



## Foreign Affairs Committee

### Oral evidence: Implementing the Integrated Review in Nigeria, HC 202

Tuesday 21 September 2020

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Members present: Tom Tugendhat (Chair); Chris Bryant; Alicia Kearns; Stewart Malcolm McDonald; Henry Smith; Claudia Webbe.

Questions 21 - 63

#### Witnesses

I: Adesope Olajide (AKA Shopsy Doo), Broadcaster and definer of the Afrobeats scene; and Patoranking, Nigerian music artist and performer.

II: Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede, Director at Africa Initiative for Governance; and Helen Dempster, Assistant Director at Centre for Global Development.



## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Adesope Olajide (AKA Shopsy Doo) and Patoranking.

Q21 **Chair:** Welcome to this afternoon's hybrid session of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Some witnesses will very kindly appear down the line from Nigeria and some will be in the room.

I am very grateful to our first witness, who has extremely generously come to share his time with us this afternoon. Many people will be aware of him; he is much more famous than any of us here. Shopsy, thank you very much indeed for joining us. It is an enormous privilege to have you join the Foreign Affairs Committee this afternoon.

**Shopsy Doo:** Thank you very much for having me.

Q22 **Chair:** For many people who are aware of Nigeria's output in various different ways in the past few years, Afrobeats has been one of the main cultural exports and has dominated the music agenda, and certainly many people's understanding of Nigerian culture. Will you tell us a little bit about how the genre grew up, where it comes from and what role it plays now?

**Shopsy Doo:** Once again, thank you very much for having me in this session. It is an absolute honour.

Afrobeats is a derivative of the term Afrobeat, which was a genre created by the legendary Fela Kuti about 30 years ago. He created Afrobeat, a mixture of jazz, traditional African music and highlife. He used it as a tool to project messages about humanity and social justice, but in the past 20 years Afrobeats—an umbrella term for African popular music, specifically in Nigeria and the likes of Ghana and other parts of Africa—has been the sound of pop music for the younger generation. It is a mixture of pop, hip-hop and R&B.

Over the past 20 years, they have used this to raise their voice internationally and join the world of global music. It is a mixture of everything from reggae, dance hall and hip-hop, and a lot of the entertainers and musicians originate from Nigeria, Lagos and Port Harcourt. The younger generation in Nigeria has found this genre of music to be a tool for their voice, not only to entertain the world and get people dancing and celebrating our culture but to speak about social justice, as Fela did in the past, and mixing it around and making something that in a way aligns with what the whole world is listening to right now in pop music.

In a nutshell, Afrobeats over the past 20 years has come into the UK via the diaspora. The vibrant diaspora in the UK has elevated the sound and promoted it to everybody else.

Q23 **Chair:** Fela Kuti was one of the first people who made African music international. His impact on the film industry, certainly in the 1980s, was



enormous. For those of us who grew up listening to Prince Eyango, Les Têtes Brulées and people like that in Cameroon, it was not just an English language phenomenon; it covered many different linguistic groups—certainly the French and so on. Would you say that Afrobeats is having the same impact? Does it have a wider cultural effect, or is it predominantly Nigerian?

**Shopsy Doo:** It has a wider cultural effect. Starting in the 1990s, Congolese pop musicians were the first group to make their way into the international market: Europe, France, the United Kingdom. In the 2000s, it brought in the likes of Ghanaian pop musicians before the Nigerians. It is a wider umbrella that allows the younger generation in Africa, from Nigeria all the way to South Africa, to bring the fresh new sounds that the continent is dancing to.

Obviously, individual sounds emanate from different countries in Africa, but Afrobeats is the umbrella term being used to describe the new movement of African pop music to the rest of the world. As you said, it goes back to the 1970s and 1980s with the likes of Fela Kuti, and the list goes on from Ghana to Congo. We are getting the same kind of movement from Wizkid all the way to South Africa with Cassper Nyovest. It is an entire culture shift with the young generation changing the sound. They are taking from the past, but they are now saying, “This is us, and this is what the future is about to become,” and it is everybody in Africa.

- Q24 **Chair:** One of the things that was noticeable in the earlier wave of African music was that it dragged in many other industries—the film industry, the recording industry and so on. We have started to see the emergence of major film festivals in places like Ouagadougou, Lagos and various other places. Would you say that Afrobeats has had the same effect? Has it become a cultural driving force in other industries and cultures?

As you answer that, will you also touch on the way in which it has transformed technology? I know that the technological connection, social media, streaming and so on, has also been a huge part of this.

**Shopsy Doo:** As you know, the film industry, particularly in Nigeria and Nollywood, over the past two or three decades has done incredible work to project Nigerian creatives around the world. It has reached a point where the film side of things has now finally joined shoulder to shoulder with the music industry. It has also promoted other cultures, such as the fashion industry. We now have fashion festivals in Lagos, Nigeria. Supermodels like Naomi Campbell are travelling to Nigeria to host it for a period of four or five days. That is reaching the eyes of the world in fashion and movies by collaborating with creatives back home in Nigeria.

Music is really a tool for every other sector. I know that we might get closer to that, but in the past five or six years we have seen some of the biggest superstars coming from Nigeria, like Wizkid and Davido. They have decided that December is the time to hold their annual concerts in



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Lagos. That has increased tourism immensely over the past five years from the diaspora into Nigeria and other countries like Ghana as well. The music has been successful, but it has carried along other industries such as fashion, the live industry and the movie industry.

You talked about “tech”. Technology has played a phenomenal role over the past decade in projecting African creatives to the world. The initial kick-in was the internet and platforms such as Myspace and then Facebook, which allowed musicians and creatives to create their content and promote it to the rest of the world from their bedrooms.

Technology now also offers the options of distribution. They can create music and upload it on to certain platforms, and from Lagos, or wherever they are, their music and content can spread to every corner of the world. That increases their fan bases around the world because of technology.

In the past 10 years, yes, music has been great. Technology has helped to produce, promote and make it visible for other people to find out about content and the music.

**Q25 Chair:** Will you talk a little more about the way in which the recording industry has grown up around it? One of the things about the Nigerian industry is that it is much more indigenous than many European recording industries, which are dominated very often by US recording labels. That is not true of Nigeria; it tends to be much more domestic-driven. Will you talk just a little bit about how that has changed and how Afrobeats is feeding into NollyBeats and various other different ways in which these have stimulated each other?

**Shopsy Doo:** As you said, the major international record labels went back into markets like Nigeria over the past five or six years. Before that, the industry continued to thrive locally. We are looking at local record labels, family investments and friends who have put up finance to buy studio equipment for artists and creatives and used local systems, such as the telecommunications network where people can download music on their mobile phones in Nigeria.

In that way a lot of the attention has been localised. There had not been much international investment or foreign exposure until the past four or five years. People had to make their way by themselves in Nigeria. One of the biggest markets for Afrobeats, or biggest projector of Afrobeats in the world, which I call the Mecca of Afrobeats, is London. London has a huge and very vibrant diaspora that enjoys African culture, particularly Nigerian music, film and arts. Over the past 10, 12 or 13 years the connection between second and first-generation Nigerians with what is going on has almost been the vehicle or bridge to export that content to the rest of the world. It has almost been a direct sale of creatives back in Nigeria to their family and friends in the UK, who have now projected it to the rest of the world.



