Photo credit: Yemisi Dada

Status report on electricity in Nigeria (2017)

MacArthur Foundation

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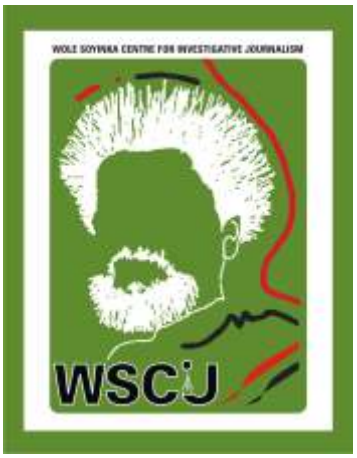

MacArthur Foundation

Status report on electricity in Nigeria (2017)

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Photo credit: Olanrewaju Elegebede

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Photo credit: Olajide Adelana

REMOP The Regulators Monitoring Programme MacArthur Foundation

Abbreviations

C1 - Commercial customer 1 category

D1- Industrial customer 1 category

DisCo - Distribution Company

EG - Embedded Generation

EPSRA 2005 - Electric Power Sector Reform Act 2005

GenCo - Generation Company

IPP - Independent Power Producers

IR - Interim Rule (2013 -2015)

MO - Market Operator

MYTO - Multi Year Tariff Order

NBET - Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trading Plc.

NDPHC - Niger Delta Power Holding Company

NERC - Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission

NESI - Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry

NIPP - National Integrated Power Projects

PHCN - Power Hold Company of Nigeria

PPA - Power Purchase Agreement

R1- Residential customer 1 category

RE - Renewable Energy

SLA - Service Level Agreement

TCN - Transmission Company of Nigeria

TEM - Transitional Electricity Market

TUOS - Transmission Use of System

Photo credit: Kunle Ajayi

Executive summary

In its close to a decade of operation as a regulator, NERC has recorded considerable number of achievements, including expansion in the electricity market evidenced by increased volume of investment in the sector and the development of industry codes and standards. It has also seen other modifications that have created a more attractive electricity market in Nigeria; increased participation of Nigerians in the electricity market; and increased power generation and supply to consumers.

The successes recorded notwithstanding, NERC is faced with challenges ranging from a policy framework which apparently has outlived its purpose; subordination to government (particularly the Minister); inadequate public consultation and slow enforcement of actions on its defaulting licensees; and inconsistency in implementation of directives.

This report is a status report on electricity in Nigeria as at the commencement of the Regulators Monitoring Programme (REMOP) initiative, which is carried out with support from the MacArthur Foundation. It serves as a baseline for the programme and helps the WSCIJ as well as other stakeholders appreciate the state of the most critical sector. It seeks to highlight the history, milestones, successes and challenges of electricity in Nigeria with special reference to the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC).

The methodology for the report consists of meetings with select persons in the electricity sector, including representatives of civil society organisations, regulators, the media as well as representatives of the WSCIJ; desk research on available NERC documents; and finally content analysis of twelve select newspapers – ten print and two online.

As the 'fourth estate of the realm' the media has been limited in the performance of its social responsibility of holding government and stakeholders accountable for the public good due to the technicality of the electricity sector.

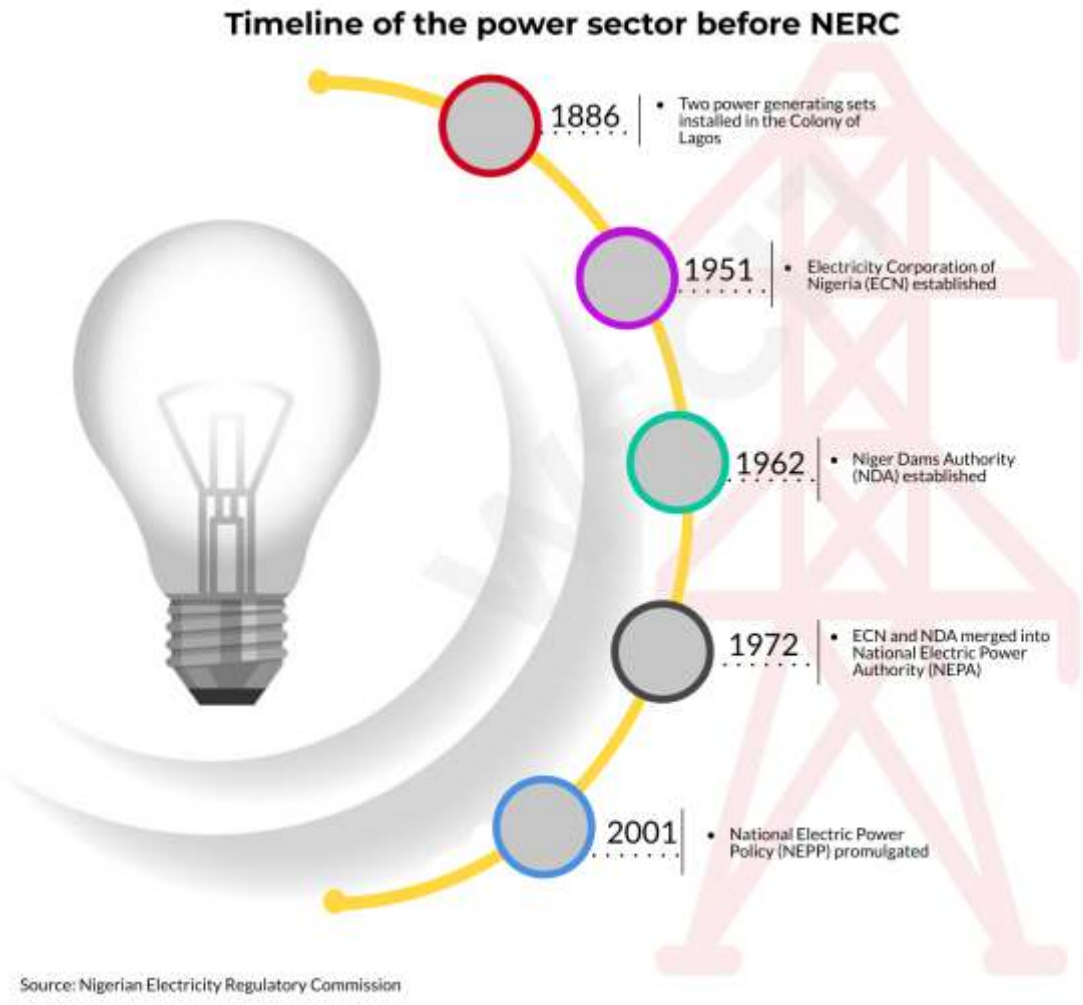
The report therefore recommends that the media should improve efforts to remind the parties involved in the power sector privatisation agreement (government, GenCos, TCN and DisCos) to deliver on their promises. The media should also help report the sector with investigative human-interest stories told in simpler language to increase the understanding of the sector by all stakeholders.

