
NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: *As humanity enters the third millennium Nigeria is bewildered by myriads of economic, political and social problems, which show either no or very little sign of diminishing. The country is plagued by economic depression, political instability, rising ethnic tension, kidnapping, religious conflicts, social malice, inflation, appalling corruption as a system and failure of democracy and state responsibility to citizen. A major issue for the country and the masses is the issue of endemic poverty, which is a denial of fundamental human rights and underdevelopment in all sectors of the economy. The United Nations has set up 8 Millennium Development goals and all its agencies are working towards the achievement of such goals. In Nigeria also the target of development has been shifted from 2000 to 2015. Many organizations have committed themselves as development partners both internally and internationally this paper looks at the importance of non-governmental organizations in the national development of Nigeria. NGOs should contribute to the development of Nigeria by investing in education, agriculture, housing, roads constructions, and health and human services.*

Keywords: Non Governmental Organization (NGOs), Government, Organization, National, Voluntary, Private, Family Planning, Policy, Economic Development, Mobilization, Agriculture, Rural, Political Development, Health, Empowerment, Partnership, Collaboration, Poverty, Unemployment, Societies, Outreach.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Anure, Joseph .K. (2013), Non Governmental Organizations and National Development. *J. of Social Sciences and Public Policy*, Vol. 5, Number 2, Pp. 143 – 151.

INTRODUCTION

Private and non-governmental Organizations play a vital role in national development. Public Welfare activities based on the tradition of giving religious merit and fame, promoting the welfare of others, and assisting the needy are being carried out privately and internationally in the private sector. As a result, donations from the private sector have contributed considerably to the formation of religious and social trusts. The non-governmental organization formally began in the late 1849s with the establishment of "Shree Chanda Kamdhenu Charkha Pracharak Mahaguth" (Uzodinma, 2007). The objectives were to participate in the country's development in order to supplement to government efforts to arouse general awareness and to empower common people. Subsequently Paropaker Organization was established. After Nepal opened its doors to the outside world following the revolution of 1950s, the Red Cross, Family Planning Association, Lions and Rotary Clubs were established and run by national social workers

volunteers with the assistance of international organizations (Porter, 2004). A wide range of non-governmental organizations concerned with child education, and services relating to fatal diseases like leprosy, tuberculosis and cancer were established through the efforts of social workers. With the increase in the number of such organizations, the insufficiency of government acts, rules, policies and plans to integrate and promote such organizations is being felt. In this paper, the writer examines that role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in National Development. The paper Examines he performance of NGOs workers in rural development, their roles in national rebirth and poverty alleviation in Nigeria which are Key indices to national development.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

For the purpose of this paper, the following concepts are clarified and operationalised to avoid ambiguity in our arguments. These include non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and National Development.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS)

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOS) are organizations of people with special interest in a particular aspect of community or social life of the people and the nation (Dele, 2004). In its general term, NGOs refer to all organizations independent of overt government control (Casmir, 2008). They are organizations created on the basis of people's voluntary initiatives and deal with issues that concern development through participation. In this paper therefore, the writer agrees with Sorkaa (2000) who defined NGOs as those associations typically composed of disadvantaged rural people who come together to address problems of common concern particularly, with regards to the provision of health, education, portable water, roads, etc to their members this fostering national development.

Development as a concept has been tinged by the ideological disposition of scholars (Casmir 2008). The paper conceptualizes development in terms of socio-economic and political transformation which encompasses the social relations of the people in the exercise of power and determination of issues that are paramount ex necessity to their existence. In line with the position of Rodney development is a qualitative process of change plus growth whose critical determinants are the models and relations of production interaction to either suppress or enhance developments and underdevelopments. Development has therefore been linked to the crucial activities and abilities of non-governmental organizations to enhance and transform within their domain into production.

NGOS and National Development: NGOs are conceived by Mulgunk (1990) and Nyanoro (1992) as any grouping of people, constituted with unique aim of promoting development for a target population so that it masters its turning economic condition on the economic political and socio-cultural levels. NGOs are characterized by extreme

diversity; however, they share common features as people coming together to address felt needs in participatory manner (Edwards, 2001).

