Collective Social Responsibility and Development Partnership: Towards Synergizing Citizens' and Local NGOs' Capacities in Nigeria

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Abstract- In recent times, the globe is witnessing a development strategy involving the formation of partnerships at different levels to assist developing countries like Nigeria, to be brought up to speed in the pursuit of sustainable social development. Using the Social Action Theory, this paper explains the rationale for this emerging phenomenon, paying particular attention to the crucial roles of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private citizens in driving development via partnership. The paper argues against over dependence on foreign aid by less developed countries (LDCs), and draws attention to the need for them to look inward considering that the flow of foreign aid is on the decrease, owing to the fact that donor countries are themselves facing increasing levels of domestic challenges which demand due attention. Also, donor countries are getting weary of the continuous misappropriation of aid by corrupt leaders in less developed countries. Besides, emphasis is gradually shifting rather to emergency aid, and more importantly, procedures for securing funding from foreign sources are getting more and more tedious, and may not encourage flexibility in grassroots development interventions. Consequently, this paper advocates for the social ethical concept of collective responsibility, so that the scenario is such that corporate private institutions like NGOs and well spirited individuals work hand in hand with the government to strengthen this "third sector" of society, in order to engender sustainable development.

Index Terms— Collective Social Responsibility, Non-Governmental Organisations, Development Partnership, Development Aid, Social Action.

I. INTRODUCTION

Presently, there is a strong commitment among world leaders to fight poverty and promote the wellbeing of human society in general. This commitment was further strengthened when member countries of the United Nations adopted eight millennium development goals (MDGs) in September 2000, and set for themselves the target of making substantial progress towards achieving these goals by 2015. Consequently, a number of countries have drawn up plans and strategies to achieve the MDGs at their various local levels. Of these goals, the eighth one – "global partnership for development" - commits the governments and citizens of the rich countries to support the less developed countries (LDCs) in the pursuit of the MDGs. This partnership concept thus necessitated the continuous provision of aid to poorer countries by the richer ones through various development agencies. Undoubtedly, development aid to poor countries has played significant roles in addressing specific issues of development. However, it has also become a subject of controversy for obvious reasons. For instance, critics argue that foreign aid is a failure in that most of the aids are appropriated by corrupt bureaucrats. They argue further that it stifles initiative, and has created a dependent welfare mentality among the recipient countries (Bauer, and Yamey, 1982). Moreover, even when the amount of aid proposed by donor countries for these less developed countries (LDCs) have increased, the actual aid made available to the LDCs are effectively reducing due to need for donor countries to respond to their own domestic challenges and other equally crucial global issues. Critics therefore suggest that it is wiser for development practitioners in less developed and recipient countries to think of ways of mobilizing support within, to supplement foreign support, the sustainability of which is only probable.

This paper analyses on the concept of collective social responsibility by individuals and corporate private citizens working alongside the government to drive sustainable social development. It focuses on the use of and support for non-governmental

organisations (NGOs) and other forms of citizens' organizations or the broader citizen sector, as used by Todaro and Smith, (2009), to empower the masses for better wellbeing. Drawing from the postulations of the Social Action Theory, the paper draws attention to how collective responsibility can be adopted and utilised as a model to develop a variety of program-based platforms that address the need for organizations, as well as individuals to be socially responsible. This it is believed will act as a catalyst for driving sustainable social development programs in Nigeria and other African countries.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY: CURRENT TRENDS IN DEVELOPMENT

A close examination of the first seven Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) shows that they are actually linked to one another, and are directed at reducing poverty and other forms of social problems. However, the last goal on global partnership for development is a means by which shared responsibilities can be fostered between developing and developing countries to achieve the rest of the MDGs. In other words, developing countries are expected to pursue poverty reduction and good governance with governments and other agencies in developed countries supporting their efforts by increasing aid, opening trade to exports from developing countries and providing debt relief (http://www.oecd.org/about/ retrieved July 9, 2011). This support by developed countries to facilitate different dimensions of development in developing countries is referred to as 'Development Aid', or Foreign aid' as it is often described. It encompasses all official grants and concessional loans, in currency or in kind, that are broadly aimed at transferring resources from developed to less developed nations on development, poverty, or income distribution grounds (Todaro & Smith 2009). Note that development aid is different from humanitarian aid to the extent that the former focuses on alleviating poverty in the long term, rather than a short term response. This partnership between donor and recipient countries in the pursuit of development in less developed countries (LDCs) is known as development cooperation/partnership.

