

**Written evidence from the British Council (IRN0029)**

**House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee**

# **Implementing the Integrated Review in Nigeria**

**Monday 7 June 2021**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 The British Council is a long-established part of the UK's overseas infrastructure in Nigeria. Operating from a number of sites across the country and with a large network of partners, we support the UK's international objectives by building the connections and creating the conditions to foster greater collaboration and understanding in the future.
- 1.2 While an operationally independent Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB), we are committed to supporting delivery of the UK's international objectives, including the Foreign Secretary's ambitions for Official Development Assistance (ODA).
- 1.3 Our work in Nigeria focusses on UK/Nigeria educational and creative links. We connect education institutions with a view to encouraging collaboration on research, science and innovation and help drive UK education exports and international student recruitment. Through partnerships with the creative industries, we also uncover new opportunities for UK creativity and are helping to develop a thriving, collaborative community of UK and Nigerian creatives for the future.
- 1.4 The operating environment in Nigeria is challenging, with corruption often present and problematic. In terms of international competition, the UK enjoys a strong perception among young Nigerians, although there is a real sense of challenge from a number of international competitors, including China.
- 1.5 Funding for our work in Nigeria comes primarily from the ODA portion of our grant-in-aid and from partnership funding. The challenging economic picture in the UK and the move to 0.5% have meant a slight decrease in the funding available for the British Council in Nigeria, but its designation as a priority country means that the bulk of grant-in-aid going into Nigeria has been protected for 2021/22. Our future funding settlement will be decided in the wake of the Comprehensive Spending Review in the autumn.

## **2. How we work in Nigeria**

- 2.1 The British Council Nigeria is operationally independent of the FCDO, comprising a team of 190 UK-appointed and local personnel led by our highly experienced Country Director, Lucy Pearson, with over seven years in-country. At regional level, our work in Nigeria is coordinated through our Regional Director for Sub-Saharan Africa.
- 2.2 However, we have strong and mutually supportive relationship with FCDO in Nigeria with a shared commitment to delivering against strategic priorities. The British Council's Country Director is a member of the High Commission Senior Leadership Team, attends the Strategy Board and contributes to Country and Business Planning, in particular towards Education in the Human Development strategic pillar. Following the FCO/DfID merger, the British Council's work in Nigeria sits within the "People-to-People" block of the High Commission. We work to support the FCDO's fusing of teams to build capabilities in policy and programming while utilising the connections it brings to foster new UK-Nigeria partnerships, develop joint proposals on soft power and build the UK brand in Nigeria.
- 2.3 The Country Director meets regularly with the High Commissioner, her Deputies and with the FCDO's programme leads in relevant areas – Education, Climate, Soft Power, Prosperity as well as Security (OSMs) and Trade. In developing our own Nigeria strategy and plan, our Country Director proactively consults with the High Commissioner, deputies, and relevant thematic leads to seek inputs, feedback and build allegiance towards strategic focus, plans and delivery. The strength of this relationship and the regular interactions mean that this is a genuinely collaborative

process, with the most recent draft Country Plan for 21/22 shared with the High Commissioner and senior FCDO stakeholders on 2 March 2021.

- 2.4 Our work has helped support policy development at the High Commission, as well as planning and programming. The research and insight we are able to provide, as well as the access to networks we create are of real value to the mission. Of particular recent note have been our Next Generation Nigeria report, as well as our role in delivering the Education World Forum and Going Global, our international conference for education leaders.
- 2.5 We are also a delivery partner and co-designer of several co-funded programmes with the FCDO in-country. One of our global programmes, Connecting Classrooms for Global Learning is particularly active in Nigeria and we are the delivery partner for the KaLMA programme (Kano Literacy and Maths Accelerator) part of the flagship PLANE (Partnership for Learning for All in Nigerian Education) programme. This focusses on inclusion and girls' education.
- 2.6 Previously, British Council Nigeria was a member of the Nigerian Development Partners Group, co-chaired by the High Commission. This group coordinates aid interventions among the international community. Around 2019 we were asked to remove ourselves from the Group, due a to perceived conflict of interest by the Head of DFID Nigeria. Whilst the British Council does often have dual roles in country – in policy support and programme delivery - we also have the experience, professionalism and our “Dual Role Guidance” to manage potential conflicts of interest and are able to exclude ourselves before obtaining privileged information. Given our knowledge, experience, track, networks, influence, insights and programme funding in areas of common interest to the Nigerian Development Partners Group, we continue to believe that there is mutual value in our future participation.

