

A CRITICAL STUDY OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AS PURVEYORS OF DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA (1980 – 2016)

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ABSTRACT

The non-governmental organizations hereafter referred to as NGOs in Nigeria have since the 1980s evolved to play increasing roles as purveyor of development in the country. This is mainly because of the Nigerian state's failure to provide a humane and better life for the citizenry. As the neo liberalists advocated for the contraction of the state and increasing involvement of other non-governmental institutions and organizations in the process of development in Nigeria NGOs proliferated. Although NGOs were not conceived as development alternatives to the state, their increasing role was necessary as they were conceived as being better at reaching to the grassroots and being people oriented. From the 1980s to date, NGOs have contributed in many ways to the process of development in Nigeria but for the fact that the country's developmental challenges have continued to increase, the role of the organizations seems to be undermined. Many accuse NGOs for being corrupt and self-centered and claim that they have not lived above board. Against this backdrop, this paper is a critical study of NGOs as purveyors of development in Nigeria. To achieve its aim, the paper relies on critical discourse technique of qualitative analysis as it looks at the roles the NGOs need to play in the light of Nigeria's increasing development challenges especially the rehabilitation of IDPs in north east Nigeria. It is the opinion of the paper that NGOs should play active and transparent roles in this evolving project in order to be regarded as a true purveyor of development in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Corruption, Development, Non-Governmental Organization, Nigeria, Purveyor of Development

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, as in other nations of the world, individuals are interested in having a better or at least a more humane life which borders on life-sustenance, self-esteem and freedom, and it means that government is charged with the responsibility of providing these basic needs to the people through various economic, political and social means. This is largely true because as can be remembered, one of the driving forces which sustained the quest for independence by many colonized peoples (including Nigeria) was the belief that development would necessarily follow independence. Unfortunately, fifty six years after independence, Nigeria like some Third World Countries is yet to develop which means that the people have not gotten humane life they expected from the government notwithstanding foreign aid/assistance from zonal agencies, developed countries and their likes. This is why, according to Booth (1994), the role of the NGOs involved in Third World relief and development work is receiving increasing attention in recent years to such an extent that the 1980's have been termed the decade of the NGOs. The increasing attention however reflects the current opinion that the NGOs are in some way better at relief and development work than official bilateral and multilateral aid agencies. Two factors are responsible for this view as identified by Booth (1994). The first is a general dissatisfaction with official aid

policies which have prompted both government and public alike to view NGOs as alternative development channels. The second is the paradigm shift in development thinking which stresses the active participation of local people in development process. More so, international treaties and international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) were perceived as being too centered on the interests of capitalist enterprises. All these reasons and factors have made the NGOs to be conceived as purveyors of development not only in Nigeria but in other places that have similar development challenges.

NGOs are relatively new in Nigeria and their development is still low when compared with the development of similar organizations in the more advanced countries of America, Europe and Asia. Nonetheless, the NGO scene in Nigeria is dynamic and the number of NGOs in the country is exploding, with new ones emerging daily. Presently, the list of NGOs in Nigeria covers the letter A to Z and they are as much as 3,208 (three thousand two hundred and eight) in number (United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, 2016). This is a good development in an era when economic constraints mainly caused by corruption and other factors restricted the influence of government and limited its ability to meet the development needs of the people. This proliferation of NGOs in Nigeria still indicates that there is need for effective alternatives for social development in the country.

Thus, many NGOs have developed to emphasize humanitarian issues, developmental aid and sustainable development by supporting a wide range of activities in such areas as health, education, household food security and nutrition, women's development, child welfare, environment, AIDS/HIV, income – generation, human rights and other areas of development. These NGOs are receiving increasing attention from a variety of institutions like the United Nations family, DFID, USAID, the Nigerian three-tiers of governments, individuals and many groups who perceive them to be more significant and better in the development process than the official unilateral, bilateral or multilateral agencies. More so, the attention given to the NGOs is because of the current interest in promoting collaboration between governments, donor agencies and NGOs which reflects an awareness of the need to combine macro-level interventions with practical measures to improve the quality of life of people especially at the grassroots levels. These interested institutions, the donors and individuals give their support to the NGOs believing that they have a comparative advantage as effective agents of development because of their relative administrative simplicity, proximity to the grassroots, ability to identify the felt needs of the people, and efficient and cost effective mode of operation. It is in this light that donations and supports have been given to the NGOs in Nigeria and there is no doubt that some good have been done in the country through them. Despite this, the NGOs have increasingly come under heavy criticisms recently because the challenge of development is still obvious in Nigeria which questions their role as purveyors of development. For example, while Shonecke (2003) criticizes the NGOs for doing more harm than good, the NGO is an avenue to share funds (Akukwe, 1988). Evidence of mass illiteracy, hunger, malnutrition, poverty, low level of political education, humanitarian and child abuses to mention a few areas of development need in the country today indicate that the NGOs are not yet able to meet up with their supposed roles. This however, does not mean that NGOs are alternative development bodies at a parallel line with the state. Nevertheless, NGOs have been accused of neglecting their traditional role of developing the people as they have resorted to making business with the people's poverty (Shonecke, 2003). Based on these criticisms, this paper raises the following questions; what is the nexus between the NGOs and development in Nigeria? Have the NGOs been able to meet up with their expected roles as agents of development in the country? In fact, what are the factors militating against the effectiveness of NGOs' functions in Nigeria? On the whole, how can NGOs become sincere purveyors of development in Nigeria? This paper answers these questions to the extent that it also provides some suggestions on what the NGOs need to