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Because of the amount of attention that has received and some of the successful entertainers it has created, it has alerted the international markets in the UK and the United States of America to introduce major record labels to come and find out how they have operated within that system locally without structure, and to see how they can also partake of this.

They are visible. They are collaborating with some of the talent and creatives back home, but the system that works in markets like Nigeria is localised because we still lack the international structure and markets like the UK for creatives who have the investment that musicians in countries like this would have. That has been a straight creator-to-consumer system in Nigeria.

- Q26 **Chair:** Before I turn to my colleague Chris Bryant, I want to ask a quick question on which you just touched. The UK domestic market, not just the Nigerian but the wider African diaspora, is one of the major areas of growth. One of the areas in which the UK has helped some industries around the world is intellectual property protection. Do you see as an important element of the growth of Afrobeats the ability of artists to be rewarded for their work? Do you see that as something that is vulnerable in Nigeria and is easier to protect in the UK?

**Shopsy Doo:** Absolutely. About six or seven years ago I was part of a programme supported by UK Trade & Investment that went to Nigeria. When we went to Nigeria we informed some of the entertainers and creatives about how to protect intellectual property and register with international bodies to ensure that their content was not taken advantage of outside the continent so they could get the benefits from that.

However, in those markets in Nigeria there is still a problem with intellectual property rights and lack of structure and collection bodies and societies that can provide that type of information and collect the rights of artists and creatives. That is a major area where the UK has been very instrumental and supportive, but those are structures that we hope, with conversations like this and the interest you have shown to date, to build in Nigeria and other parts of the continent to ensure people have those rights and can get money for what they create.

- Q27 **Chris Bryant:** Thank you for joining us. I want to ask a question that would affect British artists as well, which is: how on earth do you make your money? I do not mean you personally, but how does a performing artist make money, because downloads do not provide a revenue stream?

**Shopsy Doo:** One of the most important parts of artists' revenue is the live industry and live engagement. The digital downloads are all well and good for a certain period of time, but it has been recorded that live music and concerts are a huge part of artists' generation of income. That is where some of Nigerian and Afrobeats artists have now started to reap the fruits of their labour. About three weeks ago Wizkid was selling every day 20,000 tickets back to back over three days at the O2 Arena. That



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

happened in about 12 minutes. This was the same artist who 12 years ago was performing to an audience of only about 150 in London. That shows the growth of the genre and that that is where money can be made.

In Nigeria, artists will rely largely on endorsements with multinational companies and they are brand ambassadors. The support from those types of companies adds to what they make from their digital downloads. For now, the income comes from live music, endorsements and brand partnerships rather than digital downloads.

**Q28 Chris Bryant:** We heard from the diaspora in south London that there are lots of problems with education in Nigeria. There is a big divide between many private schools and state schools, where leaking roofs, teachers not being paid and so on are some of the many problems. Is that replicated for people learning music?

**Shopsy Doo:** Absolutely. It has taken a while for the creative industries in Nigeria, the movie industry or the music industry, to be respected as a proper career. Up until 10 years ago a lot of people working in the entertainment industry were looked upon as layabouts and people who do not really have any future. Families and parents were not encouraging their kids to go down that route.

When it comes to the music business and entertainment industry, music has not really got into spaces it should get into; that is, into universities and secondary schools where they can speak about some of the things we are talking about here, such as intellectual property rights, how to create quality content that travels around the world and how to maximise income other than just creating music.

We talk about the divide between the affluent and the less privileged. The less privileged are probably about 99% of the population, which means that schools and places of education do not even have this type of information. A lot of people will go to school just for their basics to be able to earn a living. Entertainment, music and the movie industries are seen as stuff that layabouts do.

For now, this is one of the areas where the international community and people like yourselves, taking time to sit down with us, can assist in showing the younger generation in Nigeria and parts of Africa the creative industry as a path to create wealth and jobs for themselves and feed their families.

In lots of ways, what they lack are structure, information, education, funding and support. I think that with platforms and opportunities like this hopefully they will start to come to them.

**Q29 Chris Bryant:** The other thing we heard about from the diaspora community last week was the brain-drain—people deciding to come to university or college in the UK. I wonder whether that also applies to



musicians. I think that Fela Kuti did some of his training in the UK, did he not? Does that apply as well?

**Shopsy Doo:** No, it does not, but what does apply is that a lot of the creatives come to the UK to try to collaborate with United Kingdom artists or artists based here; they try to sample some of the music here. For a lot of them, creatively they still try to connect with their roots back home. In the music industry we have not seen that type of brain-drain that we have seen among professionals like medical doctors or nurses. What we are seeing are creatives and artists looking to come into markets like this to collaborate with established artists, learn more about promoting and creating content and take it back home to infuse what they are doing.

Q30 **Chris Bryant:** I know Latin American music more than African music, but some of what you were describing earlier about the social justice message is, I guess, very similar to the protest songs of the '70s, the '80s and the '90s, which were very lyrical and relied on rhythms and patterns of music that had been around in Latin American culture for a very long time, but it was made new and was called the New Song. Are there similarities? What is the social message?

**Shopsy Doo:** There are similarities with younger artists now. We have a variety of artists who are still tapping into social messages; they are speaking about leadership and asking and demanding more from the Government in Nigeria to do more for the people and provide security, jobs and healthcare. We have the likes of Burna Boy and Yemi Alade. People are now adding to their songs messages that people want to hear.

Initially, a lot of artists and creatives were shying away from social justice because they felt that that could be a way for them to be highlighted and be a target for people in power and to be stripped of the means to make money. A lot of younger artists shied away from that at the beginning and just entertained people and got them dancing. Now they have become more successful and popular they are getting more confident about adding these lyrics and speaking directly to power and Government to do something about the situation in their country. That is what we are getting now.

Q31 **Chair:** Patoranking, welcome to the Foreign Affairs Committee. I am extremely grateful for your taking the time to join us. As you can hear, we are curious about the connections between Nigeria and the United Kingdom and the way in which we support each other and various elements in which the music industry is exemplary of the cultural connections and Nigeria's cultural powers. You have been remarkably instrumental in changing many of the cultural elements in the Nigerian industry. Will you tell the Committee a little bit about your own story and how you achieved what you have so remarkably?

**Patoranking:** Thank you very much for this opportunity. I am Patoranking by name. I was born in the ghetto. I do not know whether you are aware of what the ghetto or slum looks like in Nigeria. The





## HOUSE OF COMMONS

chances of making it out of the ghetto are very slim. Even though I was from the ghetto, I was from a home and I was able to learn about the morals of life from my parents, and that path shaped who I am. The music part was what I learned from the slum, the street and the ghetto.

It was not easy knowing that the only thing I had was my talent. I was the first from a family of five. All I did growing up was selling on the street with my dad. That was the only thing we had then. I was trying to combine supporting the family. The culture in Nigeria and Africa is that, being the first child, you should be able to support the family. That was what I was doing with my dad.

It was not easy. I am thankful for the talent. I did not know how to convince my parents that music was it for me. Even though the streets believed in my talent, my parents said, "You have to go to school." Knowing how difficult it was and they were not financially buoyant to give me the education I deserved, I had to use what I had to get what I wanted, which was my talent: music.

