NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOS) AND THE DECLINE OF STATE INTERVENTION IN NIGERIA’S DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
The last decades have witnessed proliferation in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in all spheres of human activities worldwide, especially in developing countries. NGOs as an integral part of civil society were concerned with management of a complex and diverse range of activities. Whereas some of these NGOs are at the local level, some are at the regional or national levels. Many NGOs are primarily concerned with poverty or disaster alleviation, the second form of NGO strategy can be described as ‘sustainable systems development’. While others focus on local-level development projects, usually filling gaps government services have not met. It is this type of NGO that is most likely to facilitate change at the level of development due to decline in State intervention in Nigeria’s development and is therefore the focus of this paper. This paper is hinged on secondary sources of data. NGOs contribute to the redistributions and transformations necessary for longer-term structural change that tackles the roots causes—rather than symptoms of poverty and its related social and economic vulnerabilities. However, NGOs need by altering their funding structures and opportunities in such a way that would make them autonomous and responsive to the needs of their grassroots constituencies.

Keywords: Non Governmental Organizations, Development, Intervention, Poverty Reduction, Nigeria.

Introduction
Documentary evidence shows that, right from the times of Nigeria’s independence till date, development has been taken as a state responsibility in Nigeria. Getting wedded to the principles of welfarism, due to its commitment to ensure a socialist model of development, to give a real shape to the promises made by the Constitution, the state has enunciated various
schemes and programmes from time to time for ensuring development in every gamut of the country. These development schemes and programmes are to develop places and people of the country who together can symbolize the development of the nation. The development schemes and programmes launched to develop people and strengthen the human resources include, programmes relating to education, health, nutrition, sanitation, women empowerment as well as vulnerable and weaker sections of the population like children, women, physically challenged and the internally displaced individuals. This is no longer so in the recent time.

Until the late 1970s, NGOs were little-recognised in the implementation of development projects or in policy influence. Those few existing were perceived as bit players in service provision, short-term relief, and emergency work. Since the late 1970s, NGOs have played an increasingly prominent role in the development sector, widely praised for their strengths as innovative and grassroots driven organisations with the desire and capacity to pursue participatory and people-centred forms of development and to fill gaps left by the failure of states across the developing world in meeting the needs of their poorest citizens (Banks and Hulme, 2012). Non Governmental Organizations have emerged as the key role players in the landscape of development. It was perceived failures of state-led development approaches throughout the 1970s and 1980s that fuelled interest in NGOs as a development alternative, offering innovative and people-centred approaches to service delivery, advocacy and empowerment. With the recession of the governmental interventions, NGO activism has gone up from local to national and international levels.

As noted by Dahiru (2017), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) constitute a viable alternative to government as channels of development assistance, particularly in developing countries. They are today recognised as the catalysts of development and change makers. NGOs, therefore, rose to prominence as vehicles of popular participation and advocates for the poor, as well as service providers (Bebbington, 2005). Seen to offer participatory and people-centred approaches to development that were both innovative and experimental, they offered the opportunity for generating bottom-up opportunities for development, reflecting the needs and wants of local communities and disadvantaged groups. The initial hype greeting NGOs as a development alternative, however, was surprisingly uncritical, based more on assumptions than evidence (Hearn, 2007; Bebbington, Hickey and Mitlin, 2008; Lewis and Kanji, 2009; Fowler 2011).

With their concern, campaigning ability and ability to reach and relate to people directly, NGOs have significant contributions towards emergency response, democracy building, conflict resolution, human rights work, cultural preservation, environmental activism, policy analysis, and generating ground level research insight and information. Key activities of NGOs are linked with policy advocacy, mobilization of people for self-help development and poverty reduction, among others. Today, the NGOs are the promoters of development by raising people’s awareness, participation and take a lead role in micro planning involving the people. They are the via media between the Government and other private development initiators and the people for whom the development programmes are designed and directed. NGOs are no longer minor actors on the development stage, in some cases receiving as much or more funding than their government counterparts (Brass, 2011). Understanding their
expansion must be contextualised within the history and systems in which NGOs are embedded (Lewis and Kanji 2009).

Defining Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
As with so many concepts within development, what constitutes an NGO is open to debate. By their very nature, NGOs are very heterogeneous entities, and range from large bi-lateral funding agencies operating in many countries (such as Oxfam, Save the Children Fund, and World Vision), to very small organisations operating at village level, whose function is to provide for the immediate needs of their members. The latter are sometimes referred to as grassroots organisations.

