April 14, 2022

Simplification of the Rules Taskforce (SORT),
Home Office,
2 Marsham Street,
London SW1P 4DF,
United Kingdom.

CC

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP,
Secretary of State for the Home Department,
2 Marsham Street,
London SW1P 4DF,
United Kingdom.

Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP,
The Speaker of the House of Commons.
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA,
United Kingdom.

Dear SORT,

<div align="center">**Re: Making a Case for Nigeria's Inclusion in the MESC list**</div>

Thank you for your reply to us dated March 31, 2022. We are excited that the Home Office recognises the extent of work the Policy Shapers team and our Advocacy Taskforce put into the preparation of the 15-page policy brief spiced with data points from the United Nations, West African Examination Council, Migration Policy Institute, House of Commons, etc. Thank you for also informing us of your intention to retain the brief for the future, however, your last response left us with a couple of questions that we would love to address.

Addressing Contradictions and Key Questions
"Thank you very much for taking the time to put together this evidence pack for us, we will retain it for any future review of the MESC list." We found the second part of this statement to be in

direct conflict with your previous reply to us dated January 26, 2022 where you noted that the MESC list *"...is periodically reviewed and updated, and new countries are added if they are found to meet the requirements."* It is our understanding that the English word 'periodically' means 'at regular intervals of time' (Marriam Webster), thus, saying 'for any future review' without any distinct time is in total contradiction to your previous claim. We are aware that the Law Commission in Report 388, Simplification of the Immigration Rules, 8.8, p.12, recommended April and October as suitable periods for immigration rules review, thus we would very much appreciate it if you tell us a more concrete period for this review as opposed to leaving it to probability. This issue is also closely related to some of the questions you did not answer from the policy brief;

1. When was the MESC list last reviewed?
2. Which countries were recently added? Also;
3. What form of public evidence was used to validate their inclusion?

"While we appreciate that the evidence you provided shows a generally significant level of English proficiency and literacy in Nigeria, it does not show that more than 51% of the population speak English as a first language." The second part of this statement again is in direct conflict with what [the Home Office told the BBC in July 2021](). We quote, *"We must have evidence that at least 51% of the population speaks English as a first language for a country to be included in the Majority English Speaking Country list…"* It goes without saying that "at least 51%" and "more than 51%" can be interpreted differently. Our policy brief has proven statistically that at least 51% of the population speaks English as a first language which meets the Home Office criteria as referenced on a public record of the BBC. "...more than 51%" could mean 52%, 65%, 79%, or even 100%. We do not think it is logically acceptable to have a fleeting requirement for such an important foreign policy issue which [costs Nigerians up to 5 billion naira annually](). Another important question is, why does the Home Office not have a page on its website that speaks to the composition and rationale of the MESC list? In the spirit of [open governance and transparency](), it is important for the UK to make this information public knowledge as opposed to addressing questions privately on a case-by-case basis.

Additional Public Evidence
Our policy brief revealed that, indeed, there is public evidence to support Nigeria's demand for inclusion in the Majority English Speaking Country (MESC) list. Some of these include a top 30 global ranking and a top 3 Africa ranking on the annual Education First English Proficiency Index over the past five years; the United Nations projection that 62% of Nigeria's population is under 25 years, a tech-savvy generation with 75% literacy in English; and a 62.5% pass rate in the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) with nearly 5 million English credits recorded between 2016 and 2021. Your response implied the data we shared is not sufficient but you did not state the particular aspect of our analysis you disagree with.

Also, our brief never mentioned that only 51% of the population speaks English, as you implied in your last message to us. See an excerpt below.

