

Written evidence submitted by Dr Modesta Alozie and Professor Marcus Power (IRN0022)

Dr Modesta Alozie is the Lead Research Fellow on the Data and Displacement Project in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick (UK). She obtained her PhD in International Development Planning from University College London. As a Nigerian living in the UK, she has maintained contact with Nigeria through active research and policy engagements. Her research has focused on (1) understanding the link between oil, gender and conflict and (2) examining the role of Big Data in advancing humanitarian protection (both projects focused on Nigeria). She is also part of the LO-ACT research project at the University of Sheffield examining the role of small cities in the Global South in achieving low carbon transition. She is a contributing author for the 2021 United Cities and Local Government Gold Report where she wrote on the role of energy access in achieving sustainability.

Professor Marcus Power is a Professor of Human Geography at Durham University (UK). His research interests and expertise concerns (1) the political geographies and geopolitics of development and (2) energy access and the low carbon transition (both focused on sub-Saharan Africa). His most recent research projects have focused on 'South-South' cooperation, trade and investment flows in/to Africa (primarily involving three (re)emerging development donors - China, India and Brazil) and on electrification and the affordability, accessibility and sustainability of low carbon energy services in sub-Saharan Africa. He is author of *Geopolitics and Development* (Routledge, 2019).

Both are keen to draw on their research expertise and experience to assist the FAC inquiry into the Nigeria-UK relationship and to contribute suggestions for strengthening and improving it.

Introduction and context

1. As a significant diplomatic force and geopolitical presence within West Africa, a major participant in continental African politics and an increasingly important international economic actor, Nigeria has long been courted by a range of foreign powers seeking to develop strategic alliances.
2. In our view what the UK could most usefully do to enhance and extend its relationship with Nigeria is to *differentiate* the nature of its co-operation with the country from what is on offer from these other strategic actors and to focus it much more directly around issue-specific areas such as climate change and (low carbon) energy access.

3. Energy access is one of the biggest and most critical development challenges facing the sub-Saharan Africa region. Similarly, securing sufficient investment to address the impacts of climate change remains an urgent priority for the continent.
4. Aligning climate investment and energy access goals (both of which are key to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs) is a challenging but crucial objective that can create new jobs and greater economic growth as well as harvesting wide-ranging social and health benefits for Africa's peoples.
5. Even with efficiency measures in place, energy demand in African economies is expected to nearly double by 2040. As the most populous African country with a population of over 200 million people (60% of whom are under 25 years of age) Nigeria is a strategically important country for achieving global energy transition - addressing the very real impacts of energy poverty in the country can make a significant difference in the lives of millions in ways which have the potential to serve as an important exemplar for others in the continent.
6. As an oil dependent economy (the oil sector accounts for 50% of the government revenue and 90% of foreign exchange), Nigeria's economy has been in consistent decline due to a massive reduction in oil revenue as the world moves away from oil. With poor management of resources and additional economic pressures arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigeria's economic situation has worsened as the number of Nigerians living below the country's poverty line increased to just over 40% of the population (or 83 million people) in 2020.
7. In this climate of rising economic challenges and given the significant capital costs of rolling out clean energy technologies on a large scale, making progress with clean energy access in Nigeria is highly dependent on foreign investment. There are a number of foreign actors involved from the EU, World Bank and African Development Bank (AfDB) to a variety of bilateral initiatives from countries like Germany and the Netherlands. China's focus in Nigeria's energy sector has often been on oil and gas infrastructure and large-scale hydropower rather than on renewables and the expansion of clean energy access.

The challenge of expanding clean energy access

8. Given the strong historical emphasis on oil, renewable energy in Nigeria remains in a somewhat nascent stage. Momentum is however certainly growing to expand access to clean energy in the country, especially since 2020

when the Federal Government launched the Nigeria Electrification Project (NEP) in partnership with many multilateral institutions including the World Bank and AfDB. NEP's objective is to expand access to cheap, affordable, safe and clean energy to underserved communities in Nigeria (particularly households in rural areas) and has a strong focus on micro small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