The term NGO, which is understood and used in different ways in different places and times, has been considered very difficult to define and agree on, if not impossible. One of the reasons which make it a hard job is that, there are many similar terms used for the same thing or the same thing with slightly different connotations. Some of the definitions found in the third sector literature are: major group; pressure group; interest group; private voluntary organization; independent voluntary sector; third sector organization; grassroots organization; activist organization; non-profit body; and professional, voluntary, and citizens organization (Martens, 2002). Put simply, in the West, NGO refers to organizations working on development in non-industrialized countries while ‘non-profit’ or ‘voluntary’ organizations mean organizations working on welfare matters in Western industrialized countries (Lewis, 1999). However, more generally, the terms third sector or non-profit organizations are considered to refer to activity which is neither state sector nor business sector. An important additional assumption is that, unlike cooperatives and mutual benefit organizations, whose activities benefit more directly their members, NGOs aim to help interests of many and unspecified persons; although, there is overlap with ‘mutual’ bodies (Bidet, 2002, Park, 2002). NGOs are formal (professionalized) independent societal organizations whose primary aim is to promote common goals at the national or the international level (Martens, 2002).

One of the reasons that make it hard for us to conceive what NGOs exactly mean is diversity in their scale, in terms of size and money, their fields of action, their ways of activities, their structural forms and their target beneficiaries. These things affect how far they meet various needs of different people in different situations, hence, the differences in their conceptualizations.

Theoretical Framework of the Paper
This paper is anchored on the public goods or the performance failure and the contract failure theories.

Public Goods or the Performance Failure Theory
To the performance failure theory, NGOs emerged to satisfy the residual unsatisfied demand for public goods in the society. Weisbrod (1977) cited in Thomas (2015) argues that people created NGOs when the government or market could not provide public goods for all or serve the general interests of everybody. State failure creates a situation in which NGOs emerge as innovative responses to different types of problems. On the other hand, Anheier (1990) argues
that NGOs are capable of providing services more economically than the government. In addition, NGOs do not seek profits for their services and they undertake their projects at lower labour costs than entrepreneurs because they rely on voluntary local inputs that do not include transaction costs. Based on this sort of argument, failures with NGO-led projects compared with those of the government have less consequences on the economy as a whole, since nearly all NGO-led projects are carried out at micro-level. On the contrary, in case of government or market failure, the unsatisfied demand for public goods left by such a failure attracts the emergence of NGOs. NGOs could therefore, fulfill unsatisfied needs like health care, social work or education services. James (1987) claims that the more a society is heterogeneous, the more conducive it becomes for the creation of many NGOs.

Proponents of government outsourcing argue that it is more efficient and cost-effective than government provision of the same services. Governments function loosely as a monopoly and lack the incentive to innovate to save cost. By introducing competition, so the argument goes, NGOs are motivated to deliver services efficiently and effectively. In addition, whereas the government must negotiate a considerable bureaucracy, private entities have more flexibility to adjust staffing and wage levels and to utilize NGOs capital as necessary.

Contract Failure Theory
A central argument of contract failure theory is that, when people confront difficulties in pursuing contracts, they turn to find reliable agents in NGOs. This is because NGOs could be more trustworthy as contractors between the people and entrepreneurs because entrepreneurs could take undue advantage of the people’s ignorance for profit making. Brown and Korten (1991) argue that NGOs could emerge in case of market failure because markets tend to be potentially vulnerable to failure in developing countries. In such situations, NGOs could emerge because people have trust in them more than profit making entities (Thomas, 2015). NGOs could play the role of local intermediaries by mobilizing the people for participation in government initiated projects. Additionally, they also claim that NGOs could be profoundly effective as intermediaries for the delivery of services to disadvantaged people in the society. In this regard, NGOs could be considered as alternative institutions through which the underprivileged are better served than conventionally. Similarly, Thomas (2015) claims that NGOs try to stimulate the participation of the underprivileged and are able to reach those strata of society which are bypassed by public service delivery systems.

Generally speaking, NGOs are believed to be more reliable and less guided by political considerations. Culturally, NGOs grounded in the local culture are more sensitive to local needs and adaptation. Thus, rather than replace the indigenous social culture by large scale organizations, NGOs try to nurture the local organizations within their own cultural sphere.

Role of NGOs in Nigeria’s Development
Today, NGO initiatives and efforts in development are widely accepted throughout the world. NGOs play a significant role in speedy, inexpensive and people oriented development. As a consequence, NGO participation in development is gaining currency. The rapid growth and expansion of NGOs worldwide attest to their growing critical role in the development process. At the international level, NGOs are perceived as vehicles for providing democratization and economic growth in Third World countries (Makoba, 2002). Within Third World countries,
NGOs are increasingly considered good substitutes for weak states and markets in the promotion of economic development and the provision of basic services to most people.

