Review

Promoting credible elections in developing countries: International development partners and civil society organizations in Nigeria

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International development agencies are important actors for democracy promotion, especially in developing countries. In this regard, there has been an upsurge of these agencies in Nigeria's democratization process. This paper examines Democratic Governance for Development (DGD) as one of the initiatives of international development agencies toward promoting democracy in Nigeria. Specifically, the initiative has been providing assistance to state and non-state actors such as electoral commission, political parties and civil society groups towards promoting credible election in Nigeria. With the aid of qualitative data, the paper revealed that DGD project has provided technical and financial support to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to monitor and observe elections, create public awareness and strengthen other forms of civic engagement in order to influence the conduct of credible election in the country. However, the paper shows that lack of proper coordination of support, inadequate data base of the CSOs; absence of reliable instruments for assessment of support, lack of internal democracy in the conduct of the CSOs as well as mismanagement of resources all combined and affect democracy support towards credible elections in Nigeria. Thus, the paper concludes that international assistance for credible election could only be meaningful and effective by eliminating the culture of impunity, providing instrument of evaluation of support as well as continuing capacity building of the CSOs in Nigeria.

Key words: Nigeria, international development agencies, democracy promotion, election, CSOs.

INTRODUCTION

In the recent past, global effort towards democracy promotion has substantially increased especially, following the demise of communism in Eastern Europe and the fall of Berlin wall in 1989. This development was influenced by several factors such as the emergent unipolar world, impact of globalisation, development challenges affecting developing countries as well as the blowing wind of democratization across the globe. It is important to note that transition to democracy particularly in developing countries has not been without

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problems as it is often characterized with conflicts leading to decay of democratization process. Perhaps, this explains why Santiso (2001) argued that democratic transitions have not automatically led to the consolidation of the institutions and behaviours associated with democratic politics and, in some countries such as Pakistan, fragile democracy collapsed, reversing initial progress.

As part of effort to address the lingering problems of development and democratization, international development agencies initiate development assistance towards improving democratic governance. The essence for this assistance is to support new democracies to complete their unfinished transitions and progressively moved towards democratic consolidation. Some of the areas that benefitted from this development assistance include the public sector, election management and process, as well as manpower development. In addition, some of the major institutions that were targeted are the state and non-state actors including the civil service, election management bodies (INEC and ISEC), and civil society organizations (CSOs). Indeed, the logic for providing development support to both the state and non-state actors lies in the fact that both performances complement each other in democratization process.

Against this background, this paper examines DGD support to CSOs towards credible election in Nigeria. Exploring the DGD support to some CSOs from 2010, the paper contributes to the growing body of literature on how international development agencies shape and influence the conduct of credible elections in Nigeria. Following this introduction is a review of relevant literature on international development agencies and democracy promotion with a view to appreciate similar effort elsewhere and as well situate the Nigerian case within the broader literature. The third section assess DGD project towards credible elections using some selected CSOs in Nigeria and the last section concludes the paper with some useful policy recommendations.

International development partners and democracy promotion in developing countries

Democracy promotion and credible elections are often linked together such that it is difficult to separate the two. While democracy promotion support increases the chances of conducting credible elections, free and fair election on the other hand, is central to democratic consolidation. In this regard, election and democracy are inextricably linked together since elections lead to the emergence of credible leadership in a democratic context. It needs to be emphasized that the credibility of a country's leadership is always linked to the ability of electoral management bodies such as INEC to conduct free, fair and credible elections. Due to its influence on credible election across the globe, democracy promotion

is increasingly becoming an important foreign policy instruments employed by development agencies to influence their relations with the developing countries. Democracy promotion is somehow complex and confusing but involves establishment and/or restoration of democratic government through military and economic sanctions or providing financial and technical support to countries involve in democratization process. Arguably, promoting democracy implies preparing the ground for establishing a democratic government or rather, strengthening the existing democratic institutions leading to consolidation of democratic rule. This definition presupposes that there are different ways of promoting democracy depending on the situation or circumstances surrounding relations among countries of the world.

The first way of promoting democracy involves enforcement of military and/ or economic sanctions by international communities on countries that fail to democratize. The essence of enforcing sanction or exploiting military option is to compel undemocratic regimes to open up their political space for democracy to flourish and prosper. Military and or economic sanction as strategies for promoting democracy are usually enforced former communist countries, authoritarian regimes or countries that experience civil conflicts such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Liberia. These countries have suffered serious political decay due to authoritarian rule of some of political leadership as well as excessive civil conflicts massaged with primordial manifestations.