NGOs are import agents of change and development in the country especially at grassroots NGOs have significantly increased their commitment, both human and financial, to the cause of development, seeking actively to reach a greater number of people and to improve their quality of life (Mulguriji, 1990). In the views of Nwaghangeri (1995) and Mougeot (2005), NGOs are better equipped for rural needs by virtue of their simplicity, the proximity to the grassroots, their ability to identify felt needs of the people and their efficient and cost effective modes of operation. NGOs, according to David (2001), owe their existence to the work outputs of their employees within the context of administrative and policy structures provided. To achieve their set goals, there must be material and human resources (workforce) on deck and working effectively and efficiently too.

Considering the importance of NGOs in complementing government's efforts in rural development, the need to assist rural people to achieve national development and the importance of the human resource in harnessing the organizational objectives, there is therefore the need for an empirical insight into the contributions and roles of selected NGOs in National Development. Consequently, the writer looks at Goemak Unity and Development Organization (GUDO), Mwaghavul Development Association (MDA) in Plateau State; Farmers Development Union (FADU) Lift Above poverty (LAPO); Country Women and Development (COWAD); Progressive Farmers Development Organizations (PROFADOS); Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN); Community Development and Micro-Finance Roundtable (CDMR); Women in Cooperative, Agricultural and Development (WICAD), Stop Hunger, Alikama Rural Development Association.

GUDO and MDA

Goemai Unity and Development Organization (GUDO) is a leading self-help in Shendam and Quang Pam, while Mwagavul Development Association is a similar organization in Mangu Local Government Area, all of Plateau State. The contributions of these organizations to rural development which is a key ingredient to national development over the years cannot be overstressed. Over the years, governmental policies have inadequately and un-properly enhanced the development of rural areas, primarily either by outsiders to the particular rural problematic or because the officials who are not stake holders cannot positively serve this purpose.

Economic Development according to the modernist is attributed to internal constraint of traditional societies. However, this perception degrades the potentials of the rural areas towards development. Ake in Sorkaa (1992) reinforces these potentials when he opines that the idea that a people and their culture and social institutions can be an obstacle to their development is one of the major obstacle and confusion of current development

thinking and one of the most expensive error..... people will pursue the betterment of their own lives within the control of their own understanding and values.

In assessing the roles of GUDO and MDA in National Development, emphasis is placed on education, Health care, Rural Roads, mobilization and political development and Agriculture which are all key sectors of national development.

Educational Development

In their contributions to educational facilities and infrastructures, the MDA has positively established and sustained secondary schools as follows, Kambun, Mararaba Pushit 1979, Kerang 1983, Ampang 1984. The first established in 1976 at Mangun was taken over by the government (Casmir, 2008). The donation of books by Dr. Ibrahim Bulus one time MDA president has concretized this contribution, thus positively impacting on the educational life and advancement of the people. Importantly, 1979 and 1996 (MDA details of income and expenditure 1995/1996) MDA expended about ₦ 6, 000, 000 on MDA Teachers. They have also established community schools at Nyemdung, Bwanpe and Daika. This is the project to have risen to over N 180,000,000 by 2012 (Casmir, 2008). While this is laudable, such efforts by GUDO have been short, lived with the handling over one of its only secondary schools established by Goemai Youth Movement at Duankwan to the government leaving it with little or no contribution much to the educational sector. If education is the strong basis for national developments, then non-governmental organizations like GUDO need to wake up and embark on an aggressive educational development project.

Rural Health Care Development

A healthy workforce is a necessary ingredient to national development. The Nigerian Health sector is basically at the primary level. Leaving the health sector only in the hands of private individuals and the government is unhealthy for national development. NGOs should wake up to their challenges.

Rural Road Construction

MDA seems to have been involved in partial rehabilitation of the road from Daiaka to Jingi and have supplied materials for the building of the bridge linking Daiaka to Jingi. Similar contributions have been made by the organization towards the roads from Mangu to Bwai Chakfern and Kombum amounting to several hundreds of thousands of Naira. It is the suggestion of the writer that other NGOs should take a file from the MDA in the area of rural roads as these are key ingredients to national developments.

