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L. A. Ogunsola
Obafemi Awolowo University

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Information and Communication Technologies and the Effects of Globalization: Twenty-First Century “Digital Slavery” for Developing Countries—Myth or Reality?

L. A. Ogunsola

Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University

Ile - Ife, Nigeria

Abstract

The main goal of this paper is to examine the ICT (Information and Communication Technology) revolution and the concept of globalization as they effect developing countries. Globalization as one of the reasons for possible widening of the gap between the poor and the rich nations was examined and the emerging concept of “digital slavery” was carefully evaluated. The wide gap in availability and use of ICTs across the world and the influences ICTs exert on globalization at the expense of developing countries were carefully examined and suggestions and necessary policies were offered for developing countries to leap-frog the industrialization stage and transform their economies into high value-added information economies that can compete with the advanced countries on the global market. This is why it is important for Africa, in general, and Nigeria, in particular, to be aware of the implications, prepare to avoid the most telling consequences and prepare to meet its challenges.

Introduction

The information revolution and the extraordinary increase in the spread of knowledge have given birth to a new era—one of knowledge and information which effects directly economic, social, cultural and political activities of all regions of the world, including Africa. Governments worldwide have recognized the role that Information and Communication Technologies could play in socio-economic development. A number of countries especially those in the developed world and some in developing countries are putting in place policies and plans designed to transform their economies into an information and knowledge economy. Countries like USA, Canada, and a number of European countries, as well as Asian countries like India, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, and South American countries like Brazil, Chile, and Mexico among

others, and Australia and Mauritius either already have in place comprehensive ICTs policies and plans or are at an advanced stage of implementing these programmes across their economies and societies. Some of these countries see ICTs and their deployment for socio-economic development as one area where they can quickly establish global dominance and reap tremendous payoff in terms of wealth creation and generation of high-quality employment. On the other hand, some other countries regard the development and utilization of ICTs within their economy and society as a key component of their national vision to improve the quality of life, knowledge and international competitiveness.

As Faye (2000) has pointed out, ICTs are offering even less developed countries a window of opportunities to leapfrog the industrialization stage and transform their economics in to high value-added information economies that can compete with the advanced economics on the global market. Technological innovation has contributed to globalization by supplying infrastructure for trans-world connections. According to Ajayi (2000), the revolution taking place in information and communication technologies have been the central and driving force for the globalization process. Both developed and less-developed countries cannot afford to miss out on the opportunities these technologies are creating.

In practice, globalization benefits those with technology, resources, contacts, information and access to markets. It has a negative impact on the poor. The prediction is that the gap between the new winners and losers within the world economy order dominated by an Information and Knowledge Economies will be much larger than the development gap that now exists between the advanced nations and the less developed nations. African countries are at risk of being further marginalized if they fail to embrace these technologies to transform their economies. As pointed out by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, globalization can benefit humankind as a whole.

At the moment millions of people—perhaps even the majority of the human race—are being denied those benefits. They are poor not because they have too much globalization, but rather that they have too little—or none at all. Many people are actually suffering in different ways—I would say not from globalization itself, but from the failure to manage its adverse effects. Some have lost their jobs; others see their communities disintegrating, some feel that their very identity is at stake (UN, 2000). The most significant aspect of ICTs and globalization that should concern the developing countries like Nigeria is the fact that it has led to unprecedented inequalities in the distributing of benefits between developed countries and the less developed. Present day globalization is not new because history shows that a similar trend was witnessed in the 19th century and the earlier part of the 20th century (Adeboye, 2000). What is different is the intensity and the magnitude of the inequalities that it generates.

In all these developments, there is the underlying assumption that globalization is good for all and that its benefits are shared out (even if not equally) all over the world. The more developed countries benefit while the least developed countries tend to remain impoverished and do not share in the benefits. The combined effect of the global fluidity of finance capital, the growth of foreign direct investment, and the emergence of global corporations have greatly undermined the economic and political sovereignty of states—especially the poor ones. It must be emphasized that the so-called globalized world is riddled with imperfections.