The second type of democracy promotion involves the provision of financial and technical assistance to newly establish democracies. This type of support is usually provided to transitional countries or those that emerged out of civil wars and have accepted and imbibed democratic culture as evident in Rwanda and Mozambique towards the end of the 1990s. However, it is significant to state that financial and technical assistance may sometimes be accompanied with conditionalities such as economic and political liberalization and general governance reforms. In recent times, this approach is widely employed by donor countries and agencies to mobilize fund and technical support to assist the building and consolidation of democratic governance across Africa. Financial support and technical assistance are largely used in organizing credible election and improving the capacity of state and non-state actors towards raising the quality of democratization process.

It is significant to note that both forms of democracy promotion have problems at least in practice. Financial and technical assistance often accompanied with conditions has negative effects on domestic economic growth, generation of employment and citizens' access to basic social services. While the implication of financial and technical support is economic, military and/or economic sanctions raise legal, economic and political questions in relation to the legality of military and/ or

economic on the sovereignty and independence of the recipient countries. Due to its legal, political and economic implications, military and economic sanctions usually experienced stiff opposition from external and domestic environment as evident in Iraq and Afghanistan. Evidence revealed that the devastating consequences of military operations in these countries include bombardment and killings of innocent souls in the name of democracy promotion. Furthermore, in countries where military and/or economic option is resorted to, people are polarized along ethnic and tribal lines and are continuously grappling with how to build and sustain democracy and by extension national unity.

In spite of the problems associated with the two forms of democracy promotion, in recent times, financial and technical support became the most popular and generally acceptable form of democracy promotion. Studies revealed that more than 90 % of democracy promotion efforts are provided through financial and technical support to improve the quality of electoral process in countries such as Mexico, Nicaragua and in some African countries (Pastor, 1995; Putnam, 1993, Chand, 1997). The popularity of this form of democracy promotion may not be unconnected with the fact that it is a more moderate and acceptable approach than the military option. More importantly, it is reciprocal as it has socio-economic and political benefits to both the donors and recipient countries. On one hand, it guards against democratic reversal and guarantee sustainable development in developing countries. On the other hand, it serves as a strategy for promoting trade, security cooperation and generates international political support for the donor countries. According to Rakner et al. (2008) democracy (promotion) assistance responds to a variety of foreign governments' and donors' motivations and interest, including foreign policy, security, humanitarian and development goals. Donors supported democracy efforts with the belief that democracy, as a system of governance, provides more benefits than authoritarianism, both internally and internationally. Due to its enormous benefits, financial and technical democratic assistance became part of development assistance strategy aimed at improving not only the capacity of democratic institutions but also alleviating poverty and other development challenges in developing democracies.

Echoing the same argument, Santiso (2001) opined that democracy assistance could be described as an aid provided to open up non-democratic regimes or to further a regime change in a country that has experience a democratic opening. He further asserts that democracy assistance could be in form of direct or indirect support or a pressure to encourage policy reform. While direct support is provided to improve the quality of electoral process, create voter awareness, political parties' and parliamentary development, indirect support relates to providing assistance to encourage policy reform and economic development through liberalization and

privatization of economic activities. Evidently, economic growth has an effect on voters' behaviour whereas policy reform is seen as part of the whole process encouraging transparency and accountability as the twin principles of good governance. However, one important thing to note is that democracy aids are often provided based on the focus or targets of the provider. For instance, while some international development agencies focus their attention on the state actors, several others provide assistance to large number of national and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Rakner et al. (2007) maintained that from 2003-2004 about U.S $ 2 b was expended on democracy promotion related projects across the globe. Out of this amount, more than U.S $800 m was provided by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and significant portion of this amount went to Africa. According to Adetula et al. (2010), by 2009, USAID has provides $17.552m for various forms of democracy aid in Nigeria. Similarly, €7m was provided by European Union Parliament to support human rights and democracy efforts in Nigeria. The primary motive for some of this form of assistance is to empower the CSOs/NGOs in their quest to promote human rights and democracy.