NGOs are seen by their proponents as a catalyst for societal change because they are responsive to the needs and problems of their clients, usually the poor, women and children. Because of targeting and being responsive to marginalized groups in society, NGOs are being heralded as "important vehicles for empowerment, democratization and economic development." In fact, some NGOs are "driven by strong values and . . . interests, geared toward empowering communities that have been traditionally disempowered. International donor agencies see NGOs as "having the capacity and commitment make up for the shortcomings of the state and market in reducing poverty" (Bromideh, 2011).

Perhaps, the greatest potential NGOs have is to generate self-help solutions to problems of poverty and powerlessness in society. This is based on the view of NGOs as independent, "efficient, less bureaucratic, grassroots oriented, participatory and contributing to sustainable development in grassroots communities." But for NGOs to remain independent of donor or elite control and achieve their social and economic goals, they have to work diligently toward capacity building and financial sustainability.

NGOs are increasingly playing an important role in the development process of most Third World countries. The growing importance of NGOs in the development process is attributed to the fact that they are considered suitable for promoting participatory grassroots development and self-reliance, especially among the vulnerable segments of society-namely, the poor, women and children. In fact, some NGOs seek to organize and involve the marginalized groups in their own development (Makoba, 2002; Stiles, 2002). And sometimes, they try to link their clients to the powerful segments of society by providing access to resources that are normally out of reach to the poor. For example, within development-oriented NGOs, microfinance institutions (MFIs) try to contribute to the economic improvement of the poor by: "bringing in new income from outside the community, preventing income from leaving the community, providing new employment opportunities and stimulating backward and forward linkages to other community enterprises (Makoba, 2002).

The scope of development is quite broad based. It includes not only economic progress, but also promotion of social justice, gender equity, inclusion, citizen’s awareness, empowerment and improved quality of life. To achieve all these and to have a holistic vision of development, the state requires the constructive and collaborative participation of the civil society in its various developmental activities and programs. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as the operational arm of the civil society therefore have an important role in the development processes.

The target sectors for NGOs are elementary and adult education; vocational training of adolescent girls and women from poor and needy families, to implement the reproductive and child Health programme, animal care, National Health Programme, development of women and children in the rural areas and environmental improvement of urban slums and
welfare of communities etc. The emphasis of most of the NGOs in the country is on encouraging self employment through skill formation.

Several NGOs have worked hand in hand with the Government to ensure that millions of out of school children are enrolled and continue their school education, thus, making the right to education and universalization of primary education a reality. The NGOs are active to promote education, particularly among that section of population, which has remained un-benefited or less benefited by the measures adopted by the government (Stiles, 2002).

NGOs have significantly influenced the development of laws and policies on several important social and developmental issues such as the right to information, juvenile justice, ending corporal punishment in schools, anti-trafficking, forests and environment, wildlife conservation, women, elderly people, people with disability, rehabilitation and resettlement of development induced displaced people.

Women are the other vulnerable section of society. Gender discrimination is a ubiquitous cultural reality. Girls are discriminated in the upbringing pattern in the family. Larger numbers of the undernourished are from amongst the girls. Retention of girls in schools is much less as compared to boys. Women are forced to work as housewife and denied participation in gainful economic activities outside homes. About three-fourths of the work done by women is un-monetized (Bromideh, 2011). In Nigeria, NGOs have played a catalyst role in bringing change in the status of women and girls. They make vigorous door step campaigning to bring girls to schools, to end gender discriminatory practices in families, schools and communities, to end violence against girls and women, to make health care facilities reach the women (Stiles, 2002). NGOs have played significant role in tracking trafficking against women, counselling the victims of violence and rehabilitating them. In general they make women conscious of their changing roles, rights and make social resources available to the women. They train women with skills, knowledge and help in the process of capacity building and their empowerment. They have played crucial roles in emancipating the women from many conservative taboos, ensuring equality to them and empowering them. They have organized women from time to time to demand for their rights.

The threat to the human life is on rise. Environmental pollution and imbalance on the one hand and the depletion of natural resources on the other have posed a great challenge to development of the country. Here, the role of NGOs is really noticeable and praiseworthy. Thousands of voluntary organizations are at work to awaken people and governments against environmental degradation and depletion of resources. NGOs in the country are making vigorous efforts to ensure sustainable development by introducing new practices, alternative livelihood for the people (Bromideh, 2011). They are training people for the conservation of forests, natural resources, water etc. NGOs train people to combat the effects of climate change. Their role during disasters and the period following that is tremendous. They not only help in the successful disaster management process, but help in distributing relief and rehabilitating the disaster affected people.