First, free trade is far from being free. In developing countries, trade distorting export subsidies and domestic support in agriculture make nonsense of the pretensions to free trade. Likewise, developed countries restrict the imports of labour-intensive products like textiles that would provide a major boost to exports of developing countries. Free movement of persons across national borders is severely restricted. Highly skilled personnel and those who have money to invest can cross borders fairly easily. The story is different for lower skilled people and particularly unskilled labour. These people can hardly move at all. As Onitiri (2001) has put it, you will find many of them in asylum camps in the developed countries, knocking at the gates for a chance to do the most menial job. All of the above point to the indices of digital slavery for developing countries. In effect, what we now call globalization is really a globalization of imperfections: restricted trade, restricted movement and absence of a world authority that can compensate effectively for marginalized areas and pockets of poverty in a globalised world.

The diffusion of ICT into Africa is at a snail's speed, such that the gap between the information-rich developed countries and Africa continues to increase every day. Africa has 13% of the world population, but only 2% of world telephone lines and 1% of Internet connectivity measured in terms of number of Internet hosts and Internet users. Consequently, most African countries including Nigeria have not been able to reap the abundant benefits of the global information society and the information economy in areas such as education, health, commerce, agriculture, rural development etc.

It is the objective of this paper to evaluate the effects of ICT in the globalization process and examine the emerging concept of 'Digital Slavery' as it is affecting developing countries. In addition, this paper will try to highlight and discuss the factors responsible for this concept of digital slavery. This paper attempts to make developing countries aware of and proactively anticipate the trends, consequences and implications as well as devise appropriate response. This paper will, finally, try to assess the benefits of globalization while minimizing the destabilizations, dislocation, disparities, distortion, disruptions and even the concept of digital slavery associated with the current global trends.

ICTs and Globalization

Information Communication Technology is basically an electronic based system of information transmission, reception, processing and retrieval, which has drastically changed the way we think, the way we live and the environment in which we live. It must be realized that globalization is not limited to the financial markets, but encompasses the whole range of social, political, economic and cultural phenomena. Information and communication technology revolution is the central and driving force for globalization and the dynamic change in all aspects of human existence is the key by-product of the present globalization period of ICT revolution. The world telecommunication system, the convergence of computer technology and telecommunications technology into the Information Technology, with all its components and activities, is distinctive in its extension and complexity—and is also undergoing a rapid and fundamental change. The results of this are that National boundaries between countries and continents become indistinct and the capacity to transfer and process information increases at an exceptional rate. The global information communication has been called “the world’s largest machine,” and it is very complex and difficult to visualize and understand in its different hardware and software subsystems. As Kofi Annan (1999) has put it, “the Internet holds the greatest promise humanity has known for long- distance learning and universal access to quality education... It offers the best chance yet for developing countries to take their rightful place in the global economy... And so our mission must be to ensure access as widely as possible. If we do not, the gulf between the haves and the have-nots will be the gulf between the technology-rich and the technology-poor.”

ICTs are increasingly playing an important role in organizations and in society’s ability to produce, access, adapt and apply information. They are being heralded as the tools for the post-industrial age, and the foundations for a knowledge economy, due to their ability to facilitate the transfer and acquisition of knowledge (Morale-Gomez and Melesse, 1998). These views seem to be shared globally, irrespective of geographical location and difference in income level and wealth of the nation. ICT may not be the only cause of changes we are witnessing in today’s business environment, but the rapid developments in ICT have given impetus to the current wave of globalization.

While trans-national corporations are reaping huge profits from the flexibility and opportunities offered by globalization, the level of poverty in the world is growing. At least, 2.8 billion people in the world, that is 45% of the world population, are living on less than \$2 a day (Stiglitz 2002). Africa in particular is hit by the growth of poverty and economic crisis. The use and production of ICT plays an important role in the ability of nations to participate in global economic activities. Apart from facilitating the acquisition and absorption of knowledge, ICT could offer developing countries