do in order to become sincere and trust worthy purveyors of development in the country.

NGOS AND DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTUAL EXPLANATION

There is a conceptual confusion concerning the term NGO as it is an umbrella term covering a wide range of organizations. Unlike the term inter-governmental organization, NGO is a term in general use but is not a legal definition (Wikipedia encyclopedia, 2009). In many jurisdictions, NGOs are defined as civil society organization or referred to by other names such as, independent sector, volunteer sector, grass root organization, self-help organization; and transnational social movement, a point which the encyclopedia shares with other authors like Booth (1994) and Lane (1995). To lessen the confusion associated with the term NGO, the World Bank has divided them into Operational and Advocacy types. Whereas the primary purpose of an operational NGO is to design and implement development – related projects which are frequently categorizes into relief-oriented or development – oriented, service delivery or participatory, religious or secular, public or private-oriented, an Advocacy NGO is to defend or promote a specific course. It tries to create awareness. However, no matter how an organization positions itself to be regarded as an NGO, an NGO according to <http://www.ngo.org/ngo.info/define/html>, represents any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international levels. Task – oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizen concerns to governments, advocate and monitor policies and encourage political participation through provision of information. Some are organized around specific issues such as human rights, environment or health. They provide analysis and expertise, service as early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements. Their relationship with offices and agencies of the United Nations system differs depending on their goals, their venue and the mandate of a particular institution.

Bagei (2011) in a similar development defines NGOs from the stand point of being exogenous or indigenous voluntary private non-profit organizations that are engaged in relief, rehabilitation and development programmes using finance raised from voluntary, private sources and donor agencies and managing themselves autonomously at local, national and or international levels. This positions the NGOs as autonomous internal or external organizations that render assistance to targeted individuals or groups when the need arises. In addition, the World Bank has defined the NGOs as the groups and institutions that are entirely or largely independent of state or national government characterized primarily by humanitarian or cooperative rather than commercial objectives. It is apparent from the foregoing that NGOs are non-profit making organizations established for multiple developmental projects and programmes that are gendered toward the people. Thus, NGOs seem to be critical in the life of any developmental state as they attract and purvey development.

The concept of development itself seems to be in a state of flux since the end of the Second World War as it was first conceived as the outcome of economic growth (Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2013). In this sense, development theorists (Rostow, 1952 and Harold and Dormar, 1957) for example proposed models of development that generally identified structural changes, savings and investments as the source of economic development and growth (Otto and Ukpere, 2012). The assumption stemmed from the optimism that economic growth would generate fund for investment and infrastructural development that would guarantee better living condition for the people. Alas! This was never realized even in the 1960s and 1970s. In the developing nations of Latin America and Africa for example instead of providing corresponding social goods to the people, increasing poverty, food insecurity, unemployment, diseases, crimes, wars and illiteracy became prevalent. Thus, post development thought as Rapley (2007) argues calls for a return to the stress on people as both the measures and determinants of development. This was a similar position earlier taken by Amucheazi (1980), Ike and

Edozien (2003).