Even though it was argued that international democracy aid is conditional, studies have revealed that several factors influenced its adoption by international development partners in developing countries (Chand, 1979; Adetula, et al., 2010; Santiso, 2001). For instance, some international agencies have strong conviction that there is a correlation between development potentials and challenges as well as the quality of democratic governance in developing countries. In this regard, providing democracy assistance will not only raise the legitimacy of a country's elected leadership, but also reduces poverty and conflicts which are the vain of development affecting most developing countries. Similarly, in his study on international co-operation for democracy and good governance, Santiso (2001) maintained that democracy's credibility resides in its capacity to alleviate poverty and promote development. Put simply, a democratic government with credible political leadership formulates policies and programmes to address the problems of poverty and raise the quality of governance.

In addition, Rukambe (n.d) also argued that building democracy is an important vehicle for ending conflicts and bringing development in developing country. He maintained that it is because of the capacity of democracy assistance in dealing with conflicts and promoting human rights that U.N mainstream democracy promotion in its development work. Sharing the same view point, Newman and Rich (2004) alluded that democracy is a critical condition for ending conflicts and the problems of underdevelopment in developing countries and thus, the quality of development anywhere in the world often depends on the quality of their

democratic governance. Little wonder therefore that one of the objectives of DGD project emphasized development as part of effort in promoting democracy. In this regard, democracy aid includes also governance assistance to state and non-state sectors to facilitate development and deepen democracy. Indeed, democracy aid is a vital component of general process of development, especially in developing countries. Perhaps, this explains why the international development partners committed 5 to 10% of their total official development assistance towards promoting democracy across the developing countries (Rakner et al., 2007).

Against the above background, thousands of international development partners are currently involved in bilateral and multilateral collaboration in Nigeria (Okwechime, 2007; COMSATS, 2007). Countries such as U.S.A, U.K, and Germany formed donor agencies to support the establishment of democratic rule in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. Some of these donor agencies include Department for International Development (Dfid), The World Bank (WB), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United State Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). Others are the European Union (EU), Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It is important to note that democratic support is in most cases directed towards electoral reforms, voter awareness, women and youth empowerment as well as capacity building of political and civil institutions.

Specifically, electoral reforms involve the transformation of the procedure involved in the electoral process. It includes changing the pattern of voter registration and sensitization, introduction of technology in the verification of voters, election monitoring and observation, voters' turnout as well as administration of election management body (INEC). Essentially, electoral reform is meant to add value to electoral process, which by extension generates credibility to the process and legitimacy of the political leadership.

The idea of reforming the electoral process stemmed out of the fact that election in Africa is increasingly becoming an obstacle to democratization. Evidence revealed that flawed elections are increasingly been conducted and in some cases accepted by both national and international communities. These types of elections in countries such as Kenya, Nigeria and former Sudan have resulted in civil conflicts that eroded the legitimacy of political leadership and polarized citizens along regional and ethnic lines. While some segment of Kenyans citizens questions the credibility of their political leadership due to allegations related to ethnic conflicts of the 2007 elections, ethnic cleansing has led to the breaking away of Sudan into Sudan and South Sudan. In

the same vain, Nigeria has over the years suffered serious problems of insecurity arising from excessive politicization of religion and ethnicity in the politics of the country. All these point to the fact that flawed elections if not handle carefully and with a sense of inclusiveness may breed instability and thus affect the quality of democratic governance.

Aside supporting credible elections, international agencies also provide support for the reform of the public sector. This is due to the fact that there is a link between credible lection and the public sector in a variety of ways. Generally, it is argued that the public sector provides a plat form for the continuity of government and thus, helps in consolidating democracy. Perhaps, this explains why public sector reform is presently a firm agenda in Africa and hardly a single nation is left out. Indeed, it represents traditions or frameworks within which desired changes have been conceptualized on the continent. Public sector reform is, in a variety of ways, a response to domestic development challenges and international pressure on African countries. While internally, the concern for the reform relates to how to address the myriads of development challenges of the continent. On the other hand, the international dimension for the reform was influenced by the rapid pace of globalization, the desire to increase the capacity of the public sector to deal with challenges and opportunities that are associated with democratic governance focusing essentially on public goods such as the environment and human rights, transparency and accountability among others (Cheema, 2007).