Today, many people are displaced due to developmental projects and are quite often not properly compensated and rehabilitated. The NGOs have a major role to play towards the
cause of people’s resettlement and are also performing commendable job in this direction (Stiles, 2002). The projects like the construction of dams, road highways and railways have often made some sections of people, particularly in rural areas, vulnerable and are displaced without being properly compensated. The NGOs role as the via media between the people and the Government is commendable. People have got their due compensation due to NGO intervention.

Voluntary organizations, working at both national and international levels, have earned praise for their services in societal development. These organizations are busy in creating awareness and zeal among people for participation in development projects. Ensuring humanism by fighting against human rights violations, social exclusions, domestic violence and others have been common objectives of the NGOs. Of late, these organizations are also entering the sector of economic well-being and standard of living. It is now well established that NGOs have an important role to play in the development processes and that both the state and market need the collaboration of credible, active, and accountable NGOs.

Challenges Faced by NGOs in the Process of Development
The role of NGOs in the process of development is tremendous. But the hurdles on the way of their functioning are many. A few important challenges which prevent the smooth operation of NGOs as development agents are mentioned below.

**Lack of Funds:** Most of the NGOs suffer from paucity of funds. Government or donor agencies do not give out funds for NGOs for execution of programmes as at when due for fear of non-execution until the feasibility of such execution is done, thus delaying NGOs. NGOs have to make matching contributions which they are sometimes unable to generate and are, therefore, unable to avail themselves of the grants. Nowadays charity is not so strong in the minds and hearts of the people as it was in the ancient society. This is a reason for paucity of funds for NGOs.

**Lack of Dedicated Leadership:** Leadership qualities of the NGOs like in any other organisations expected to determine the quality and condition of the services they can render. In most of the NGOs, there is a crisis of leadership. Leaders lack adequate vision, take NGO activity as a profession to maximize personal gain or career with no other alternative livelihood options. They often lack dedication and ethics. Enthusiasm, voluntarism and professionalism become the missing elements for the leaders. All these impoverished the leadership quality which they are required to have to spearhead development activities.

**Lack of Public Participation:** NGOs cannot alone ensure development. They have their limitations. Their efforts need to be supplemented by public participation. But tragically, in majority of cases NGOs are not backed by public participation, but by public apathy (Bromideh, 2011). Some of the factors responsible for such a state of affairs are general backwardness of the people, absence of adequate number of dedicated persons. Over emphasis on targets and time bound programmes, political interference and vested interests, easy availability of funds without proper planning and assessment of felt needs and safeguards for the community, distrust of agencies and workers who do not have a base in the community and are unable to win its support and lack of decentralization are some of the
reasons that constrain the role of NGOs in the process of development. When people fail to participate as partners with NGOs in the process of development, development becomes retarded and the role of NGOs as agencies of development becomes limited.

There are also systemic problems. As NGOs need to compete for funds from Donors, this strips them of much-needed autonomy. Current NGO culture has been critically described as follows: “They are apolitical, professional, accountable to foreigners, and often very large and wealthy relative to other civil society actors” (Stiles, 2002). The NGOs frequently become captive clients who have to undertake whatever the foreign donor decides to finance. In such circumstances, the needs of the poor can become secondary to the need of the NGO to survive. However, it is high time now for the NGOs to overcome these shortcomings and challenges in order to become the right alternative agents for development. Development cannot take place without the support and services of these NGOs.

Conclusion and Recommendations
There is no denying the fact that, the NGOs adopt the people-centred development approaches that were both innovative and experimental. NGOs hold a great promise to provide self-help solutions to problems of poverty and powerlessness in many Third World societies. They are increasingly making up for the shortcomings of the state in reducing poverty. Furthermore, their future role in development is expected to increase precisely because of favourable international donor support. In fact, NGOs are increasingly influencing economic and social development policy in most developing countries. But despite their growing role and expected contribution to Nigeria development, NGOs should neither be considered as the only panacea for solving the problems of development as part of the state’s constitutional mandate as enshrined in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Also, NGOs bottom-up approach to development suggests implicitly that NGOs are accountable to the communities they represent, and it is this downwards accountability that impacts upon NGO effectiveness in empowerment outcomes for poor and marginalised groups. Although, NGOs are considered ‘independent’ organisations, however, they are characterised by a high dependency on donor funding, depending on donor funds for around 85 to 90 percent of their income and risking collapse without continued support. Such dependence has skewed the alignment of NGOs away from beneficiaries and towards donors in terms of accountability.

Avoiding reliance on one funding source and achieving some degree of financial autonomy, therefore, is critical for NGOs to make strategic choices and prevent them from becoming passive in the face of structural constraints. Given the magnitude of these constraints, however, strengthening NGOs to remain autonomous and responsive to grassroots constituencies also requires altering funding structures and opportunities to provide them with more flexible funding alternatives.
References