In the early 1980s therefore, the neo-liberal thought of restructuring the state to accommodate other development partners since the developmental state has failed in most of its developmental projects and programmes, increased the role of the NGOs as purveyors of development. No wonder the 1980s have been referred to as the decade of the NGOs. In the case of Nigeria and some other developing nations, there has been a spate of proliferation of NGOs since then. It is on this note that Lane (1995) observes that the role of NGOs involved in Third World relief and development work has received increasing attention in recent years because of the opinion that NGOs are in some way better at relief and development work than official bilateral or multilateral aid agencies. This is because of a general dissatisfaction people have about official aid policies of the Northern donors and aid agencies. Based on this fact, Lane points out that even government in turn comes to view NGOs as alternative development channels. The paradigm shift in development thinking which stresses active participation of local people in the development processes is another factor that leads to viewing the NGOs as better development mechanism than inter-governmental organizations where corruption thrives. Conversely, as evidence shall reveal in this work, NGOs have also become corrupt at certain stages of playing their roles. In accord with Lane (1995), Akukwe (1988) stresses that the tendency to over-centralize decision – making naturally affects the operation of the NGOs and so advocates for the participation of the people in development processes so that sustainable development can be achieved in Nigeria. Understandably, although NGOs and development are different variables, as a matter of necessity, they have affected themselves deeply and as such have generated some debates on the NGO – development nexus especially since the 1980s and this paper is a contribution to that debate.

HISTORICIZING THE NEXUS BETWEEN THE NGOs AND ISSUES OF DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Before 1960, Nigeria was a British Colony. She got her independence from Britain in 1960. Few years after the attainment of this independence, debates and discussions were rife and lively about the problems of national development, and great hopes were raised on the possibility of the country becoming developed within a short while. In her national development plans, Nigeria recognized certain key elements of sustainable development such as ecological integrity and sustainability, equity and distributive justice at all levels, socially – relevant economic productivity and technological development, popular participation and collective autonomy as well as prevalence and institutionalization of human and democratic rights (Aina and Salau: 1992). Proceeding from these elements, it is obvious that Nigeria's development history does not totally lack recognition of these key elements. Although implementation might have failed, evidence abounds, according to Aina and Salau (1992) that the recognition of this direction can be found in the five national objectives of Nigeria as for example declared in the 2nd National Development Plan (NDP), 1970-1974. These objectives were to establish Nigeria as a united, strong and self – reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; a just and egalitarian society; a land full of bright and full opportunities; a free and democratic society for all.

Indeed, at the material level, progress has been made in Nigeria. According to Amucheazi (1980), industries have expanded, there are express highways, flyovers, wide and concrete bridges, school and hospital expansion. Rapid economic growth has also increased the pace of population growth from 55 – 59 million in 1963 (Aina and Salau; 1992.27), to about 170 million today. In addition, a substantial amount of progress has been achieved in many directions but statistics can be deceptive. They are just material progress. The question is, how far has the lot of the common man been benefited? The failure of so many development projects and strategies and the consequent critique or rejection of the very idea of

development by many in recent times according to Ike and Edozien (2003:5) “can be attributed largely to lopsided and anti-cultural understanding of development. Many African countries themselves with their elites got lost in the euphoria of modernization.” Therefore, one fact which has been tested to be true is that most development models (be it political, economical, technological and social) conceived in the western nations and transported to African nations by imposition or otherwise have failed to address the problem of development in most of these nations (including Nigeria). Such models work in the developed Northern Industrialized and Western nations but when applied to Nigeria failed because they considered in isolation, an idea that was in itself integral and that is development of the people and things. Amucheazi (1980:3-4), reveals that: “If we were to take present income levels and correct for inflation, there can be no denying that the average citizen is today worse off than he was ten years ago... Judging from the increasing decay of our villages, towns and cities, there is really no evidence to believe that the quality of life of the people in these places has improved.”

This classical and incisive revelation aptly summarizes the state of affairs of a nation (Nigeria) which is said to be developing by leaps and bounds, which has outlined several development plans, has abundant resources and recorded impressive figures of achievement in the economic sector. Today, Nigeria is regarded as the number one economy in Africa but against this, the welfare of the citizens and the material development of the nation seem to be moving in opposite directions. Thus, as the national objectives of Nigeria enunciated above still remain valid; their realization from the point of view of the key elements of lasting development constitute the core of our contemporary development challenge which in essence, if met, will open the door to the transformation of the country.

In Nigeria, the proliferation of NGOs (local and international) has led to a situation in which there were no longer a few branches of international NGOs such as Rotary International, Lions International, The Boys Scout and the Girls Guide dominating the arena. Rather, so many NGOs (local and international) have been established since the 1980s and 1990s (referred to as the decades of the NGOs) to provide vanguard and innovative functions; service provider function, advocacy function; value guardian function, as well as development function, to mention but a few. NGOs in Nigeria have supported a wide range of activities in such areas as health, education, household, food security and nutrition, women’s development, child welfare, environment, HIV/AIDS, income generation, human right, and other related areas NGOs are increasingly becoming more significant in Nigeria’s development process as they have become more recognised by a wide variety of interested institutions such as the inter-governmental and multilateral organisations themselves, the members of the UN family the three tiers of governments in Nigeria and their agencies, and other groups.