In addition, the desire for public sector reform results from administrative abuses and culture of impunity that characterized the public sector in developing countries. Arguably, reforming the public sector implies reducing the prevalence of corruption, institutionalization of due process and raising the quality of service delivery. This suggests that there is a link between public sector reform and the flourishing of democratic rule. Indeed, it has been established that the inability of the public sector to carry out its responsibilities within the provisions of the law reverse the development potentials available in a democratic setting. In view of the above, international development agencies linked democracy support to the reform of the public sector with emphasis on institutionalization of good governance principles in state administration.

Another important sector that benefitted from democracy assistance is the civil society sector as an important actor in democratization. Since the beginning of third wave democratization, the CSOs have been widely acknowledged as an integral part of democratization process. The civil society organizations are considered not just a major analytical paradigm, but a force and factor in the politics of developing countries. Therefore, the rising influence of the CSOs in African governance and development discourse is regarded as a significant

milestone in the structuring of the political life of Africa (Uadiale, 2011). Their overbearing influence in building democracy has been also widely acknowledged. Brendler-Lindqvist (2007) argues that civil society performs both countervailing and educative functions in a democratic setting. They balance power relation between the state and the market (the countervailing function) as well as foster democratic culture among citizens (the educational function). In this regard, the CSOs are important tools in building democracy as such granting them aid encourage their active participation in democratization process. Perhaps, this explains why the Swedish development agency (SIDA) maintained that the purpose of supporting civil society is to strengthen them as "a democratic actor" and as "an arena for civic engagement and organization (SIDA, 2004).

Historical evidence shows that the CSOs have actively participated in the struggle against military rule and consolidate such effort by taken active part in the establishment of democratic governance in Africa. According to Fadakinte (2013), the period of military rule was the most remarkable period for the civil society because it was the period that witnessed the emergence of civil society organizations as the main opposition to military (miss) rule. Indeed, it was civil society groups that struggled against anti-democratic policies and blatant abuse of power by the military regimes in Nigeria. More so, the CSOs are also at the forefront for advocating a just democratic order through mass mobilization, awareness for reforms and struggles against anti-democratic policies and programmes. For example the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), Campaign for Democracy (CD), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) and Constitution Rights Project (CRP) have participated in the struggles against military rule in Nigeria (Salihu, 1999). These groups in collaboration with Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) and National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) resist the cancellation of June 12 general elections and the restoration of democratic rule in Nigeria. Following the demise of the military rule in different parts of Africa in the 1990s, the CSOs renewed their commitment to the flourishing of democratic rule on the continent. Some of these groups continued to serve as plat forms for sustaining democracy by promoting the ideals of human rights, rule of law and credible elections in Kenya, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana and Nigeria among others.

The foregoing clearly indicated that providing support to CSOs is not only significant but a condition for deepening democracy in Nigeria. This is because of their continued struggle for constructive civic engagement, prevention of authoritarian regimes and quest for a responsible government. In view of the above, the international development agencies have been providing technical and financial assistance to improve their capacity to continue

to support democratic rule in Nigeria and in other developing countries. The next section of this paper examines DGD support to civil society organisations towards credible election in Nigeria.

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT (DGD) PROJECT AND CREDIBLE ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is one of the most influential countries in Africa due to its strategic importance to African development. In terms of size, the country is the largest on the continent with a population of about 170 million people (NPC, 2006; NBS, 2013). Similarly, available records have shown that the per capita income of Nigeria stood at $1280 and human development index was 0.47 (UNDP Report, 2012). Following decades of military rule, the country returned to democratic rule in May 1999 after a successful transition programme initiated by General Abdussalami Abubakar who took over as the Nigeria's military head of state after the death of General Sani Abacha. This transition ushered in the fourth republic and witnessed the influx of international agencies in the country's democratisation process. Election as one of the major pillars of democratic governance received considerable attention from international agencies. Indeed, it is an undeniable fact that election is one of the most significant aspects of democratic governance. Furthermore, modern representative democracies evolved within the context of competitive elections. Periodic elections at regular intervals, therefore, represent one of the major defining elements of democracy (Baba, 2014). As an ingredient of representative government, credible elections are the best means of deepening democracy and promoting good governance (Jega, 2014). However, historical evidence revealed that elections in Nigeria are far from been credible because of series of malpractices that characterised its conduct. Reports from election observers and monitors revealed that the Nigerian 2007 and 2011 general elections are among the worst elections conducted in the country (TMG, 2012, PLAC, 2013). These elections were characterised by sharp election rigging, multiple and underage voting, ballot box stuffing and snatching and widespread electoral violence in Lagos, Kaduna, Rivers and Sokoto states (PLAC Report, 2013; INEC Study Report, 2012).