### **3. Building trade, educational and other connections for the UK**

- 3.1 One of the central aims of the British Council, set out in our Royal Charter, is to develop long-term relationships and lasting connections which facilitate exchange, trust and mutual understanding. This is all the more important in Nigeria, where business is frequently driven by personal relationships and connections.
- 3.2 Our 77-year history in Nigeria, and the regard in which we are held, is unrivalled by competitor cultural relations organisations. A 2018 survey found that the British Council is both better known and regarded in Nigeria than our competitors, and over 40% of those surveyed said they would recommend the British Council'.

#### **Trade**

- 3.3 We use our long-standing relationships, and the good will that we help foster, to build trade links between the UK and Nigeria. Working with the FCDO and other government departments, we support sector specific trade missions to highlight commercial opportunities within the market. We curate market intelligence and data, broker links, support collaborations between creative entrepreneurs and higher education institutions.
- 3.4 The value of our work as a catalyst for trade is recognised in the close working relationship we enjoy with the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy, Helen Grant MP. Since taking up her post we have been in regular contact and, in December 2020, we supported her visit to Nigeria where she met with partners in the Creative Industries and participants of the Nigeria Creative Enterprise support programme (NICE). The aim of the visit was to build a greater understanding of the needs, opportunities for trade, investment and collaboration and the barriers across the creative sectors.

- 3.5 A key outcome of this visit was to cement the idea of a physical trade mission to Nigeria, with a redefined focus, moving away from one specific sector to a broader, cross-sector creative industries focus encompassing film, TV, media, fashion and music. In advance of the trade mission, we supported DIT to deliver a series of virtual sessions to 'warm up' the UK sector. During the visit of the Minister for Africa and Helen Grant in April 2021, we facilitated and attended a dinner, hosted by the British Deputy High Commissioner with senior leaders in the Nigerian creative industries, building connections at the highest levels and further highlighting opportunities for the UK and trade.

## **Education**

- 3.6 Through education, we encourage links and strong relationships across a range of sectors. The UK remains the market leader for educational investment and exchange for Nigeria. Despite increased competition from other markets, the UK remains the top destination for Nigerians looking to study abroad, and Nigeria contributes around £300 million to the UK's economy annually.
- 3.7 The British Council facilitate and support this market by leveraging existing relationships to encourage a receptiveness to new ideas and open markets. We connect UK HE institutions with their peers in Nigeria, and through programmes like STUDY UK we promote the UK as a destination for study for Nigerian students.
- 3.8 Nigeria is a priority country for HMG's international Higher Education and Trans-National Education. With this in mind, we work collaboratively with DIT in Nigeria and London and Sir Steve Smith (the UK's International Education Champion) to maximise UK/ Nigeria partnerships (for example with BUILA, UUKi, QAA and AdvanceHE) and opportunities to enhance attractiveness and the UK's market share.
- 3.9 In terms of international student recruitment, the UK is the top destination and will likely remain a favoured destination for Nigerians looking to study abroad. Between 2016 and 2018 (based on the student figures for both on campus and distance learning delivery models) Nigeria leads the region with a total of about £1.5billion spent on international education export. It is expected that the introduction of the graduate route in July of 2021 will lead to increased interest in study opportunities in the UK especially from Nigeria's prospective postgraduate student population.

## **Creative industries**

- 3.10 When it comes to the creative arts, NICE is just one example of a programme designed to foster collaboration and partnerships between Nigeria and the UK on fashion and film. It works to encourage greater co-creation and boost the recognition of the UK as a key partner and source of expertise and technology in the creative industries. On the conclusion of the NICE programme, 75% of participants reported a 32% increase in their revenue and attributed this to the programme. 50% also reported an improvement in their standard of living while 63% of participants had an improved perception of the UK brand and its role as leader in supporting the development of the creative industries in Nigeria<sup>ii</sup>.
- 3.11 The connections that we are able to make for the UK, its creative businesses and its educational institutions as well as the wider UK commercial sector are of intrinsic value as we continue to build and develop our strong economic links with the largest economy in Africa. Through this work we establish the UK as a partner of choice for Nigeria public and private partners.