NGOs in Nigeria can boast of so many achievements in the aforementioned areas of development. For example, the Carter Centre (INGO) which has its headquarters in Atlanta Georgia in the USA has through its Global 2000 project almost eradicated guinea worm disease from Nigeria. This is a laudable achievement because this disease was a scourge that ravaged the lives of a great numbers of poor rural dwellers in Nigeria especially Ebonyi State people before now. In another area of development, Ike and Edozien (2001) have asserted that increasing numbers of highly specialized micro finance institutions, MFI outside the government system have found effective solutions to addressing the needs of the poor and have focused particularly on women as socially most legitimate avenue for sustainable development in the future. Although reality can prove their claim to be overstated, the example of successful partnership between Lift above Poverty Organization, LAPO, Benin City and Growing Business Foundation, GBF (all, Local NGOs) is worth commending. LAPO’s achievements are: engaging in the services of providing credit facilities to its members for the purpose of financing their business ventures and capacity building; servicing four rural dwellers out of every five members and 99%

of its members are women. With a loan portfolio of N50 million and membership strength of 10,000, LAPO has generally promoted self-employment in some income generating activities through micro-credit to members only; promoted the virtue of thrift among members and encouraged leadership and gender sensitisation (Eke and Edozien, 2001).

Other achievements according to Ike and Edozien (2001) include Small Project Fund, SPF an arm of CIDJAP (a local NGO in Enugu); out of 251 co-operatives, organizations and persons who applied for assistance within January to December 2000, 84 persons were given loans. Individual loan beneficiaries received loans ranging between N10, 000 and N50, 000 depending on the level of enterprise engaged in. In all, about N400, 000.000 to over 500 loan beneficiaries with a good repayment track record. In all its projects, SPF has been funded primarily by donor agencies internationally and locally. More so, many NGOs have worked collaboratively with other international agencies like United Kingdom's Department for International Development, DFID, and United States agency for International Development, USAID, German Leprosy Relief Association, GLRA, for the sake of bringing social development to Nigeria. For example, PATHS (i.e. Partnership for Transforming Health Systems) is a programme of collaboration with Nigerian partners to develop partnership for transforming health systems in Nigeria. It is funded by DFID, and in its phase one of operation (Known as PATHs 1) 2002 – 2008, operated in some states of the federation, namely: Enugu, Ekiti, Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa.

Through the instrumentality of many NGOs and CBOs (Community Based Organizations) such as Women Aid Collective (WACOL), Women Action Research Organization (WARO), Ama Dialog Foundation (ADF), National Association of Women Journalist (NAWOJ), Year of Ultimate Talent Harvest (YOUTH), mediating for the Less Privileged and Women Development (MEWOOD), PATHS I achieved a lot within six years. "PATHS has done so much that it is difficult to list all..." (PATHS Final Progress Report: 2002 – 2008: iii) This evidence has shown, also that Partnership for Transforming Health Systems (PATHS) has supported the implementation of the District Health System which has done so much towards integrating previously pigmented services and revitalizing primary health care services. It has supported the development and implementation of the under pinning systems necessary to, and working in partnership with the Health Commodities Procurement Project (HCPP), has brought much needed drugs and equipment to our facilities. It has trained well over 2,000 health care workers in Enugu State alone, both clinical and non – clinical, in an effort to help improve the quality of care provided. It has supported the pioneering of ground breaking practices in Public Private Partnership, PPP by enabling government to work hand in hand with faith based sectors.

Another NGO, the Tulsi Chanrai Foundation which focuses on essential community needs like curing of eye problems, provision of access to primary health care and provision of safe drinking water to the less privileged communities has been performing according to Ogunipe in Vanguard (2008:44), "12,000 sight restoring surgeries every year, since 1992." In collaboration with General Hospitals in Birnin Kebbi, Calabar, Owerri and Yola, the foundation with the assistance of some sponsors (like GINO manufacturing company) has provided these surgeries free of charge to the less privileged patients. In Benue State for instance First Step Action for Children initiative FSACI has focused on children and women thereby achieving the following: carrying out awareness campaign on HIV/AIDS, established early child-care centre in Fiidi community in Makurdi Local Government Area in partnership with a youth carper and in 2008/2009 scaled up its work on comprehensive care for orphans and vulnerable children in 12 communities in Benue and Nassarawa States (Myom, 2014). Although NGOs' achievements in Nigeria are many, their position as development agents is still contentious because they have not performed their roles largely to the expectations of the people of Nigeria without blemish. They have been accused of being corrupt and selfish.