Motunrayo Alaka
Executive Director/CEO

Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC)

History of power generation in Nigeria

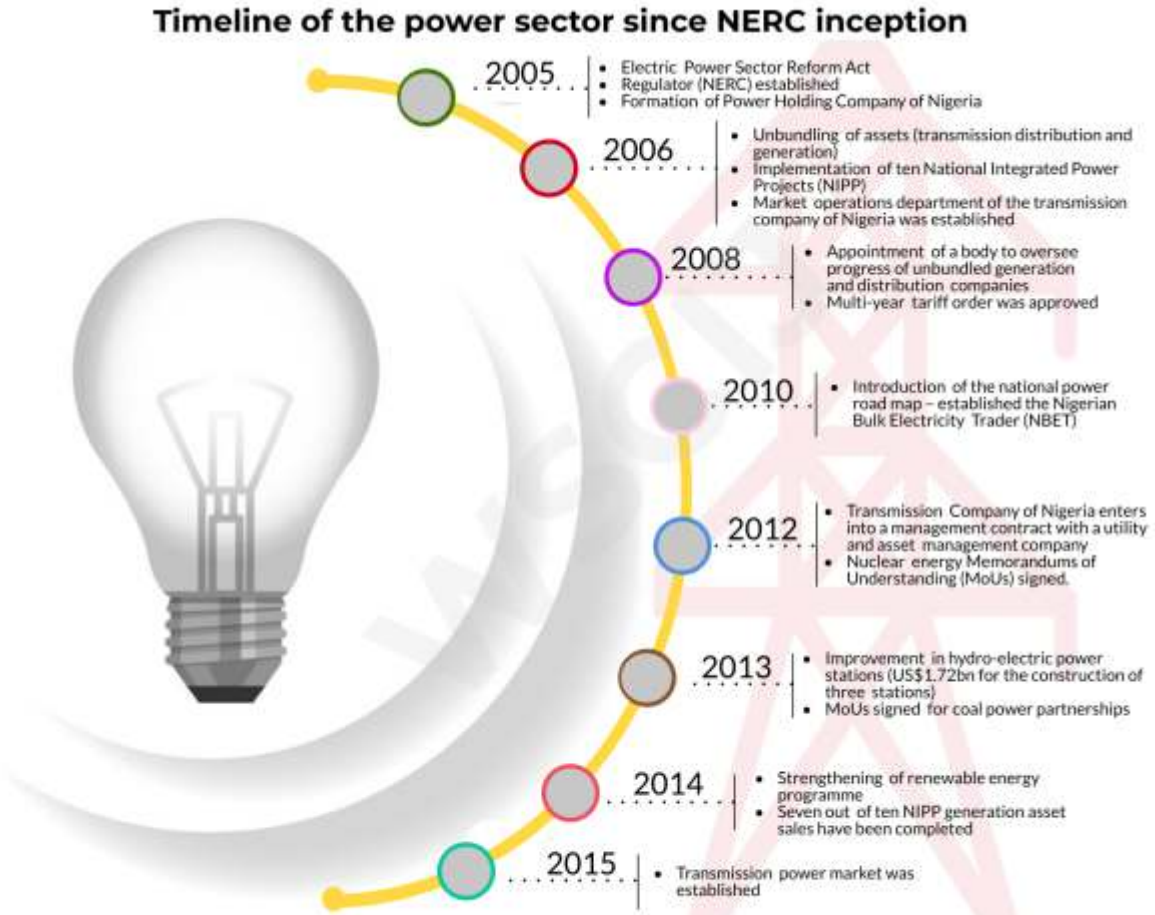
The history of power generation in Nigeria is older than the country itself as it dates back to 1886 when two generating sets were installed to serve the Colony of Lagos headquartered in Badagry and the Northern Province headquartered in Zungeru, Niger State. These served the British colonial masters and their administrative entities for the most of the colonial era. However, the rest of Nigerians have no access to electricity.



