When State Agents become Kleptocratic

Women are deprived of alternatives!

The US$ 49.8 million clean cookstove project initiated by the government of Nigeria that never reached Women in rural communities.

A report by the Follow The Money Team on a mission to track and visualize funds meant for procurement and distribution of 750,000 clean cookstoves and 18,000 Wonderbags to rural women
‘Federal Executive Council approves 9.3 billion Naira for the National Clean Cooking Scheme, congratulations to my hardworking team.

BAHIJUJATU ABUBAKAR, Coordinator, Nigeria Renewable Energy Office.

‘Where are the clean stoves since they approved the money, who will get it, I hope they will not distribute it to their allies, I stay in Kwalita here in Abuja, and I hope it will reach us?.’

SALIMA NGADI, Commenting during our radio program on WAZOBIA FM.

“We received 5 billion Naira from the presidential intervention on Clean Cookstoves, and we paid the contractor 1.2 billion Naira, and we still have 3.8 billion Naira in our account.”

LAURENTIEN MALLAM, Former Minister of Environment

‘When will they start to distribute the clean stoves, in Keta we don’t see any stove, it is always available on Newspaper, they told us second month, but now it is the sixth month.

MADALLA LARABA, During a focus group discussion in Sokoto

‘I was sent to this meeting to only come and hear contributions from other individuals, as such I do not have any information from the Ministry of Environment with respect to the work plan of the project.’

UMAR A UMAR, During a stakeholders meeting in May 2015

‘Is it not disappointing if someone from the Ministry of Environment will come to this meeting, and will not be able to highlight the work plan of the Ministry on how they will spend tax payers money worth 9.2 billion Naira.’

ALEX ABUTU, A journalist during a stakeholders meeting in May 2015

‘Court cases and cancellation of contracts are all distractions, what has happened to the remaining 8 billion Naira - a question for, the former Minister and Renewable Energy Office.’
₦9,287,250,000

November 2014

FEC okays ₦9.3b stoves, others for national clean cooking scheme

₦5,000,000,000

April 2015

Amount released to Ministry of Environment

₦1,253,778,750

April 2015

Amount released to the contractor (Integra Renewable Energy) by the Ministry of Environment

45,000

May 2015

Estimated number of clean cookstoves assembled by the contractor as at May 18, 2015 when we visited

₦3,746,221,250

September 2015

Amount of money remaining at the Ministry of Environment

₦4,287,250,000

Amount of money remaining at the Ecological Fund Office
FOREWORD

“Even the most well intended and well thought out policies may not have an impact if they are not implemented properly. Unfortunately, the gap between intention and implementation can be quite wide. The many failings of government are often given as the reason good policies cannot really be made to work” as suggested by Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo in Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of Way to Fight Global Poverty.

In the same vein, we quite agree that government inadequacy is greatly affecting the impact of foreign aid in a developing country like Nigeria. In November 26, 2014, the federal government of Nigeria announced the approval of NGN 9.2 Billion Naira (NGN 9,287,250,000) for the procurement and distribution of 750,000 clean cookstoves and 18,000 Wonderbags, as part of the National Clean Cooking Scheme (NCCS) to rural women in order to reduce deaths emanating from indoor air pollution, reduce tree felling, and desertification. One would have thought this is a right step, in the right direction, and at the right time when the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, is strengthening key stakeholders in providing alternative energies for their countries.

It’s already 256 days after this announcement, and 120 days after some of the funds were released to the Federal Ministry of Environment [MOE] of Nigeria, the fate of the 750,000 rural households or women that were suppose to enjoy from the benefit of this project still remains hanging, with lots of controversy around the number of clean cookstoves that the contractor has already “brought” into the country, the court case filed by the contractor against the Ministry of Environment, and most importantly where did all the money go? or where is the money?

It is easy to get depressed by such findings like “the milk has been skimmed somewhere and somehow” 5 billion Naira finally got to the Ministry of Environment account, and 1.2 Billion Naira (NGN 1,253,778,750) out of it went to the contractor, although the MOE in a response to our FOIA letter confirmed NGN 1,393,087,000 is the total sum of the contract, while the remaining 4.2 Billion Naira (4, 287,250,000) is nowhere to be found, and we keep been asked on why we do what we do: “Why bother?” These are the “small” questions in that if perhaps, no one, decided to keep the story alive - with several request for information letters (using the FOIA), monthly stakeholders meetings, tweet - a - thons, and traditional media engagements - this would not have been in the front burner, as it has always been.