THE SELFISH INTEREST OF THE NGOs AS AN IMPEDIMENT TO PLAYING THEIR ROLE EFFECTIVELY AS AGENTS OF DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Over the past three decades, Nigeria has witnessed the proliferation of NGOs and there is no doubt that they have done some good work in the country as evidenced above. Notwithstanding these good works, it seems that the selfish interest of members of NGOs usually hamper their role as agents of development in Nigeria. Evidence abounds according to Shonecke (2003) that with the availability of funds in the private sector, NGOs multiplied, not always for the purest of motives. To the author, when ministers and civil servants are no longer able to easily get their 10% (or more) kickback on government projects, they start their private NGOs to be where the money flows. For many intellectuals who found themselves unemployed or in a hard spot, to start an NGO becomes a way to make a living. Today, people have learnt how this new industry (i.e. the NGO) works because they have learnt exactly which project is most likely to stir the interest of a sponsor (s), what the donors want to hear and how to make money flow. This type of development always attracts corruption. These corruption tendencies and actions by NGO members therefore mean that they are making business with people's poverty. Instead of directing the money (attracted from donors) to enhance genuine development, the money gobbles up with the high cost of running of the offices, organizing workshops and seminars at exorbitant rates. For example, it is now common to see many NGOs starting off their operations with three essential items: an exotic office, some computer gadgets and at least, a jeep or any other expensive or respectable car/cars. If you walk around the major cities in Nigeria you will observe that most of these NGOs offices are situated in costly cum high brow areas (like G.R.A., New Haven, and Independence Layout, to say the least, in the case of Enugu State). Their staff members are well remunerated more than their peers in most government paid jobs and their offices well furnished with state-of-the-art equipment. Evidence of their high wages can be seen in the latest brand of cars and jeeps their workers litter around their office premises. How has this benefited the poor masses? It thus implies that the comfort of the members of the NGOs matters more than the role they are meant to play, i.e., to be agents of people's development.

It is not entirely the fault of members of the NGOs, it is a result of the unjust socio-economic relationship which prioritizes the accumulation of wealth by any means possible inherent in the Nigerian capitalist system. So, as the case may be, most NGO members are battling to shrug off some of the impacts of underdevelopment which most Nigerians live with. More so, the sense of greed and selfishness also make some members to direct some of the relief materials meant to serve the interest of the poor to their homes. For example, Agboola in Daily Sun (2007:6), reports that UNICEF "has expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that most of the relief materials meant for persons displaced by flood in some local government areas of Plateau State have been diverted to unknown places." According to the report, UNICEF field officer, Mr. Jallo who led other officials to the victims in Pilgani and Yashi camps (all in Langtang LGA) and Gbonga camp in Kanke LGA because of this dissatisfaction decided to hand over the remaining items directly to the traditional heads (of the areas instead of the NGOs) to ensure that the items were safe by the time the officials returned another day. Although some of the NGOs and government officials accused tried to explain what happened, Mr. Jallo insisted that "whatever is brought to the camps must remain and should not be moved to people's house" (Agboola in Daily Sun, 2007:6). This, therefore, confirms the claim by Akukwe (1988) that whereas in Spain, the government uses the Red Cross for successful educational campaigns about disabilities just as social services are provided by NGOs in Bangladesh partly because of lack of government resources and partly to evoke people-participation, and in the Netherlands, most social services are provided by voluntary agencies that get almost their funding from the government, in Nigeria, some NGOs receive grants-in-aid, or

subvention from donor agencies, states or federal government for various services but when it comes to a definite policy of who receives what and for what services, Nigerians excel in the art of muddling through.

By the examples above, it is now obvious that the selfish interest of the members of the NGOs usually hampers the role of the NGOs as agents of development in Nigeria. This is so because most times the members of NGOs end up being agents of selves' development. Confirming this claim, *Vanguard* (2007:34) reports that Mrs. Ifejika (ANSACA project manager, Idemili North, Anambra State) in extolling the virtues of the founder of an NGO, YOUTH AWARENESS, Kaduna, Mrs. Hope Nwandu who paid school fees for 50 orphans in Oraukwu town, commended her "for taking seriously the issue of orphans and widows as well as ensuring that what is provided by the donor agencies are given to those they are meant for.... Because there are those who were called like her and given money and they took the money to their private businesses and homes." This is a product of role conflict where those entrusted with money and materials for the people's well-being have capitalized on their ascribed roles to make business with people's poverty.