## **Science and technology to drive innovation**

- 3.12 Support for scientific collaboration is a priority for our work, and is embedded across wider programme design and deliver. For example, we broker UK/Nigeria institutional partnerships focused on sharing global best practice and building institutional knowledge around commercialisation of research work and the development of sustainable partnerships.
- 3.13 A clear example of this is the Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform (SPHEIR). The FCDO funded grant programme is delivered across 8 locations in SSA and supports the transformation of higher education to better meet the needs of graduates and employers in focus countries. With a programme budget of £600,000 for Nigeria alone, in the last 5 years, we have built a network of 13 institutions that have through their project activities, helped transform graduate education and its outcomes by embedding innovative pedagogy within graduate social science programmes. By enhancing the educational experience for both instructors and learners, the partnership enhances the capacity of academic staff and improve students' capability to contribute to economic growth and social development. Leveraging on the lessons from this programme we have also piloted smaller scale tailored partnerships looking promoting the use of innovation in Nigerian universities and building professional capability in research.
- 3.14 We launched a large-scale grant programme to support the development of UK / SSA institutional partnerships focused on fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation within universities which captures technological advances and allows them to be full exploited. The Innovation for African Universities programme is designed to provide a platform for the development of cross continental collaborations and an exchange of learning and knowledge between participating institutions. Over a period of 18 months, starting from April 2021, a total of 21 partnerships will be brokered between UK and SSA universities with grants of over a million pounds offered to support the development of these partnerships. This programme supports the UK governments ambition to remove market barriers and increase the number of international partnerships and collaborations across a range of locations particularly priority markets like Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya.
- 3.15 The British Council too has been using the driving power of technology to improve and enhance what we do and what we are able to offer our partners around the world. Much of this work was already underway, however, the Covid-19 pandemic has acted as an accelerator, pushing us to meet the significant shifts in the way Nigeria uses technology and capitalise on the possibilities and opportunities it presents us with. We have adapted to this with a range of new digital tools and platforms for both cultural exchange and capacity building, , targeting our key audience of young Nigerians.
- 3.16 Over the last year, the majority of our programmes have been repurposed for digital delivery across a range of platforms. This has provided a model for partners and audiences, and our expertise and guidance has helped both UK and Nigerian partners adapt to the conditions of the pandemic. In 2020, we grew the online audience for our programmes by 38% to reach 3,398,901 adding to our total reach in-country of around 100 million people per year..
- 3.17 The pandemic has also increased demand for further investment in digital literacy and audience engagement. This is prompting strategic partnerships with technology organisations such as Microsoft to design and deliver programmes focused on building skills for inclusive digital participation. A pitot is scheduled for the northern Nigeria city of Kano later this year.

#### **4. The environment we operate within**

##### **Challenges for investment in Nigeria**

- 4.1 A range of challenges deter investment in Nigeria, including high levels of corruption and increasing insecurity, alongside poor infrastructure and energy access, scarcity of foreign exchange, foreign investors' concerns about the design and implementation of regulation and Nigeria's structural economic challenges. Although the World Bank highlighted that Nigeria had made some notable improvements in 2018 and 2019, Nigeria ranked 131st out of 189 countries in the 2019 World Bank's Ease of Doing Business index. Corruption in Nigeria has a significant impact on prosperity and democracy. Nigeria ranks 149th out of 180 countries on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.
- 4.2 Tackling these issues is in the UK's interest. The British Council has a history of addressing 'upstream' interventions, working towards open societies in which transparency, among other elements, is encouraged. Our Active Citizens programme is an example where this is clearly demonstrated. The programme focuses on social leadership training, promotes intercultural dialogue and community-led social development. Through the programme, individuals are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to design and implement social action projects to tackle social issues in their community. Our Active Citizens programme supported more than 800 students and six community action projects in four cities across northern Nigeria. The projects, in Jos, Kano, Sokoto and Zaria, focus on areas including women's rights, environmental sustainability and career advice