I moved to Ghana at one point to learn about the culture because I was doing dance halls and Afrobeats. The dance hall culture is huge in Ghana. I had to go there and learn a little more about the dance hall culture. I went back home to do music as well.

I am thankful for where I am today. We had a lot of stumbling blocks because there was no financial support or structure. You have so many talents, or too many talents. I tell people that over 1 million people sing professionally. Even if you add my parents, they sing in church as well; over 10 million people sing. There is no support system to help to develop and nurture that talent. These are the challenges we face.

It is a bigger challenge for me because I am an independent artist. I do not have a label to push my work; all I have is my talent and my team. That means we have to double the work. It takes the average artist signed to a label, let us say, five. That means we have to work at the rate of perhaps 50 just to match it. It has never been easy. That is just a little bit about where I come from.

**Q32 Chair:** Alicia wants to come in on various elements of this. Clearly, your experience has been quite remarkable. We will also be looking at what elements of technology have enabled this. Shopsy was telling us about the different technological fields that have effectively enabled Afrobeats and different cultural musical elements to succeed. From your perspective, what did you see as the key technologies that helped you?

**Patoranking:** Social media played a very huge role. It is one of the biggest. I became a household name in 2013, but at that time we were still on the verge of getting used to social media. We were used to the local media, but tech-wise social media had a huge impact on my career.

**Q33 Alicia Kearns:** Thank you for taking the time today. I am interested to





## HOUSE OF COMMONS

understand from you what barriers Nigerian artists face when trying to export their music and break into international markets. What would be your ask of the UK Government to support Nigerian music makers and music?

**Shopsy Doo:** Some of the barriers are obviously funding. We are looking at funding for a lot of the creatives in Nigeria who are creating music; we are looking at partners in international funding organisations who would invest in the creative industries.

Secondly, it would be information and education. As I mentioned earlier, I was part of a team who went to Nigeria via support from UKTI to teach Nigerian musicians about how to maximise their income from their creations and about partners and international organisations they could register with to protect their rights worldwide, so education and information would also be very important for that.

Thirdly, I mentioned earlier that the live industry is a massive part of promoting music around the world. Nigerian creatives have been successful in getting out on social media and promoting their music digitally, but we know that to sustain and grow bigger the artist has to go to countries like the United Kingdom where there is a vibrant African diaspora community and perform to them live.

There are lots of hoops and red tape in allowing creatives to come here and perform live, engage with audiences and promote their music to the rest of the world. If the UK Government can take their time to look into that red tape and hoops to make it a lot more accessible to a wider range of creatives from Nigeria, that would be very helpful.

Last but not least, the Foreign Office in the United Kingdom could engage with the Foreign Office in Nigeria. The time you have taken today to speak to us about Afrobeats, our music and our creatives is hugely appreciated. We would appreciate it even more if you could engage the Foreign Office in Nigeria to take time to look at this genre that is now becoming a revolution around the world.

PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2015 said that the Nigerian music industry digital download sales were about 53 million, and in 2021 it reached \$73 million. It is projected to go even higher than that. It added about 18 billion nairas to the Nigerian economy in 2020. If the British music industry adds close to £5 billion to the British economy, look what Afrobeats can do for the Nigerian economy.

We would like the British Government to engage with their partners in Nigeria to signpost them and have a closer look at this fast-rising genre that is becoming a global export, and the benefits to the Nigerian economy and job creation. They can invest in young people and support the creative industry to ensure it gives back to the country. Those would be my humble requests to the UK Government.



Q34 **Alicia Kearns:** Patoranking, are there any issues that you face in trying to get your music heard around the world and in international markets? What do you think the UK Government could be doing to support fellow young boys who, when you look at them, remind you of when you were young?

**Patoranking:** I think Shopsy said it all. I am only saying that I want to be a symbol of hope to my people. Music inspires me, like I am touched. There are so many people on the street. It is very important that I speak about the image of my country. Whenever I move, I have the pride of being a Nigerian. Nigeria made me who I am, but it is so sad that it has got so dense. A lot of my colleagues and I in the arts and the entertainment world are trying to change the narrative or perception of Nigeria and Nigerians. This is what we do with our music.

People say, "Your music inspires us." I tell people that there is nothing bigger than learning. Initially, I spoke about information on education. That is one of the fundamental parts. We would want the Government to create policies and invest in arts, in the same way the Government create funding for other things in Nigeria. It would be very nice if they created funding for the arts, which are Nigeria's biggest export right now. With that we see the country going in the direction we want it to go.

Q35 **Alicia Kearns:** Just before you joined us, Shopsy was talking about how important the music was and said that Afrobeats was a social justice movement. I confess I am not an expert on Afrobeats, so please bear with me. Do you find that people listen to specific artists within specific communities in Nigeria, or do you think people tap into different Afrobeats artists from different communities?

Do you think enough is being done to use Afrobeats to bring people together, particularly in some of the areas of Nigeria where we see conflict? I am talking about the north-east. Do you think more could be done to use that and bring people together and away from extremism, or are there divisions within the Afrobeats community along community lines?

**Patoranking:** No; it is oneness. Apart from football, what brings people together in the country is music. That is the only tool we have to communicate; that is the only tool for people to voice their opinion. For example, when I was coming up as an artist I said I wanted to be the voice of the voiceless. For example, if I represent my community and write a song stating how poorly or badly my people are being treated, that goes everywhere; it is me representing the people, and the same people just follow the chain. There is no division in Afrobeats; it is just one music that speaks for all. Whether anybody is using it to fight for social injustice or they are using it to speak for the people, it is just one voice as far as I know. Regardless of where you are from, your tribe, your state or culture, there is no division; it is just one music, one people and, most importantly, one voice.



**Shopsy Doo:** To add a little to what Patoranking said, thank you very much for that question. I think that is absolutely right. Entertainers in Nigeria are one of the most unifying symbols that we have in the country outside football. As you said, with insecurity in different parts of Nigeria, these entertainers hold more sway and power and have more credibility with the people than some of the leaders in office.

I call these people my ambassadors. I have completely changed the way I talk about Patoranking or Wizkid or Yemi Alade. I call them my ambassadors, because I believe that the way they have promoted the country over the past 10 years deserves high praise. The way they have stood up for their passports, even though there are difficulties back home, deserves praise. The Government should look at these creatives as a way of engaging young people. Those people can be found in areas where there is insecurity, lack of jobs and lack of opportunity. They can find a way to use their musical tools and engage people to down tools and put down their arms. I think they are missing a trick here, and you have just said it beautifully. I hope you are on the panel that engages with the Nigerian Foreign Office.

**Alicia Kearns:** Hopefully, I will meet you in Nigeria.

**Chair:** We will certainly be communicating with the British Foreign Office. I hope that the Nigerian Foreign Office will read this, but we hold the British Government, not the Nigerian Government, to account.

Q36 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Thank you both for joining us this afternoon. It has been good to listen to you.

Can I ask about two things? One of them carries on from a question put by my colleague Mr Bryant about music education. I want to ask in particular about sound engineering and that whole industry. Is that seen as a viable career? How do you assess the capacity of that industry? I would be interested in your views on that.