> According to population projections by the United Nations for 2020, about 62% of the Nigerian population are below 25 years of age. By contrast, less than 5% are aged 60 years and above. This makes Nigeria a youthful population with a median age of about 18 years, which is lower than African and world estimates of 20 and 29 respectively. Furthermore, as of 2019, data from Statista shows that around 72% of young women and 78% of young men in Nigeria are literate in English (75% combined). This means they could understand, read, and write a short, simple statement, for instance, on their everyday life in the English language. Mathematically, bringing both datasets together:
>
> If 62% of Nigeria's population is under 25 and 75% of young people under 25 are literate in English
>
> Therefore, 75% of Nigeria's 62% population represents the total percentage of young people proficient in English
>
> Answer = 46.5%
>
> Knowing that we already have 46.5% English speakers from the youth population alone, it is statistically safe to estimate the additional 4.5% required to attain the Home Office's MESC benchmark of 51% can easily be estimated from the other 34% of the population aged 25-64 years, as they primarily make up the working population, and the language of upward mobility in Nigeria's labour market is English.

Please note that 4.5% from the adult population is a very modest estimation made to fulfil the Home Office's criteria. As of 2018, Nigeria's adult literacy rate was at 62.02% and if you consider that English is the medium of instruction in Nigeria's nursery, primary, secondary, and tertiary education institutions, it means that the individuals who make up this 62% have advanced proficiency in the English language.
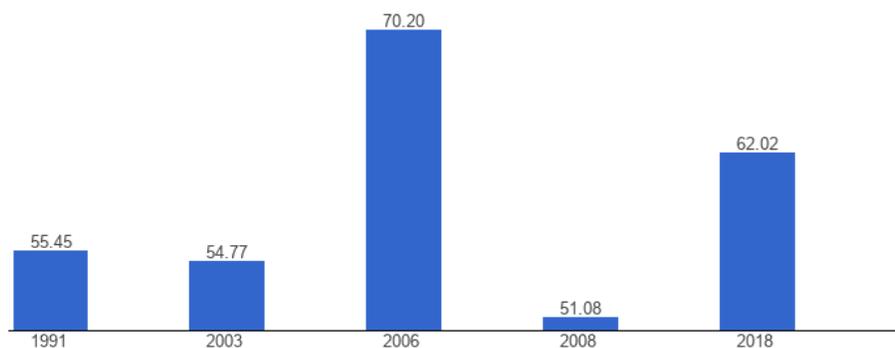
Literacy rate in Nigeria, 1991 - 2018 (Source: The Global Economy Data portal)

Between 1991 and 2018, the average literacy rate in Nigeria was 58.7% with a minimum of 51.08% in 2008 and a maximum of 70.2% in 2006. This average is still way above the Home Office's 51% criteria.

Furthermore, as the country's population grows, the overall English proficiency and literacy rate would continue to improve. According to the Census Bureau of the United States, the population of Nigeria will surpass that of the United States in 2047, when the population of Nigeria would have reached an estimated 379.25 million. By this projection, Nigeria would become the third most populated country in the world with a new globally-aware tech-savvy generation.
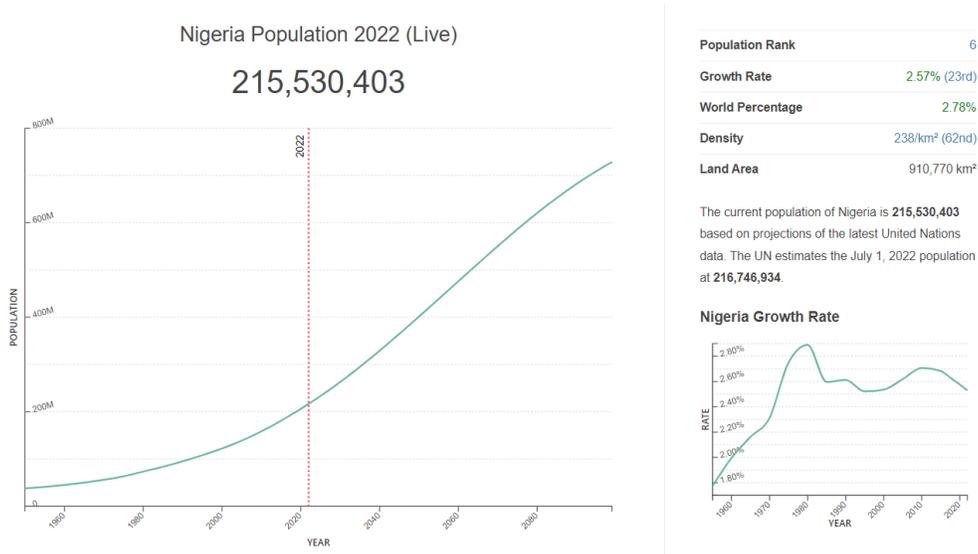
Nigeria's Population growth rate and trend (Source: World Population Review)