### **International Competition**

- 4.3 The UK's main trade competitors in Nigeria, in order of market share, are China, India, the USA, the Netherlands and Germany. In terms of soft power and influence, we see growing influence from the USA, France, Germany and Saudi Arabia, particularly in the Muslim North of the country. The Goethe Institute and Alliance Française have a strong presence in Lagos.
- 4.4 Of these competitors, the evolving perception of China among Nigerians is of real interest. China's soft power infrastructure and presence in Nigeria is not yet particularly evident or strong. There is a network of Confucius Institutes located within established higher education institutes in Nigeria, for example the University of Lagos and UniLag. There are also a number of Nigeria-China Friendship Associations and some delivery of language training. Social media is also a key part of China's soft media armoury in Nigeria.
- 4.5 Whilst there is no trend data for Nigeria, attitudes generally have hardened towards China, though we see contradictions - on the one hand China appears to be less attractive and trusted than it was even a couple of years ago but is at the same time seen as the most important (trade and investment) player by a significant margin.
- 4.6 While the importance of China to trade and investment is clear, Chinese influence in this area is not universally seen as a good thing in Nigeria. The damaging impact of cheap imports and their effects on domestic manufacturing, the perception of an over-reliance on Chinese goods and on Chinese workers are of particular concern, the latter especially given the high unemployment and underemployment rates in Nigeria. These considerations will undoubtedly have had an impact on the overall perceptions data.
- 4.7 In May 2020 the British Council commissioned IposMori to undertake research on perceptions of the UK across G20 countries. Some of this data has already been made available to the Committee and full publication of this work is imminent. In this research Nigerian respondents were more likely to favour the UK over the USA than the average across G20 countries, though China remained their first choice as International Partner. The report found that:

- (a) The UK performs better than China when it comes to overall attractiveness – UK 85%, China 72%
- (b) There is a much deeper trust in people in the UK than in China - UK 63% vs China 39%
- (c) There is a deeper trust in Government in the UK than in China - UK 65% vs China 48%

4.8 However, there are clearly a number of other things going on that we should be alive to. Other data from the survey shows Nigerians ranking China above the UK when it comes to art and culture. This is a result which challenges other findings, both in Nigeria and elsewhere. It may however be linked to the way in which young Nigerians identify China as a country at the cutting edge of technology, far ahead of Japan and the USA for example, and far ahead of the UK too.

## 5. Funding, ODA spend and the importance of partnership

5.1 Nigeria is a diverse and highly complex operating environment with multiple interventions being delivered across sectors by several government and international development stakeholders. With limited resources, focus is required. The British Council works collaboratively with organisations with similar values and programmatic objectives. We actively participate in partnership fora and communities of practice to identify future partners and their emerging objectives, and to stay plugged in to shifts in the policy and practice environment.

5.2 In all of our ODA work we work towards the ambitions for ODA set out by the Foreign Secretary. These include:

- (a) **Climate change** – *we are adding value to the UK Government’s COP26 objectives through our global ODA programme, supporting capacity building of young people and connecting them with policymakers. Our programme has been welcomed for its support to make COP26 a ‘whole of society’ COP, working closely with XHMG partners across the network.*

In the lead up to the COP event this year, the British Council Nigeria will work with a series of critical stakeholder groups to host and deliver around 8 climate themed events and projects targeted at a cross section of youth groups, public/ private bodies and policy makers. Beyond COP26, a strand of our large scale higher education programme in SSA (Innovation for African Universities) looks to build a better understanding about climate issues with youth audiences and academia in universities with the aim of creating collaborative platforms that support the development of innovative solutions to climate change issues across the African continent

- (b) **Girls’ education** – *our holistic approach empowers girls and enables them to fulfil their potential.*

We engage with policymakers and educators to embed inclusive learning practice; provide quality English language education; and enhance pathways to employment/ FE&HE. Our ambition over the next five years for girls to receive 12 years of quality education by ensuring gender sensitive standards are embedded into our programmes. To support this, we have worked to build a repository of data and evidence through our programmes to ensure our programme design is aligned with the needs at country level. A good example of our work in this area is the Northern Nigeria Girls Education Programme (2014– 18) NNGEP. Working through international and local partnerships with NGOs and CBOs NNGEP focused on; innovative research and thought leadership suited to the Nigerian context, interventions with political, traditional and religious leaders and community-based advocacy. NNGEP contributed to the enrolment of 200,000 girls

and supported more than 20,000 girls to transition from primary to secondary school.

- (c) **Open Societies and Conflict Resolution** – *we help the UK to build alliances and provide the next generation of young leaders with skills and agency to participate in/ change their societies.*

Whilst the British Council Nigeria has a history of successful programmes in Open Societies and Conflict Resolution, including the DFID funded programmes which ended in 2019 - Justice for All and the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme – the recommendation of the 2019 Tailored Review, the Foreign Secretary’s Review and recent FCDO strategic discussions are being taken forward and we are scaling down our (largely donor funded) work in Justice, Conflict and Stability. Our work across the education, arts and English pillars, however, all contribute towards creating societies in which transparency, open debate and good governance all thrive.

