Efforts of Donor Agencies in Capacity Building in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper focused on the role of donor agencies in capacity building in Nigeria. The spillover effects of conflicts to advanced economies, has prompted the massive development of donor agencies. Recently, due to several humanitarian crises, there are many donor agencies' footprints in Nigeria. This paper was aimed at examining the extent donor agencies assist in capacity building of people in need, as well as the contributions of government to bring such efforts to fruition. Hence, three layers of capacity building were identified which include individual, organizational and community levels. This paper also indicated that there are extinctive factors that portray the extensiveness of capacity building, such as skills, ability, instinct, processes, resources. In terms of interventions, donor agencies give out development or humanitarian grants for attainment of specific objectives, based on their mandates, visions, missions. The role of government is to provide road map, and enabling environment for capacity building to strive. The paper concluded that misappropriation of grants or falsification of activities, should be discouraged among national organizations, that support the implementation of donor grants.

Key words: capacity-building, donor-agencies, grants, interventions, humanitarian,

Introduction

Capacity building is one important gestures extended to different parts of the world by the advanced economies, using donor agencies. In spite of the mixed rationales behind these charities, it seems to have proved overtime to be useful in keeping the "peace" at home, using necessary aids abroad.

Indeed, there have been growing concerns on the lopsided nature of global economic system. So many radical scholars have associated international terrorism to this imbalance in human per-capital index across the globe. The argument is basically on the concept of human security, which has shown that people with inadequate basic human needs would likely resort to criminality or violence to survive. Although, such conflict would not affect many developed countries directly, but it has indirectly caused some national security concerns. In September 11, 2001, some terrorist gangs attacked the United States of America using hijacked passenger planes. More so, foreign missions in most of the troubled parts of the world have been attacked leaving military and non-military causalities.

Meanwhile, Data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2021), indicates that the number of people forced out of their homes due to socio-political persecutions, conflicts, generalized violence, human rights violations or civil disturbance has significantly increased in the last 10 years. According to the Migration Data Portal (2022), there were 41 million forcibly displaced people as of the end of 2010, and the figure was 78.5 million by the end of 2020. Refugees from this data were 26.4 million, while asylum-seekers made of 4.1 million (UNHCR, 2021).

It is noteworthy, that most of the asylum-seekers find their ways to Europe and other western countries. The presence of these conflict uprooted individuals posed some degree of concerns to the advanced economies. Thus, international development has become one of the cardinal foreign policies of many developed countries. This is largely done with the help of grants from donor agencies, from governments or agencies with strong affiliation with foreign governments.

The essence is partly to curb the desire or extent of asylum-seeking abroad by people within conflict or distressed areas. One of such ways of encouraging them to stay is through grants of different categories to support, short, medium to long terms developmental initiatives in form of capacity building. According to Mark Bray in Uleberg (2009:7), capacity building is a "fundamental part of the mandates of many international organizations. Much of their work aims to strengthen national capacities through training, technical advice, exchange of experiences, research, and policy advice". Most international organizations work on the grants made available by donor agencies. The Donor agencies are therefore the vehicle for support, indigent populations to cope from hardship, ineffectual or systemic dysfunctions, created directly or indirectly by conflicts or institutional flaws.

This paper is aimed at examining the extent donor agencies assist in capacity development of people in need, as well as the contributions of government to bring such efforts to fruition. The paper will also highlight case study impact of capacity building, also indicate some of the challenges of capacity building in Nigeria.