Source: Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission

An Act of Parliament in 1951 established the Electricity Corporation of Nigeria (ECN). In 1962, the Niger Dams Authority (NDA) was established for the development of hydroelectric power in Nigeria. A merger of the two organisations in 1972 resulted in the formation of the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), which was saddled with the responsibility of generating, transmitting and distributing electricity for the whole country. NEPA operated as an integrated utility company and had a total generation capacity of about 6,200 Megawatt (MW) from two hydro and 4 thermal (gas) power plants as at year 2000. Soon, the continuous growth in the country's population resulted in an unstable and unreliable electric power supply situation with customers exposed to frequent power outages. The industry also experienced poor maintenance culture of power infrastructure, obsolete power plants like the Oji River coal power, poor revenue generation, high losses, and power theft.

In the year 2001, the reform of the electricity sector began with the promulgation of the National Electric Power Policy (NEPP), which had the goal of establishing an efficient electricity market. It had focal point of privatising the utility assets to inject better investment and managerial styles for the utilities.



Source: The Power Sector in Nigeria, July 2016 by PwC / Nigeria Power Baseline Report (2015)

The privatisation pathway was set when the Electric Power Sector Act (EPSRA) was announced in March 2005. The foremost objective was to evaluate the utilities in terms of their value chain and put them under a holding to fast track the privatisation process. This resulted in the transformation of NEPA to the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) in 2006.

With the transitional corporation, PHCN enabled by the EPSRA was enacted and the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) was established as an independent regulatory body for the electricity industry in Nigeria. PHCN had 18 successor companies comprising six Generation Companies (GenCos), 11 Distribution Companies (DisCos) and the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) created from NEPA.

In 2010, the Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trading Plc. (NBET) was established as a credible off-taker of electric power from generation companies. By November 2013, the privatisation of four GenCos and 10 DisCos was completed with the sales of 60 per cent equity. The Federal Government however retained the ownership of the TCN. In November 2014, the privatisation of all the 11 DisCos was completed.

Establishment of NERC

The EPSRA 2005 amongst other things, advocated for an independent sector regulator to uphold and enforce rules in the pre-privatised market and then work to become more efficient in the post-privatised era. The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) was then created by the Act and performs its operations based on the guidelines stipulated in the Act. In October 2005, the pioneer commission was inaugurated with the Chairman, Dr Ransome Owan.

For the new sector learning the art of competition, the commission began making regulations and codes that will guide the power sector operators now referred to as 'market participants'. In November 2006, the Commission issued the Customer Complaints handling Standards and Procedures Regulation.

By April 2007, it held a consultation on the proposed Multi-Year Tariff Order (MYTO) Methodology was issued to the public. It also issued the Regulation on Customer Service Standards of Performance for Electricity Distribution Companies in December of the same year. The Multi-Year Tariff Order (MYTO 1), being a guiding tariff for power purchase and sales came into effect on July 1, 2008. To guide transmission, distribution and effective metering of customers, NERC rolled out the Grid Code, Distribution Code and Metering Code in August of 2008.

With controversy surrounding the pioneer commissioners, an Administrator was appointed to oversee the affairs of the Commission in February 2009. The Administrator was answerable to the minister and its independence reduced. It is believed in some quarters that the challenge with the actualisation of an autonomous regulator over the power sector became deepened at this point. By December 2010, the Second Commission was inaugurated with seven commissioners led by Dr Sam Amadi, the Chairman.

The MYTO methodology was reviewed in March 2012 after a public consultation as directed by the EPSRA. The MYTO 2 then came into effect on June 1, in a clear attempt to provide a guiding tariff for electricity pricing and sales. Given the rising rate of electrical accidents in the power sector, the Commission in July 2014, issued the Health and Safety Code to guide operators on preventing and or reporting accidents. Accidents deemed to have been caused by negligence of operators began to attract sanctions for offenders and compensation to victims.

In what the Commission described as a way of updating the MYTO, it launched the MYTO 2.1 on January 1, 2015, which was amended in April. By December, NERC rolled out the Feed-In-Tariffs for Renewable Energy (RE) generation after there were signs of investors seeking to build renewable energy plants. Presently, plants for about 1,140mw of electricity from solar power are being constructed. The plants are expected to begin operation by 2018.