Given the significance of credible election in promoting good democratic governance, international development agencies committed themselves to providing financial and technical assistance towards improving electoral process with a view to raising the quality of democratic governance in Nigeria. One of the major initiatives formed by development agencies is the Democratic Governance for Development Project (DGD). The project was introduced to provide technical and financial assistance

Table 1. Donors' contribution to DGD II project from 2012-2015.

Year of intervention	Donor partner	Amount contributed
2012-2013	All Donors	$12.5m
2012-2015	EU	$25m
2012-2015	DFID	$10.9m
2012-2015	CIDA	$3m
2012-2015	UNDP	$12.6m
2012-2015	KOICA	$230,000
TOTAL		$64,230,000

Source: UNDP, 2013

to political institutions and civil society groups towards the promotion of credible election in Nigeria. The key partners of DGD project include the European Union (E.U), Department for International Development (DfID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the UNDP (UNDP, 2014). Thus, the project is a joint donor-funded project implemented by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on behalf of other contributing donors.

The first phase of the project was implemented from 2010-2011 with specific objectives of empowering the capacity of political and civil institutions towards successful general elections in 2011. Following the successful implementation of the first phase, the second phase came into effect and was tagged DGDII. The overall objectives of the DGDII include strengthening the democratic character of Nigerian political processes; and promoting outcomes that consolidate and advance democratic governance and accountability (DGDII Document, 2012).

DGD project has four major components, which collectively seek to promote credible, transparent and sustainable electoral process, improve democratic functioning of political parties, and increase the participation of marginalized groups in governance as well as strengthening the capacity of the civil society and media as the channels of civic engagement. It is evident that these components are interrelated and to some extent complimentary in democratization process. For example, while the conduct of credible election provides legitimacy to elected representatives, inclusiveness improves the quality of democratic institutions; promote participation of the opposition, minorities and under-represented population in the democratization process. However, raising the quality of democratic governance through citizens' participation in the electoral process could not be guaranteed without vibrant political parties and civil society. These institutions are central as they prepare candidates for political contestation; inspect the conduct of political leadership as well as promote civic engagement among citizens.

Several factors justified the development of DGD

project in Nigeria. Firstly, the project was influenced by lack of clear and systematic arrangement for channelling and regulating donor support in the country. Similarly, the dismal performance of government in managing democracy assistance also contributed to the emergence of DGD project. Perhaps, poor management performance of democracy aids as well as the desire to provide independent support to stakeholders influences the inclusion of non-state actors as recipient of aids as well as the establishment of donor basket fund where support from DGD partners could be deposited, managed and evaluated. However, including non-state actors does not suggest that the state is completely ignored in democracy aids. In fact, one of the mandates of the DGD project was to provide democracy assistance to the state institutions such as the INEC, the national assembly and research institutes to meaningfully contribute towards improving democratic governance. In view of the foregoing, the donor members provided financial contribution for the implementation of DGD II project effective from 2012. Table 1 shows the donors' contribution in Nigeria:

The table revealed that over US $64m was contributed by the members of the project with the highest contribution of $25m coming from the European Union (E.U) whereas and KOICA contributed $230,000. Although there were no official figures of how the assistance has been distributed, significant proportion was earmarked for improving the capacity of CSOs involved in election and other related areas in Nigeria. Evidence from UNDP database (n.d) shows that over 250 CSOs benefitted from the project in seven thematic areas. These areas include election, media, conflict management, political parties, gender empowerment, human rights, rule of law and access to justice, youth empowerment and any other democratic governance areas not covered in the list. Table 2 shows the benefiting CSOs and their areas of interest in Nigeria:

The foregoing table revealed that ten selected civil society organizations benefited from DGD II project across the country. It is however important to note that most of the selected CSOs work in voter education and empowerment areas and thus focus on women and youth empowerment. The premium given to women and youth

Table 2. CSOs and their areas of coverage under DGDII Project from 2012-2015.