Most development aid comes from the Western industrialized countries, although some poorer countries also sometimes contribute to aid. Aid may be bilateral: given from one country directly to another; or it may be multilateral: given by the donor country to an international organization such as the World Bank or the United Nations via its many agencies like UNDP, UNICEF, UNAIDS, etc., which then distribute same to target developing countries. The proportion is currently about 70% bilateral 30% multilateral (http://www.oecd.org/about/ retrieved July 9, 2011). About 80-85% of developmental aid comes from government sources as official development assistance (ODA). The remaining 15-20% comes from private organizations such as "Non-governmental organizations" (NGOs), foundations and other development charities like Oxfam.

Despite the on-going partnership between donor and recipient countries in the pursuit of development in less developed countries (LDCs), it is becoming increasing needful for leadership in less developed countries to look inward, to source for internal solutions to its numerous development challenges. One reason why LDCs should look inwards is the fact that many donor countries are saddled with several challenges these days and are therefore tilting towards reducing funding to other countries. Some of them are faced with such internal issues as unemployment, government deficits, and balance of payments problems. These have come to gain priority over international politics. Moreover, some of these less developed countries actually have resources which are mismanaged by corrupt leaders. According to Todaro & Smith (2009), tax payers in donor countries are increasingly demanding for more focus on domestic economic problems, especially as they came to realize that their funds allocated to foreign aid often benefit small elite groups in LCDs who in many cases are richer than themselves.

Furthermore, although it is expected that organizations receiving aid have appropriate accountability and transparency measures, current practices have been widely criticized for being extremely time-consuming, difficult to use, and for taking time away from important work on the ground. (Medley, Townsend, Porter and Oakley, 2002; Win, 2004). In fact, as noted by Rauh, (2010), the increasing emphasis on paper-based rational management tools rewards organizations that produce good documentation, while organizations that lack these skills, but who are nonetheless making positive impact, may not be as highly respected by funders. As such, there is the danger of NGOs being captured by the goals of funder rather than intended beneficiaries; this can get to the point where priorities are changed from one year to the next, (Smiles and Helmich, 1993). This has led to the practice in which NGOs increasingly adopt "corporate style" practices and agendas, although they have not necessarily resulted in improved efficiency. This limits the flexibility of recipient organisations as they may have tendency to tailor their programs to fit the available funding, a phenomenon known as Donor Capture. Thus, NGOs may not pursue the most relevant work because of pressure to adopt funder agendas. Thus, Win, (2004) comments that development is not about words and procedures, but about changing the realities of people's lives. He stated further that procedures, concepts and methods are needed, but only as tools to help us do the work that needs to be done, adding that when development is reduced to fitting things on blue squares, then we create more problems than we claim to solve.

Lastly, the continuous increase in cases of natural disasters around the globe, as well as wars in many countries, have necessitated increase in humanitarian and emergency aids, and so more and more funding is channelled to curbing emerging disasters control issues. These obvious current development challenges, particularly as it affects partnership between donor and recipient countries in the provision and utilization of development aid thus create the inevitable need for LDCs to look inward for internal solutions to their development problems and more importantly explore the option of mobilizing NGOs and citizens to partner and support development interventions.

III. COLLECTIVE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: A CRITICAL DIMENSION OF DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

In today's increasingly globalized and complex world, multi-lateral stakeholder solutions are required to address economic, environmental and social issues in order to attain long term sustainability. For development to be sustained, multiple stakeholders should have the opportunity and obligation to work together and thereby share responsibilities. This is social responsibility.