I know we have been discussing music and that both of you are passionate musicians, but what about other performing arts? What about the theatre? What about visual art? What about even the literary world? How do you assess Nigeria's projection in the non-music parts of its cultural footprint to the rest of the world? We have talked about London and other countries on the continent of Africa, but what about non-English speaking countries in Europe? How well does Nigerian culture in the round do in projecting into spaces like that?

**Shopsy Doo:** On the sound engineering industry, information and education is always very important. Initially, for the creative industry the front-facing personalities became the superstars. We are talking about actors, musicians and those whom people engage with first. They became the celebrities and superstars. They were highly paid and started to make a lot of money, but over the past five years the tide has slowly turned to people behind the scenes: producers, sound engineers and sound mixers. People are starting to notice that, for you to be a successful musician,



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

there is a body or team around you to help create your content and make it palatable to the ears and visually beautiful to the world.

These sound mixers, sound producers and instrumentalists are starting to get the notoriety and recognition they deserve. However, there is still a long way to go, especially when it comes to rights for these instrumentalists and sound mixers and engineers. That is where information comes into play. I am not a sound engineer, but I believe that once you are accredited to work on a body of work, a song or an album, some sort of revenue is supposed to come to your table continuously for the work that you have helped to produce. A lot of people in that sector are not aware of that yet, or they are slowly starting to get that information.

Moving to the other questions you asked about Europe as a whole, over the past two weeks I have been to Berlin, where there is a thriving Afrobeats community. It is a shame that the Berlin carnival was cancelled. However, I have seen thousands of people come out for Afrobeats in Berlin, Hamburg and Amsterdam. I am going to Sweden in two or three weeks' time. The diaspora and the genre have gone around Europe. Initially, Africans have gone to the more popular countries and cities where a lot of Africans have resided. They have promoted the genre there, but now we have the success of Burna Boy, who has won a Grammy. We had two Grammy winners in 2021: Burna Boy and Wizkid picked up Grammys in 2021 and opened the door for artists to tour as international artists across Europe to cities that probably have not been playing this music in the past. There is the same type of reactions as we have had in the UK over the past 10 years. It has taken time, but Europe has finally got on board and they get the same reception in major cities across Europe.

***Patoranking:*** It is very important that we get these questions right because we frequently ask them. One of the problems we are having back home is that we do the right thing in the wrong way. We are used to certain things because we are not informed. Afrobeats is about to become the biggest genre and is untapped. For example, there have been all sorts of reggae, from dance hall reggae to EDM reggae and hip-hop reggae. There has been an evolution of reggae, but Afrobeats is untapped.

This is where we need those structures and the information. We still do the right thing in the wrong way, because we do not have certain structures and we are not informed. For example, we need a songwriter to understand that. That is a job here. We need a sound engineer to understand that it goes way beyond just mixing and making the vocals clean; it is also part of the song. If they do not have the information they cannot get it, so that is where we are at the moment.

Even the Government need to be informed. My Government do not seem to be informed because they do not understand what it is. If my



colleagues are selling out the O2 Arena, how come we do not have an O2 here in Nigeria? How come we do not have the capacity? We do not have a venue of that capacity. The biggest indoor capacity here is roughly 8,000. I do not know if it even goes up to that.

These are structural problems. If we do not fix it from the roots up, we may not get to the top. The reason I am sitting here having this conversation right now is that the foundation is solid. If the foundation is not solid, it will still be a very big problem for us.

**Shopsy Doo:** You mentioned other creatives like writers and poets. We have extremely successful writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Other parts of the creative industry have started to enjoy the ripple effects of the success of Afrobeats. I describe Afrobeats as being a vehicle that carries everybody else on top. It is used in movies. Writers and poets are now starting to partner with Afrobeats artists to help them promote and project their work to the world.

However, a lot of those other industries are still suffering from the same thing we are talking about: structure, information, investment and support. We need to look at how to help to promote that. Decades ago we had winners such as Wole Soyinka and other writers with Nobel awards who took their writing abilities, incredible knowledge and vast exposure around the world.

We still have an industry of incredible writers of that ilk, but what we have had over the past two or three decades is a system that has not allowed these incredible writers and creatives to flourish enough to be identified internationally. I believe that with the right exposure and information these other sectors would also take a leaf out of the Afrobeats book, which is to do it by themselves and find a way to get to Parliament in the UK and other parts of the world, and people will be able to open the doors to them. They are still surviving and the music industry is helping to promote them.

Q37 **Claudia Webbe:** I am delighted to be able to look at west African culture, music and development. The whole notion of Afrobeats is important as a current genre. Afrobeats in a sense has become transnational and is now of international significance, and is performed in Lagos in Nigeria, Accra in Ghana and here on the streets of London. To what extent is it staying, and what is the next movement that we will see?

**Patoranking:** We are just getting started with the culture itself. I do not think we are there yet for us to say, "What's next?" For example, if you go to the website of any of the record labels and click on genres there is a list of them. You see reggae, hip-hop and Latino. Afrobeats needs to be there. When we start getting into those conversations we can start to say, "What's next?" When do we start having an Afrobeats song of the year at the Grammys, just like they have a reggae album of the year? These are certain steps that need to be taken.



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

I mentioned earlier that it is still untapped. This is fresh. The artists you hear right now do not even make up 0.5% of the artists who are supposed to be heard, so it is still new and fresh. We're just getting started and you ask what is next for us.

**Shopsy Doo:** I totally agree with what Patoranking has said. Even though it is a genre that has just developed over the past 20 years and started to break ground in Lagos, Accra and other parts of Africa and now London, Europe and the United States of America, we are just starting to see strides. I mentioned the Grammys this year with Burna Boy and Wizkid. Currently, Wizkid is on tour in the United States of America. He has broken into the Billboard Hot 100 chart in the USA, rising to No. 12, I think.

Right now, Afrobeats is a genre that is kicking the door open, and for whatever structure or path it creates with its success other genres will be able to come through. We saw pop, house, EDM, electro, and drum and bass. What happens is that it creates a path others can ride through; that is what Afrobeats is doing right now.

In terms of staying, you are talking about close to 1 billion people in Africa and about 60% of the population are described as being young. Those are the people who support your Wizkids, your Patorankings, your Burna Boys and your Tiwa Savages. The list goes on. For a lot of people, the staying power relies on the audience.

My daughter is 15 years old. She was born and raised in the UK, here in Essex. Now, a large percentage of the music she listens to is Afrobeats that you would not believe was not introduced to her by her dad. She introduces me to new music more than ever, so the genre is spreading to different parts and finding new audiences that are becoming younger every single day. I think that will be the staying power of Afrobeats.

Q38 **Claudia Webbe:** I guess we are focusing slightly on Afrobeats as a mechanism to highlight the cultural worth and offer of Nigeria as a whole, but Afrobeats probably has a history similar to the portrayal and recognition of what we call music of black origin here in the UK, America and elsewhere. It has taken some time for that to be recognised. Equally, it has taken time for there to be recognition in terms of the decision makers, producers, those who hold the levers of power, where the income goes and whether artists themselves are properly rewarded.

