

Faith-Based Organizations: Instruments for Achieving Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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This paper examines the role and contribution of religious organisations to sustainable development in Nigeria. It is theoretical in nature and the review is based on secondary materials. It also focuses on the Concept, Types, Roles, and Functions of Religious Organisations as instruments for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. The main argument in this paper is the distinctiveness and superiority of Religious Organisations over secular organizations in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper provides an avenue for identifying the contributions of Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) as alternative to secular theory of development in Nigerian development sector, especially as they are emerging as important center for mobilizing civil societies in the country. This study identified Yusuf various religious organisations that contributed to the sustainable development in Nigeria; this includes Joint Youth Islamic Organisation (JYIO), Jama'atul Izalatul Bid'a wa Iqamatus Sunnah (JIBWIS), Christian Rural and Urban Development of Nigeria (CRUDAN) Foundation for Muslim Welfare (FMW), Federation of Muslim Women's Association in Nigeria (FOMWAN), Muslim Corps Association of Nigeria (MCAN), Sisters Da'awa Group (SDG), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN) etc. This paper shows that religious organizations offer various opportunities for reaching the poor in grassroots level by the virtue of their moral acceptance and legitimacy in communities.

Keywords: Faith-Based Organizations, Instrument, Sustainable development

Introduction

Sustainable development is an organizing principle for global development that supports the well-being of people and their environment. Environmentalists have used the term sustainable development to clarify the desired balance between economic growths on the one hand, and environmental preservation on the other. Sustainable development comprises the meeting of the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations. The main concept behind the idea of sustainable development is an ethical imperative of inter-generational and intra-generational equity, which has evolved from the development paradigm of equitable growth (Marais, Everatt, & Dube, 2007).

The role of religion for the sustainable development in Nigeria has been positively stands as a reliable institution providing steppingstones to sustainable development. Religion can bring about sustainable political development through the inculcation of high sense of morality, duty, selfless service, public accountability, respect for human lives, love of one's neighbour, abhorrence of violence, love for peace, contentment with what one can

legitimately have, justice: among the citizens as well as the leaders (Omoregbe, 2003, p. 309). The churches in Africa have focused their development strategies in two areas: education and healthcare which can be considered as the most important areas in sustainable development process. Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) serve as instruments for sustainable Development in contemporary times, they provide human development services, such as education, health care, peace keeping and other social services. FBOs are valued to have comparative advantages over secular social service providers because of their moral competence, their roots within rural and urban communities, the respect and trust of their members as well as their beneficiaries. Hence, James (2009) contends that FBOs have historically been in the forefront of service delivery and social security, even though they have been disregarded by donors for decades (p. 6). Roberts, and Odumosu (2009) asserted that there is a need for contemporary study of Faith-Based Organizations in Nigeria (para. 9). The recognition of the fact that faith is basically a significant driver of social change, point to the

pertinence of research study into the activities of FBOs in Nigeria.

Nigeria is clearly a prototype state in accommodating divergent religious faiths and harbouring many religious fault-lines, with a population of over 210 million and over 250 ethno-linguistic groups (United Nation, 2019). It is the only country with a population of approximately half Christians and half Muslims (Kwaja 2009, p. 54). There are so many Faiths-Based Organisations working with the people in the propagation of religious moral teachings through various organisations in Nigeria. Some of them includes, Joint Youth Islamic Organisation (JYIO), Christian Rural and Urban Development of Nigeria (CRUDAN), Jama'atul IZalatul Bid'a Walqamatus Sunnah (JIBWIS), Justice and Peace Caritas Organization (JDPC), Foundation for Muslim Welfare (FMW), Muslim Sisters Organisation (MSO), National Council of Muslim Youth Organisation (NACOMYO), Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN), Federation of Muslim Women's Association in Nigeria (FOMWAN), Jama'atut Tajdidil Islam (JTI), Ihsan Association of Nigeria (IAN), Council of Ulama Yoruba Chapter (CUYAZ), Muslim Corps Association of Nigeria (MCAN), Sisters Da'awa Group (SDG), Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN), Fitiyanul Islam Association of Nigeria (FIAN), Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Hilaqu Zikirullah Association (HZA), Ansaruddeen, Anwaruddeen etc. All these organizations have laudable goals and programmes operating for several years in almost all the states of Nigeria. They have common characteristics of delivering variety of services to the public, such as seeking the spiritual well-being of the people, advocating justice for the oppressed. They also play a major role in humanitarian aid and international development, including the improvement of cooperation and relationship among community members based on their peculiar faith and ideologies. All these indicate the efforts and multifaceted approaches of Religious Organisations in promoting the wellbeing of the people that foster the restoration and maintenance of sustainable development in

Nigeria. Hence there is a great concern or need for the promotion of sustainable development through the involvement of religious Organisations in Nigeria.