Concept of Donor Agencies

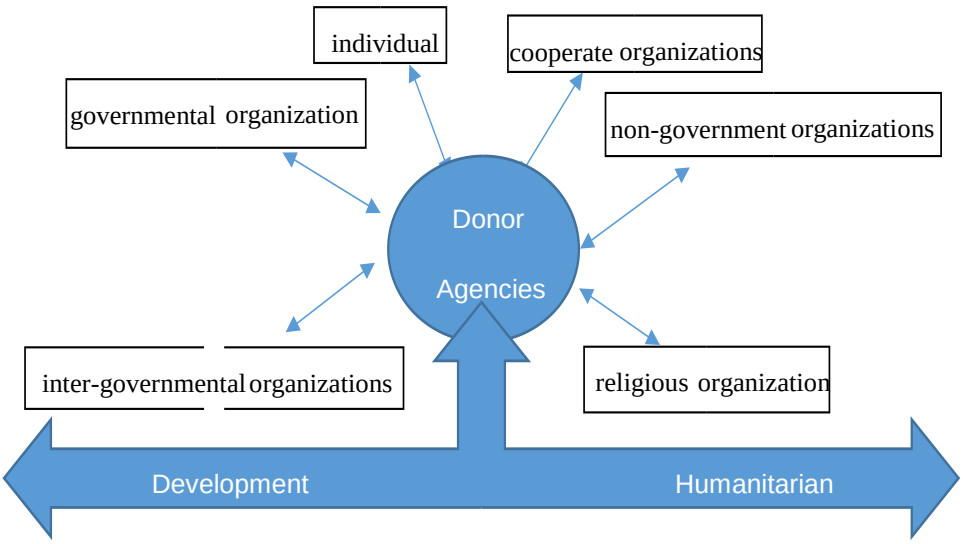
Donor agencies are dedicated institutions that provide funds in different lights, to support interventions in areas of needs across the world. For proper understanding of the concept of donor agencies we need to first and foremost know who a donor is. A donor could be defined as a person who donates something of importance, like organs, tissues, money, properties etc, in support of those in dire need of such valuables. Strictly speaking, a donor is someone who donates something of value or importance to a person or an organization, especially in charity or in support. Such donation is basically aimed at bettering the lots of others who are in need.

Some scholars have given different meanings to donor agencies, based on their conceptions. But some of such definitions tend to align donor agencies to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). For instance, Sambo and Sule (2020) noted that international donor agencies are organisations that are mainly non-governmental and operate across the globe in all countries of the world particularly developing countries to provide non-profit services and aids to the poor and the needy, especially those in critical humanitarian and social conditions. In reality, donor agencies go beyond the NGOs, as they are often under the caprices of governmental institutions, even when they are spearheaded by individuals or NGOs they tend to align with overall government policies at home and abroad. In other words, donor agencies is a wider spectrum of system with governments championing the course in charity, using designated offices, citizens, and other diplomatic means. The major aim is to alleviate sufferings abroad, to provide for the needs of people in every part of the world, where and when it mattered most, irrespective of the economies status of the country. The essence is to reduce the effects of human insecurity and the burden of spill-over effects of crisis or conflict around the globe. This is done by different strata of agencies, operating in compacts of global resources.

Just as observed by Lewis & Kanji (2009), donor agencies fundamentally operates in three layers of actors, described by them as "implementers" "catalysts" and "partners". In their opinion, the "implementers" are mainly concerned with mobilisation of resources to deliver goods and services, while the "catalysts" are the action planners concern with the "motivation, enhancement and donation towards improved foresight and activities to support social change in individuals, organisations, institutions and governments" . On

the hand, the "partners" as posited by Lewis & Kanji (2009) are the link between the governments, organisations and institutions on joint efforts to materialized the objectives of grants.

In this light, donor agencies comprises of several individuals, or organizations influenced by governments or by empathy, to implement foreign aids in alignment with desired institutional, governmental or organizational thrusts. In essence, we can define donor agencies here as different individual's foundations, cooperate organizations, governmental organizations, non-government organizations and inter-governmental organizations as well as religious organizations, that set aside some designated funds in form of grants in aid for those in needs or require support.



Source: Attah (2022)

Donor Agencies and Programme Interventions in Nigeria

History of donor agencies presence in Nigeria, is often attributed to the Civil war crisis of 1967-1970. This is mainly because activities of donor agencies are often mistaken to be solely during humanitarian crisis. But far beyond that, donor agencies could also grant aids in peace time, as far as there is need or perception of it. Hence, historically, early European activities in Nigeria in form of anti-slavery efforts and missionary works, had some backings of organizations in Europe and Americas, which supported their nationals in form of funds to assist in their missions in Nigeria. Such funding were grants in aid which represents what donor agencies are basically known for today. It is noteworthy that

the Missionaries were the first to establish tuition-free schools in Nigerian communities, which pegged them to charity. In the same vein, there were elements of capacity building transmitted to locals in artisan-ship, teaching and learning, clerical services and so on. Nevertheless, in contemporaneity, the Nigeria Civil war saw massive deployment of grants in aid, in health, shelter, and other life saving activities. This partly informs the temptation for some scholars to associate the history of donor agencies in Nigeria to the 1960s.