On the other hand, the condition of over-dependence on external resources for development in Nigeria and most other developing countries makes it that, as Booth (1994:265) puts it, Southern NGOs (SNGOs) "are usually 90% dependent on foreign aid...." This is so because of the selfish interest of Southern NGOs whose members are more interested in lining their pockets while the selfish interest of the donors makes it that virtually all donors funding are projectile so that NGOs utilizing funds tend to expand in project activities, particularly those favored by donors. Today, there are so many health sector-related NGOs here and there in Nigeria because attention is more on the sector. Accepting these donations and aids further require that SNGOs account to donors or Northern NGOs (NNGOs) or the domestic government, sometimes, the three. Thus, the juxtaposition of realistic and surreal situations in this kind of relationship is that he who pays the piper usually dictates the tune of the pipe. So, while some members of the SNGOs are busy satisfying their selfish interest through the aforementioned ways, the donors or NNGOs are busy consolidating their imperialistic strategy which in itself is selfishness. This, the donors and sponsors achieve through imposing their bureaucratic culture on NGOs for fear of abuse of the donated funds but in the end, too much energy and funds go into administration and no longer to fund the projects for which the NGOs were started. The underlying illusion, according to Shonecke (2003:28), "is that the length and language of reports are proportional to the amount and quality of work done on the ground."

CORRUPTION COMPROMISES AND UNDERMINES THE ROLE OF THE NGOs AS PURVEYORS OF DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

According to Akukwe (1988:87), NGOs are "merely avenues to share public funds". In the words of Shonecke (2003:28), "NGOs have increasingly come under fire and some maintained that with the best of intentions, they at times do more harm than good". For example, in the case where according to *Vanguard* (2007), NGOs personnel participated in the illicit behaviour of diverting relief materials meant for victims of flood disaster in Plateau State, NGOs have done more harm than good they are meant to do. The implication of this behaviour is that the NGOs are corrupt. They are corrupt because corruption is a general term for the misuse of public position of trust for private gain. This is true because the above example has proved that the NGOs are abusing or misusing the public position of trust they hold for private gain. This, therefore, means that corruption has made the benefit of NGOs participation in development activities in Nigeria not to get meaningfully to the targeted people, the poor masses.

The result is that "...there can be no denying that the average citizen is today worse off than he was ten years

ago.... Judging from the increasing decay of our villages, towns and cities, there is really no evidence to believe that the qualities of life of the people in these places have improved” (Amucheazi 1980:3-4). To prove that corruption compromises and undermines the development impact of the NGOS and other development agencies this quotation holds water because even when it was made in 1980 what is obtainable today is not different. More important however is the fact that the NGOs have even failed to meet up with their vanguard role which has made them, traditionally, the watchdog of the people just because of their corrupt practices. The implication therefore, is that the NGOs have failed to a large extent to realise their responsibilities and challenges by not being above board and beyond reproach. Instead of discharging their roles effectively, fearlessly and honestly, most NGOs have become captive to political point-scoring. For example, within the NGO community in Nigeria, it is very difficult to identify any NGO as solely concerned with battling corruption (one of the root causes of the under development syndromes the NGOs are supposed to be fighting). This is so because the NGOs are equally corrupt. When we observe clearly that most NGOs usually hide a lot of information from the public, this implies that they are not transparent, honest and responsive to the yelling of the people.

Nevertheless, the NGOs’ achievements recorded earlier in this section suggest that the NGOs have played some good roles in the development of Nigeria but the achievements are evidentially undermined because the culture of corruption prevalent in the country has contributed in the corruption of the NGOs. The result of this is that the NGOs just like some other institutions of development have become compromised, self-serving and subservient. This is not surprising because many scholars like Akani, Toyo and Nwankwo have variously proved that the Nigerian state itself is an instrument of corruption (Akani: 2002).

IS NGOS – GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIP AN IMPEDIMENT TO ACHIEVING PEOPLE – CENTRED DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

There is no doubt as we can deduce from the achievements of the NGO community in Nigeria that considerable good has been done through NGOs but the challenge of enduring, people-centered and people-oriented development is still the major developmental problem of the nation state waiting to be tackled successfully. This omnipresent challenge is the reason for the increased role assumed by the NGOs when it was believed that the state has failed to provide the needed development to the people but surprisingly this problem is still present in Nigeria. The evidence is not far-fetched because a lasting development has not been achieved in the country since its history as a nation – state. What we have today in Nigeria are conditions of deprivation, low self esteem, homelessness, mass illiteracy, poverty, hunger, high infant mortality to say the obvious.

