

An Assessment of the Development Potentials of Nasarawa State in Nigeria

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Abstract: *The paper examines the development potentials of Nasarawa state in Nigeria as they relate to the growth and development. Information were generated through field survey, focused group discussion (FGD) and secondary sources. The development potentials are numerous. These include solid minerals, agriculture, human resources, tropical climate, tourism potentials, education, livestock, water resources, forest resources and land resource considering its proximity to Abuja, the Federal Capital City of Nigeria. Proper harnessing of these resources will no doubt place Nasarawa State Government in a better position to create a vibrant economy that would have a lot to offer in terms of wealth and income generation, employment creation and infrastructural development with poverty alleviation as a consequence. This paper concludes by suggesting partnership approach in harnessing these untapped resources where other alternatives fail.*

Keywords: *Development potentials, growth, development, synergy.*

I. Introduction

Located in the central region of Nigeria, Nasarawa State was created out of Plateau state on October 1st 1996 with its headquarters at Lafia. The State lies between latitude 7 45' and 9 25'N of the equator and between 7 and 9 37'E of the Greenwich meridian and it covers a land mass of 27,862km² with a population of 1,863,275 people according to 2006 provisional census spread in the thirteen (13) local government areas of the state namely Akwanga, Awe, Doma, Karu, Keffi, Kokona, Lafia, Nassarawa Eggon, Nassarawa, Obi, Toto and Wamba. The state shares boundary with Kaduna state in the North, Plateau state in the East, Taraba and Benue states in the south and Federal Capital Territory and Kogi state in the west.

The state is highly prospective for growth and development considering its strategic location and proximity to Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, abundant tourism potentials, abundant solid mineral deposits, predominant tropical climate, diverse human resources, rich agricultural potentials, great potentials for animal husbandry, vast land resource, large water bodies, Savannah nature of forest that houses a lot of merchantable tress as well as its distinction of educational institutions. Nonetheless, the state is backward in terms of human capital development, physical transformation and other infrastructural development.

Worst still, the state is operating at the mercy of monthly Federal allocation to the neglect of Internally Generated Revenue (IGR). Its primary occupation is agriculture, with over 90% of its working population involved with little or no mechanization to the neglect of other development potentials. This paper therefore aims at ascertaining the development potentials with investment opportunities that exist in Nasarawa state with clear locations.

SIGNIFICANT OF THE STUDY

This study will be of interest to both the state government and the private sector as we are witnessing a global economic down-turn that requires the need to chart a new course for our survival. Thus, inventory of the state development potentials and the dissemination of this information become necessary in order to attract public and private investors to different sectors of the economy in the state. It will help the state government to make more viable investment decisions that will lead to proper harnessing of the state host of natural and human resources that will ultimately lead to improvement in the living standard of many families at the grass root.

II. Methodology Of The Study

The data used in this study were primarily generated through field work and Focused Group Discussion (FGD) with members of the local communities where these development potentials are identified and who are expected to benefit from these potentials when properly harnessed. But majorly, our data were obtained from secondary sources: websites, journals, magazines, textbooks and unpublished materials. Data organisation, analysis and presentation were made with the use of tables.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Dwivedi (2002, p.470) asserts that the natural resources of a country which include rivers and lakes, forest, landscape, oil and gas, and solid minerals are the major determinants of its growth and development. He argues that countries that are rich in natural resources have much longer growth potential than those lacking natural resources. He however asserts that it is the harnessing of environmental resource with the aid of manpower, capital and technology that brings about growth and development. According to him, these are the factors that had contributed to the rapid growth and development of USA, UK, France, Canada and Australia. Alluding to the above, Barau (2004, p.7) said that physical environment of any country provides both problems and opportunities for the inhabitants. The available opportunities include soil type, forest, climates; water bodies amongst others, which if harnessed will help in improving quality of life of the citizenry.

**PRESENTATION OF DEVELOPMENT POTENTIALS WITH INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES
AGRICULTURE AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Other than the highlands around Nassarawa Eggon, Akwanga and Wamba local government areas, the bulk of Nasarawa State lies in a lowland region, which is very fertile for agricultural practice; hence the primary occupation of the inhabitants is farming. Despite inherent problems in the sector with respect to storage and mechanization owing to difficult terrain and high cost of procurement and maintenance, Nasarawa state produces a wide range of crops with lots of investment opportunities in the areas other than construction of silos as presented below.

