

Critical Analysis of The Effectiveness of Civil Society in Nigeria: A Study of Interventions and Monitoring of Poverty and Attainment of SDG in Nigeria

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Abstract

Without any shred of doubt, poverty is one of the social issues that has no regard for tribe, race, country, or other ways by which we group people all over the world. The major difference when it comes to poverty is the level with which it affects different countries. The irony of the whole situation is that what some countries refer to as poverty is prosperity for some others. Third world countries are grappling with serious level of poverty, and Nigeria is not left out. In fact, the poverty level is so astounding that it poses great danger to countries all over the world due to its security implications and effects on world peace. As the international poverty benchmark got increased to \$1.90 from \$1 in September 2015, many Nigerians were further pushed below poverty line. It can be argued with very little contradiction that factors such as poor governance, mismatched allocation of resources, unemployment, lack of equity, corrupt practices and many others are responsible for the extreme level of poverty in Nigeria. The study adopts structural functionalism as the analytical framework to examine the effects of various interventions by civil society organizations within and outside Nigeria, on the level of poverty and the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in Nigeria. In addition, the mixed method (of both primary and secondary data) is used to collect data while content analysis is applied. The study observes that for the level of poverty to reduce drastically in Nigeria, there is need for good and effective leadership, strong institutions, as well as using public-private partnership.

Keywords: SDG (Sustainable Development Goals), CSOs, international poverty line,

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1. Introduction

A country's development is restricted to the authorities as well as individuals and organizations. Because of the unsatisfactory nature of government ministries, departments, and agencies, it is commonplace to see CSOs as antagonistic to policies formulated by the government. Interestingly, this is not supposed to be the case because CSOs are meant to be partners in progress with the government and help with planning and monitoring the execution of governmental policies. In Nigeria, CSOs consist majorly of NGOs, volunteer groups, indigenous peoples' groups, religious groups, social groups, and community-based organizations (Malaolu & Ogbuabor, 2017).

What makes this study of paramount importance is that it seeks to explore the effectiveness of CSOs in the country; their actions and tracking of poverty alleviation as well as the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals using Nigeria as the basis; and analyse the goals one by one while also seeking to suggest ways by which CSOs can achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

Apart from aiding the collection of data, CSOs also indirectly monitor SDGs' execution. How SDGs perform in other countries should be included in the appraisal process to be sure that human rights treaties are responsible for implementing the goals, good governance, inclusive participation, as well as the rule of law. So, practical analysis, as well as methods of collecting data and reporting them have to be confirmed about locating SDGs (African Civil Society Circle, 2016).

2. Critical Analysis of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Civil Society is now totally acceptable when developmental thoughts and pattern are being considered. The idea

of civil society reflects various normative understandings of what the relationship among individuals, communities and their country should be. The desire by people to identify the problems of their societies and how to find solutions to them through their organizations is understandable. They also utilize these organizations to determine the desired and required developments, civil society focuses creating solutions to challenges such as freedom for the voiceless individuals, solving the problem of poor growth and development of the economy, as well as socio-structural modifications.

The major goal was amendment of the societal structure of the African countries, which remains unchanged and is responsible for the abnormal degree of poverty and abysmal growth of its economy. While policies which are targeted at reforming social sectors, which are dependent on liberalism, are targeted at modifying the obligations to provide well-being packages by governments, CSOs started creating schemes which were carried out by NGOs. CSOs are classified into two namely Advocacy and Operational CSOs. What differentiates both classes of CSOs is reflected in their developmental roles and how they interact with governments on policy formulation.

CSOs role is to help further good governance through policy and advocacy, monitoring and attainment, performance and actions, regulations and actions, by helping citizens understand the belief, norms, values and expectations, by ensuring the vulnerable masses also gain access to societal welfare, and by ensuring work development that will improve the well-being of the societal citizens and communities.

2.1 Theories of Civil Society

Over the last few decades, CSOs have had to shoulder the responsibilities of nation building, being the intermediary between partners and governments as well as monitoring the implementation of programmes aimed at achieving all seventeen Sustainable Development Goals.

There is a synergy in the target of these bodies and that of the UN, particularly as it relates to some developmental programs which are focused on poverty alleviation, providing solutions to the problem of climate change, ensuring the rights of women and children are not trampled upon, and many others.

Ernest Gellner's endeavour on demystifying civil society remains one of the most accurate modern-day expositions on liberalism (Howell and Pearce, 2001:19). Gellner in page 32 of his 1994 work posited that the most accurate present-day definition of civil society is as a cluster of NGOs opposing the government to guide against being oppressed.