As this work is trying to prove, governments have been unable to give majority of Nigerians food, accommodation, employment, good health – care, participatory democracy, corrupt-free environment, peaceful atmosphere, and even, hope. This mountain of problems has eroded an average Nigerian’s self-reliance, self-sustenance and self-esteem (the key ingredients of sustained development). This also does imply that with weak and corrupt institutions, the effort to get Nigeria on the path to genuine development has not yielded commensurate result as the case of the NGO and other development institutions in Nigeria has shown. This is due largely to the collaboration of the NGOs and the governments of Nigeria.

Some international agencies and organizations have helped the NGOs in Nigeria to achieve some of their set-out goals. For instance, DFID (2009) reveals that it worked at federal and state levels and with civil society and the private

sector to improve the effectiveness of Nigeria's own expenditure on poverty reduction, to improve the environment for non-oil growth, and to make a direct impact on the Millennium Development Goals, MDGs. To achieve this, DFID has spent \$100M in 2008/2009; \$80M in 2006/2007, \$35M in 2003/2004 respectively (DFID, 2009). DFID further reveals that it is the largest bilateral donor to Nigeria and third largest over all, after World Bank and European Union. On the other hand, United State Agency for International Development (USAID) through its **Global Partnership** (2009) claims that the U.S. government aid plus the rising amount given by American citizens and companies make U.S. the first of all countries in the amount of aid provided to countries in need. For example, to help local indigenous NGOs, Networks and collaborating organizations become more efficient and effective in the delivery of development services, USAID is supporting increased access to quality family planning and reproductive health services in Nigeria. It's maternal and child health efforts focus on routine immunization, polio eradication, birth preparedness and maternity services. In response to the more than 300,000 Nigerian children who needlessly die from malaria each year, the U.S. according to **USAID** (2009:1-2), "is increasing access to proven preventive and curative interventions – insecticide – treated bed nets, net re-treatment kits, and malaria treatment for children and pregnant women."

Statistically, USAID has in 2007 increased its annual budget for its democratic response programme in Nigeria from \$212 billion for year 2007. This is a result from the USAID/Nigeria comprehensive five – year sustainable development strategy (2004 – 2009) for its on-going programme in Nigeria. According to the Nations (2008:42), "the European Union (EU) has offered Nigeria a grant of 840 million euro for infrastructural development." Based on this the then speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Dimeji Bankole because of this grant said that "the House would soon inaugurate a committee to monitor the activities of the NGOs and when inaugurated, would be saddled with the responsibility of tracking funds from donor agencies with a view to ensuring that such funds achieve the desired outcome" (Nations, 2008:42). This is a confirmation that NGOs have not played their roles satisfactorily so far. The point is that while the nation – state enjoys tracking funds from donors just as the NGOs are heavily dependent on the tracked fund or the ones directly given to them, and is under the control of the Nigerian government and donors, conversely, these funds have not been well utilized for the genuine development of Nigeria. No wonder the officials of UNICEF as revealed earlier, expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that most of the relief materials meant for persons displaced by flood in some local government areas of Plateau State in 2007 have been diverted to unknown places by NGOs and government personnel entrusted with the materials. So, instead of working for the purpose the NGOs were initially conceived as agents of development in Nigeria and the reason for tracking the funds, selfish interest of their members and the government usually hamper the effective execution of their responsibilities.

These instances imply that both the government of Nigeria and most NGOs are more interested in the donations, grants and aid they are tracking because they can go on muddling through somehow. They are not genuinely interested in the enhancement of genuine development in the country. The implication of this situation is that Nigeria's development priorities are not well arranged and directed. Imagine where a country which depends heavily on foreign fund for some development projects spends over N790 billion on fuelling generators alone yearly (AIT money show, 2009) where as infant and maternal mortality in the country remains one of the highest in Africa (Health sector Reform: (2007). The question is, where then went the whole funds tracked from donors? Corruption in the public sectors has also infected the NGOs so that the NGOs have played more to satisfy themselves and the interest of their sponsors and collaborators than the interest of the masses in Nigeria, and this is a serious impediment to the effective functioning of NGOs as development agents in the country. According to Osuntogun (2000:266), examples of successful NGOs in Bangladesh, Peru and Bolivia