Social responsibility is an ethical ideology that an entity, be it an organization or individual, has an obligation to act to benefit society at large. This responsibility can be passive, by avoiding involvement in socially harmful acts; or active, by performing activities that directly advance social goals (Wikipedia, 2010). For instance at the global level, world leaders took a step in this direction in 2000 via these declarations:

"We have a collective responsibility to uphold the principle of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. As leaders we have a duty therefore to the entire world's people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world to whom the future belongs." (Source: UN millennium declaration, September 6, 2000).

In the corporate private world, it is now a common business practice known as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Corporate Social responsibility is a non-binding, or soft law principle which has received some normative status in relation to private and public corporations in UNESCO's *Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights* developed by its International Bioethics Committee, particularly in relation to child and maternal welfare (Faunce and Nasu 2009). Similarly, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has developed an international standard to provide guidelines for adopting and disseminating social responsibility: ISO 26000 - Social Responsibility. This standard is to encourage voluntary commitment to social responsibility and lead to common guidance on concepts, definitions and methods of evaluation. The standard describes itself as a guide for dialogue and language, not a constraining or certifiable management standard. In addition, individual citizens are expected to be socially responsible for the society (individual social responsibility). The citizens can organize themselves into civil organisation to tackle social problems. A Nigerian Christian clergy challenged citizens to social responsibility as follows: *"... Many of us have benefited from the structure of our society whether you love it or hate it. We must now give back to it. This thinking is the beginning of the birth of nationhood: the idea that we owe our society and our nation something. We must not resign ourselves to always calling out for help and hand-outs; reaching out to be given something by government or government representatives. We must make a solemn decision to play on the field, to become involved and be spectators no more. We must gladly render service and seek to improve our society. We must dream bigger and higher to create for ourselves and posterity a more prosperous, virile and egalitarian society"*[1].

The citizens' sector action is supposed to converge with the responsibilities of governments and profit enterprises for sustainability of the society, hence the term, "collective social responsibility". To this end, the core aim of collective responsibility is to enable platform creation in which constituents – individuals, academics, educational institutions, corporations and non- profit organizations - can come as a collective whole to formulate real-world development solutions that are practical and sustainable in the society.

IV. THEORETICAL BASIS FOR CITIZENS AND NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS PARTNERSHIP IN DEVELOPMENT: THE SOCIAL ACTION PERSPECTIVE

Development as a process of societal transformation is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon. This is evidenced in the numerous challenges being experienced around the globe by different nation-states, all in the quest to attain and maintain development. Yet, no single approach has been identified as being adequate for tackling these universal development challenges. Nonetheless, the Social Action Theory provides a lead in explaining societal development, especially the type that is citizens/intervention groups-supported, or more simply, partnership-driven.

The Social Action theory is based on Max Weber's application of interpretative approach in the understanding of human interpersonal and inter-group relations. This Sociological approach concerns itself mainly with the interpretation of **social action**, its causes and consequences; and the tacit understanding of motives behind human behaviour at different social situations (Haralambos and Heald, 1980; Haralambos and Holborn, 2000).

According to Igbo (2003), social action refers to the behaviour that occurs in a given social situation. A situation is said to be social if individuals, known as actors, direct their behaviours to other people. Social action is therefore a behaviour that is oriented towards the behaviours of others. Put more aptly, it is a behaviour that derives from or responds to the fact (or factors) of collective existence in which people's behaviours are mutually related. This action includes both failure to act and passive acquiescence, but does not include accidental actions, physical actions, idiosyncratic behaviour and instinctual responses. The social action may be oriented to the past, present or anticipate future behaviour of others. The 'others' to whom social actors relate their behaviour may be individual persons, groups, or even society at large. These "others" may be personally known or unknown to the actor, present or not present at the time of acting. The most important thing is that the actor has some mental awareness of the others and is sufficiently conscious of their existence.

The Social Action theory influenced a number of contemporary Sociology scholars, like Talcott Parsons, who believes that commitment to common values provides basis for order in society, stressing that value consensus forms the fundamental integrating principle in society (Charles, 2010). Social action usually involves a social actor, which could be an individual, or

social actors such as a group of people, an organization, or a corporate body, while the society is the stage in which social actors play their roles as guided by norms, rules, regulations, values and beliefs; for the common good of the social system. Social action occurs at all levels of society and can take such forms as community mobilization and participation; capacity building and empowerment involving civil society and citizen organisations; and any other action taken to ensure equilibrium within the social system.

