the government’s record on service delivery. Interviewees were asked to identify the major policy achievements of the Obasanjo government, and also to name which government institutions and agencies they had the greatest confidence in.

The three major achievements of the Obasanjo government which received the highest rankings were debt relief, fighting corruption and reforming the banking sector. In a

related section of the survey, respondents underlined the importance of telecom sector achievements by identifying the sector as the one they have the most confidence in, thereby highlighting the importance of recent telecom sector liberalization.

Among government institutions, Nigerians had the greatest confidence in the National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). NAFDAC, the food and drug regulatory agency, had recently made strides in combating the prevalence of fake and sub-standard drugs in the Nigerian market. Similarly, EFCC, the anti-corruption agency established by the past Obasanjo administration, had recently been successful in tackling various cases of grand corruption in Nigeria. Respondents had the least confidence in the local electricity company, the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN).

What do Nigerians expect government to deliver in the coming 12 months? The majority of respondents identified the key priorities for government in the coming months as job creation (24 percent of respondents), improving access to water (17 percent), improving electricity supply (14 percent), fixing the road transportation network (11 percent), and improving education (10 percent). These top five responses were not surprising and reflected the existing public dissatisfaction with high levels of underemployment in Nigeria, the poor state of public infrastructure and weak social service delivery in the country.



e. Confidence in Business Sectors

Another component of the poll examined the level of confidence in the Nigerian business sector. Respondents were provided with a list of 12 industry sectors and asked two questions: *which sectors did they have the greatest confidence in* (i.e. in providing value for money), and *which sectors in their opinion made the greatest contribution to the national economy*.

In response to the first question, the majority of respondents were most confident about the telecommunications (82 percent), banking (81 percent) and agricultural (77 percent) sectors. The oil and gas industry received a 65 percent confidence rating while the real estate sector received the lowest confidence rating of 42 percent. For the second question, on which sectors made the greatest contribution to the national economy, the highest responses were obtained for the oil and gas sector, agriculture, and the banking sector.

f. Prevention and Treatment of HIV/AIDS

In this final section of the survey, respondents were asked various questions relating to the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. On HIV/AIDS treatment, respondents were asked two questions: first, *whether to the best of their knowledge they knew of available treatment that helps people with HIV to live longer*, and second, *whether to the best of their knowledge there was treatment available that completely cured HIV/AIDS*. Only 52 percent of respondents knew of the existence of life-enhancing medication for HIV positive individuals while 74 percent of respondents were aware that there was currently no cure for HIV/AIDS.

On prevention, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statements about HIV/AIDS:

- One way to avoid HIV/AIDS is to abstain from sex (i.e. not have sex at all);
- Another way to reduce someone's chance of contracting HIV is to only have sex with one uninfected partner who is also monogamous;
- To avoid HIV/AIDS, drug users should avoid sharing needles.

About 64 percent of respondents agreed that abstinence was one way of avoiding HIV/AIDS, 79 percent of respondents agreed that HIV/AIDS could be prevented by having sex only with a monogamous, uninfected partner and 84 percent of respondents agreed that drug users could avoid HIV/AIDS by not sharing needles.

The poll also revealed interesting variation in responses to HIV/AIDS questions based on levels of education. Knowledge about treatment options for HIV/AIDS increased with levels of education. Similarly, Nigerians with higher levels of education agreed that monogamous relationships and avoiding the sharing of needles among drug users reduced the spread of HIV. Overall, these statistics suggest that greater effort is needed to educate Nigerians of all age groups on the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The initial NOI/Gallup Poll has provided rich and valuable insights into various public policy issues in Nigeria. As an initial survey, it provided an overview of public opinion on forms of governance, on feelings of personal and socioeconomic wellbeing, on improving relations in the Niger Delta, as well as on confidence in government institutions and businesses. Some of the initial results provide lessons for governments and businesses, while others point to areas for further investigation. A second NOI/Gallup Poll is planned in Nigeria in the last quarter of 2007. It is anticipated that this poll will enable a more detailed assessment of public opinion on various socioeconomic and governance issues.