- 5.3 Nigeria is a priority country for the British Council, both due to its strategic importance to the UK, our long history in the country and its commercial importance. Reflective of this, our ODA Grant-in-Aid funding has remained relatively consistent. However, our funding allocation in Nigeria has seen a slight reduction in this financial year owing to the changes to ODA spend in the UK linked to the weaker than expected GNI result and the move to 0.5%.

**British Council ODA funding allocation for Nigeria by year**

18/19 - GBP	19/20 - GBP	20/21 – GBP	21/22 - GBP
2,573,750	3,008,562	3,146,646	3,035,392

- 5.4 In Nigeria as across our Global Network, the budget is focused on our strategic programme priorities in arts (including creative economies); education and the English language. This represents a more streamlined programme range, with our work across Justice, Conflict and Stability having been scaled back in order to allow us to concentrate on other programmes following the recommendations from the Tailored Review process.
- 5.5 As ODA resources have reduced due to the financial challenges of the pandemic our membership of communities of practice and partnerships have become all the more important as a means of identifying opportunities for funding, collaborative work and new partnership opportunities. Our membership of education communities-of-practice establishes an important UK link into key sector actors such as UNICEF, USAID, and EUNIC for arts and culture. This helps ensure that the UK is aware of the funding and partnership prospects in the market, highlights the collaborative opportunities, and means that we can deploy shared resources with key players for increased impact and scale.
- 5.6 Financial necessity will require many future British Council programmes in Nigeria to include a delivery model that leverages more on partnerships, seeking an 80:20 split between global and local partnerships. . We will also have a stronger focus on co-creation and joint delivery of programmes to manage costs, with an anticipated 60% of delivery being done through others.
- 5.7 More broadly, the way in which we have had to prioritise ODA towards strategic geographies and portfolios, means that efficiencies and reductions have been made elsewhere in Nigeria, the sub-Saharan Africa region and globally. Combined with the changes to the amount of money available via government grant and our commercial surplus to fund our operations in the non-ODA world, this means that the British

Council will be operating in fewer countries with reduced funding available under the current financial settlement.

## 6. Context and background

### Nigeria

- 6.1 Nigeria has a population of approximately 200 million with some 63.2% under 24 years of age. It is a growing country, expected to reach 433 million by 2050, making it both the third largest country and the largest English-speaking population in the world. While GDP has steadily grown since 1982 at an average of 3.8%, making Nigeria Africa's largest economy, this growth has not been inclusive, and consequently, Nigeria has the largest population of people living in extreme poverty in the world. GDP growth masks massive poverty and regional inequality, both of which are anticipated to increase as a result of COVID-19. By 2040 one in four of the world's poor will be Nigerian. Forecast annual economic growth of 2.5% for 2022 to 2024 lags behind population growth.
- 6.2 Skills for employability and jobs are central challenges for Nigeria as it grapples with a growing youth population and 4.8m Nigerians entering the labour market annually. 12.1m children aged 6-17 are out of school. The education system is inadequate for the needs of a modern economy. As Nigeria diversifies from oil and resource-based revenue, new skills needs, including in the fast-growing creative industries, create an opportunity for the UK to assist Nigeria's development, to influence the education sector towards UK models, and to provide a platform for UK exports.

### British Council

- 6.3 The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. This enhances the security, prosperity and influence of the UK and, in so doing, helps make the world a better, safer place.
- 6.4 We have offices in the major four cities of Nigeria – Abuja (the Federal Capital), Lagos (the commercial centre), Port Harcourt (hub for Nigeria's oil fields), and Kano (gateway to the north) – and our 200 staff work in a range of states delivering large scale contracts, partnership programmes, examinations and projects across the portfolio.
- 6.5 Our programme aims to expand the positive relationship between the UK and Nigeria and strengthen UK influence and attraction by leveraging the UK's experience in education, English, arts and culture.

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<sup>i</sup> Data from The British Councils Global Brand Perception Research Survey - 2018

<sup>ii</sup> Data from the Nigeria Creative Enterprise Support Programme Report