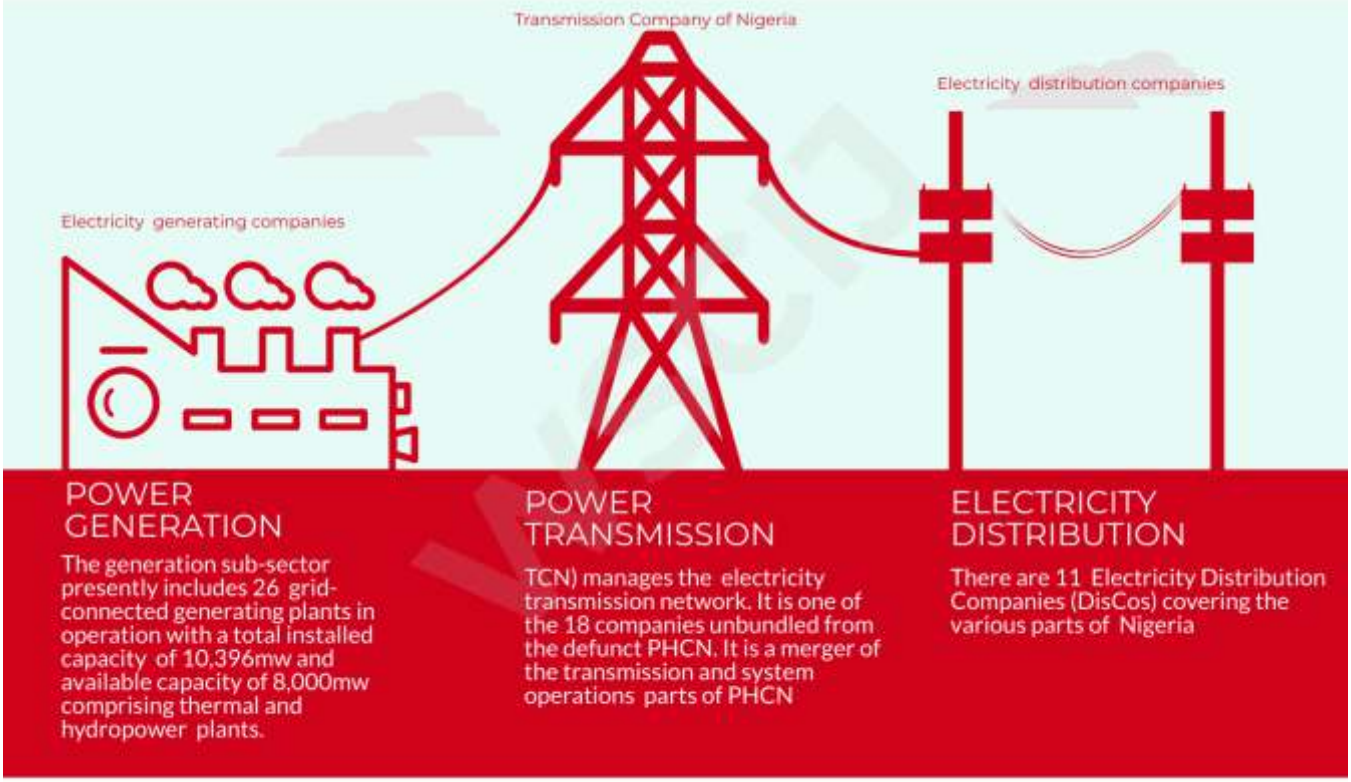
Due to demands for a cost reflective tariff that actually takes into account factors of production, NERC again issued the MYTO 2015 in February 2016 which sets out a 10-year tariff plan with semi-annual review and adjustment according to the prevailing exchange rate, inflation, gas price, and power generation statistics.

The tenure of the second commission came to an end in December 2015. Afterwards, Dr Anthony Akah was appointed the Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) till February 2017 when the third set of commissioners were inaugurated. However, the appointment of Prof James Momoh by the Presidency as Chairman of the Commission is yet to be cleared by the Senate as at May 2017.

Electricity delivery system value chain

The Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry (NESI) has transformed with time; from a wholly government controlled system to private led market. The privatisation of 18 companies was completed in November 2013 after a transaction over $3 billion proceeds.

The electricity value chain in Nigeria consists of the Generation, Transmission and Distribution. However the chain includes sections like the gas suppliers (raw materials), ancillary service providers (NERC, NBET, Market Operator (MO)) and the end users of electricity – consumers.



Power generation

The generation sub-sector presently includes 26 grid-connected generating plants in operation with a total installed capacity of 10,396mw and available capacity of 8,000mw comprising thermal and hydropower plants. The plants consist of the privatised GenCos, Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and the generating stations under the National Integrated Power Project (NIPP).

The privatised plants as at November 2013 are 776mw Afam power, 414mw Sapele Power, 1,020mw Egbin Power, 900mw Ughelli Power. The three hydros are on long-term concession. They are 760mw Kainji Hydro, 578mw Jebba Hydro and 600mw Shiroro Hydro.

IPPs are power plants managed by the private sector prior to the privatisation process. These include Shell-operated – 642mw Afam VI, 480mw Agip operated – Okpai, Ibom Power, NESCO and 270mw AES Barges.

As an intervention of the three tiers of government, the Federal Government in 2004 incorporated the Niger Delta Power Holding Company (NDPHC), which built 10 thermal power plants under the National Integrated Power Projects (NIPP). They have a capacity of 4,774mw of which eight of the plants are operating presently but at lower capacity due to gas financing constraint.

More IPPs have been licenced by NERC including the 400mw Azura power, the 1200mw Ezuma Coal power, and licences for 14 solar power plants that will be adding 1140mw to the electricity grid in the next two years.

In the post-privatised power sector, the Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trading Plc. (NBET) purchases power generated by the GenCos and IPPs at agreed prices stated in Power Purchase Agreements (PPA) and resells to the DisCos which deliver the power to the end consumer.

Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism (WSCIJ)

Photo credit: Justina Asishana

Power transmission

The Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) manages the electricity transmission network. It is one of the 18 companies unbundled from the defunct PHCN. It is a merger of the transmission and system operations parts of PHCN. It was incorporated in November 2005 and issued a transmission license on July 1, 2006. TCN is presently fully owned and operated by the government and as part of the reform programme of the government, it is to be reorganised and restructured to improve its reliability and expand its capacity.