unprecedented opportunities to change educational systems, improve policy formulation and execution, and widen the range of opportunities for business and for the poor. It could also support the process of learning, knowledge networking, knowledge codification, teleworking, and science systems. ICT could be used to access global knowledge and communication with other people. However, over major parts of developing countries ICT is available only on a very limited scale, and this raises doubts about developing countries' ability to participate in the current ICT-induced global knowledge economy. There has also been concern that this unequal distribution of ICT may in fact further contribute to the marginalization of poor countries in relation to developed countries, and to disruptions of the social fabric. Hence, one can conclude that the concept of 'digital slavery' is inevitable for developing countries as far as ICT is concerned. The wide gap in the availability and use of ICT across the world, and the influences ICT exerts on globalization, raise questions about whether globalization entails homogeneity for organizations and societies in developing countries. It also raises questions about the feasibility and desirability of efforts to implement the development of ICT through the transfer of best practices from western industrialized countries to developing countries, and whether organizations can utilize ICT in accordance with the socio-cultural requirements of the contexts (Walshan, 2001). Information and Communication Technology development is a global revolution. It has become a subject of great significance and concern to all mankind. Relevant studies have shown that the greatest impact of the ICT revolution will revolve around the 'Digital Divide' equation. The most important aspect of the ICT challenge is the need to plan, design and implement a National Information Infrastructure (NII) as the engine of economic growth and development.

Digital Slavery—Reality or Myth?

Slavery is a social institution which is defined by law and custom as the most absolute involuntary form of human servitude. It is a condition in which one human being was owned by another. A slave was considered by law as property, or chattel, and deprived of most of the rights ordinarily held by free persons. But it must be realized that there is no consensus on what a slave was or on how the institution of slavery should be defined. But it must be known that the slave usually had few rights and always fewer than his owner. The product of a slave's labour could be claimed by someone else, who also frequently had the right to control his physical production. Another characteristic of slavery is the fact that the slave was deprived of personal liberty and the right to move about geographically as he desired. There were likely to be limits on his capacity to make choices with regards to his occupation. At this juncture, one can rightly ask how the above characteristics of slavery fit in to this concept of 'digital slavery', which is the theme of this paper. Despite the undoubted benefits offered by ICTs, significant barriers to their effective use exist in both developed and developing countries. These

barriers must be addressed to allow realization of ICTs' full potential. Some barriers may be endemic (e.g. the generation gap, learning processes and gaining experience in ICTs). The developing countries are faced with the problems of poor telecoms infrastructure, poor computer and general literacy, lack of awareness of the Internet and regulatory inadequacy that also hinder other applications of the Internet there. Technological gaps and uneven diffusion in technology are not new. "Older" innovations such as telephony and electricity are still far from evenly diffused - but what may be unprecedented is the potential size of the opportunity costs and benefits forgone by failure to participate in the new 'digital society.' Growth in the use of ICTs is highly uneven. There are significant disparities in access to and use of ICTs across countries. Developing countries risk being left further behind in terms of income, equality, development, voice and presence on an increasingly digitalized world stage. The image of globalization as a promise or threat is, in fact, one of the most powerful and persuasive images of our times (Veseth, 1998). Yet, despite the vast literature on this subject and the ongoing discussion, globalization remains an ill-defined concept. Some view it as the international system that has succeeded the end of the Cold War, while others prefer to continue using the term "internationalization" to describe the current changes in the international economy. Though there is some agreement among scholars and experts that globalization is producing greater interconnections and interdependence, there seems to be little consensus on the degree of integration it engenders and on its pervasiveness. Different views have emerged on this issue.

As way of simplification, four different positions can be accounted for: "The first identifies globalization with an increasing homogenization within the global system, which would ultimately lead to assimilation. The second—the 'strong globalization view'—contends that homogeneity remains highly unlikely within the global system, but that a range of qualitative and quantitative changes have combined to introduce a new condition, or set of processes, into world affairs that warrant the novel term 'globalization'. The third position—the 'weak' globalization perspective—maintains that many of the undoubtedly important developments of recent decades signal a significant increase of internationalization within the international political economy that has complex but variable consequences for politics, economics and society, but that has not ushered in a distinctively new era in human affairs. The final-rejectionist—position defends the view that nothing of any great or irreversible significance has taken place" (Jones, 2000). Most observers have dismissed the most radical views, i.e. that globalization is leading to assimilation or that it is not upon us. The crucial debate is thus between the "strong" and "weak" globalization positions.