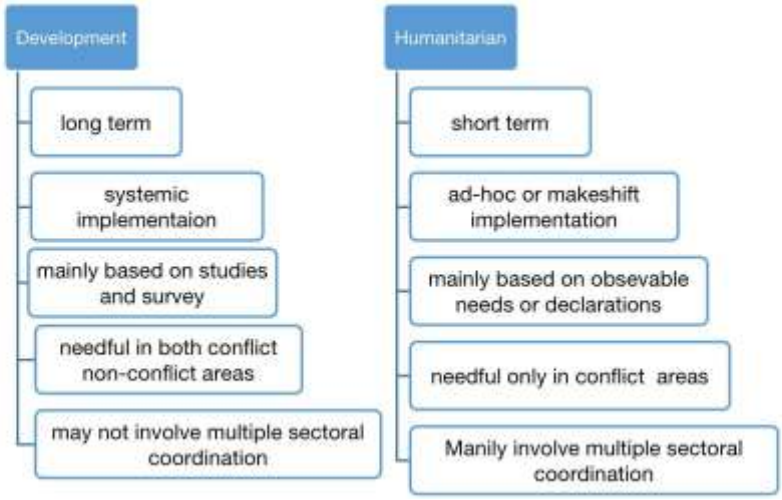
Recently, due to several humanitarian crises, there are many donor agencies footprints in Nigeria. However, before the crisis in the north-east, several donor agencies were operational in Nigeria. It is important to state this, so that we will not be entangled in another perception of believing that donor agencies presence is solely during crisis moments, as has been the narrative. It is obvious that the crisis in the north-east of Nigeria created significant humanitarian crises that caught the attention of the world.

Donor agencies no doubt have doubled their presence in Nigeria since 2014 when the crisis in north-east became a global concern. Those in operation ranges from the governments support aid agencies to UN specialised agencies as well as international and national non-governmental organizations. Here are some of the notable international donor agencies in Nigeria;

i. African Union Scientific Technical Research Commission
ii. British Council in Nigeria
iii. Delegate of the European Union to Nigeria and ECOWAS
iv. Economic Community of West African States
iv. Wateraid Nigeria
v. World Bank
vi. World Safety Organization
vii. Agence Francaise de Development
ix. Canada International Development Agency
x. German Technical Corps
xi. International Labour Office xii. UN Agencies
xiii. British Department for International Development
xiv. Japan International Cooperation Agency
xv. Untied State Agency for International Development

In terms of interventions, donor agencies give out grants for attainment of specific objectives based on their mandates, visions, missions. These cut across different sectoral areas of interventions. But by a way of typology this could be classified into two-development and humanitarian interventions. Humanitarian intervention occurs when large number of people are displaced or discomforted due to violent conflict, natural or man-made disaster, persecution as maybe declared by international NGO working group or association. On the other hand, development interventions are often triggered by identified needs, based on survey or studies conducted in a context. It could be carried in peace time and in any part of the world, where eminent needs are found.

Nevertheless, both intervention areas are generally aimed at improving the well-being of people in need. However, there are several factors that distinguish the two major intervention areas. This could be found in terms of sustainability, duration, nature of intervention, informed yardsticks for intervention and so on. Humanitarian intervention may focus on health, shelter, livelihood, water and sanitation, child protection, education, nutrition, while development could include advocacy in different thematic areas, sensitization, and other areas found in the humanitarian sector. The major similarity among the two is the fact that the resources required to implement them all came from donor agencies, capacity building is another acute area of interest manifest in all the interventions, both interventions are largely implemented by NGOs and Inter-governmental organizations. The difference between the two could find in the digram below.