Mobilization and Political Development

National development can not be achieved if the citizens are not mobilized towards development programmes and political activities of the country. Areas like political education, mobilization of eligible electorates for registration of voters, voting and participation fully in the governance cannot be accomplished only by government alone.

In Plateau state, GUDO and MDA at one time or the other played positive roles towards mobilizing their people for political participation.

Agriculture

While Agriculture is the mainstay of the rural economy the development of a formidable agrarian economy will be laudable to the rural dwellers. Most NGOs have left the provision of Agricultural inputs and facilities to government and private individuals alone. This has seriously affected the agrarian nature of the rural economy.

Rural and national development cannot be reduced to the provision of social facilities alone, it equally encompasses the development of a solid rural commercial activities. To this end, the contributions of NGOs to commercial activities in their areas of operation need to be assessed. The MDA has contributed by the establishment of community Bank at Mwaghavul. This has helped immensely in improving the credit worthiness employment to the numerous unemployed youths of Mwaghavul land, thereby helping in cutting unemployment.

While it is agreeable that socio-cultural activities constitute yet another significant dimension of rural development, it is imperative to note the significant contribution of both organizations to this sector. MDA alone expended about ₦98, 445 in 1995 (MDA report 1995/96), while GUDO expended about ₦20, 380 in 1991 and ₦89, 470 in 1992 respectively (GUDO Progress Report 1990-1993:2).

Farmers Development Union (FADU) is another NGO that is examined. It is a micro-finance NGO with the basic goal of self-sufficiency of micro finance Institutions in operation and finance. FADU gives micro-credit to the pool people at grassroots level using a bottom up approach linking groups to societies, to districts and to zones. FADU has helped in many ways purchasing equipment, machines, farm implements, insecticides for poor masses in different parts of the country (FADU Brochure, 2009 Life – Above Poverty LAPO) Development Centre's in non-governmental poverty focused development organization with the broad aim of assisting poor women to enhance their socio-economic statuses. The centre, with its headquarters in Benin-City is an autonomous organization with emphasis on social and economic development for sustainable livelihood. The mission of LAPO is to assist members to overcome factors beyond lack of funds which intend to strengthen the severity of poverty, issues like ignorance, illiteracy, low self-esteem and environmental degradation which all affect national development (Jekayurfa, 2010). According to LAPO Brochure (2010), the objective of this NGO includes empowering members to effectively participate in the informal sector with emphasis on micro-enterprise development. It promotes environment enhancing practices among the people, enhance leadership skills, literacy, status and political participation among poor women, and conduct investigations on the nature and causes of poverty. In pursuance of its objectives, LAPO has involved itself in micro-business management to enhance better loans utilization and efficient funds

management through training, it also provides opportunity for women to lesson certain skills such as sewing, food processing, confectionary, soap making and a host of other income generating activities to alleviate poverty and enhance national development.

Outreach Foundation: Is another NGO with its headquarters in Lagos. It was founded in 1981 with a vision to encourage and foster the development of Nigerian Women and Youths through education, empowerment and general improvement in their quality of life. It has the mission to mobilized, organize and empower the disadvantaged poor, particularly the Women and Youths both politically socially and economically through provision of micro-credit, information sharing, education and training. The activities of the organization include savings and credit schemes training and business advisory services, seminars and workshops. According to their brochure, the outreach foundation has extended credit facilities to 29 primary societies comprising 100 members under its economic empowerment programme. It has also successfully organized training programmes for officers of its primary group on group management, micro-enterprise management, financial and credit management and a lot of other activities that can alleviate poverty and enhance national development.

Women in Cooperatives, Agriculture and Development (WICAD): This is an NGO established in Ogbomoso, Oyo state to unite the grassroots women together so as to help them develop various businesses through cooperative efforts; the Organization consists of 18 vibrant societies with at least 30 members in each society. The mandate of the organization is to improve the economic status of women. It has a mission to eradicate poverty national development. The organization has a credit scheme; extensive fish pond at Yaku village which is cropped yearly and the grains which accrue is re-invested into the credit scheme. It has an extensive citrus farm at Aipo village. It gives lectures on sickle-cell disease which can aggravate poverty in parents and affects national development.