To articulate the relevance of Social Action theory in development process, especially in community mobilization, Minkler, Wallerstein and Wilson (2008), wrote as follows: "*The Social Action Theory is a community-oriented model that is used to increase the problem-solving ability of entire communities through achieving concrete changes towards social justice. That is, individuals within communities coming together to redress the imbalance of powers or privileges between a disadvantaged group and society at large*"

Minkler, et al, (2008) went further to point out key concepts applied in Social Action theory as follows:

1) Empowerment: any social process that allows people to gain mastery over their lives and their community and so aims at transforming power relations between communities, institutions, and governmental agencies. For example, communities may feel more empowered when they work together to strengthen their cultural identity and community assets.

2) Critical Consciousness: a mental state by which members in a community recognize the need for social change and are ready to work towards implementing such changes. Critical consciousness can be raised by engaging individuals in dialogues and discussions that clearly relate how problems and their root causes can be resolved through social action.

3) Community Capacity: the ability of a community to identify, as well as mobilize and solve social problems. These characteristics include the presence of leadership, participation, skills, sense of community, and more; and can be enhanced in via skill-building and workshops that allow members of the community to become more effective leaders.

4) Social Capital: community resources that exist via relationships formed between community members. Social resources such as trust, reciprocity, and civic engagement can connect individuals in a fragmented community across social boundaries and power hierarchies, facilitating community building and organization. Social networking techniques and enhancing social support are important methods that build social capital.

5) Issue Selection: the process by which communities identify winnable, specific goals that unify and build community strength. In this process, individuals work together to select issues they feel are relevant to the entire community.

6) Participation and Relevance: engaging community members to work on implementing their plan of action after selecting an issue.

In view of the foregoing, the Social Action approach as a community-organization model can be adopted and applied in several social issues, particularly those involving intervention in development challenges affecting communities and social groups. Thus, foreign donors and civil society organizations' activities of cooperating with government to solve immediate society, community and group problems to facilitate development in LDCs, fit into this model. All these put together in the light of the Social Action Theory call for collective responsibility among government, non- governmental organisations, civil society organizations as well as private citizens, to be part of the entire process of development through partnership.

V. CITIZENS' AND NON-GOVERNMENT-ORGANIZATIONS' PARTNERSHIP IN DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF COLLECTIVE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The idea of Collective social responsibility (CSR) in development suggests that achieving notable success in societal transformation depends not only on a vibrant private sector and an efficient public sector, but also on a vigorous citizens sector as well. Relying on the public and private sectors alone can be compared to trying to sit on a two-legged stool (Todaro and Smith, 2009). Todaro and Smith further described the failures of either government or private sectors as opportunities with which private citizens can organise and step in to fill any void through what they termed, "sector extension". This organisation of the citizen sector is usually termed Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the development context. They are also termed non-profit, voluntary, independent, civil society or citizen organisation. It means that NGOs are non-profit creation, self-governing and led by wilful volunteers.

The UNDP (2003) defined a Non-Governmental-Organisation as: "any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organised on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs, perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizens' concerns to governments, monitor policies and encourage political participation at the community level. They provide analysis and expertise, serve as early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements. Some are organised around specific issues, such as human rights, environment or health (UNDP, 2008). NGOs function alongside government and profit-based enterprises in the delivery of social services for the well-being of the society, and are therefore referred to as the third sector (Ehigiamusoe, 1998), which indeed constitutes an extension of both the public and private sectors, when looked at in the context of "sector extension" above. They evolve from experiences, interests, ideas and innate zeal to respond to or remedy observed societal phenomena or desire in the society. NGOs could be international, national, regional, or community based, depending on their financial resources, networking capability, and the goals behind their

formation (Omofonmwan and Odia, 2009). They perform their roles through collaboration and partnership with donor organisations and/or networking with other NGOs.