In this campaign, the agents of “horizontal accountability” in Nigeria - the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) have been an ally since we started tracking, and they had every bit of information around this activation. As pointed out in Andreas Schedler’s Restraining the State: Conflicts and Agents of Accountability that agencies of accountability do not develop as the result of solo brilliant performances but need requisite coalitions to come together, in this case we had to kick the status quo from its point of equilibrium, while still hoping that the ICPC will sprung into action after been part of the processes we have initiated.
Follow The Money is an initiative of Connected Development [CODE] that advocates, visualizes and tracks funds (government spending or international aid spending) that are meant for local communities, and this report is an output from our #WomenCookstoves activation in December 2014.

For further questions, comments and suggestions around this report, please feel free to direct it to info@followthemoneyng.org

Hamzat Lawal and Oludotun Babayemi | Co-Creators, Follow The Money.

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THE CASE

According to the World Health Organization, 95,300 deaths mostly women and children occur annually as a result of smoke from the kitchen. In response to these deaths, on Wednesday, November 26, 2014, the Federal Executive Council approved the sum of 9.2 billion Naira for the procurement and free distribution of 750,000 clean cookstoves and 18,000 Wonderbags to rural women. According to the press release from the State House of the federal government of Nigeria, the contractor - Integra Renewable Energy Services Limited were supposed to deliver the clean cookstoves within twelve (12) weeks, afterwards, which distribution to rural women will commence.

Immediately, there was a public outcry about the necessity of such a project, the contracting process which brought about the contractor that was approved, the work plan of importing clean cookstove parts into the country, and if the clean cookstoves will ever get to the rural women it was meant for. Another huge debate was if the concerned government ministry, department or agency that initiated this scheme ever contacted stakeholders in the alternative or renewable energy sector.
WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?

Of most concern to the Follow The Money [FTM] team, is how the 9.2 billion Naira will be spent, who gets what? and if the clean cookstoves will get to the 750,000 rural women, and how the women will use the clean cookstoves. This is definitely not an easy task, but we understand that engaging the right stakeholders to share knowledge and information on the project will make us get a clearer picture of the work plan, and beneficiaries that this intervention is directed at.

In January 2015, the FTM team sent a request of information letter to the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Special Duties, and the National Renewable Energy Office requesting for a costed work plan and beneficiaries of the project. The FTM team also sent a tweet message to Engineer Bahijjatu Abubakar, the National Coordinator of the Renewable Energy Programme Office for a meeting to ascertain her office work plan on the 9.2 Billion Naira, since we found out that it was her team that made proposition for the presidential intervention.
Unfortunately, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) that backed up our request for information letter was ridiculed by the three agents of government it was addressed to, as none of them replied our letters. We confirmed that our letter was in the Minister's office, and they had not been any action afterwards. The Ministry of Special Duties only called to inform us that when the Minister is back in the country, they will call us back!

The meeting with Engr. Bahijjatu was cancelled as she instructed us that she cannot speak on the issue of the clean cookstoves, except she receives a directive from the Ministry of Environment, under which she operates. She advised we follow up with the Minister of Environment, Mallam Laurentian and her office did not also respond to our request for information letter.

So while most fingers pointed at the Ministry of Environment, as the sponsor of the memo, that was approved on November 26, 2014, the FTM team looked forward to other press briefings or meetings that might bring together the Ministry, and journalist that remains network member of the FTM in the country. It was not long, before this happened - On January 27, 2015 there was the Nigerian Alliance for Clean Cookstoves Conference, which the Minister would attend, and have a press briefing. During the conference, the FTM team asked the same question of costed workplan and beneficiaries of the project, and the minister told the public that the funds in question has not been released, and that the beneficiaries will be decided through distribution mechanisms that will be decided by state governors and local government chairmen wives.

Following the Money, while putting pressure on government might not be that sexy, as there could be a wide gap between approval and release of funds, nevertheless, we can remain enthusiastic, that it is better to be prepared, so that when the funds are released, government institutions can understand, and also appreciate the fact that, there are some agents of accountability that wants these taxpayers money to work. Is this true? maybe, farfetched with this project, but on the long run, a win for advocates of accountability, as there was no room to relent, on keeping the story alive!

ONLINE CAMPAIGN ON MARCH 2, 2015
As Follow The Money uses the offline and online media in encouraging citizen participation, and government feedback, we organized a Tweet and Facebook message roll out by participants using the #WomenCookstoves hashtag. Pre written Tweet messages are been shared among volunteers who then retweet and tweet accordingly to key stakeholders, and government institutions that are directly concerned with this project. Also, it has been an opportunity to share outcomes and findings with the global community, and as well learn lessons from other views on #WomenCookstoves. According to @hashtracking our online campaign for #WomenCookstoves on that day generated 679,284 impressions with 369 tweets.
STAKEHOLDERS MEETING ON MARCH 3, 2015

On March 3, 2015, the FTM team of CODE conveyed a stakeholders meeting having 40 key stakeholders from the NGOs, contractor, journalist, and government agencies. The most disturbing fact was that the main concerned government ministry - the Ministry of Environment was absent, also its agency - Renewable Energy Programme Office and also the Ministry of Special Duties, while other government institutions such as the Ministry of Women Affairs and Development, and the Office of the Secretary to the Federal Government, and the National Orientation Agency were present. Rural Women Energy Security (RUWES), a government project turned government NGO (GONGO), was present, and highlighted they have been partnering with state and local government in distribution of cookstoves that were under the National Clean Cookstove Scheme (NCCS). The representative who said she could not speak for the Ministry of Environment, said all things been equal, that RUWES might still coordinate the distribution mechanism for the clean cookstoves that will be purchased for this project.