In the midst of the worldwide economic boom, reports documenting modern-day slavery come from every corner of the globe. From Bangladesh to Brazil, from India to The Sudan, and even in the U.S., there are more people enslaved today than ever before

in human history (Britannica, 2003). As indicated in the earlier part of this paper, globalization always produces winners and losers. In all cases, those who win are those who trade in goods and services characterized by increasing returns. The pace and structure of globalization is usually dictated by the winners. In the late 19th century and pre-first World War years, it was driven by colonialism and gunboat diplomacy. The current one is driven by more subtle ideology propagated by the international financial institutions and the world trade organization through the influence of ICTs. It must be emphasized that trade liberation should lead to greater benefits for all if the free movement of goods and services is extended to the physical movement of people. In contrast, what happens is that it is driven by multinational corporations that locate different stages in the production/value chain in different parts of the world. It must also be realized that it is these multinational corporations that are the most important vehicles for transferring technology around the globe. Location is determined by cost advantage. The result is minimal inter-firm and inter-industry trade and integration. Labour migration, which helps to equalize factor costs in previous episode of liberation, is restricted to the highly skilled-computer software and hardware engineers and programmers. As Mule (2000), observes, “In theory globalization can have a positive impact on agricultural growth. In practice globalization benefits those with technology, resources, contacts, information and access to markets. It has a negative impact on the poor.” As Adeboye (2002) has revealed, much of the financial flow-over, 60 percent is speculative rather than developmental. What is really stated is the fact that globalization has always led to the de-industrialization of losers at the expense of winners. For example, China and India were just as industrialized as parts of Europe at the start of the first globalization. The manufacturing sectors of these economies vanished with Britain’s market penetration following colonization. United States and European market penetration seems to have done the same thing to the economies of the south in the current round of globalization. Developing countries’ export concentration is also very high. They not only trade in low value-added goods and services, but also they depend on one or a few export commodities for their export earnings. This aids greater marginalization. From the above, one can rightly say that the concept of ‘digital slavery’ in the 21st century is becoming a reality for the African countries. The main effect of the transformation engendered by globalization is that certain parts of the world, the developing world in general and Africa in particular, are being increasingly marginalized and subjected to the hegemonic control of the main actor on the world scene. It must be pointed out that the West has driven the globalization agenda in a way to gain disproportionate share of the benefits at the expense of the developing world.

In our contemporary world, many countries, which incidentally are geographically located in Europe, North America and parts of Asia, are highly industrialized, and they have an edge in modern science and technology. They also show similar patterns in level of wealth, with a stable governance structure. On the other hand, we have many