TCN's licensed activities include electricity transmission, system operation and electricity trading. It is responsible for evacuating electric power generated by the electricity generating companies (GenCos) and wheeling it to distribution companies (DisCos). It provides the vital transmission infrastructure between the GenCos and the DisCos' Feeder Sub-stations. The transmission network consists of high voltage substations with a total (theoretical) transmission wheeling capacity of 7,500mw and over 20,000km of transmission lines. Currently, transmission-wheeling capacity is at 6,000mw, which is higher than the distribution capability of 5,000mw. TCN consists of three operational departments:

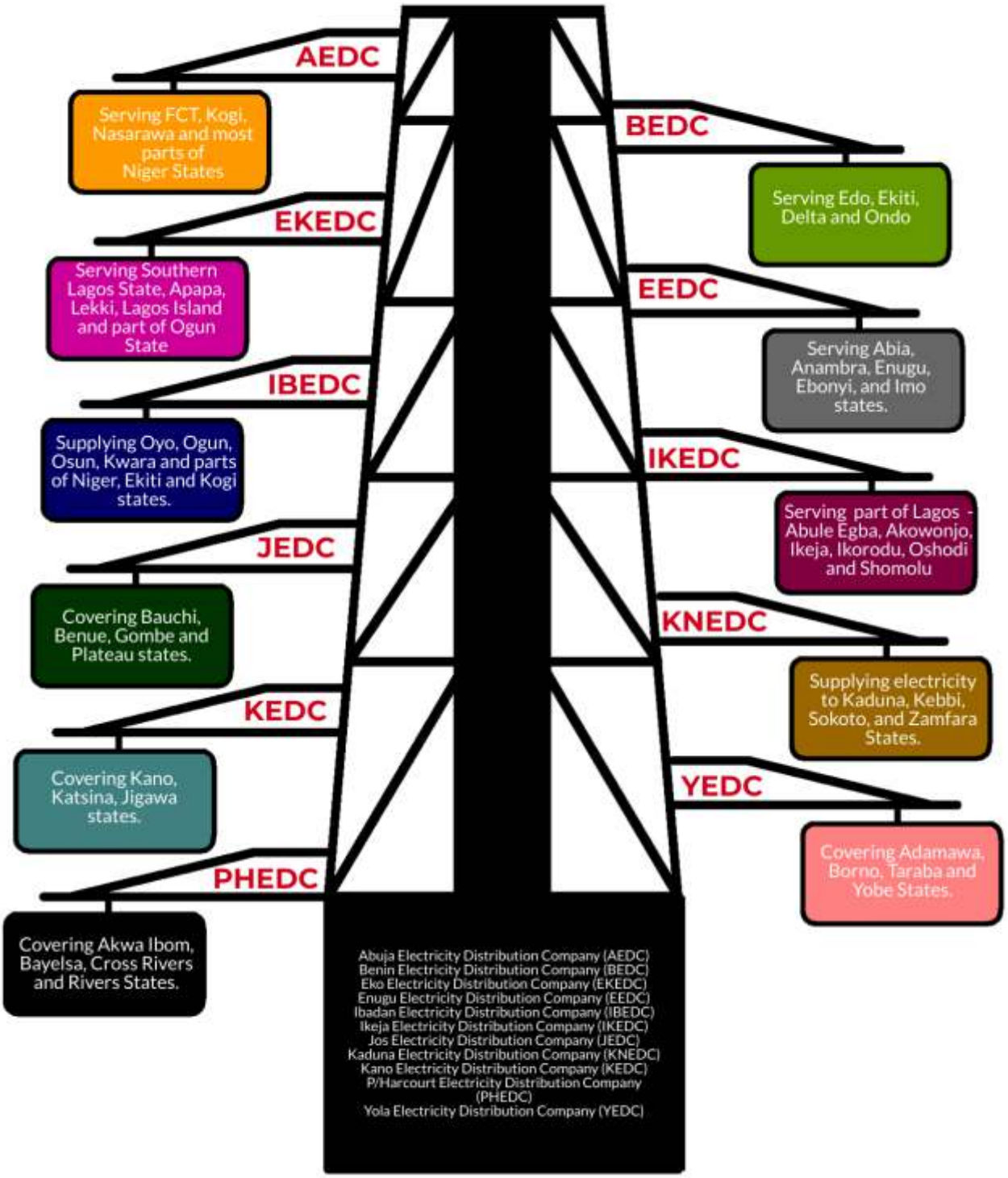
- **Transmission Service Provider (TSP)**: The TSP oversees the development and maintenance of the transmission infrastructure. It is responsible for the national inter-connected transmission system of substations and power lines and providing open access transmission services. Its role is to maintain the physical infrastructure that make up the transmission grid and expand it to new areas.

- **System Operations (SO)**: The SO manages the flow of electricity throughout the power system from generation to distribution companies. It operates the Grid Code for the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry (NESI). The SO has the responsibility for ensuring that the transmission grid lines are reliable and maintaining the technical stability of the grid through its operations of planning, dispatch, and control of the electricity on the grid.

- **Market Operations (MO)**: The MO administers the market rules of the NESI. It is responsible for the administration of the Electricity Market and promoting efficiency in the market. At the long-term stage of the electricity market, ensuring and promoting competition among market participants will be a key function of the MO.

Electricity distribution/retailing

There are 11 Electricity Distribution Companies (DisCos) covering the various parts of Nigeria



NERC in the power sector value chain

The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) was created as an independent body, established by the EPSRA of 2005 to undertake technical and economic regulation of the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry (NESI). The Commission has its headquarters in Abuja, and has currently six zonal offices in the six geopolitical zones of the country.