As part of the outcomes of the meeting, was stakeholders disappointment about the absence of the key government agencies, and the plan of the Ministry of Environment to distribute the clean cookstoves through state and local government wives. A press release was issued, highlighting stakeholders’ displeasure concerning the proposed distribution mechanism. Likewise, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Development informed us that as a government agency that has enjoyed successful partnership with the Ministry of Environment in the past, they were quite shocked that they were not also consulted on the project.
The contractor - Integra Renewable Energy Services Limited, informed us that they have not received any funds from the government or signed any contract with regards to the clean cookstoves. It was also revealed that a new implementation committee on the actualization of the project has been inaugurated by the Renewable Energy Programme Office, and representatives from the committee informed us that no funds have been released to the Ministry of Environment. Proceedings and outcomes of the meeting were aired to millions of Nigerians on two National Television and in several newspapers.

**STAKEHOLDERS MEETING ON APRIL 16, 2015**

On April 16, 2015, the FTM team of CODE conveyed another stakeholders meeting having 40 key stakeholders from the NGOs, contractor, journalist, and government agencies. The Ministry of Environment was again absent, also its agency - Renewable Energy Programme Office and also the Ministry of Special Duties, while other government institutions such as the Ministry of Women Affairs and Development, the Office of the Secretary to the Federal Government, the Office of the Senate Committee on Ecology and Environment and the National Orientation Agency were present. This time around, invitations were extended to the Ecological Fund Office [EFO], as funds for projects like this are released through this government office.

At this meeting, it was some days to handing over of ministry notes to the office of the secretary to the federal government; as such stakeholders hinted that it will be pertinent to look into the handing over notes of the Ministry of Environment, if some updates on the clean cookstoves will be included. It was also discovered that the implementing committee that was inaugurated by the Renewable Energy Programme Office has been disbanded by the Ministry of Environment,
as it was reported that the Minister instructed the action due to the fact that it was not a legal committee constituted by the Ministry.

Likewise, the stakeholders were informed by the National Coordinator of the RUWES that her appointment has been terminated. The Ministry of Environment has reverted their initial plan to distribute clean cookstoves through state and local government wives, the stoves will now be distributed through faith based organizations and women groups in rural communities. The contractor revealed to the stakeholders that 15% of the 9.2 billion Naira, about 1.2 billion Naira has been released to their organization two weeks before the April 16, 2015. He further mentioned that the amount to be purchased will be the worth of the amount released, and while responding to the question, of disclosure of the contract document, he assured stakeholders that the contract document will be made available to the FTM team, and also on-sight visitation will be allowed. Proceedings and outcomes of the meeting were aired to millions of Nigerians on two National Television and in several newspapers.

“GROUNDTRUTHING” ACTIVITY ON MAY 18, 2015

As the contractor has given consent for the team to hold on-site visit to the assembly point of the clean cookstoves that are already available, the team and some experts from the ICPC visited the Velodrome of the National Stadium in Abuja, where the available clean cookstoves were housed. We estimated the number of clean cookstoves as at this day to be 45,000, and that about 70% of what was available were empty liquified petroleum gas (LPGs), and boldly labelled on the LPGs and clean cookstoves was NCCS (National Clean Cookstove Scheme)
STAKEHOLDERS MEETING ON MAY 22, 2015

As some information on the remaining 7.9 billion still remained farfetched, we decided to have another stakeholder meeting on May 22, 2015 (which was 7 days to the swearing in of a new government). Present at this meeting were representative from the MOE, and the Ecological Fund Office. While we appreciated their presence for the first time, it was unfortunate that none of the representative could give us exact information on the status of the project, and where the 9.2 billion Naira has gone! Rather, they promised they will be at the next meeting, if we can quickly send in their invitation, and clearly stating the reasons why we are inviting the ministry, and what they will be presenting to stakeholders. The representative from the MOE stated that he was only instructed to come and listen and not make contributions to the meeting, while the representative from the EFO informed us that he had just resumed at the agency, as such, he will not be able to give any information.