Private NGOs have been described as being among the most significant forces in the field of development assistance (Todaro & Smith, 2009). They represent specific local and international groups with concerns as diverse as providing emergency relief, protecting child health, increasing food production, promoting women's rights, alleviating poverty, protecting the environment, and providing rural credit to small farmers and local businesses. NGOs build roads, houses, hospitals and schools. They work in family planning clinics and refugee camps. They teach in schools and universities, and conduct research on increasing farm yields (Brienkerhoff, Smith and Teegen, 2007). They include religious groups, private foundations and charities, research organisations, and federations of dedicated Doctors, Nurses, Engineers, Agricultural Scientists, and Economists.

Increasingly, indigenous NGOs are taking the lead in LDCs. These citizens' or civil society organisations have shown great potentials in their development roles. Omofonmwan and Odia (2009) noted that the various cases where NGOs and CSOs have created impacts reveal the relevance of their partnership, especially with regards to participatory approach of community development. They cited the example the Zimbabwe's agricultural success in recent years, which has been attributed largely to the strong initiative of the local farmers' organisations. Similarly, Kenya's self-help movements have recorded significant developmental achievements (Holmquist, 1984). In Tanzania, extensive civil society organizations (CSOs) lobbying resulted in the abolition of fees at primary school level (Ohiorhenuan, 2003). In the case of Nigeria, Adebayo (1997) reported the existence of large numbers of development NGOs, stressing that this is regarded as a positive indication towards poverty alleviation. He also pointed out that NGOs can help mobilise resources beyond State budget for the purpose of development interventions.

NGOs have certain important advantages. Firstly, they are less constrained by political imperatives; and secondly, by working directly with the local people, they are able to avoid suspicion and cynicism on the part of the poor concerning the sincerity of their projects. And whereas government rely on authority to achieve outcomes; private sector on market mechanisms to provide incentives for mutually beneficial exchange, citizens' organisations depend on independent voluntary efforts and influence to promote their values and facilitate social and economic development.

Citizens' organizations like NGOs and other CSOs working together stand better chances to succeed with development intervention programmes considering that they work directly with grass root populations in detrimental conditions. This close working relationship provides a platform for them to more easily identify and design programmes that can effectively tackle the conditions in question. This is unlike government agencies which tend to offer uniform services, and profit-making organizations which may lack incentives for innovative programmes. Also, as Todaro and Smith,(2009) observed, once a potential solution to a development problem has been identified, NGOs may have greater flexibility than government in altering their structures accordingly. This can be by means of localized innovations, minor adaptations of programme innovations to suit particular needs, or even by use of participation mechanisms. However, the extent of this flexibility can be limited by available funding and other such constraints.

Since NGOs are formed mainly by experts with technical and specialized knowledge, it becomes easy for them draw up possible models and solutions for problems faced by a community. This particular feature of NGOs places them in an advantaged position in the process of doing specialized work with local citizens' groups. In addition, goods and services that are rival but excludable, including those targeted at socially excluded populations, may be best designed and provided by NGOs who know and work with these groups. Examples include: local public health facilities, non-formal education, rural telecommunications and computing facilities, codification and integration of legal and governance practices, community mapping and property registration.

Throughout developing world, both government and private sectors have poor track record in ensuring sustainability of natural resources and other common property. NGOs are however known to do much better in this area. This is another reason why they can be trusted with such development intervention programmes. Besides, their local presence and relationship, frequent interaction and communication and greater avenues for participation, may naturally generate for them greater trust among local people than for government. NGOs may also enjoy greater trust in assumed competency, reliability, responsiveness, established personal contacts. Lastly, because of their understanding of the needs of grass root populace, especially the under privileged among them who are often excluded from social processes, NGOs may therefore play a role in the aggregation of preferences and representation of community needs.