Table 1: Major agricultural crops with industrial potentials

S/N	Crop	Production Capacity (000mt)	Production Area (000HA)	Industrial Potentials
1.	Maize	108.69	58.83	Maize flour, custard powder, baby food, livestock feeds.
2.	Rice	105.63	31.24	Rice milling plants
3.	Sorghum	1117.72	86.92	Flour, malt confectionaries
4.	Millet	14.21	13.53	Grain processing
5.	Cowpea	5.20	12.19	Processing plant
6.	Soya beans	1.97	2.09	Soya milk, Vegetable oil, soya flour.
7.	Yam	1198.20	67.34	Yam flour, chips pellets, pounded yam.
8.	Cassava	164.32	17.49	Flour chips, pellets starch, glucose/dextrose
9.	Sweet potato	3.43	0.32	Dextrose, glucose, chips
10.	Irish potato	1.43	0.22	Chips.
11.	Orange	750,000	25,000	Fruit juice
12.	Mango	180,000	10,000	Juice production
13.	Cashew	300,000	2000	Oil solvent, edible nuts
14.	Oil palm	75,000	500	Palm oil, palm wine, cosmetics
15.	Coconut	65,000	400	Coconut oil
16.	Ground nut	123.80	104.10	Oil processing plant
17.	Beniseed	6.24	13.13	Confectionary, edible oil
18.	Melon	NA	NA	Mellon milling

Source: www. nasarawastate.org

SOLID MINERALS AND INVESTMENT POTENTIALS

Exploration and mining activities in Nigeria as extensively studied by Akwa, et,al 2007 p.24 show that Nasarawa state is one of the leading mineral producing states in the country hence, it is appropriately called the “Home of Solid Minerals”. The solid minerals are found virtually in all the local government areas of the state. Except for barite, clay, glass sand and marbles with inferred reserves of 730,000 tones, 9.1 million tonnes, 2.54million tones and 4million tones respectively. Other minerals are yet to be quantified (www. nasarawastate.org)

Although mining is a major industry in the state, there are few or no facilities for the processing of these minerals. Salt for example is still majorly processed with the use of traditional method. Investment opportunities therefore exist in the solid mineral sector of the state as detailed below.

Table 2: Distribution of Solid Minerals in Nasarawa State

S/N	LGA/locality	Minerals
1.	Akwanga	Cassiterite, Clay, Columbite, Mica, Grannite, Limenite
2.	Awe (Azara, Wuse, Alosi)	Baryte, Clay, Galena, Salt, Limestone
3.	Doma	Clay, Silica sand
4.	Keana	Baryte, Galena, Salt, Zinc, Lead, Limestone.
5.	Karu(Panda)	Clay, Glass sand, Granite, Tantalite, Mica
6.	Keffi(Ungwar Doka, Tudun Jenjela)	Clay, Tale, Gemstone(Tourmaline, Aquamarine, Sapphire)
7.	Kokona(Bakin-Aini, Rafin Gabas)	Mica, Chalcopryrite, Gemstone (Tourmaline and Aquamarine)

8.	Lafia (Shabu)	Clay, Silica sand, Gemstone (Topaz)
9.	Nassarwa Eggon (Wana, Alogani, Mada station, Ungwar Gyawa)	Quartz, Mica, Granite, Gemstone (Emerald, Aquamarine, Heliodor, Topaz, Amethyst)
10.	Obi	Baryte, Clay Coal
11.	Nassarawa(Udege-mbeki)	Cassiterite, Clay, Columbite, Tantalite
12.	Toto (Ugya)	Marble, Iron ore, Mica
13.	Wamba(Randa, Gongon)	Cassiterite, Tantalite, Granite, Columbite, limonite, Aquamarine

Source: Nasarawa State Ministry of Commerce, Industries and Cooperatives Lafia.