Source: Attah 2022

The primary aim of all the interventions is to fulfil organizational mandates. Thus, the discrepancies on intervention types are mainly concerned to professional discourse, as all the interventions mainstream into developmental ideals whether tangible or abstractive. As noted by Ulleberg (2009), as development actors, NGOs have become the main service providers in countries where there is inadequacies or the government is unable to fulfil its constituted roles. In many sectors, several NGOs have moved beyond 'gap-filling' initiatives into capacity building activities.

Concept of Capacity-Building

The idea of capacity-building is one that has remained highly debated among scholars and practitioners. This is because of the activities that surrounds the concept, in terms of training, mentor-ship, apprenticeship etc. Thus, the concept is often confused among players in the donor sector. This conceptual schism was captured in Ulleberg (2009) submission that;

> it is also useful to consider some of these international actors' perceptions of NGOs relating to capacity development, especially considering that many NGOs do not give a clear definition of the term capacity development. Eade's (2007: 631) critique of capacity building as a sort of aid jargon ("Often it is no more than a serious sounding alternative to 'training") might be considered exaggerated by some, but it makes an important point: unless the term is defined clearly and its parameters clearly drawn, determining what constitutes capacity development becomes a challenging exercise (Ulleberg 2009:19).

This however, does not in any way imply that the concept of capacity building is devoid of any valid meaning. In order to make sense out of the phrase capacity building, the root words- "capacity" and "building" must be considered separately. Capacity entails ability, requisite knowledge, skills, aptitude, competence and other learning experience acquired over a period time. Building on the other hand, has to do with erection of structures or ideas, or adding value to what is in existence in a more constructive manner. Putting these together capacity-building could be conceived as a transformation or transmission of body of knowledge from an individual or group of individuals to other individuals or groups of individuals, through resources mobilization and monitoring. By this definition capacity-building is mainly concern with transfer of resourceful knowledge or experiences from those who know to those who does not really know.

Although training is component of capacity building, but it goes beyond that, as it is robust in content as well as involving follow-up of other events in support of its enhancement. As such, the concept of capacity building as promotes by donor agencies, encompasses different elements of learning experiences in both abstractive and practical senses, with necessary complimentary incentives attached to it. This entrenches the longevity of capacity-building, when compared to some of its aggregates like training.

Extinctive factors that portray the extensiveness of capacity building could be describes as "elements of capacity building". Based on UN conception, there are several forms-elements in which capacity-building is manifested in the overall body of knowledge and experiences. In this vein, elements of capacity building include;

i. Ability
ii. Skills
iii. Processes
iv. Instinct
v. Resources

In some instances, these elements are completely manifested during capacity-building efforts, while in some other occasion, handful of these elements might be manifested. That is where there is some level of confusion on what capacity building is or is not. But professionally, in planning capacity building activities, experienced practitioners design the program to embrace every element, at different phase of the activities, in order to achieve the desired objectives. When all these elements are married together in a long tiered events, the participants are entrenched to long lasting learning.

In line with these elements, the United Nation Organizations have been a powerful player in international capacity building. Hence, capacity building is conceptualised by the UN as a process of developing, strengthening the skills, instinct, ability, processes, resources that organizations and communities need to survival and thrive in a fast-changing world. Sustenance is therefore essential for the attainment of the idea of capacity-building.

Layers of Capacity-building

From the definition of capacity-building we have noted above, there are three major layers/levels of capacity-building which include;

i. Individual level
ii. Organizational level
iii. Community level

Individuals are the major thrust of capacity-building as individuals make up the community and the organization. Although some capacity building could be projected at individual level, such could also be organized at community or organizational levels. The fact is that the way individuals conceive or comprehend knowledge differs, so also their reaction to learned experiences. The community level is one of the targeted layers for capacity building. Most donor funded capacity building project target community members for achievement of their objectives. The organization's level is quite essential to attainment of capacity-building as most of these exercises are done through organizations-Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) or Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) (Attah 2022).

Why do Donor agencies facilitate capacity-building?

Capacity-building is organized so that community;

i. can survive, earn a living out of the challenges that are faced;
ii. improve and advance from a rudimentary level to superior height;
iii. change some old system or moribund ways or attitude to more universally acceptable system or custom;
iv. to discourage mass migrations.