Do you think that the cultural offer of Nigeria is properly recognised in the UK, and what more could we do to ensure that we have the investment you talk about, not just in the UK but worldwide because this is an international phenomenon in terms of the diaspora of Nigeria? Wherever Nigerians go they take the culture with them. How do you break the barriers, that ceiling and that concrete that prevents that recognition in terms of decision makers, producers and those who decide the direction of what is and is not recognised?





**Patoranking:** For me, the biggest way to break those barriers is by opportunities. We have been given limited or no opportunities. It is funny how we have been trying to do it ourselves and we have got this far. I used to look up to so many great Jamaican reggae artists. These were big names in Jamaica. Over the past few years, one of the countries I managed to break into, apart from those in Africa, was Jamaica in the Caribbean. It is so funny how the people I look up to are those who want to make Afrobeats music with me. I remember the first time I performed in Jamaica. I used to pray, "God, I want to be a household name in Jamaica," because I love the reggae culture. These are my people, but they are far off.

Fast forward to how I am making music with people I look up to. How did that happen? it was just a little opportunity I had and I took it. I do not think it is difficult to break the barrier. We get an opportunity. We do not have enough opportunities. We move with the little we have and we make it big. That is what a Nigerian and African wants. You give them a slight opportunity and they run with it.

**Shopsy Doo:** You mentioned decision makers, record labels and platforms. Now we have seen DSPs like Apple, Spotify and TIDAL, and the power they wield within the music industry. First, we hope that within the Afrobeats industry those structures and international record labels recognise Afrobeats as a genre; and, secondly, that they come to that genre and look at people who are specialists within it to advise, support and work in those spaces so that we finally break in, and that whatever percentages are due to us, with respect, with finance and support those people will be able to fight for what is ours.

Sadly, what happens at the moment is that the bigger platforms and record labels have people in positions who have nothing to do with the culture; they know nothing about the roots of the culture. They come in just as technocrats. When that happens they cannot see the opportunities and that the genre needs to go to the next level. What they see is an opportunity to get themselves to the next level. We need professionals within our genre and our culture to be given opportunities in bigger places and bigger platforms to ensure this gets the recognition it deserves.

**Patoranking:** To summarise what Ade just said, just put us in that room; we want to be in that room. Put us in the room where the decisions are being made; we want to be there.

Q39 **Claudia Webbe:** As for vehicles for moving this agenda forward, we have had many vehicles over the years for what we call music of black origin. For example, we have the organisation Music of Black Origin and the MOBOs. That has helped to give a platform to key artists and it has an international reach to try to give a platform to music genres like that relating to Afrobeats.

To what extent are vehicles like that important, and how can that be





extended to film, theatre and other creatives? Recently, Channel 4 did a whole day on recognition of African and Afro-Caribbean creatives. How important are vehicles like that?

**Shopsy Doo:** Those vehicles are extremely important. Those are some of the platforms that help to project us beyond our normal audiences and markets. You mentioned the MOBOS. They have done incredible work over the past couple of years, but it also took them years even to recognise African music at the highest level. Black entertainment television in the United States of America has received criticism for years. They call it the black entertainment award, but they recognise African creators and African entertainers behind closed doors and not on the stages where their international counterparts in hip-hop and reggae are recognised. So, even these organisations that are supposed to project our image and support the creatives took time before they accepted that an African renaissance and genre and movement was happening. They have got into that now and the Channel 4s of this world and the MOBOS awards hopefully going forward will start to open the doors wider for people from our community, not just a blanket umbrella that says this or that.

The African story within the United Kingdom is such a beautiful one; it is a beautiful representation. We are proud to be British and to be part of this; we are proud to be part of the diaspora, but there is a story within us that we need opportunities to tell. Platforms and organisations like this are very important.

**Chair:** I am extremely grateful. The reason we are conducting this inquiry and have invited you here as witnesses is that your contributions are part of British culture as much as they are part of Nigerian culture; they are fundamentally intertwined. As you say, your Essex daughter is British, yet is born with these rhythms in her mind.

I should also say that one of the main reasons we are doing this is that some of us are Nollywood fans and, as soon as "King of Boys: The Return of the King" is written for extras, I would be grateful if you let me know where to call.

**Chris Bryant:** I think that was the royal "we", was it not?

**Chair:** No. The whole Committee would love to be on "King of Boys: The Return of the King". They do not know that yet, but that is what I am bidding for.

**Chris Bryant:** He is a shocking Chair.

Q40 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed to both of you. I am extremely grateful for your time. If there are things that you think of later that you believe we should be aware of, or areas where you feel we should have asked a question but did not, I would be very grateful if you wrote to us.

**Shopsy Doo:** Thank you very much for having us.



**Patoranking:** Thank you for having us and for your time. I am working on a movie about where I come from, and hopefully you will have a private viewing at the time of Nollywood. You will see where I come from. We had music from so many of the biggest names, and many will still be big in future where they come from.

**Chair:** Patoranking, I am a very low-priced extra.

**Chris Bryant:** You still can't afford him.

**Chair:** Thank you.

## Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede and Helen Dempster.

Q41 **Chair:** Welcome to the Foreign Affairs Committee. We are very lucky to have with us this afternoon Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede and Helen Dempster. I ask them very briefly to introduce themselves.

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** I am the executive vice-chair of the Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation. It is a pleasure to be here.

**Helen Dempster:** Thank you very much for having me. I am a policy fellow and the assistant director of the Centre for Global Development's migration and humanitarian policy programme.

Q42 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed both for joining us. As you will have heard from our first panel, one of the things that came across very strongly is the way in which music and culture has transformed the IT sector and the way in which information is transferred, not just in Nigeria but around the world. Perhaps I may start with you, Helen. How do you think the connections are working, and where are the gaps, where are the issues, in both the UK and Nigeria?

**Helen Dempster:** I must say that I am not an expert on Nigeria nor the ICT industry. I am here representing a team at CGD and the World Bank, Washington and Nigeria offices. We put together a report, which we published last year. We had a look at the potential for more skilled migration between Nigeria and European countries within a variety of sectors, one of which was the ICT sector. It gave us a really good opportunity to ask a number of different stakeholders, within Nigeria and abroad, about what the ICT industry looked like in Nigeria, and where the gaps were.

The first thing to say is that the ICT sector in Nigeria has grown extremely quickly. This came out from the first panel as well. What is interesting is that, during Covid 19, it was the only industry to emerge unscathed. The growth of the industry increased in 2020 over 2019, and



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

in 2020 it contributed 15% of Nigeria's GDP, so it is a hugely important sector for the country.

Unfortunately, what you have seen is that this flourishing sector has not really led to jobs for Nigerians on the ground. In 2017, only 1% of the population was actually employed within the ICT sector. One thing that came out quite strongly from our interviews is that a lot of people did not believe they necessarily had the technical and soft skills that were needed to fill some of these roles.

There is a really interesting thing called the digital competitiveness report, which ranked Nigeria 126th out of 140 countries in terms of digital skills. I think this is an area where we need to be focusing.