NERC is vested with the mandate of licensing operators, determining operating codes and standards, establishing customer rights and obligations and setting cost-reflective-industry-tariffs. It seeks to demonstrate qualities of transparency, fairness and accountability as an independent regulator stipulated by the EPSRA. Regulatory decisions are to be taken by a board of Commissioners under section 34(1) of the EPSRA which states that, the "Commission shall consist of seven fulltime Commissioners appointed by the President subject to confirmation by the Senate."

The regulator should keep an eye on the operators, consumers, industry and issues of sustainability. To run its affairs, the Commission collects 1.5 per cent of market revenue as regulatory charge received through the Market Operator. This enables it to perform its many roles, including regulating standards of performance for all electricity licensees and monitor performance to ensure that those standards are met and maintained or even exceeded; monitoring and enforcing rules; and organising market working groups, panels and committees for consultation, dispute resolution, rule-making and protection of public interest.

Photo credit: Saheed Olugbon

Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism (WSCIJ)

Photo credit: Olanrewaju Elegbede

Policy environment of NERC

NERC is a sector-wide regulator covering both the technical and social aspects of electricity generation. It focuses on the three parts of the value chain. Major source of power in Nigeria is gas but because it cannot supply gas, it has no direct role. Its indirect role is that its act or lack of it impacts on the capacity to generate power. With the creation of the Nigerian Electricity Management Services Agency (NEMSA) in 2014, some technical enforcement and meter testing is no longer part of commission's roles.

The roles of NERC in the power sector can be broadly categorised into economic, ensuring standards, stimulating efficiency and balance interests.

- **Economic:** The Commission permits entrants into the electricity market by granting licenses of new investors and ensuring they operate by the set rules. The operators are therefore subject to NERC's authority to sanction should they violate the terms of licence.

- **Standard:** On ensuring standard, enabling a competitive market is the most important mandate of the commission. NERC has to ensure a market that is standard enough for the investor to plan, invest, recover investment and make profit. A good tariff is a necessary but insufficient criterion for the buoyancy of the sector. Price setting is a critical aspect for creating a stable market but the commission ought to balance it optimal investments that would improve services.

- **Efficiency:** Although NERC does not regulate gas supply, it works with actors to set the price of gas supply to power. In planning the tariff under MYTO, the commission often takes into account the prevailing gas price to ensure that such tariff guarantees availability and delivery of gas to maximise power generation. It also regulates the conditions for power generation by setting the price for the recovery of generation investments. Currently, there is no adequate generation; therefore, there is no competitive market. Also, new costs are being discovered— knowing the efficient cost is a science and Nigeria is yet to achieve this and it poses a great deal of regulatory challenge.

NERC interventions

Guided by the EPSRA, NERC sets short term and long term roles in the growing electricity market. In the short term, NERC does the following:

- **Design and manage electricity tariffs**: A core regulatory task is to design fair and equitable electricity tariffs for numerous customer classes and periodically review and redesign those tariffs considering a variety of objectives this is reflected in the NERC Multi Year Tariff Order. Inherent to this process is the balancing of costs, benefits, and risk among ratepayers, utilities, and private investors, as well as aligning tariffs with public policy objectives. Tariffs must be designed at rates high enough to maintain the financial and operational health of the utility, attract private investment, meet growing demand, minimise outages, and address a variety of other capital-intensive objectives. Yet, consumer costs must be low enough to promote continued economic growth and productivity, protect the interests of low-income populations, and prevent ratepayers from providing windfall profits to utilities and private investors. Tariffs for one rate class may be subsidised by other rate classes or government budgets. Raising rates to reflect the true cost of delivered electricity may be necessary in many settings to ensure the financial health of the utility, but this option may be politically or economically unattractive (NACOP, 2014).

- **Maintain and expand reliable electricity access**: Electricity disruptions and supply shortages can have significant economic costs to a jurisdiction as a whole. As a result of power shortage, utilities rely on load shedding, industrial load response, or expensive emergency power while consumers rely on inefficient sources to bridge the shortage. Coordinated planning efforts, large capital expenditures, and associated rate increases are often required to meet demand growth and maintain system reliability, particularly in the context of rapid economic growth. Emerging markets experience deteriorating infrastructure, unmet demand, power quality issues, power scarcity, and large technical and non -technical losses; raising investment cost under these conditions may pose difficulties.

- **Facilitate private investment/ cost recovery**: Private investments help to take strain off of utility balance sheets or government budgets as capital expenditures and associated financing costs are avoided. To the extent that a power sector is open to private investment, and perhaps aims to increase such investment, the regulator must create a stable investment ecosystem. The Regulator approves Power Purchase Agreements (PPA) and reviews Transmission Use of System (TUOS) Agreements to provide private investors with certainty that those contracts will be honoured. Avoiding erratic and non-transparent decision-making helps to reduce investors' perceived regulatory risk and contributes to keeping the utilities' cost of capital low. NERC started with the Interim Rules (IR) in 2013 immediately after the privatisation and further switched to the Transitional Electricity Market (TEM) in 2015 to facilitate market competition. It works closely with the Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trader (NBET) to give confidence to investors and financiers, and try to protect vulnerable groups.

- **Technical safety and reliability of power system**: Regulators must work with system operators, utilities, and standards bodies to develop and enforce standards for the safe interconnection to and operation of the power system. These tasks include, but not limited to: establishing technical requirements for transmission and distribution

(T&D) expansion and power system components, rules for interconnection of utility-scale and Embedded Generation. Most of these rules and codes have been developed by NERC and can be accessed on its website: www.nerc.gov.ng.