Concept of Religious Organisation

Virtually every aspect of life is directly or indirectly affected by a type of Organisation. People seek Organisational effort as the need arises; to feed, clothe, house, educate, or employ themselves etc. Organisations provide people's needs for entertainment, spiritual upliftment, insurance, transport, healthcare, and legal assistance among many others (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998 p. 103). Some Organisations like banks and other commercial institutions, they survive and grow through profit-oriented ventures. Whereas for non-governmental organisations like faith-based organisations are considered with activities geared towards effective management for sustainability and growth. In addition to its spiritual functions and the promotion of the dependence on God for direction; Faith-Based Organisation soften times exist to mobilise and utilise human, material, and financial resources to achieve the purposes of God for humanity (Boapeah, 2006 p. 49).

Faith Based Organisation (FBO)

The term Faith-Based Organization as broader term to Religious Organisation does not have a generally accepted description used by government, academia, the media or even the faith-based sectors. The absence of single universally accepted definition of FBOs has not helped conceptual analysis of what FBOs stand for. Many scholars proffer varieties of definitions and typologies. Dicklitch and Rice (2004,) define Faith Based Organizations as non-state actors that have a central religious or faith core to their philosophy, membership, or programmatic approach, although they are not simply missionaries (p. 661). On the other hand, Clarke (2006) viewed Faith-Based Organization as organization that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within the faith (p. 835). This definition considers Faith-Based Organizations as the organizations which derive their origin and practice from the teaching

of their religion or base on its doctrines and perceptions established by affiliated congregations in their community. Berger (2003) defines Faith-Based Organization as:

A formal organization whose identity and mission are self-consciously derived *from* the teachings of one or more religious or spiritual traditions and which operates on a non-profit, independent, voluntary basis to promote and realize collectively articulated ideas about the public good at the national or international level. (p.16).

This definition provides the most acceptable and reliable statement in this field of study. It shows that the intrinsic value of religious civil society organizations encompasses all the broad areas of development and social functions. Unlike their counterpart secular NGOs, they are often influenced or motivated to perform humanitarian tasks. Thus, FBOs may therefore, be referred to as religion(s)-based organizations, specialized (registered or unregistered) non-profit institutions that have religious character or missions (Woldehanna, 2005, p. 27).

Historical Emergence of Faith-Based Organizations in Nigeria

The origins of FBOs in Nigeria remain arguable among scholars (Baiyeri, 2013). However, a historical progression can be drawn. As early as 1842 when Christianity arrived in Nigeria, missionaries were major providers of human development services like education, health care and other social services. In those days, missionaries established mission stations, mission schools, mission hospitals and mission work. In 1916, the Ahmadiyya movement began as a Muslim organization aimed at revising the development efforts, which was perceived as channels of conversion of people from different religions to Islam in northern Nigeria. Moreover, Qadiriyya and Tijjaniyya movement (Islamic sects) contributed to the political growth and the expansion of economic and commercial activities in Northern Nigeria before the arrival of British colonial masters. Odumusu, O., Olaniyi, R., & Alonge, S. (2009). Consider Muslim FBOs as the origin of faith-based development activities in Nigeria (para. 3). However, the discourse becomes more

interesting when African Traditional Religion is factored in. This predates Christianity and Islam. It has been the religion of our forebears, the source of their culture and livelihood; what gave them meaning to existence. On the place of African Traditional Religion (ATR) in development communication, Baiyeri (2013) states:

African Traditional rulers and functionaries-built places of worship and enforced doctrines and ritual observances in much the same way ATR legitimizes loyalty to kings and constituted traditional authorities. The Supreme Being and deities were worshipped, and sacrifices offered to them in the belief that these supernatural beings would give the worshippers wealth, happiness, and protection, which constitute aspects of human development. (p. 17)

Developmental activities were looked upon as a religious obligation that provides social services to the people who have embraced the religion. Whichever side of the argument you take, FBOs started with the coming of religion in Nigeria. And if religion is as old as man, as in the case of ATR, which has been with us, then FBOs have been with us right from the beginning of man, although not in this developed form.

Types of Faith Based Organizations

Several scholars have developed interesting typologies to distinguish Faith-Based Organizations from their secular counterparts. Odumusu, et al. (2009) adopted five typologies for FBOs in Nigeria namely:

1. **Interfaith Organizations:** These are FBOs from various religious traditions that come together to carry out specific programme for the good and welfare of the people. For example, Federation of Muslim Women of Nigeria (FOMWAN) and Justice and Peace Caritas Organization (JDPC) working for gender equality and peace maintenance in Nigeria.
2. **Apex Bodies:** This refers to religious affiliated bodies that serve as umbrella to registered ones. Sometimes it serves as political voice for the rest such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Jama'atul Nasrul Islam (JNI).