Marxist Theory

In the views of Marxism, Civil Society is that sphere which allows for the middle class to exploit the working class. The economic interactions within this sphere were the implicit fact, with every other thing a mere structural indication. Marx and Hegel's work review civil society in its transformation, in a manner that goes beyond the nineteenth century's prevailing politics to delve into a future where man's real essence is revealed.

Structural Functionalism Theory

Gabriel Almond, his assertion was the presence of some specific roles in all political systems. Also, as clearly stated by the duo of Bingham Powell and Gabriel Almond, structural functionalism is a sociological view that society is a compounded system which is made up of segments which work together for the promotion of stability and solidarity. Their suggestion is that human life is guided by social structures, as obtained in CSOs.

2.2 Critical Analysis of Civil society in Nigeria

With more than 250 tribes scattered across different geographical locations in 36 states and its Federal Capital, Nigeria is a highly heterogeneous society. Nigeria has four generations of civil society in Nigeria.

- First (precolonial): Religion and traditional institute.
- Second (1914-1980): Trade unions, professional associations, chambers of commerce, student union and voluntary membership.
- Third (1980-present): non-governmental organizations.
- Fourth (2005-present): Social Media based Movement

A historical analysis of CSOs in Nigeria shows that the country has a powerful civil society tradition that dates to many decades. This has contributed to the diversity and multicultural nature of the country. Issues such as poor governance, lack of access to basic amenities by the citizens, as well as the history of resistance to oppression have basically fuelled the growth of CSOs in Nigeria.

2.3 Critical Analysis of the Effectiveness of Civil Society in Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Volunteering organizations regularly function in different capacities that mostly fuse together to create a scope which is subject to change. Differentiating the roles of these organizations require a multifaceted scope. They are categorized according to Elsdon (1991) as:

- Organizations, which introduce new programmes whose importance are subsequently acknowledged and taken over by the government. Examples of these are mission schools which were taken over by the government and fused into existing government-owned academic systems.
- Organizations which are like the above, but which differ due to their supplementary services for public utilities. The Red Cross Society is a very fitting example of this.
- Organizations that are totally autonomous but still support related public services. These kinds are sometimes supported by the government.
- Organizations that champion the interest of some specific groups of people, and which absolutely differ from government-owned services.

The proliferation of CSOs in Nigeria has brought about various organizations within the civil society with some of them being real and well-grounded while the genuineness and viability of others is questionable. According to a UNICEF report in 2002, genuine CSOs in Nigeria were only 648 in number.

The result is not immediate, cannot be predicted and cannot be easily determined, meaning developmental protagonists must be patient and flexible. Funders presently focus more on project grants which are likely to negatively impact the projects if funds are not provided for the implementation of the projects (Thompson, 1991).

3. Critical Analysis of the Effectiveness of CSOs in Sustainable development Goal 1 in Nigeria

Nigeria being a federation of 36 states, with a population of 206.1 million as of 2020, over 40% of people are living in poverty. According to (Opebi 2016) 64 % were living below poverty line. A closer look at available data on the efficiency of CSOs in the first SDG (poverty eradication) shows that there are 54 duly registered CSOs across Nigeria, with the north, which is ironically the region which needs them the most, having the least figure.

3.1 Poverty and its Major Causes

Different data state that Nigeria is one of the poorest in sub-Saharan Africa despite being blessed with a rich deposit of different natural resources. The World Bank has observed that many citizens of the West African country are confined to terribly low standards of living with monetary earnings barely enough to settle their living costs in terms of feeding, housing, healthcare, and education.

- **Income-induced Poverty:** Income-induced poverty is the most prominent factor of a country's poverty level. Income-induced poverty posits that a country's poor are living in either absolute or relative poverty. The number of low-income earners in Nigeria is astronomical because the minimum wage is too small and is barely enough to sustain an individual despite the fact that so many of the working-class citizens are not lazy. The payment they receive in many instances is far below the official minimum wage.
- **Nigeria's Unequal Income:** A country's income inequality can be determined by the Gini index. Based on information from the UNDP, the Gini coefficient of Nigeria is almost 1, which means the poor are getting a lesser chunk of the nation's earnings and the country's poverty gap is becoming much wider than it seems.

Year	Headcount Index (%)	Dept (%)	Severity (%)	Gini Coefficient	Main Per Capital Expd.	Size of Poor Populations
1985	43	16	8	.39	593	36
1992	34	14	8	.45	792	35
1995	40	17	8	.46	720	44
1996				.458		43.80

Source: World Bank (1996)

The implication of this is that almost 50% of the nation's earnings belong to just 20% of the high earners. With this estimation, 20% of the population's poorest own less than 5% of the nation's earnings. About 40% may be

termed the cause of disturbances, civil disobedience and political crises. An increase in the existing inequality does not bode well for the Nigerian democratic.