countries, which are geographically located in Africa and most parts of Asia, that have not shown much improvement on most fronts of development, especially when considered on a global scale. They are characterized by war and famine, and corruption is seriously affecting the development and functioning of the public infrastructure. By this, one can say that all these factors are seriously aiding the concept of 'digital slavery,' which is seriously threatening African countries. The most significant aspect of globalization that should concern us in Africa is the fact that it has led to unprecedented inequalities in the distribution of benefits between the developed countries and the less developed. Present day globalization as earlier noted, is not new because history shows that a significant trend was witnessed in the 19th century and the earlier part of the 20th century. What is different is the intensity and the magnitude of the inequalities that it generates. In all these developments, there is the underlying assumption that globalization is good for all and that its benefits are shared out, even if not equally, all over the world. By this, it can be assumed that the concept of 'digital slavery' in this paper can be termed as a myth because the originators and the inventors of ICTs, which are the developed countries, allow and encourage the benefits of globalization to be shared throughout the world. It is also argued that ICTs as a great social leveler, can erase cultural barriers, overwhelm economic inequalities, and even compensate for intellectual disparities. High technology can also put unequal human beings on an equal footing, and that makes it the most potent democratizing tool ever devised. But it is hardly realized that globalization benefits different countries differently, the more developed countries taking the lion's share of the benefits while the least developed tend to be impoverished and by-passed by the benefits. It may be said that two different worlds co-existed. One was the world of the rich nations whose population had ample access to education, health services, clean water, unemployment benefits, and social security. The other one was the world characterized by abject poverty with a lack of education, no access to health services and a lack of basic infrastructures to deliver social services. The combined effect of the global fluidity of finance capital, the growth of foreign direct investment (FDI), and the emergency of global corporations has greatly undermined the economic (political) sovereignty of states especially the poor ones. It is necessary to highlight certain pertinent issues that must be addressed in any discussion on globalization. UNDP in 1999 reproduced figures to show that the gap between the richest and the poorest countries in per capita income terms was only 3:1 during the dawn of the Industrial Revolution in 1820, rising to 11:1 by the first episode of globalization in 1913. More recently, it grew to 35:1 in 1950, rising slightly to 44:1 by 1973. After the commencement of the present round of globalization, this figure has acquired a staggering magnitude of 71:1. Accompanying this widening gap is the grave human cost in terms of malnutrition, morbidity and mortality (Murshed, 2000). It is estimated that those living in abject poverty number over 700 million, the majority of whom are in Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia. Since the beginning of the 1980s, most African countries have been facing severe economic

crisis. Most macro-economic indicators have been pointing downwards. The continent is only the least industrialized part of the world, but is also undergoing de-industrialization (Mkandawire 1991). Over the past decade, the UNDP human development index country rankings have been showing that 15-20 countries at the very bottom of the list are all in Africa. Moreover, Africa currently has the highest level of debt as a proportion of GDP and it is the only region where food supply is declining. This is the most conclusive evidence of 'digital slavery' and marginalization of some groups and nations from the process of globalization. This is why it is important for Africa and Nigeria in particular to be aware of the implications, and be prepared to meet its challenges.

Many researchers have noted that globalization, far from delivering on these great promises, has been responsible for serious destabilizing forces that have been associated with increasing poverty, negative rates of economic development, massive unemployment, and instability of exchange rates and double-digit inflation rates. It was noted that at the international level, the international financial system has been unable to cope with the risks and challenges of globalization. By this, one can say that developing countries especially African countries are gradually drifting to 'digital slavery.' The diffusion of ICTs into Africa has been at a snail's speed, so much so that the gap between information-rich developed countries and African countries continues to widen every day. As pointed out by Stiglitz (2002), the former Vice President and Chief Economist of the World Bank, it was the decision of the Western countries to keep quotas on a wide range of goods—from textiles to sugar—while forcing the developing countries to open their markets. The West has been subsidizing its agriculture, thus weakening the developing countries' capacity to compete, while at the same time forcing them to remove their own subsidies, thereby increasing their vulnerability to Western imports. He also recalls how capital markets of developing countries were opened and subsequently subjected to speculative attacks leading to net outflow of resources and the weakening of currencies. From the above analysis, one is tempted to conclude that 'digital slavery' as far as African countries are concerned is a reality.

The Way Forward

At the beginning of the 1990s, the leading economies of the world began to realize the importance of information and knowledge as valuable resources, both nationally and within organizations. A national information infrastructure was formulated to provide foundation for an information economy. In order to assist African countries to face the challenges of the information society and thus avoid their marginalization and the effects of 'digital slavery,' the United Nation Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has elaborated an African Information Society Initiative (AISI), as requested by

member states. This initiative is an action framework to build Africa's information and communication infrastructure, and was adopted during the ECA's 22nd meeting of African Ministers in charge of planning and development (held in May 1996) under resolution 812 (XXXI) entitled "Implementation of the African Information Society Initiative" (ECA, 1996). These efforts led to the development of National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI), whose policies, plans and strategies could be used to enhance the role of information and communication technologies in facilitating the socio-economic development process. For the African countries to avoid 'digital slavery' there is need for a master plan and strategy for implementation of NICI. In addition, there is a need to establish a commission on ICTs to regulate the sector. It must be realized that this is the time for government to encourage Nigerians in diaspora to actively participate in ICT development. Also, the various governments in African countries should declare access to ICT services as a fundamental human right of everybody and should establish a timetable and guarantee-enabling environment for attracting the right level of investments.