Also, when you consider factors like high rural-urban migration, which according to the World Bank has been a major driver of Nigeria's rapid urbanisation, you would agree that the already high levels of English literacy in the country are set to go even higher.
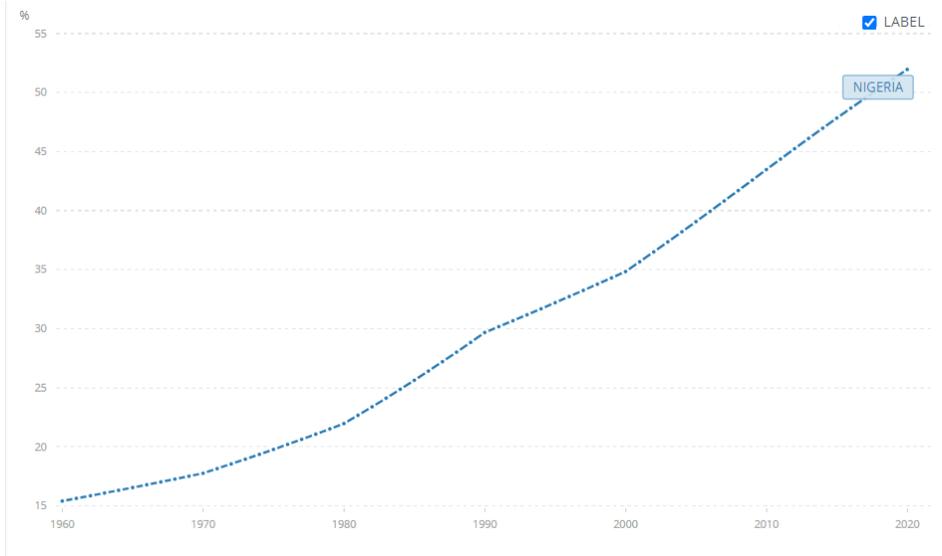
World Bank chart derived from UN Population's World Urbanisation Prospects, 2018 shows an increase in the urban population in Nigeria between 1960 and 2020 (Source: World Bank)

In addition to the data points highlighted in our policy brief dated February 14, 2022, we believe the aforementioned points also add to the argument in support of Nigeria's inclusion in the Majority English Speaking Country (MESC) list.

Setting the Reform in Motion

While our singular campaign demand is for an outright inclusion of Nigeria in the MESC list as the robust data we have shared supports this, we understand that sometimes policy change of this magnitude can take time thus we have identified two quick steps which the Home Office can take as part of its activities to set this policy reform in motion.

1. Many of our 74,000 campaign supporters have noted that one way the Home Office can quickly address this discriminatory policy practice against English-speaking Africans is to cancel the expiry clause in the IELTS test result. This is in recognition of the fact that the English knowledge of these citizens cannot expire since they live in an English-speaking country. Thus making the IELTS result last for a lifetime, just like the French DELF/DALF test, is a good place to start this reform conversation.

2. Another good step in the right direction would be a drastic reduction in the cost of the test that resonates with the economic realities of the African continent.

These points are still a far cry from our desired goal of Nigeria's inclusion in the MESC list, but the implementation of both would be considered a good start towards the actualization of this policy reform, and a sign of empathy and reason from the United Kingdom government towards its former colonies in Africa. This has become even more important as agitations against the UK and the Royal family are rising in the Caribbean community and more young people on the African continent are speaking up against these sorts of discriminatory policies.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Policy Shapers Team,
On behalf of our 74,000 Campaign Supporters
Port Harcourt, Nigeria
thepolicyshapers@gmail.com