- **Inability to Access Quality Education:** According to the UNDP (2021), school attendance by female students in the North East and North West are below 50%. The result of this is an increase in poverty which is due to the low rate of girl-child education in the north.
- **Lack of Good Governance:** It is not news that Nigeria is poorly governed, a situation which caused impoverishment for many citizens. Neo-colonialism has brought more poverty with it, leading to poor management of resources. Government's decision making and execution at the important levels can be fingered as one of the unending poverty cycles spread of poverty.
- **Population Explosion:** Population explosion remains a major poverty-increasing factor. With the presence of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, many hitherto careful families have become more indifferent financial security before bearing more children.

Year	Population	Growth Rate	Density	Population Rank	Density Rank
2022	216,746,934	2.57%	237.98	6	62
2021	211,400,708	2.60%	232.11	7	64
2019	200,963,599	2.60%	220.65	7	66
2018	195,874,683	2.62%	215.06	7	66
2017	190,873,244	2.64%	209.57	7	68
2015	181,137,448	2.71%	198.88	7	69
2010	158,503,197	2.68%	174.03	7	71
2005	138,865,016	2.58%	152.47	9	71
2000	122,283,850	2.53%	134.26	10	75

Source: World Population Review (2000-2022)

Overpopulation makes it difficult for a country to achieve a state of equilibrium because many will be shut out of policies.

- **Macroeconomics Policy Failure:** The failure of major economic policies by the government has had major impact of altering the economic equilibrium.
- **Human resource development:** In considering human capital development, one must measure its human resource development, and how its effect on the poverty level of a state. A country must constantly invest in its state and its human capital development with efficient result which will bring changes to labour market and poverty.
- **Poor Growth of the Economy:** The Nigerian living standard is a unique one featuring the two evils of impoverishment and high-level inequality. Data obtained from the UNDP in 2009 shows that 65.9%, which translates to roughly 112.5 million citizens were poor. This figure is extremely high when compared with the 15% and 27.2% found in 1960 and 1980 respectively.

Start Year			End Year
2017 GDP was	\$375.75B	a, 7.14%	Decline from 2016
2018 GDP was	\$397.19B	a, 5.71%	Increase from 2017
2019 GDP was	\$448.12B	a, 12.82%	Increase from 2018
2020 GDP was	\$432.29B	a, 3.53%	Decline from 2019

Source: World Bank (2017-2020)

A country that has not embraced new innovations will continue to be a consumer as it cannot produce anything. This will make it impossible for the citizens to break free from the shackles of poverty as they will be unable to access jobs.

- **Lack of Employment:** There has been a progressive increase in the rate of unemployment from about 2% in 1980 to 18.1% in 2000. The year 2014 saw a drop in unemployment to 11.8% but it increased to

21.1% in 2010, and 25% in 2012.

Poverty due to unemployment is occasioned by the inequality being experienced in the population (Ogbeide and Agu, 2015). For Nigerian citizens, the benchmark was set at between \$1 and \$2 daily. Unemployment among the number of people in the workforce age group has been fluctuating for a while.

- Indebtedness: Repayment of debts helps to develop a country socially and economically. Nigeria's external debt of 28.5 million US dollars as at late 2020 represented 80% of her GDP and would have been useful for provision of amenities for the citizens.

3.3 Poverty Index

Before COVID-19, between four and ten Nigerians were already in abject impoverishment and many others were already flirting with the poverty line. As discussed above, Nigeria's Bureau of Statistics disclosed that 39.1% of the citizenry survive on less than \$2 daily, a figure which falls below the global benchmark.

Distribution among groups: 2018	International Poverty line % non-poor	Relative group % Bottom 40	Multidimensional poverty Measures	% of Population
Urban Population	83	18	Monetary Poverty	
	17	82		
Rural Population	49	52	Daily	N/A
	51	48	Income/consumption less than US\$1,90	
Males	61	40		
	39	60		
Females	61	40	Education	
	39	60		
0-14yrs old	53	48	At least one child is not enrolled in school	N/A
	47	52		
15-64yrs old	66	35	No adult has completed primary	N/A
	34	65		
65 and older	74	27		
	26	73		
Without Edu. (16+)	43	58	Access to basic infrastructure	
	57	42		
Primary Edu. (16+)	64	37	No access to limited-standard drinking water	N/A
	36	63		
Sec Edu.	76	25	No access to limited standard of sanitation	N/A
	24	75		
Tertiary/post-sec	90	10	No access to electricity	N/A

Source: World Bank Using LSS/SSAPOV/GMD

The rate food insecurity tripled, eclipsing the figures from the first quarter of 2019 and second quarter of 2020, which gave just 27% and 74.4% respectively. The heightened food insecurity became the number one problem which led to a long-term poverty crisis which affected human development.