- **Security of infrastructure:** The regulator in coordination with other governmental institutions, play a key role in facilitating the security of power infrastructure; typically no singular institution is usually positioned to ensure the security of the infrastructure. However, the regulator in an emerging electricity market create frameworks to promote long-term security of supply for fuels used at generation facilities, minimise the frequency of fuel scarcity events, and insulate captive consumers from fuel price volatility and scarcity -related spikes.

In the long term, the regulatory commission prepares to drive technological change, economic growth/development, evolving social priorities, and global events in the power sector. Some of these objectives are new while others represent evolutions of existing objectives. Some of the long-term focus of NERC includes reducing health and environmental impacts of power system operation.
Another long-term outlook is to support the development and investment in renewable and alternative power sources. NERC in 2015 created the Renewable Energy (RE) feed-in-tariff methodology to enable entrants have a tariff to sell solar power or any other RE power to willing buyers.

NERC also ought to promote Embedded Generation (EG) or captive power in the long run, to ensure the generation of more readily available power. It has developed a code for this in recent times. Although the EG concept is evolving in the electricity market, the commission has a role to play to ensure it does not clash with the traditional utility business models and financial arrangements. This is to help balance the costs and benefits of EG for both the operators and the customers.

The Commission also should advocate for smart grid technologies, which would ease integration of distributed power generation.

Also in the long run, the commission must facilitate consumer participation in the electricity market. It is supposed to provide an enabler for consumers to know their rights, what they consume and when they are short-changed. It is also supposed to have robust complaints and redress mechanisms to give the power sector confidence. NERC has done more of this in recent time by creating 19 forum offices where aggrieved consumers could present their complaints not addressed at the customer service units of the Distribution Companies (DisCos).

Successes/challenges of NERC interventions

Successes

Since inception, NERC has recorded significant achievements including the expansion of capacity and network by the issuance of licences for electricity generation, transmission and distribution, as well as the development of industry codes and standards, market rules and a multi-year tariff order. In addition, the Commission has issued various regulations and orders that have created an attractive and stable electricity market in Nigeria.

These achievements have been made possible by ensuring that market transactions are rule based and regulatory interventions are preceded by robust consultative and stakeholder engagement processes to ensure transparency, fairness and accountability.

- **Market expansion:** With the privatisation of the power sector and apparent role of NERC three years into the privatisation, the electricity market has become more open. The volume of investment has significantly improved in the power sector and if sustained, the sector may begin to witness improvement in power supply in the next two years or less. More investors have come into the sector to expand the market, and power operators can challenge the government regulator on certain decisions that are taken. For instance, the MYTO 2015 approval that hiked tariff by over 50 per cent was challenged by many consumer groups in court. This can only happen in a privatised and regulated market as it is emerging in Nigeria.

- **More participation in electricity market:** Many Nigerians are getting to know more about the power sector. Consumers feel more empowered to demand service. More consumer groups like the Nigerian Electricity Consumer Association Network (NECAN), Power Consumers Network (PCN), Manufacturers' Association of Nigeria (MAN), community groups and power operator groups like the Association of Nigerian Electricity Distributors (ANED) and Association of Power Generating Companies (APGC) are coming together to challenge power policies and pronouncements deemed unfavourable to them.

- **Increased power generation capacity:** The power supply availability and generation capacity have increased. From 2,000mw in 2005, it has grown to a record peak generation of 5,074mw as captured in February 2016. At present, the GenCos say there is up to 8,000mw capability, the transmission can evacuate about 6,000mw and the Distribution can take 5,000mw which points to an achievement in the sector post privatisation. Government is targeting the attainment of 10,000mw by 2019 although the forecast electricity demand of Nigeria at present is 17,000mw.

Challenges

In spite of the achievements, the regulatory commission is still enmeshed in certain challenges that may be impeding on its successes. Key among these challenges are policy framework issues, subordination to government (especially the Minister), inadequate public consultation and lack of or slow enforcement of actions on its defaulting licenses.

The policy framework of the commission is based on the EPSRA 2005 which was meant to reform the power sector and not go further on the operation of the sector after the reform. Crucial legislative tasks need to set out in terms of achieving a long term power plan or legislation of the Nigerian power sector in the post privatisation era.

The commission as established by the Act of 2005 should be an independent agency capable of sanction licences that are operated by government. The independence rating of NERC has declined further in recent times, leaving the minister to lord over its affairs. This is demonstrable in the fact that the third set of commissioners was inaugurated in February 2017, 14 months after the second set of commissioners left in December 2015. The Act stipulates that the new board should be constituted and be inaugurated before the wound up of the existing one so that no vacuum is created the regulatory leadership roles. However till date, a Chairman/CEO is yet to be confirmed for the commission hence leaving the major decisions of technical and commercial electricity market regulations in the hand of the minister to endorse. There is therefore a need to limit political interference typical of the Nigerian private sector - an extension of government. A Politically Exposed Persons (PEP) analysis for investors will show strong links to government quarters and NERC ought to be wary of this.