Halt United Sell Help Organization (HUSHO): This is Nsukka based NGO aimed at improving the socio-economic condition of Nsukka people through self-help initiative. According to the brochure, the Organizations initial capital was realized from "ESUN" its credit delivery is group repayment which is often over one-year period. The organization has reached over 11,000 clients in government areas in the eastern part of Nigeria based in Ikot road, Abia state (Akerere, 2000).

Total Health Organization (THO): This is another NGO which started as an indigenes group caring for street boys and girls, the organization has since 1987 of its foundation helped the elderly widows, Orphans, Street persons and some other poor people. It has its main objectives as promotion of good health of the poor and the needy through the provision of health care centre's, homes for the handicapped and rehabilitation centre's for the destitute promoting measures against hunger and poverty through the provision of food, clothing and other basic necessities; provision of better home and living; standards among the poor and needy through the provision of health, vocational

education, family planning and cottage industries and measures that restores the hearts of the poor and needy (Amali, 1996).

According to Network Nutrition letter (1999) the Organization established a 100-bed non-profit hospital complex at Ogboh Hill, Aba; established Community Health Care, free rural mobile clinics reaching immunities in 6 states. It has also participated in Rehabilitation of their communities.

Grassroots Empowerment Network (GEN): This is another Nigeria-based NGO based in Akwa-Ibom state. It has the aim of helping to alleviate poverty and enhance national development. It is also a response to ill-health and social injustice brought about by the daily deteriorating standard of living, unfair economic practices, environmental pollution and degradation. Its areas of operation are mainly rural and other Urban setting that are overshadowed by poverty, hunger, and Squalor (NGO Network Nutrition Newsletter, 1997).

Successive governments have realized the need to engage NGOs in national development that government has evolved the Public Private Partnership (PPP) to enhance national development.

Public-Private Partnership (PPP) and Nigeria's Development: Uzodinma (2009) posits that the Public Private Partnership relate to perceptions and practices ensuring national/global development in the areas of health, development and well being of the society, and the conceptual aspects of such relationships, including the role of the key players, in collaborating to make these partnerships successful or otherwise (Mougeot, 2005).

In Nigeria, sustainable access to health care and other services can be accomplished through PPP, where the government delivers the minimum standard of services, products and or care, the Private sector brings skills and Core competencies, while donors and business bring funding and other resources (Coldevin, 2001).

Although NGOs have developed and expanded to such an extent that government and NGOs have not been able to contribute to national development as desired due to certain problems which include the following:

- i. There remained a dearth of policies, acts and rules to protect, promote and encourage NGOs.
- ii. The central organizations of NGOs and the government mainly exerted greater control and interfered instead of allowing the NGOs to run independently.
- iii. The investment of the public sectors and economic development.
- iv. The administrative procedures were not clear, simple and decentralized. The NGOs lack coordination.

An NGO is naturally conceived voluntary by nature: not committed to profit making for distributing dividends among its own members; politically neutral; liberal in conducting programmes; oriented towards the up-liftmen of the poor, needy and helpless; and active in arousing social awareness (Besset, 2004).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Private investment should be mobilized for infrastructural development, social-economic growth and poverty elimination to enhance national development.
- Public – Private Collaboration effectiveness should be increased such as helping those seeking to develop and provide health care products and services within the country.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it is clear that Nigeria citizens should not rely and place their hope on the government alone to alleviate poverty and bring about national development. The government, NGOs and civil societies should help in providing free education at all levels, free medical care for all, provision of decent and affordable housing, provision of welfare benefits for the unemployed, the sick and the elderly. All these can engender national development NGOs should contribute to educational development which is a panacea to national development; by providing grants, scholarships, prizes and loans. In order to bring about desirable national development and make the national rebirth or rebranding programmes a success, Nigerians should imbibe the essential values of honesty, services accountability consideration for others, faithfulness, respect of individual rights. In these ways, the government, NGOs and Nigerians can work to bring about the desired national development.

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