is a justification that “NGOs can be very useful institutions for promoting... rural participatory programmes.” Unlike in Nigeria, in these countries NGOs have helped in sustaining development projects and issues; utilizing their funds judiciously for the purpose they were meant. In Nigeria, according to Akukwe (1988), some NGOs receive grants-in-aid, or subvention from different levels of governments and other donor agencies for various services but when it comes to a definite policy of who receives what and for what services, Nigerians excel in the art of muddling through. They muddle through because of the culture of corruption prevalent in the country. Thus, even when corruption is a global phenomenon, its endemic nature in Nigeria makes it easier for NGOs and the governments to derail from their expected positive roles. This is a confirmation of the fact that since the Nigerian state is corrupt; its governmental and non-governmental organizations are also corrupt.

This realistic position shall however remain unless SNGOs are able to fund themselves largely. Regrettably, the culture of corruption in the land has offered the NGOs the opportunity to become corrupt as their personnel join government agencies and personnel to line their pockets at the expense of the masses who always expect the good dividends of development trickling down from the NGOs and the governments. The implication of this is that the development impact of the NGOs have largely been undermined and compromised. Obviously, this seems to reincarnate the ever standing issue of how development can be people – oriented and centered in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

From all indications, the NGO community and other foreign development partners have tried in contributing to issues pertaining to development in the country but the people are not yet at the centre of this implicating that there is still an urgent need for the path to people-centered development to be followed. However, the paper is of the view that Nigeria has the potentials just as the NGOs achieve this onerous task. The fact however is that selfishness and corruption remain the major impediments to the effective functioning of the NGOs in Nigeria. Against the forgoing, the paper argues that while donations are given to NGOs on behalf of the people they represent it is expected that the NGOs should use them appropriately and not to misuse them. More so, since a boy cannot play the role of a biological mother and vice versa, a reasonable thinker should not expect the foreign donors to donate funds and materials to the NGOs or the Nigerian governments and be expected also to come and do the grassroots developmental roles reserved for the NGOs. It is not proper and should not be expected to happen. The implication therefore is that the NGOs are to be blamed for their own predicaments and for disappointing those they claim to be representing. The reversal of this role failure is important for the NGOs to remain viable agents of development in Nigeria.

Notwithstanding their achievements and shortcomings, the NGOs have enormous potentials to help Nigeria achieve people – centered development. So, for the NGO community to succeed in realizing its full potentials, first of all, it has to reduce its over-dependence on external resources so that the structure of its activities, staff composition and accountability can be under its control. By so doing it can grow organically. The step is necessary because the dependence of African NGOs on foreign assistance correlates negatively with policy influence; casting closer collaboration is a step towards ultimate co-optation so, they should develop programmes and projects that can make them self reliant, self-sustaining and viable. More so, since the state is unwilling to create an enabling environment for the NGOs to succeed because of the profit-motif, the NGOs should try to develop and execute projects in areas where the state has largely failed. Areas such as: poverty-reduction, youth/women empowerment, human-rights advocacy, primary health care, environmental degradation, food insecurity and rehabilitation of the internally displaced persons (IDP) in North East

Nigeria. Focusing on these areas shall trickle-down some other good results such as employment generation, leadership skill acquisition, micro-credit financing, reduction in infant and maternal mortality, cheap and affordable accommodation, clothes and cheap but nutritious food especially to the IDPs and other poor people in Nigeria. This recommendation is important considering the rehabilitation of the North East Nigeria project that is on going in the country presently. The NGOs may achieve these by reducing the amount of money wasted in buying costly cars, office equipment, certain bureaucracies, outrageous salaries of staff, high cost of consultancy services and even high cost of securing offices. Frugally, the amounts saved through these management adjustments can help the NGOs achieve certain good results without over-depending fully on donations. This will enable them to allow whatever that is directed to the victims to get to them in-tact and on time.

Following the prescription of DFID (2001) which suggests that development agencies should be subjected to the same rules of governance as other actors, the paper is of the opinion that NGOs dealings should be transparent and they should account for their activities to government, parliament, civil society and the intended beneficiaries in Nigeria as in other developing and transitional countries. If the voices of the poor are to be heard in this process, the development of truly democratic systems is a priority, including political alliances and civil society. In all, since social role is a set of connected behaviors, rights and obligations as conceptualized by actors in social situations, the participation of the grass root people in matters that affects them is their right that must be obliged if the NGOs are to achieve a lasting success in their development activities in Nigeria.

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