Table 3: Investment Opportunities in the Solid Mineral Sector

S/N	Investment Opportunities	Viable Locations
1.	Baryte Processing	Azara
2.	Solid Minerals buying centres	Lafia, Akwanga and keffi
3.	Lapidary Plants for Gemstone	N/Eggon, Garaku
4.	Glass making	Shabu
5.	Marble processing	Toto
6.	Salt Factories	Keana, Ribi
7.	Burnt Bricks Factories	Keffi, kadarko, Akwanga, Karu
8.	Cement Plants	Kadarko, Keana
9.	Coal briquetting enterprise	Obi
10.	Battery manufacturing	Keana
11.	Electric/Energy generating plants	Obi, Keffi, Wamba, Nass/Eggon
12.	Ceramics and Bricks works	Akwanga
13.	Terrazo/Tiles making and marketing company	Gadabuke, Toto

Source: Adopted from Yaro, O.O (2005, p.88): Developing Solid Minerals Deposits for Rural Development in Nigeria

TOURISM POTENTIALS AND POSSIBLE AREAS OF INVESTMENT

Nasarawa State has abundant tourist landmarks and sites cutting across the thirteen local government areas which are in need of development as distributed in the table 4 below:

Table 4: Distribution of Tourism Resources with Investible Potentials in Nasarawa State.

S/N	Tourist Sites	Location	Size	Possible Areas of Investment
1.	Peperuwa Lake	Peperuwa East of Lafia	7 x 3.8km	Picnicking, Camping, Viewing, Hotel Business.
2.	Malloney Hills	Keffi	Long	Picnicking, Camping.
3.	Oku-Akpa	Nasarawa	Long	Picnicking, Mountaineering, Hunting.
4.	Umaisha River	Umaisha (Toto)	Large	Fishing, Swimming, Boating, Regatta
5.	Akiri Warm Spring	Akiri (Awe)	Large	Curative Powers, Water Spring Plant.
6.	Doma Dam	Doma	2km x 300m	Irrigation, Fish Farming.
7.	Lafia Dyeing Pits and Calabash Carving	Kofar Pada (Lafia)	-	Traditional Cloth Weaving, Calabash Weaving.
8.	Akiri Salt Lake	Akiri (Awe)	Large	Salt Deposits
9.	Hunki Ox-bow Lake	Tunga (Awe)	7km x 70m	Picnicking, Boating, Fishing, Game viewing.
10.	Farin Ruwa Falls	Farin Ruwa (Wamba)	150 x50m	Hydroelectricity, Water spring, Wildlife.
11.	Eggon Hills and Caves	Nassarawa Eggon	300m high	Quarrying, Hotel Business
12.	Ara Rocks	Ara (Nassarawa)	150m high	Leadership Training, Camping, Mountaineering
13.	Keana Salt Village	Keana	Large	Salt Deposits
14.	Numan Rocks	Andaha (Akwanga)	Long	Camping, Leadership Training, Mountaineering

Source: www. Nasarawastate.org and Field survey, 2013.

WATER RESOURCES AND POSSIBLE AREAS OF INVESTMENTS

Nasarawa State is richly endowed with abundant water resources estimated at 36 billion cubic metres. Table 5 below captures the major water resources of Nasarawa state with their locations besides several ponds that exist along the major river valleys.

Table 5: Major water resources and locations

S/N	Water Resources	Location
1.	Mada River	Nass/Eggon Mada Station
2.	Gudi River	Akwanga (Gudi Station)
3.	Arikya River	Lafia (Arikya)
4.	Maisauri River	Keffi (Maisauri)
5.	Amba River	Kokona (Amba)
6.	Umaisha River	Toto (Umaisha)
7.	Uke River	Karu (Uke)
8.	Antau River	Keffi (Antau)
9.	Awonge River	Doma (Awonge)
10.	Mararaban Kogi	Lafia (Mararaban Kogi)
11.	Akiri Lake	Lafia (Akiri)
12.	Hunki Lake	Lafia (Hunki)
13.	Doma Dam	Doma
14.	Akwanga Dam	Akwanga
15.	Nassarawa Dam	Nassarawa
16.	Farin Ruwa Falls	Wamba (Farin Ruwa)
17.	Akiri Spring	Lafia (Akiri)

Source(s): www. Nasarawa state.org, Ayih, 2003, p.13, Abimiku, 2009.