4. A Study og Interventions and Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria by Civil Society

Studies show the changing dynamics on the discourse over the years (Decker 2010 1-3) explains that the advent of colonization of the African people introduced the current wave of poverty to African countries. He argues that Africans by birth had automatic social strata which included skills, vocation, language and occupation of the family or society, thus wealth came in form of homeland, chieftaincy titles, livestock, human skills and vocation, age, wisdom, spirituality, kingship and membership of royalty, social class, etc.

Globalization and capitalism have further exacerbated the sharp divides as the digitization and monetization of the economy is the order of the day thus leaving the vulnerable behind to languish and be deprived of basic amenities.

4.1 Data Analysis and Discussion

The objectives of the study are simply achieved based on the response of the respondents vis-à-vis facts from extant literature. They are as follows: The respondents observed that there are many factors responsible for the increase in the level of poverty in Nigeria. The factors mentioned included bad governance, poor government policy, poor economic policies, lack of education or literary level, climate change, corruption among other. Respondents from Oxfam International, Action Aid, CACCADEV and Volunteer Service Overseas rightly observed that, in an attempt to attain the SDGs, there is no parameter set by the United Nations or affiliated organizations to measure the attainment.

4.2 Civil Society and Poverty Alleviations

Also, respondents from the Volunteer Service Overseas, Action Aid, CACCADEV, and Oxfam International all agreed that Civil Society Organizations monitor the implementation of some government's poverty alleviation programmes such as conditional cash transfer, and other components of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) targeted at combating goals one and two - no poverty and no hunger. The NSIP is a programme initiated by the Buhari-led administration but has been criticised lately for mismanagement and lack of transformation.

4.3 Governments Effort at Achieving SDGs

Since the commencement of the implementation of the global goals, a special office on the SDGs has been opened in the same space as the presidency, the office is controlled by a senior special Assistant next to the president SDG matters SSAP-SDG. The same institutional structure of actualizing the global goals has been replicated by the 36 state governors and FCT, with an office of the SDG within the governor's office. Several poverty alleviations program are conducted, which are

- The state social Investment program
- The N-power program
- The Home-Grown feeding programs
- The conditional cash transfer program
- Government enterprise and empowerment program

4.4 CSOs in Demanding for Accountability in Nigeria

Government officials re-looted the recovered loot, according to the CSOs who supervised the project; this troubling tendency prompted the Swiss government to choose ANEEJ as the primary CSO to oversee the disbursement of cash due to be repatriated in 2017.

5. Conclusion

Civil society have been a great influence on the initiation of ideas and implementation of some the goals in SDGs in Nigeria. However, the main issue is the successive failure of leadership over the years, and the unprecedented level of corruption have led to the trust gap between the leader and the led. The objective measure had an absolute poverty line which was calculated as 30,123 naira (509USD), which consists of annual food expenditure and annual average non-food expenditure.

Meanwhile, the relative poverty measure as adopted by NBS calculates a poverty line equivalent to 2/3 of weighted mean per capita household expenditure (for food and non-food). The relative poverty line set by this measure is 23,733 naira (401USD). Based on the statistics released by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2005, the rate of poverty had increased steadily between 1980 and 1996 (65.6 percent of the population) before it

declined slightly in 2004 (at 54.4 percent of the population), with the advocacy of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Since the slight decline in the poverty rate in 2004, there have been persistent increase in the rate of poverty in Nigeria. The 2019/2020 Nigerian living standards survey released by the National Bureau of Statistics, NBS, shows that 82.9 million (40.1 percent) Nigerians are poor. Spreading across rural and urban areas.

Findings also show that In the structured interviews conducted with the representatives of Oxfam International; Child Aid, Community-care and Development Initiative (CACCADEV); Action Aid; and Volunteer Service Overseas, a number of issues were observed. The study found out that, even with the available resources in Nigeria and several interventions by regional and international partners, the rate of poverty has consistently on the increase since 1980 attributed to corruption, bad leadership, poor government economic policy, low literacy level, climate change, poor and selective implementation of poverty alleviation programmes, insecurity, as well as political instability/policy somersault.

In other hands, all these programs are being done in limited states in the countries, and Nigeria being a country with 36 states, these programs need to be carried out across all states. To discuss insecurity on a deeper level, insecurity has made a lot of people fall below the poverty line, because people have had to migrate and become refugees. Government must ensure security is sustained so that communities can thrive, which leads to agriculture growing because rural areas are more on poverty line than the urbans. Thus, Corruption, agriculture, security, climate change and the likes need to be work on for the betterment and eradication of poverty in Nigeria, and this gives CSOs and SDGs the ability to work and achieve the 2030.

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