Inconsistent implementation challenges in directives have helped to downplay the role of NERC. There are instances where the commission issued a directive and later freeze or suspend such. In 2015, NERC after approving the MYTO 2.1 froze increase in tariff for residential customers for six months. The same year, it reviewed collection loss which it had declared to be 50 per cent earlier to zero per cent. Another case was in the MYTO 2015 endorsed in December 2015 but suspended for a month till February 2016. Operators of the distribution value chain said the sector had a shortfall of about N12 billion due to the act.

The media and Nigeria's power sector

The role of the media in reporting the power sector

The media is said to be the 'fourth estate of the realm'. The social responsibility of the media is to hold government and stakeholders accountable for the public good. It is expected to expose wrong doings, portray achievements and set agenda for economic and social development.

Reporting of the power sector may be said to be robust especially in the privatisation era and with the involvement of private hands in operation of power utilities. However, the technicality of the sector is limiting the full role of the media in giving in-depth insights and reports about the sector.

Basically, the media in the Nigerian power sector is expected to perform the following roles:

Monitoring privatisation process and agreements

During the privatisation that was completed in 2013, both the federal government and the successors of the utility companies had several pacts on the deliverables for the sector in the short run. Most of these promises were tagged as 'Conditions Precedents' (CP) to be achieved before handing over the utilities and after the handing over. Some of the instances include the promise of DisCos operators to meter all customers within the first six months, reduce the Aggregate Technical, Collection and Commercial losses (ATC&C) from over 50 per cent in some of the DisCos to less than 15 per cent within the first five years of operation, and revamping the generation utilities. Government on its part in the Service Level Agreement (SLA) promised incentives to drive the infant market like the N100 billion subsidy that has not been given, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Nigeria Electricity Market Stabilisation Fund (NEMSF) being disbursed among others.

The media occupies a vital position in reminding the parties of these promises and ensuring that they deliver to ensure the growth of the sector. However, this is yet to be seen in real terms as routine publications by core media outfits in the country.

Simplifying sector terms for public understanding

The media as it is known plays the role of an educator and an informer in the society. For the power sector, there are many technical terms, policy drives and declarations that look strange to members of the public. It is the responsibility of the media to breakdown these terms towards ensuring that electricity customers and the general public understand the implications of them. For instance, in June 2017, a section of the media misinformed Nigerians about the directive of the regulator, NERC stopping all large power users (Maximum Demand Customers) mostly commercial and industrial customers who have not been metered by the DisCos from paying estimated bills. The media section however reported mistakenly that all electricity customers including the residential ones without meter to stop paying the estimated bills. NERC and the DisCos were forced to clarify the facts again for the jubilation public to be cautious.

Giving wider voice to the voiceless

The media gives voice to the voiceless. This is much more exemplified in its human angle story capabilities. It is expected that the Nigerian media raise effort in ensuring

that the voices of customers who are treated unjustly by power operators are heard. This could be by way of exploitative, unfair power billing, deprivation of power supply, conniving with vandals to wreck havocs on power installations and more. The operators also have a right to be heard if there are grievances against their customers.

In-depth reporting and follow-up on power sector activities

The media has a duty to serially do in-depth reporting of power sector activities. Issues like system collapse, foreign loans for power investments, liquidity crisis in the sector, poor gas supply, shoddy projects, operators' efficiencies, government lapses, among others need to be followed-up by the media routinely to keep the sector actors on their toes.

Summary of report on media coverage of electricity/NERC

A three-month monitoring of twelve newspapers out of over fifteen national dailies in Nigeria, was carried out to assess the media landscape in relation to how much and how well it follows key electricity regulatory institutions, especially the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), and reports issues in the power sector.

The selection includes twleve newspapers selected randomly, namely The Punch, The Sun, This Day, Business Day, Leadership, The Guardian, Vanguard, New Telegraph, Daily Trust The Nation Newspapers, The Cable and Premium Times.

Quantitative documentation of every feature, editorial, advert, interview, opinion, photo, cartoons and letter on education and electricity were documented into pre-tested Microsoft Excel template and analysed. Quantitative analysis technique was triangulated with spot qualitative analysis technique for a well-rounded research output. The descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages was used to determine the quantity of media coverage, followed by thematic analyses to establish the quality of media reports in the period under review.

Analyses of data gathered from monitoring the media for electricity showed that many of the stories lacked depth and were largely straight news; NERC's activities were underreported; many photos used by reporters in their reports were stereotyped at capturing people and events; many of the reports were too technical for audience that were unschooled in the issue; and adverts had the highest count after news.

Photo credit: Taiwo Adebulu

Recommendations

Given the challenges faced by the media in the coverage of the electricity sector, the following recommendations were made:

- There is a need to urgently train more reporters to cover electricity. There is currently a dearth of journalists who are able to properly interpret the issues, understand its technicalities, have high consciousness of ethics and are able to simplify the sector for others to understand. The WSCIJ has commenced the building of a network of reporters that fit this bill but a lot of support is required to have the intervention more impactful.

- The media should raise efforts in reminding the parties involved in the power sector privatisation agreement (government, GenCos, TCN and DisCos) to deliver on their promises.

- The media should break down sector terms towards ensuring that electricity customers and the general public understand their implications.

- Reporters and editors should give human angle to electricity stories in order to ensure that the voices of aggrieved customers and or operators are heard widely.

- Editors should encourage reporters to do in-depth reporting and follow up of power sector activities.

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@WSoyinkaCentre

19C, Ike Asogwa Close, Off Bush Street, behind
Maryland Mall, Maryland, Lagos. Nigeria

0908 251 5179 wscij@wscij.org www.wscij.org

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