The Roles of Government in Capacity Building

Government provides the roadmap to capacity-building. Capacity building can not exist in contrast to national developmental plan set aside by government. Thus, capacity-building is often aligned to national government policy, plan or goals in different areas of concerns. Government decides on the direction the state wants to go and every other actor to key into that plan.

Government provides an enabling environment to capacity-building. No capacity building can take place without decorum, there must be peace. It is the responsibility of government to ensure that there is conducive atmosphere for organizations to operate in terms of law enforcement to protect lives and properties of donor agencies are preserved, and other reasonable state policy or favorable laws. Government ensures continuity of capacity-building. Government is a continuum; therefore, government should not halt capacity-building even if there is a change in government. Government support in identifying appropriate population or localities that require capacity-building. Although most organizations act independence of government, however, they still rely on government data or survey in identifying the population or areas that need specific capacity-building. Despite this, organization guide against using NGO interventions for politics. It is the responsibility of government to ensure even distribution of capacity-

building. Capacity-building should not be concentrated in a particular area due to government policies or intervention in the programmes of foreign donor agencies.

Government provides require local expertise for capacity-building. Since government has some specialists in different areas who understand the context more than the foreign organization, their experiences could be utilized in capacity-building. Government can direct foreign agencies to sources of information or individuals who can provide them with desired local knowledge.Government ensures that gaps are covered. Language, religious, cultural barriers, government can support foreign agencies with guides to cover gaps in capacity building (Attah 2022).

Roles of Donor Agencies and other NGOs in Capacity-building

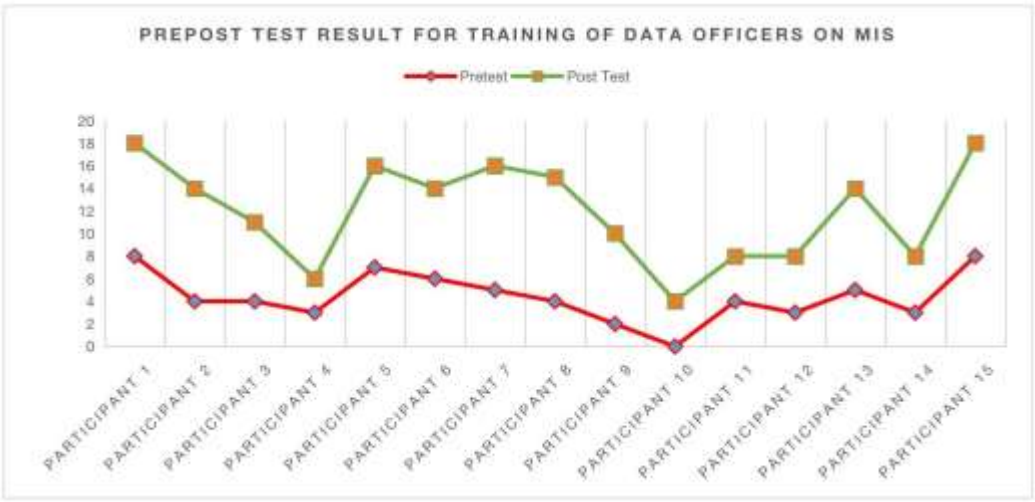
i. Identification of humanitarian or developmental problem(s): this is the first role of the donor agencies or NGOs through declaration, rapid need assessment, survey, studies.
ii. Provision of grants in aid: after the identified the donor agencies provides grants in aid to tackle the identified problems.
iii. Identification of appropriate organizations to execute the capacity-building, for disbursement of grants. Grants are not disbursed to unqualified organizations there are processes of getting the right organization to conduct these activities.
iv. Outlining how the objectives will be achieved. This is usually done between the donor and the organizations that will receive the grants. This is to ensure that every concern parties are in the same page to achieve the objectives.
v. Identification of appropriate local partners or stakeholders for the achievement of the set objectives. This could be local organization, community leaders etc.
vi. Identification of appropriate targeted population and locations: this done at the need assessment level to ensure that the most vulnerable receive the capacity building
vii. Organization of workshop or seminar; this is organized to fit into the set objectives. This is the actual activities of achieve capacity-building as outlined.
viii. Quality assurance: it is the role of the foreign donor or NGO to ensure that the aims of the capacity building are achieved in terms of quantity and quality of the capacity-building (Attah 2022).