In contrast to the contractor’s promise at the last stakeholders meeting - Integra Renewable Energy Services Limited informed us that the contract document between their organization and the MOE could not be disclosed to us (As also written in their response to our FOIA Request for Information letter) because there was a clause in the contract in which the MOE stated they cannot share the document with a third party. Furthermore, they responded through the letter that 1,253,778,750 Nigeria Naira was the amount of the contract awarded to them by the MOE.

The stakeholders decided that it may be important to send a request for information to the MOE on the contract document, and also to actualize the exact amount that remains in the coffers of the MOE and EFO, and their work plans as well. It was also decided that some stakeholder members can take legal actions if there will be no response to the request for information. The representatives from the MOE and EFO stated their commitment in actualizing that responses ensue, and they attend the next meeting as well. Proceedings and outcomes of the meeting were aired to millions of Nigerians on two National Television and in several newspapers.

ONLINE CAMPAIGN ON MAY 22, 2015

To amplify all the outcomes of our meetings so far, and get concerned government agencies to respond, we organized a Tweet and Facebook message using the #WomenCookstoves hashtag. Pre written Tweet messages are been shared among volunteers who then retweet and tweet accordingly to key stakeholders, and government institutions that are directly concerned with this project. Also, it has been an opportunity to share outcomes and findings with the global community, and as well learn lessons from other views on #WomenCookstoves. According to @hstrackracking our online campaign for #WomenCookstoves on that day generated 1,200,284 impressions with 540 tweets.
STAKEHOLDERS MEETING ON JUNE 30, 2015

With about 17 stakeholders, we kick-started another meeting, whose outcome would proffer next steps on the #WomenCookstoves project. No representative of the MOE and EFO was present at the meeting, and as at this meeting, the request for information letter that was sent after the last meeting has not been responded to. Recently, during a press briefing, the permanent secretary of the MOE, Fatima Mede said they are considering withdrawing and halting the contract award to Intergra Renewable Energy Services Limited. On the other hand, the contractor informed the stakeholders group that they are filing a lawsuit against the MOE, on proposed termination of the contract, and on instructing the banking institution involved in the contract to halt providing funds to the organization.

Present at the meeting, were two representatives of Developmental Association For Renewable Energies [DARE], an organization that remains the sole distributor of SAVE 80 brand of efficient wood stoves, under the UNFCCC’s Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects 2711 (“Efficient Fuelwood stoves for Nigeria”) and 5067 (“Improved Cooking Stoves for Nigeria Programme of Activities”) in Nigeria.

They informed us that since 2012, DARE has sold both SAVE 80 (8 – Liter Model) and Envirofit stoves to the RUWES programme of the Federal Ministry of Environment, and on all occasions, the stoves were paid for by Integra Renewable Energy Services on behalf of RUWES. They made us understand that up till the time of the meeting, Integra Renewable Energy has not placed orders for a single 4 – Liter Save 80 stove for the 9.2 billion Naira project under the NCCS programme from DARE or DARE’s partner – LHL eV in Dusseldorf, Germany, but many a time, requests for invoices have been sent to LHL by Integra Renewable Energy, but on no occasion was an order for the 4 Liter model placed.

Furthermore, they affirmed that the procured Save 80 stoves under the MOE’s 9.2 billion Naira clean cook stove project that was displayed at the Velodrome of the National Stadium were the same Save 80 (8 – Liter Model) earlier sold since 2012 by DARE to RUWES, and been paid for, by Integra Renewable Energy Services because the Save 80 stoves carries the CDM compliant number that had been assigned to the stoves that were bought before the 9.2 billion Naira project was approved.

Just a minute after the meeting got to a close, an EFO representative called in asking for the time of the meeting, and if their representative was there, and we told him the meeting is over, and that their agency was not represented. He advised that we should plan for a meeting with them as soon as possible, and we fixed a meeting for the evening of that same day. We met with the Director at the EFO, who informed us that funds does not get out from their office, that the funds could have gotten out from the Office of the Secretary to the Federal Government, and that if we have further enquiries, we should direct it to his office.
GOING FORWARD

On July 6, 2015, the MOE responded to our request for information letter, stating that all our questions would be answered by the outcome of the lawsuit. Member organizations within the stakeholders group had also filed lawsuit against the MOE on their non-response to the three request for information letters that was sent to them by the team. As we wound down this activation, we look forward to the outcome in the court. Unlike our other activations, the allegations and corruption that has ensued from this activation would be followed up by the ICPC who in the cause of this activation, joined our network, and attended all our stakeholders meeting. Likewise, other NGOs in the stakeholders meeting will be looking out to start advocacy campaigns on how important the project was, and why corrupt government officers at the MOE and EFO should be brought to book.

On May 19, 2015 the federal government of Nigeria launched the project without beneficiaries present; launched cookstoves that was already paid for 3 years ago, and holding the Microphone is the Minister of Environment, Laurentian Mallam, and just standing by her, was the former vice president, Namadi Sambo.
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