One thing we talk through in the report quite a lot is how young Nigerians are trained in ICT skills. It is very disjointed. There are a lot of formal universities and training institutions providing seminars, courses and degree programmes, but a lot of people are also learning their skills through computer skills in various different parts of big cities and from online platforms like Coursera and edX. A lot of these people are therefore graduating with this very disjointed set of skills and missing a lot of the soft skills that employers really need.

It is fascinating if you contrast that with what is happening in the UK. There are a lot of similarities and a lot of differences. The ICT sector in the UK is also growing extremely strongly. One thing I did not know is that the UK spends more on ICT per head than any other country, bar the US. It is an incredibly important sector for our country. There are about 1 million people employed in the sector, which is 3% of our working population. It is incredibly huge.

It is also growing extremely rapidly. In 2018, the Open University estimated that there were around 600,000 vacancies in the sector. These are roles that are not being filled by local people. There are huge skill shortages that are present in the UK as well. Obviously, this is having huge impacts for employers—their productivity and their investment potential.

In the report we looked at how we could try to put these two things together—to see whether we could harness the large number of young, talented, skilled people within Nigeria who really want to be able to develop their skills and find roles within the ICT industry, whether that be in Nigeria or the UK, with the giant skill shortages in the ICT sector in the UK, and whether we could harness some of this potential. Hopefully, that answers your question. I am happy to send through all the references that I mentioned as well.

**Q43 Chair:** Thank you very much. We may ask you for them in writing rather than going through them now. Clearly, the skills gaps that you spoke about raise some real challenges for both the British and Nigerian Governments. Where do you see the ways in which we can work together



while minimising the brain-drain from Nigeria to the UK?

**Helen Dempster:** Yes, of course. I would note that the brain-drain is an incredibly large problem for Nigeria, and many other countries throughout sub-Saharan Africa, Africa and beyond. This is the sense that highly skilled people are being trained within Nigeria, the Nigerian state is investing money in their training, and they are then taking their skills abroad. The Nigerian Government and the British Government would like to reduce that.

With that in mind, about 10 years ago, in 2012, my organisation, the Centre for Global Development, created a new migration model. It is called the Global Skill Partnership. It is technically very complex, and I can send you through more information on it. The general gist is that, instead of trying to attract already qualified people from Nigeria to come to the UK, the UK would invest in training those people in that skillset within Nigeria. It is the idea of two for one. You would train two people: one person would move to the UK and one person would stay in Nigeria. A country like the UK would also be providing technology and investment and other forms of support to Nigeria to be able to improve the training ecosystem and other things that the Nigeria Government prioritise within that sector. This is not a new idea, obviously. It is being trialled by Governments around the world.

I want to mention a couple of different examples. The first is the Belgian development agency Enabel, which has been conducting this programme with Morocco over the last three years. It has been training JavaScript developers in Morocco, half of whom have moved to Belgium and half have stayed in Morocco. Preliminary evaluations seem to show that this is having a huge impact on employers in Morocco and Belgium. The project has recently scaled up. Germany and Italy have now joined and so have Tunisia and Egypt, on the sending side. I think up to about 2,000 trainees will take part this year.

There have been similar programmes in other sectors. Germany and Australia are notable examples. They have been piloting this programme in sectors like healthcare and tourism and construction. We are also actively working with the UK Department of Health and Social Care on a very similar programme in nursing, with Kenya and Ghana. Again, I am happy to send through more information about any of those programmes if that would be of use.

**Chair:** That would be very useful.

Q44 **Chris Bryant:** On the education front, particularly in relation to ICT, one thing we heard from the Nigerian diaspora last week is that there is a major issue around facilities for education, especially in computer sciences. One woman was telling us that, I think, her sister or her cousin had done a whole degree in computer science without ever actually laying a hand on a computer. Is that a fair characteristic of the situation?



**Helen Dempster:** I am not sure whether that would be characteristic of everybody's experience within the sector, but certainly from my experience and the interviews I held, yes, it seems incredibly disjointed and underinvested in. The sense I got was that the Nigerian Government were not exactly keeping up with the pace of demand within the ICT sector. A lot of different companies were being founded in Nigeria, but international companies like Microsoft and Cisco were investing in Nigeria, yet the skilling system—the training and education ecosystem—is not keeping up. A lot of that was apparently to do with regulation. There was too much regulation about the way things were distributed and financed in different places around Nigeria.

In the absence of that formal ecosystem, there has been an incredible flourishing of an informal ecosystem, with different digital skills hubs being set up by local Nigerians and international players to try to fill that gap. I think they are doing an incredible job.

Coming back to what I said before, it does mean that you end up with people with very disjointed skills and you do not necessarily capture that holistic framework that you might get from a formal training provider.

Q45 **Chris Bryant:** Ofovwe, do you want to add anything?

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** I could not call myself an expert in this area, but I do know something about education in Nigeria. The universities lack all the facilities that you can imagine, even desks and tables and lecture rooms, so computers are way down the list of things university departments focus on. I completely believe that scenario. I do not think it is as unusual as you may think. I would say that the federal universities, perhaps not the private universities, definitely lack the resources.

Q46 **Chris Bryant:** We were told that there was a growing gap between the private universities, which might be better funded—and for that matter private schools—compared with others. The danger of the brain-drain is that if you are going to go to university, and it is meant to be a three-year course, which ends up being a seven-year course because for half the year the teachers or the students were on strike, you will end up saying, "I'll be better off going to the UK to study." Families will then raise every penny they possibly can to be able to come to the UK and the person never goes back. Is that what happens? You are both nodding.

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** Yes, definitely.

**Chris Bryant:** That was a very good answer.

Q47 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** I will ask about the ICT sector, and I am not fussed who takes it. If we think about emerging technologies and artificial intelligence, where does that feature in Nigeria's ICT sector?

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** I am an expert in the public sector.

**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** I want to come to the public sector next.



**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** I can speak from the public sector perspective and I would say it is completely zero. There is nothing.

Q48 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Shall we end this exchange on that note? Coming to the public sector, do you want to talk about the capacity gaps in the public sector and what it does well? There must be some good things to say.

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** I will say that there are good people in the Nigerian civil service. We have worked very closely with them as an organisation for a number of years. There are people who are very invested in doing the best they can with the resources they have, which are minimal. For the most part, there are huge capacity gaps. These gaps are there because no investment is made in training, and no investment is made in ensuring that the workforce has the skills and the knowledge that it needs. There are funding gaps. There is a lack of adherence to policy. It is all there. If you look, there are policy guidelines for how training should be done, but no training is done.

Q49 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Why is that?

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** There is a lack of understanding and a lack of political will on the importance, the necessity, of building capacity for training. The people who are there are used to things running a certain way, and they are obviously getting benefits from the way things are run, so they have no incentive to change or move.

Q50 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** This sounds like a civil service anywhere in the world, quite frankly.

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** Well, yes, definitely. The thing is that the extent of the capacity gap in Nigeria means that the civil service is ineffective.

Q51 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** When you say there is a lack of political will, why is that? Surely people can see the benefits of changing the situation that you have just outlined for the better. You are saying it does not happen and there is no political will. Why? Who does this arrangement benefit or suit, other than civil servants who say, "We do it this way because we always have," which is a not uncommon civil service view of the world?