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Note: Despite these rich water bodies, portable drinking water and edible fish are not within the reach of rural dwellers while agriculture is dominantly rain- fed. Thus, possible investments in this sector include private water supply companies, water treatment plants, bottled water factories, irrigation farming systems, hydroelectricity plants, fish farming, spring water processing plants, fish processing equipment like cold room and boating facilities.

FOREST RESOURCES AND POSSIBLE AREAS OF INVESTMENT

There exist forests in Nasarawa state particularly in karu, Toto, Wamba, Doma and Awe local government areas with merchantable species. Few of such trees include mahogany, iroko and obeche in large quantities. In this area, investment is possible in saw milling, furniture making, paper making, and agriculture and game reserve.

CLIMATOLOGICAL RESOURCES AND POSSIBLE AREAS OF INVESTMENTS

The climate of Nasarawa is predominantly tropical with an average temperature of 25° C – 36° C and an average rainfall of 1300mm. There are two major seasons, wet and dry season. The former begins from April and terminates in October with August and September as the wettest months. The latter starts from November and ends in March, with February and March as the hottest months (www.nasarawastate.org). The investible potentials arising from these forms of resources include development of wind turbines for electricity generation through wind energy, ice cream business, cold rooms, padi production and livestock farming with its associated investments (modern abattoirs, veterinary drugs, tannery and leather works, dairy products, feed production hatchery and incubator business and livestock service centres).

HUMAN RESOURCES AND POSSIBLE AREAS OF INVESTMENT

With an estimated population of over 1.8 million people, Nasarawa state is heterogeneous with over 20 ethnic groups coexisting. These ethnic nationalities include Afo, Agatu, Akye, Alago, Beriberi, Bassa, Egbira, Eggon, Fulani, Gade, Gbagyi, Gwandara, Hausa, Jukun, Kantana, Mada, Migili, Nimzom, Arum, Rinderi, Yashi, Yeskwa and Tiv. Despite these rich combinations of people and talents, the state is in dire need of manpower. This scenario has therefore presented the need for staff development centres, traditional costumes making and marketing, museum that would serve as centre for tourist attraction, establishment of more public and private schools as well as vocational school/centres.

EDUCATION AND POSSIBLE AREAS OF INVESTMENT

Nasarawa State has over 331 public secondary schools and 360 private secondary schools with many primary schools cutting across almost all villages in the state (Gwamna, 2011). At the tertiary level, there are well over 10 government and private institutions in the state, namely; Nasarawa State University Keffi, School of Nursing and Midwifery Lafia, College of Agriculture Lafia, Nasarawa State Polytechnic Lafia and College of Education Akwanga. Others are Federal University Lafia, Federal Polytechnic Nassarwa, Maurid Institute of Management Nasarawa, Hill College of Education Akwanga, Ipere College of Education Agyaragu, School of Health Technology Alushi, Nassarawa Eggon, School of health Technology, Azuba Centre, Lafia and Nasarawa College of Administration and Business Studies (NACABS) Akwanga. Investment opportunities in the sector include establishment of printing press and publication houses, provision of educational equipment (science

laboratory equipment, teaching and learning aids e.t.c), computer sales and services, selling of books and writing materials amongst others.

PROXIMITY OF THE STATE TO FCT AND POSSIBLE AREAS OF INVESTMENT

Due to its vast land resource, strategic location and proximity to Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital City, International market structure and hotel business would be a viable venture, Already; hotel business is springing up rapidly for the comfort and convenience of visitors especially in Lafia, Keffi, Akwanga, Nassarawa and Karu. These, according to (Abimiku, 2009. P.2) have helped to boost tourism, small and medium scale enterprises and promote development in the state.

III. Conclusion

In this paper, we have exposed to limelight the development potentials and the investment opportunities that exist in Nasarawa state of Nigeria for both the government and the enterprising individuals. However, for maximum exploration and utilisation of these potentials, we wish to recommend a synergy of efforts between government and private sector or between private individuals in such areas that requires huge capital outlay. Again, as an easy way of raising investible funds from financial institutions and the need for entrepreneurs to develop a realistic feasibility reports before embarking on the investment will help in this regard.

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