Major Guidelines to Capacity-Building

i. Understanding the context- the environment or location.
ii. Provide necessary support to what is in existence for delivery. Give only required expertise.
iii. Allow local ownership of the process. Do no hijack the entire process allow the community leaders to take the lead. So, provide only technical support (Attah 2022).

Case Study Impact of Capacity- Building in Nigeria

Through a donor supported grant, an NGO conducted capacity building in Management Information System (MIS). In order to show the impact of the training, pre-test was administered to all the 15 participants to observe their previous knowledge of MIS before the training. Then after the training the same test was administered to them, to know the level impact the training made on them. Below is the result of the test.



Source: NGO Cluster Group North-east Nigeria (2022)

In all 15 participants which represents 70% of the total data, took both tests. Result of participants that took both test shows that 85.7% demonstrated increase in knowledge gained. 14.3% showed no change in knowledge gained as depicted in their test score. Overall, level of knowledge increased from 39.3% to 67.9% across all the participants. This shows that the training had significant impact on the participants.

Challenges to Capacity-Building in Nigeria

Beclouded objectives or goals from the donor agencies: sometimes the objectives of donor agencies might have some underlining interests, which often cast some disdain or doubt to foreign donor supported capacity-building, which can also lead to resistance for foreign donor capacity-building by the federal or state governments of Nigeria in some instances. This idea have illustrated in the works of several scholars like Hancock 1989, Fagan 2006 and Drayton 2013, where donor agencies were seen as covert intelligent agencies, imperial fosters, manipulative agencies for their government's foreign policies. In Nigeria, for instance, an international NGO known as ACTED in January, 2023 was sacked by the Federal Government for reasons relating to unsatisfactory or suspicious roles in humanitarian interventions.

Misconception of ideas of capacity-building: in most instances local organizations and community often misconceived the idea of capacity-building. Some see capacity-building grants as means of making money both by the local organization and community who look forward to material rewards than the major objectives. ***Misappropriation of resources***: some of the grants are often misappropriated or use for different purposes. It is worth mentioning that most funds for capacity building are misappropriated by some of the underlying actors like local organizations or consultants. Donor funds in most cases are not free from corruptions in the wider society, this could come in different forms like falsehoods or bogus claims of activities. According to an informant interview in Sambo and Sule (2020: 202);

> Sometimes the donors offered the assistance through the government and the government officials are the ones in charge of the distribution of the intervention materials to the needy. In the process, the Nigerian officials connived with some unpatriotic inhabitants of the crisis-torn areas in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe and divert the goods for sale in the market and stash the money in their pockets.

Government undue interference: due to personal interest, individuals could influence government policies that could impact on capacity-building. Forcefully directing on the population and locations for capacity-building. Most capacity building facilitators narrate how they are often compelled by government official to provide such services or intervention to the communities or individuals of their choice.

Lack of sustainability: in most instances the capacity-building is not continued in the community after it was established. Individuals that received capacity-building often find

it difficult to transcend the knowledge or experience they have acquired to other levels of the society.

Poor quality assurance and evaluation: most times the quality of input of capacity-building is not properly measured, which often defeat the aim or goals of the capacity-building.

Conclusion

Capacity building is one of the potent ways of knowledge transfer. However, in crisis situations or inadequacies people tend to misconstrue the whole ideas of capacity building, thereby reducing the chances of achieving desired impacts. This most often have contributed to the misgivings on donor agencies and developmental actors, as their works are not sincerely felt in the communities. Irrespective of this shortcomings, it is imperative to note that with several checks and balances, some of these anomalies have been address or eradicated.

It is important also for national organizations who are often the last layers of donor funds to enhance their activities. The workability of the grants through capacity building is solely resting on these organizations that acquire these requisite capacities and intermingle with the communities for transmissions. Hence, their efforts should remain on the patriotic side as the impact of such capacity building will still tell on the communities, towns or states which they are part of. In other words, misappropriation of grant funds or falsification of activities should be discouraged among national organizations, that support the implementation of donor grants.

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