3. **Development Organizations:** These are FBOs that are rooted in development of the people as their goals, such as Joint Youth Islamic Organisation (JYIO) and Foundation for Muslim Welfare (FMW)
4. **Socio-political Organizations:** Some FBOs feature in the politics of the country apart from its social responsibility like Jama'atut Tajdidil Islam (JTI)
5. **Mission Organizations:** Some FBOs are missionary inclined. Beneath whatever activity they carry out, are the idea of mission, some of them includes Muslim Corps Association of Nigeria (MCAN), Sisters Da'awa Group (SDG), Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN).

Furthermore, UNICEF (2004) in collaboration with the World Conference of Religions for Peace presented typologies for FBOs which includes:

1. Congregation: This refers to local group of believers in a mosque or church that meet regularly.
2. Religious coordinating Body: This refers to intermediary organizations that Coordinate and support the congregations.
3. Non-governmental organizations: This refers to faith-based NGOs that employ staff, have office, and seek external donor to carry out its activities.
4. Community-based organizations: These are local groups that are set up in the community to provide or present the development needs of the community.

The Roles of Faith Based Organisation (FBO) in Nigeria

The roles of FBOs are numerous and are series of development ranging from education, health, economic, political, and social development. Baiyeri (2013) claims that Nigeria has benefited from political development as far back as pre-colonial era with the Qaidiriyya movement by Uthman Dan Fodio who laid the foundation for Islamic political and legal system in Northern Nigeria that the British took advantage of. Similarly, Justice Development and Peace commission at the Archdiocesan of Onitsha had been involved in the political development of Nigeria by engaging in voter

education, election monitoring, electioneering campaign programmes on the radio. Kenechukwu Micro Finance Bank of Onitsha Catholic Diocese provides soft loans and technical assistance to the people. This is a strong boost to the economic status of the people. FBOs provides platform for jobs and wealth creation, in many ways including cottage industries, farm projects, loans to farmers, small-scale businesses and so forth.

Education is a huge area of involvement for FBOs in Nigeria. Suffice to note that many of our leaders and intellectuals were trained in mission schools. FBOs have been credited with the construction of classroom blocks, community schools, provision of instructional materials, training of teachers and immerse contribution to the National educational curriculum development. Girl-child education is another area many FBOs have and are still investing in. Ngeri-Nwagha (2002) states that, the mission of Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) is to educate Muslim women and make positive impacts on national issues. Private universities and secondary schools operate as FBOs for example, Covenant University in Ogun state, Catholic University of Nigeria, Bowen University of the Baptist Conference of Nigeria etc

On health care, Odumosu et al (2009) cited World Health Organization that; "Christian Health Association of Nigeria (CHAN) provides forty per cent of the health care services in rural communities in Nigeria" (para. 5). This accounts for much that is being done in the rural areas where government presence is not felt. Other social development programmes organized by FBOs includes gender equality, family planning, HIV/AIDS awareness, mobilization, and sensitization for various vaccines in the rural communities.

Role of Faith Based Organization (FBOs) in Sustainable Development

Religious tents, such as the inculcation of high sense of morality, sense of duty, selfless service, public accountability, respect for human lives, love of one's neighbour, sense of humanity, abhorrence of violence, love for

peace, contentment with what one can legitimately have, justice, can be used to foster sustainable political development. (Omeregbe, 2003, p. 310).

Faith exposes its followers with a mandate to help others. Members of religious groups can perform practical tasks during disaster. They can contribute in persons to help people affected by the disaster, provide shelter, food, water, and information on other aids (Adeney-Risakotta, 2009, p. 226). The Islamic teaching on caring for others is a prime example of how a Faith-Based Organization stepped in promoting sustainable development. Islam promotes the concept of *zakat* (almsgiving), *infaq* (support), and *Sadaqah* (charity) as a way of helping poor people and other people in a vulnerable condition. "Love thy neighbour" is a golden rule of all religious traditions and motivates people of faith to care about the condition of others. Justice for the poor and the marginalized people is the main teachings of Jewish holy book. The Bible also mandates assistance to the poor and the vulnerable in the society (Adeney, 2009 p. 227). In addition, Faith Based Organization can also be associated with several external functions such as access to social resources, opportunity for social involvement, and support to connect with and help others while building identity and positive sense of self. For example, in 2018 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) published a guide "Engaging Faith based and Community Organizations: Planning Considerations for Emergency Managers", which outlines best practices for engaging faith-based and community organizations in emergency preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery (U.S Department of Homeland Security, 2018).