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** The Nigerian situation is quite complex and there are different interests at play. Obviously, where there is limited funding, it suits people to direct that funding elsewhere. Because the system still seems to be working—it has not collapsed, as it were—there is no burning incentive to change things.

We are very fortunate, as I said, to have good people in there who keep pushing for change and driving change. As an organisation, the Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation tasked McKinsey to go into the civil service in 2017 to help them build or create an implementation plan to change





## HOUSE OF COMMONS

things. One of the gaps that McKinsey identified was this lack of capacity. The first thing it said was, "You need to carry out a gap analysis and find out what is the level of skill there and what you need to do to close that gap."

We had eight priority areas and a lot of good intentions, but nothing was done because funding was not allocated. When you do not have funds, there is a limited amount that you can do.

The private sector does step in. Our organisation funds scholarships to the University of Oxford and we have sent 27 people since 2017 to undertake a master's in public policy and then come back to the country and try to improve things.

We partner with the L&D teams. We provide consulting support and help them to develop their own in-house training programmes. Recently, we have started an in-country executive training programme for directorate level public service workers so that they can build their capacity.

Some private sector entities are doing everything that they can, but until the Government prioritise closing this gap there is a limited amount that can be done.

**Q52 Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Given this is the Foreign Affairs Committee to hold the UK Government to account, what would you like to see the UK Government do? How can they be in a supporting role? What programmes exist? What would you like to see exist in the future, Government to Government, civil service to civil service?

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** Since funding seems to be a key limiting factor, and there is no political will to shift some of that funding to training, the UK Government can help to build capacity for the in-country civil service training organisations. There are three—ASCON, the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria, CMD and PSIN. They have outdated systems. They do not really have funding to develop their own internal capacity. The training programmes that they deliver are outdated. They are not targeted at meeting the specific needs of the different Ministries and Departments.

The UK Government could support the ramping up of capacity within those in-country training organisations, providing technical expertise as well as technology. ICT is the future. It is the way to reach the maximum number of civil servants, in the minimum amount of time, and at minimum cost, but there is no equipment. There is no equipment in universities. There is definitely no equipment in the civil service. Each year the civil service requests the funding to purchase computers and to train the civil servants, but that funding is not allocated.

As an organisation, the Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation is helping to digitalise the work of the office of the head of the civil service, of the federation. We are doing that as a pilot to show the Government what





can happen if you introduce digitalisation—the efficiencies that you can gain from just teaching someone how to get an approval in five minutes instead of the five days that it takes. The UK Government could support entities like ours. We are using our own funds. We are doing this because we understand that as private sector entities—we have other business interests—we can only grow as far as our public sector allows us to. Private sector entities like ourselves who believe in the development of a country are trying to push and, if our own Government are not really listening to us, perhaps the UK Government can help.

**Q53 Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** How big is the civil service?

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** There is a federal civil service and a state civil service, so it is quite complicated. There are at least 100,000 federal civil servants.

**Q54 Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** And at state level?

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** Oh my gosh, I could not say, to be honest. Those numbers are huge.

**Q55 Henry Smith:** Following on from that point about the difference between the decisions made in Abuja, at the federal level, and the state level, is the situation more acute at state level, and does that vary depending on what state you are in in Nigeria?

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** Yes

**Q56 Henry Smith:** Is there more of a challenge at state level than there is at federal level? A lot of development assistance funding from the UK is supposed to be focused on education and building capacity. What sort of engagement with UK developments in this area exists, both at federal level and state level?

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** There is a big difference between what happens in different states across the country, and that depends on how rich the states are and how much revenue they get. Lagos State, for example, is a very different kettle of fish. I will give you an example of the difference in capacity.

As I told you, the Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation has just started an executive training programme for mid-level civil servants. We opened it to all civil servants across the country, both federal and state. This is a free programme. It is costing us £11,500 per student. We said, "All civil servants apply. We want to help you build your capacity." We got 50% of our applications from Lagos. We got a few applications from perhaps two or three other states and the rest were from the federal civil service. When I say the federal civil service, I mean not the core civil service but Government agencies.

The issue, so that you understand what the difference is, is that the core civil servants are promoted regardless of what they do. At the end of a three-year period, they just have to take an exam. If they pass that



exam, if they have been in a position for long enough, they are immediately promoted, so they do not have any incentives to build their capacity.

The states, if they are functioning well, and if they have good leadership, have the power to introduce performance evaluation systems, as do certain Government agencies, which incentivise the civil servants to want to perform well, to want to increase their capacity. You can see where the issue is. Yes, there is a lack of political will to encourage training and so forth of civil servants, but there is also no intrinsic motivation in the civil servants themselves. I mentioned Lagos State, and Lagos State is very, very different because the civil servants are incentivised. I hope that answers your question.

**Henry Smith:** It does. That is very interesting, thank you.

Q57 **Claudia Webbe:** May I just follow up on that? How big is your organisation, and how many other types of organisation like yours are there brokering this private-public relationship to develop skills?

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** Our organisation is not very big. We are lean and mean. We have very good intentions. We have a vision for Nigeria. If you look back to independence, from 1960 to 1970 the civil service was amazing. People were properly trained and it was very effective, and the private sector was able to thrive because of that. Things have deteriorated, however. The private sector in Nigeria is thriving despite the public sector, despite the civil service. My husband and I founded the Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation because we have a vision that Nigerians can have improved public service delivery if we help to transform the public sector. We are doing this to show our private sector counterparts what is possible. To be honest, I do not really know of any other organisation that is doing what we are doing for the private sector. What we are doing is proof of concept. We are showing this is possible.

It is hard as a private sector entity to engage with Government because of the corruption. I may get into a bit of trouble for saying this, but when you engage with a Government, the people whom you meet always want to know, "What's in it for you? Why are you doing this?", and, "What's in it for me? What am I going to get out of this?"

We have struggled a little with that. There is nothing in it for us apart from seeing a Nigeria that is improved. This is our CSR, our philanthropic activity. We are helping to show other private sector entities—and there are many that are thriving—that you need to give back a little bit. You cannot just complain that the civil service is not working, the Government are not working. What are you doing to help? How can you bring your capacity into the civil service and support what it is doing. As I said to you, there are many good people in there who are trying their best but are limited by what is available to them.

Q58 **Claudia Webbe:** We have heard from aspects of civil society, if you like,



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

and the Nigerian diaspora, about some of the perceptions and realities of public sector and Government life, and how much some of that is a barrier. Is it your perception that the system is broken, as some might say? Unless there is legislative change, are your efforts really producing fruit? That is one issue.

The other issue is the perception about the lack of skills that exists, in a climate where there are high university outcomes, if you like, whether that be public or private; none the less there is still a perception that skills are lacking in key technical areas such as IT as we speak now. To what extent does that system need to be fixed in order to make what you are doing fruitful?

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** To answer your first question, in development there is a phrase “working with the grain”. That basically means working with the system that you find; not throwing your hands up and saying, “It’s all a mess,” and trying to knock it all down. To achieve change, you have to do it incrementally. You have to go into the system, understand the fundamentals, understand the issues, and then try to work around them to achieve the maximum impact that you can. That is what we do.