The digital revolution offers Nigeria and other African countries the unique opportunity of actively participating in the world latest developmental revolution. The information age has created new wealth and sustains one of the largest and unbroken growths in some economies notably North America and Europe. The biggest beneficiaries have always been countries that are quick to identify the strategic relevance of Information Technology (IT) in the rapid transformation of national economic development. IT has contributed significantly in dramatically developing and establishing the economies of Asia in the league of Newly Industrialized Economies. African countries especially Nigeria thus has the choice to either convert its population plus its low-wage economy into a strong IT powerhouse in global terms (as a net producer of IT products and services) or it could once again dash hopes of the black race by sitting on its hands and ending up as merely a large market for the consumption of IT products and services that in turn feeds the already booming economies of wiser countries. This will obviously amount to self-inflicted 'digital slavery' that will further condemn Nigeria and other African countries into another painful century of unshackling itself from the effects of slavery whose devastation would be greater than the earlier one. African countries should draw up National IT Policy that should define the road map of what Africa wants out of this revolution and how it intends to achieve its objectives. Some informed sources are likely to point out the possible impairment we are likely to suffer as a result of the inefficiency of our vital utilities and public infrastructure such as power supply, telecommunications and transportation. But one can equally counter such views with the successes that countries like India and Pakistan with similar handicaps have achieved. With this in mind, there is great potential for Nigeria and other African countries for local development of IT Brainpower for subsequent 'export' to bridge the IT skills gap in North America and Europe, also there is the need for local manufacture

of hardware components as well as local development of software. What is now needed is to take the technology a step further by encouraging the local production of some of the components used for systems building: Components such as Computers, Motherboards, Modems, Monitors, Casing/Power Supplies, Keyboards/Mice and Add-in Cards (Mirilla, 2000). That no IT company has yet been able to climb to this level has more to do with the investment climate and lack of policy guidelines by government than the required technical skill. Government/private sector cooperation is very crucial here. It is also important to note that no genuine foreign entrepreneur will come in to successfully develop this sector for us. Such initiative must come from local operators. Foreign investors come in only when policies and infrastructure have been properly defined and established. The trend all over the world is moving from national monopoly in the ownership and management of the sector in to a regime of deregulation and privatization to open up the sector to private investors in order to engender healthy competition, resulting in greater efficiency, improvement of service quality, lowering of prices and general consumer satisfaction. Some African countries like Nigeria have quite rightly and widely adopted this trend. ICT venture is highly capital intensive, but also highly profitable. The government has a lot of financial responsibility to provide for other sectors of national development like education, health-care delivery, public security and defense, public administration, etc. It therefore makes sense for government to largely divest itself from ICT infrastructure provision, but to carefully guide its growth and development through government policy, while at the same time making effective use of the ICT in the performance of its legitimate functions.

Developing countries must look forward prospectively and participate actively in building technological capabilities to suit their needs. Technology itself also has a role to play in this. Just as technologies create them, so new innovations offer ways of bridging technological divides. Connectivity can build on existing infrastructure or bypass traditional means with technologies such as wireless. The availability of free software is transforming the information technology industry.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Without any shadow of doubt, it must be realized that the entire world is going online. Although globalization is being propelled by rapid technological innovations, ICT is not the only technological force that drives globalization. There are breakthroughs in biotechnology and new materials as well as development in ICT which firms and other nations must be aware of and proactively anticipate the trends, consequences and implications as well as device appropriate response. Many of us are aware that we live in a rapidly changing world. But most of us are still not conscious of the speed of change and the interconnections between the many technological and other changes that are affecting our daily lives and that will have a profound effect on our future. And without

