



Oche Onazi, University of Edinburgh

Oche Onazi is currently writing his PhD entitled “Towards Legal and Institutional Frameworks for the Democratization of Public Goods in Nigeria” at the University of Edinburgh School of Law. He holds a Masters in Law from the University of Warwick with specialization in law in development. He is a qualified barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

***Good Governance and Electric Sector Reform in Nigeria:
A Critique from a Human Rights Perspective***

Since 2004, Nigeria has embarked on a series reforms to generally tackle the deplorable level of access to public goods and services in the country. The reforms have been executed under the rubric of the World Bank’s concept of good governance, and more generally, it’s Comprehensive Development Strategy (“CDF”).

A key feature of these approaches is the turn to human rights as a source of good economic outcomes. Good governance and the CDF mark a reversal of approach, which had in the past distanced itself from the social, structural and human aspects of economic reform. The reform of Nigeria’s electric sector emerges within this climate, and as an important part of the good governance argument. In spite of the premises about human rights at the normative level, the reforms in practice fail to establish a connection between electricity and human rights. Electricity is treated as a commodity rather than a precondition for human survival. Such is an example of the gap between the rhetoric and practice in the dominant Bretton Woods approaches to human rights.

In conclusion, I argue that a human rights approach may be one way of ensuring universal access to electricity as a matter of right and social justice. The moral appeal of human rights is proposed as means through which electricity can be expanded, and to provoke appropriate responses to deal with various forms of suffering that may occur from the lack of electricity.