I would not say the system is completely broken, but there are definitely issues and those issues are what prevent other private sector entities like ours from going in and trying to help. We take a different perspective. We try to understand what the issues are—what are the limiting factors, what are the issues they face—and try to work with the grain. We try to work not necessarily around the system but with the system, to make a few changes. When we find a champion—at this point in time we have a very high-level officer who is the head of the civil service federation—who is very passionate about change and really wants change to happen, we support her. We try to understand the reform efforts she is working on and we provide funding and all the support that she needs, to work within the system, and to show the difference that these incremental changes can make. The truth is that tomorrow she could leave and things may revert, but you have to try. Change does not come from sitting back. Change comes from people who are brave enough to engage with the system and work around it.

To answer your second question, yes, there is definitely a lack of capacity. Hundreds of thousands of university students are coming out of university without the skills that employers actually need. What is happening in a lot of private sector organisations is that they take these university graduates—I know of at least one and perhaps multiple banks that do this— and put them through a six to nine-month intensive training programme before they even let them loose in the offices. I am sure that is the same with ICT and across different disciplines.

There are serious issues with the education sector, and not just because of the lack of facilities but because of outdated teaching methods. They



are not teaching the students to be able to come out and be effective in any sort of role. It needs an overhaul for sure.

**Q59 Claudia Webbe:** Helen, from your perspective, what would need to change at a legislative level to realise the full potential of what these organisations are able to achieve? What would need to change at legislative level and indeed in trade as well?

**Helen Dempster:** Absolutely, I would echo what my colleague has said. I do not think there is a lack of policies and structures to try to implement these things. Last year, a really good national digital economy policy and strategy for the next 10 years was released. It sets out an incredibly good road map for how the Government should be engaging with the private sector in these spaces, including artificial intelligence and other areas that you mentioned, yet it is highly unlikely that the majority of this will get implemented.

In my opinion, it is not necessarily about legislative or regulatory changes. It is more about how the existing policies that have already been developed by these Governments at federal and state level actually get implemented in practice, and how the Government co-operate with the private sector in doing that.

I think it comes back to what you were saying around prioritisation. It is easier to sit back and wait for the private sector to take this on itself rather than committing to trying to shift their own structures and their own implementation frameworks. As they are getting feedback from many employers about the skills that people are coming out with from the private sector, hopefully there will be more advocacy and incentives within the Government to react to what the private sector is saying and implement what they have already decided need to be their priorities over the next 10 years.

**Q60 Claudia Webbe:** Obviously, we are hearing that this is a skills shortage not just within the private sector but across the public sector. I get that, and universities, both private or public, are in equal measure, but it appears to me that change is required there as well, despite the fact that they have some highly qualified Nigerians emerging from the universities. Clearly, there needs to a step change, and it is more about what the public sector itself can do, and what Government can do, in a sense. It is the people you elect, the Government, and what is it that Government can do to bring about the change.

We talk about a shortage, for example, of IT skills, but there is no infrastructure to enable access to IT and so on. This is at the basic level. I just wondered whether you had thought beyond that—whether there need to be specific legislative changes that could be implemented.

We heard in the last panel about people as artists being able to go so far, but, actually, their art form is subject to piracy and illegal downloading, and all kinds of things, which means the artist ends up without the proper



recognition. This is widespread. It suggests to me that there is a set of legislative changes that are needed. There needs to be not just that intervention at the public sector level but intervention in training, support and engagement at the governmental level.

**Helen Dempster:** Absolutely. I think this comes back to what you were saying before about investment and incentives. It is where you choose to put your capacity and where you choose to put your money. At the moment, they are abdicating their responsibility for training a large number of people. I can only talk about the ICT sector, but I am sure it applies to a number of other sectors as well. Those skills gaps are affecting the public sector as much as they are affecting the private sector. We can sit here and talk about Microsoft and Cisco, but ICT is such a pervasive sector and exists within many public institutions, which are also lacking those skills and those qualified people.

What came out from the majority of my interviews is that people recognise this. Ordinary young Nigerians completely understand that there are, short-lived within the sector, many opportunities and that they could earn quite a lot of money, whether they work in the public or private sector, so they are finding ways around it. This is the problem, because the way they are finding ways around it means they are not graduating with the skills that are required. Undoubtedly, legislative and regulatory changes could enable these structures, but I still think that it is more about prioritisation and recognising the incredible economic benefit that this sector could have to Nigeria if it was properly invested in.

Q61 **Chris Bryant:** It would have to have consistent electricity as well.

**Helen Dempster:** That would also help. There is definitely a regional bias here, just as you were saying before. We find exactly the same thing with some of these discussions. You will have no problem whatsoever finding skilled people who could take advantage of these schemes in Lagos or Abuja, but the minute you go into the north-east they do not have the infrastructure or the understanding to be able to engage in these programmes. Absolutely, there is a regional bias, too.

Q62 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. I am very grateful. I wanted to ask two final questions. Helen, there is an FCDO programme on skills development in Nigerian schools. How is that working?

**Helen Dempster:** I am sure my colleague can speak to the Nigerian civil service, but there is an existing project by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in Nigeria. It is called the UK-Nigeria Tech Hub. This is part of the UK Government's big network of tech hubs throughout Africa. If you look on the website, they have a range of really interesting initiatives. We spoke to them for the report. They have a developer placement programme, where they are collaborating with local private sector organisations within Nigeria to deliver and support training, internships and placements of people within companies.



I see no reason why we could not be building upon these existing schemes. The schemes have already developed relationships with colleagues in the Government, with regulators, with employer associations, with employers. There is no reason why we could not be ensuring that some of those skills programmes also benefit young Nigerians in being able to access the UK. We have the existing immigration framework set up on a points-based immigration system. They would be able to access the UK labour market fairly easily with the types of skills that could be developed within Nigeria. It would give these young people the opportunity to be able to work in two different markets and leverage their skills in two different places. We can talk about the intricacies of those programmes, but I would like to emphasise that we are not starting from scratch here. There are existing investments and relationships that could easily be leveraged to develop greater benefit for a larger number of people.

**Q63 Chair:** Perhaps you could touch on the Nigerian element of that—how the skills programme is working in Nigeria? Is it enhancing the capability of the Nigerian civil service? You mentioned very strongly some criticisms earlier. Is this helping?

**Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede:** I cannot say that I have any knowledge of it actually helping. There are a number of initiatives. There is the DFID PERL and different things the Government have been working on. I would say those are more research inclined, the ones that I am aware of, as opposed to providing practical skills, and I think the practical skills to close those skills gaps—competency gaps—are really required.

I am a Chevening scholar myself, so I can attest to how well that programme works. I think perhaps it is not targeted at the public sector. If in Nigeria there was a decision to allocate a certain number of places to civil servants, to the public sector, that could have some impact. I know that the British Council does a number of programmes, but, again, none that is targeted at the public sector. We could use the British Council as an avenue for some of these things. I think what is desperately needed from working with civil servants are these practical skills; trying to find ways in which to increase their capacity to do the jobs that they have been called to do.

**Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. I must say I am extremely grateful for both your insights into this. It will be extremely useful as we look at new ways of co-operating and deepening the relationship, and different ways of improving the outcomes for both countries and all our people. Thank you very much indeed for taking the time to join us this afternoon.