this consciousness, it is going to be difficult to fully understand our present predicament and proffer effective solutions that will ensure that we have at least a standing place in a future world. The emergence of serious economic crisis in most African countries in the 1980s and Western response of using international financial institutions, particularly the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, in imposing structural adjustment programmes, has led to tighter imperialist control of the continent. With globalization as asserted by Ibrahim (2002), the West is no longer ashamed of proclaiming the necessity for imperialism. The conclusion is that certain steps have to be taken in order to access the benefits of globalization while minimizing destabilizations, dislocation, disparities, disruption, distortions and even the concept of 'digital slavery' associated with the current global trends. In other words, nations and enterprises are not powerless in determining their response to its risks and challenges. To manage the process of globalization, African countries and enterprises must develop mechanisms and institutional arrangement for creating awareness and understanding of the nature, pace, consequences and implications of the changes resulting from globalization. Special focused teams involving representatives of the government, academia, and the private sector must be formed to monitor, analyze and disseminate information on the trends, structure, consequences and implications of globalization and recommend policy actions to all concerned. It is also necessary to use all sources of information, especially the Internet to educate the youths and the children to ensure that they do not miss the train of this global trend. Proactive measures should be taken to interact with the media in order to effectively disseminate information and views on globalization. Central to the preparedness of any nation for globalization is a sharp focus on its youths and children, who own the future, and who have been responsible for most of the phenomenal technological advances of the second half of the 20th century. A focus on children and youths is particularly called for in the case of Africa because of the heavy population of children as a percentage of the population. A nation where the children miss the train of on-line connectivity and the enormous explosion of learning that it holds is doomed. An attack on poverty must start by an assault on ignorance and a relevant nation is only guaranteed if its children are prepared for lifetime learning and are given the enablement to be part of the global future which is now.

The agenda for global preparedness would include a heavy emphasis on the development of the telecommunications and Internet infrastructure. Since technology is a major driver of globalization, the center piece of preparedness must be a focus on investments that expand the technological capability of Nigeria - institutional development, Research and Development (R&D) spending, venture capital for innovative initiatives, and a forward looking educational curricula that prepare its graduates for the challenges of globalization. Preparedness for globalization must include the transformation of the public sector to meet the global challenge of managing a private sector led economy. If the private sector is moving on-line and relating to the

Internet, government methods, service delivery, record keeping and information dissemination must engage with these new developments. Creative networking of the various initiatives within the country can help to catalyze the preparedness of the private sector, civil society and government for globalization. Also, to avoid the concept of ‘digital slavery’ computer literacy and internet connectivity must be addressed by targeted policies and deliver quick and with sustainable results. The widely held view that countries cannot influence the force or pace of globalizations, and that rather they should learn to live with or make the best of its impact and consequences is an error. Countries, by prudent cooperative and prudent management can proactively control its pace and consequences. Of particular concern is the fact that the flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) that has escalated in recent decades has eluded the poorest nations of the world, particularly African countries. While globalization has multiplied the flow of FDI, less than one percent of the total has gone to Sub-Saharan Africa. Other issues of concern include the growing number of non-tariff barriers that developed countries are imposing on goods from developing countries while forcing them to open up their own markets to the goods of the developed countries, and the use of Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPR) and Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMs) to corner developing country markets for the developed, while ensuring little or no transfer of technology to these countries, the issues of subsidies and their use in the World Trade Organization rules of international trade is also very pertinent. The developed countries use subsidies freely but penalize others who use them. It must be realized that developed countries are able to achieve these fits due to the advantages of ICTs at their disposal. All the above measures by the developed countries can then be termed ‘digital slavery’ for the developing countries because of their inability to make proper use of ICT facilities like the developed countries. African countries must rise up to these challenges of globalization and they must do everything possible to put an end to this 21st century slavery. The developing countries should seek adequate representation at international meetings where the issues are discussed, and they should cooperate to coordinate research and apply available expertise in carrying out the factual data gathering and analysis that reveal the true impact of the issue in developing countries. In addition, certain prerequisites, such as reliable power supply to operate the computers, a well-functioning telephone network to transmit data, foreign currency to import the technology, and the computer literate personnel are necessary for successful use of IT. It is disheartening to note that such infrastructural elements remain inadequate in many Sub-Saharan African countries.

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