9. In December 2020 the Federal government also launched a 'Solar Power Naija' project, focussing on five million solar connections for off-grid communities as part of the Economic Sustainability Plan (ESP) developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, the state governments are increasingly prioritising expanding energy access in their cities. The Ogun state government, for example, has launched the *Light Up Ogoni* Initiative in partnership with eight private sector energy producers. This initiative will generate electricity from renewable sources and from waste and seeks to extend electricity access to industries and households. The Kurdula mini-grid electricity project (involving states such as Sokoto, Ogun, Niger, Plateau and Cross-River) is another example that is using solar energy technologies to expand access in rural areas.
10. Despite these efforts, Nigeria still has the highest energy access deficit in the world. Over 85 million Nigerians (43% of the country's population) lack access to grid electricity according to 2020 World Bank data. Where people have on-grid electricity access, it is often unreliable and unaffordable leading many poor Nigerians to depend on electricity theft and illegal connections to access electricity, endangering their lives in the process.
11. Electrification projects such as the NEP can certainly help in delivering access to sustainable energy in Nigeria but the focus on technology alone (such as solar hybrid mini grids) is not enough. Researchers agree that to achieve a just energy transition that is enduring, all members of the society must have the chance to fully engage and participate in energy policy and planning. In particular, the perspectives and experiences of vulnerable and excluded groups must be integrated in all phases of the energy system, from planning to consumption.
12. Nigeria is an extremely fragile state divided along ethnic, gender, age and class lines. Under Nigeria's current systems, certain groups and geographies are underrepresented in policy making and in the distribution of economic resources, meaning that the availability of energy technologies and systems will not necessarily translate to affordable energy access for all. In particular, young people have not shared in Nigeria's oil economic progress as reflected in the high youth unemployment, and political processes are often top-down

and rooted in gerontocracy (where a state is ruled by leaders who are significantly older than most of the adult population), which further entrenches the social exclusion of young people and the poor.

13. To make clean energy more accessible and address the challenges of energy poverty, the voices and experiences of excluded groups such as youths and the poor - who are likely to miss the opportunities to benefit from investment in energy services because they lack capital - *must* be integrated into energy policy and planning.
14. The benefits of including young people in the development of Nigeria's energy system are many. First, including young people in energy decision making and planning can reveal existing inequalities in young people's everyday lives that contribute to their energy poverty. Youth participation in energy decision-making can also enable a better understanding of how young people's economic and social experiences undermine their capacity to access modern energy services. Such insights can enable policymakers to plan for affordable electrification options that reflect young people's varied economic and social situations. This can be an effective way to reduce poverty for the majority of Nigeria's youthful population. Second, the technology sector is growing exponentially in Nigeria, and it is being dominated by young people. Young people's knowledge about technology can therefore contribute to a significant scaling up of innovations around clean energy and climate change. Third, the unemployment rate is very high in Nigeria, with many young Nigerians lacking meaningful employment opportunities. Energy access can boost businesses and job creation, whilst improving productivity.
15. Despite the huge benefits that youth participation in the energy process can bring, a lot of institutional, cultural, and social factors can undermine it. Weak institutions marked by corruption and a lack of transparency can mean that even when young people participate in energy planning, their perspectives will be left out at the implementation phase. Additionally, political power is distributed unequally between young people and the older generation and this imbalance may hinder young people's participation in energy planning while privileging the voices of the older generation. Understanding how such contextual political, economic and cultural factors may affect youth participation in the energy process will be an important area of inquiry going forward.

Recommendations for UK government

16. The UK government can support Nigeria in addressing its energy access challenges most obviously by directly financing investments in the renewable

energy sector, but also by assisting in the acquisition of renewable energy technologies and in facilitating knowledge transfer.

17. State-level co-operation is important but there are also a variety of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) involved in renewable energy on both sides of the Nigeria-UK relationship. Within the UK there are a considerable number of SMEs with experience in delivering clean energy solutions and in developing off-grid and mini-grid solutions in rural areas. Similarly, there a growing number of micro small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) involved in Nigeria's energy sector. Bringing them together and promoting dialogue and co-operation between them could play a significant role in addressing Nigeria's energy challenges, whilst also boosting job creation.
18. In the UK academic and NGO communities there is also considerable 'know-how' and experience around renewable energy and its interface with rural development. The UK government could usefully and productively create more opportunities for this to be shared and actively promote cross-border partnerships in this area as well as joint research programmes concerning, for example, the many political, economic and social factors that shape young people's engagement with energy issues and how they can best be addressed.
19. There are a wide variety of national, regional and global actors involved in the nascent renewables sector in Nigeria. Working in close co-operation and partnership with the Nigerian state (and perhaps by establishing a new forum for the purpose) the UK government could usefully play an important role in coordinating and mobilising them to promote a more collective and 'joined up' approach to addressing energy access challenges, to share best practice and to avoid duplication.
20. The UK government could play a key role in promoting a more inclusive approach to planning energy futures in Nigeria that much more actively incorporates the voices and experiences of young people and the poor. This would involve contributing to the promotion and facilitation of a much more participatory and less 'top down' approach to energy planning.
21. More generally, the UK could also usefully develop a strong emphasis on young people in its cooperation initiatives. This might involve, for example, support for young people's involvement in the technology sector (especially renewable energy technologies) or for projects that develop local skills capacity amongst young people in renewable energy technologies in a range of areas from design to maintenance to the development of the digital skills that are driving clean energy innovations.

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June 2021