In view of the foregoing, one would have expected that the existence of NGOs in developing countries to be an indication of a vigorous civil society that can complement development efforts through initiatives to promote good governance and effective policy implementation where state and private infrastructure are weak. But unfortunately, the citizen sector is often weaker in many developing countries, in part because first, people have less money and time to donate; secondly, some of them are deficient with skills, and more importantly, this sector is sometimes actively undermined by the government and business sectors (Todaro and Smith 2009). Citizen sector and NGOs are also vulnerable to the weakness, termed "voluntary failure" which means, instead of realizing their potential, they may be insignificant (owing to limited resources or small scale and reach), selective and exclusionary, elitist and or ineffective (Krammer, 1981). Another potential pit fall of citizen sector is lack of adequate incentives to ensure effectiveness, which requires careful organisational design. They can fail to live up to their organisational potential when means

such as fund raising becomes ends in themselves, or when means are given too little attention, as well as when poor fund raising prevents them from realizing the scale they need to have real impact.

VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIA

There are many socio-economic and political issues that need attention in Nigeria. The falling standard of education and low literacy level; the high rate of unemployment, as well as the dearth of entrepreneurial skills; corruption and poor administration of public resources are some of the areas of attention. Others are the prevalence and impacts of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; gender and maternal health issues; food security, climate change and environmental sustainability. For citizens to be mobilized to collectively share in the responsibility of responding to these dire social conditions, this paper has extensively examined the moral basis for social action towards development intervention.

Development involves organizing and coalescing human energies and activities at different levels to achieve greater results (Jacobs and Cleveland, 1999); implying that it increases the utilization of human potential.   To achieve any meaningful development goal, there must therefore be social actions directed towards this end, and one of such actions is that of Nigerian citizens partnering with the local NGOs and other CSOs to initiate and drive programmes that will complement the efforts of successive Nigerian governments and cause development to occur. This is collective responsibility towards development. As such in sourcing for funds for development projects for instance, the Social Action Theory in society development and in particular, its Collective Responsibility model as described in this paper can be used to develop a variety of program-based platforms that speak to the desire for organizations, as well as individuals to be socially responsible towards development, and other social conditions seeking attention in the Nigerian society.

VII. CONCLUSION

The need for collective responsibility in development is crucial. It simply makes development the business of all, making its sustainability feasible. The process itself is two-dimensional. First, there is the part of government, and then that of the citizens. The government has a role to create the enabling environment to promote NGO and CSO activities. This will foster the development of social entrepreneurship and bring the benefits of such entrepreneurial development to the nation. Moreover, donors and international NGOs are increasingly partnering with local groups and corporations in such areas as capacity-building and fundraising. Channelling support to this sector by the Nigerian government should be a top priority, because of the impact this could have in sustaining grass root development.

Government should also formalize a system of tax refund and other benefits for citizens who contribute financially or volunteer their services to such development activities. Since the main position of this paper is citizens' mobilization, individual citizens need to be encouraged by such policy, as is the case with corporate bodies.

On the other hand, the supported organisations should put every resource to effective use and exhibit high accountability to the contributors. Many local NGOs in Nigeria have been badly labelled as lacking in aid transparency and accountability. This is a reflection of the corruption level associated with use of public resources. The social entrepreneur should enshrine accountability and operational integrity as core values of their activities. They should strive to manage value for money by ensuring proper and prudent use of resources. The focus should not just be programs and projects, but they should initiate programs based on the felt needs of the people. More importantly, they should pay attention to generating detail data for effective reporting and future planning, in the course of their activities (Cooper, 2012).

Finally, the culture of volunteer services, charity donations and personal ownership of public resources are all essential in sustaining this concept of collective responsibility. This responsibility rests on all - individuals, corporate bodies and government. The lack of this culture is incidental to high level of personal individual wealth accumulation (especially through corrupt and illegal means) in the country and the subsequent inequality among Nigerian, even in the face of abundant resources. As a result, the patriotic drive is not there among the citizens, let alone the willingness to volunteer or donate to non-profit services. Therefore every citizen should take ownership. This is the pillar of collective social responsibility.

Government should create the enabling environment to promote NGO and CSO activities. They should also formalize a system of tax refund for citizens who contribute financially to such activities. On the other hand, the supported organisations should put every resource to effective use and exhibit high accountability to the contributors.

VIII. NOTE

[1]Being an excerpt of the message: 'The Theory of Nations', presented by Pastor Oyakhilome, Chris during Christ Embassy's National Youth Convention, National Stadium, Lagos in 2006.

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