Faith-Based Organizations in Theoretical Perspective

Theoretical perspective prescribes underlying principles behind practice. The underlying principles behind the practice of faith-based social service leave scholars with many debates. However, Goggin and Orth (2002) made a disputable attempt articulated as the Theory of Individual Change thus:

In theories of change, faith-based organizations in social services are portrayed as being motivated by a desire to change the lives of the individual clients they serve, and the individuals within those FBOs are viewed as change agents...A second dimension of a theory of faith-based providers in social services delivery is that FBOs do not just provide the single service but instead, place program participants in an on-going social support network that provides role models and assistance, as dictated by the needs of the client (p. 6).

The implications of the two (2) theories are numerous, namely

1. Faith-based organizations are more holistic in their approach to the individual client and therefore transform clients in ways that secular government and private non-profit agencies do not. In other words, FBOs broaden our ideas of development, in that, the emphasis entails the development of the spirit, soul and physical dimensions of the human person. Arguably, this is a religious perspective of man, but equally suggest the value added to sustainable development by FBOs.
2. FBOs establish relationships with program participants that are more enduring- more personal than the professional relationships that are sought by secular organizations, whether a government or non-profit organization. This is to say, at grass-root level, for instance, FBOs relate with individual clients in such areas as pastoral counselling, home visits during crisis, group prayer meetings which amounts to spiritual and psychological development of the beneficiaries.
3. Faith-Based Organizations tend to be more highly motivated by their faith and spirituality. Whereas, in some cases, secular social service providers may expect all their rewards or remuneration in this world, FBOs are not just motivated by present rewards but eternal rewards that are beyond this terrestrial world. In that case, FBOs persist in social services provision even when there are little or no economic gains.

4. FBOs tend to have access to volunteers, many of whom are faith directed. This army of volunteers do not only increase the likelihood that the client can be part of a support network, but also has the benefit of being cost-effective. This principle explains one of the richest treasures of FBOs in Sustainable development. It equally points to the fact that FBOs should be a very reliable group of development agents in terms of manpower.
5. FBOs provide service delivery network that can reach those in need within their own communities. They are trusted local players nested in the fabric of that community. One major added value of FBOs to Sustainable development is the high capacity for ensuring enduring grass-root participation in development networking. This is a rare fit when compared with secular social service providers or government agents.

Some Problems of Faith Based Organizations in Nigeria

It is essential to identify some challenges that may accrue in the development services of FBOs, especially in countries characterized by religious pluralism like Nigeria. For instance, Beed and Beed (1999) Thinks that in a religiously diverse society civil unrest may erupt because of clash amongst different religious sects (intra and inter religious in nature). They further opined that several basic religious beliefs oppose the values and principles of modern capitalism and secular economics (p. 92). Tolling their argument, possible negative effects of religion on development include religious restrictions on capital accumulation, profit-making, credit markets and interest. Moreover, they observed that some religions tend to restrict any infiltration of globalization and the principal contents of modernity. Terchek (1998) noted that these religious groups in extremity tend to criticize the principles of modernity because they propagate secularism which condemns the originality and sacred content of religion. For these groups secularism is neo-imperialists doctrine which has failed to deliver an impact on the suffering masses.

Conclusion

This paper has been able to shed light on salient issues for analysing the relevance of FBOs in sustainable development. Religion is a source of motivation that spurs its adherents to give generously to the poor and strive in their actions to eradicate inequalities. For many communities their religious believes go a long way to their world view, which invariably influences their notions on how the world should be, which consequently affect their concepts of development. FBOs appear to have advantages over comparable secular institutions in helping individuals overcome difficult circumstances like imprisonment and drug abuse. FBOs provide an anchor giving meaning to various forms of human experiences, life, and actions. FBOs contribute to sustainable development through the nurturing of human conscience for honesty, transparency, and the common good. Faith Based Organizations have the capacity to promote a more holistic perspective of development that acknowledges the spiritual and material input in human development. Despite the challenges inhibiting the contribution of FBOs towards development, it remains an important agent for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Government agencies and other stake holders should support and maximize the initiatives that enable Faith Based Organizations engage in wider community development activities to provide and maintain sustainable development.

Secular and Community Based Voluntary Organizations should explore the development of strategic partnerships with FBOs to widen and deepen their potential impact on community development and peace building.

To support grass roots peace building in Nigerian communities, there is an urgent need for government policy and strategies to address sectarianism and tribalism to deal with the problem facing FBOs.

Although Faith Based Organizations FBOs are established according to the beliefs of a particular Religion(s) or tradition, their

management should be devoid of denominational or religious influence. Undue denominational influence on FBOs can lead to low productivity which in turn hinders their effort towards promoting sustainable development.

The activities of Faith Based Organizations should be valued by Government agencies, donors and other stakeholders because of their capacity to reach the poorest and provide services to the marginalized and deprived communities for their betterment and sustainable development

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