S/No	Name of CSO	Coverage	Area(s) of Engagement
1.	Alliance for Credible Elections	National	voter education and election monitoring
2.	Legal Awareness for Nigerian Women	North-West	Mobilization and capacity building for women politician
3.	Gender and Development Action	South-West & South- South	mobilization and capacity building for female politician
4.	Alliance for Africa	South-East	voter education on National Gender Policy
5.	Centre for Human Development	National	voter education and gender sensitization
6.	Centre for Women Studies & Intervention	North-Central	voter education and training on National Gender Policy
7.	Poverty in Africa Alternative	South-South	voter education on the review of electoral laws
8.	Aminu Kano Centre for Democratic Research and Training	North-West	voter education, research and training
9.	Association of Youth against Drug Abuse	North-West	sensitization and voter awareness
10.	Electoral Reform Network	National	sensitization and election observation

Source: accessed from www.ng.undp.org/dgd/cso-profile.shtml.

groups may not be unconnected with the fact that they are the largest sub-groups in the country and yet, the most vulnerable with majority of them living below the poverty line. It could also be observed from the table that CSOs are more engaged in pre-election activities than post-election, but this however, does not suggest that they are not engage in programmes during election. Okwechime (2007) revealed that CSOs comprising over 170 groups deployed over ten thousand observers to monitor the conduct of elections in the 2003 general election. Some of these CSOs prepared and published reports concerning the electoral process using international minimum standard in evaluating credibility of elections. For example, Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) is the one the CSOs supported by DGDII and Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) that monitor and submit report on 2011 election and post-election violence in Nigeria. The report examined the 2011 general elections, identify the underlying causes and intensity of post-election violence in some states and provide recommendations on measures required to address post-election violence in Nigeria (PLAC, 2012). It is significant to note that election monitoring and observation is increasingly becoming an important yardstick for measuring the quality of democratic elections across the globe.

In spite of all the efforts towards promoting credible election in Nigeria, a number of challenges affected DGD project which by implication affected their capacity to influence electoral process in Nigeria. One of these challenges was inadequate coordination of their financial assistance with that of other international donors. It is often argued that proper coordination ensures harmoni-sation and effectiveness of democracy (electoral) aids and serves as a strategy for streamlining of support. It

reduces leakages and gaps as well as provide forum for information sharing between and among the stakeholders. Similarly, effective coordination allows donors to track progress as well as reduce the likelihood of duplication of funding to CSOs. In addition, effective coordination also guarantees national coverage of donor support and ensures that no thematic area of democratic development is left out.

However, some donor organisations are reluctant to form alliance for proper coordination with others due partly to the foreign policy objectives of their home countries coupled with specific conditions of the receiving countries. In some cases, donors tied their support with foreign policy objectives of their countries and where such objectives are at variant with other donors, they find it difficult to have a plat form of coordination. For example, Adetula et al. (2010) argued that USAID and JICA do not participate in DGD project because their regulations do not allow them to participate in a binding and obligatory coordination with other donors. The policies and behaviour of donors also raise questions with regards to ownership and management of financial assistance. This is because the questions of when and how support should be channelled are usually determined from outside and thus it is always difficult to coordinate effectively. Another hindrance to coordination results from the fact that democracy aid is not only provided to assist recipient countries but also promote the interest of the donors. This explains why some donors attached economic and political conditionalities as requirements for assistance which sometimes contradicts the philosophy and objectives of others.

On the part of the recipient organization, similar coordination with the media is also expected in order to get citizens inform about their activities in relation to

credible election. The media is an important ingredient for democratic governance as it serves as the source of information regarding the electoral process and the activities of the CSOs. Vibrant media and their capacity to disseminate information on the general conduct of election as well as democratic processes improve citizens' consciousness and enhance government credibility. Consequently, working with and through the media agencies makes CSOs activities and utilization of international support more transparent and credible. However, evidence revealed that there is lack of synergy between, especially the local media in Nigeria which is largely controlled by the state and the CSOs in dissemination of information on utilization of international support. More so, due to operational, regulatory and financial constraints, close coordination with the local media becomes an illusion and thus have negative effect on effective utilization of support and the quality of elections conducted in the country.

Similarly, empirical evidence shows that assistance towards credible elections to CSOs is usually inadequate and in some cases provided towards the end of election cycle without sustainability. This has devastating consequences as people in the rural areas may be neglected or ignored. Most benefitting CSOs are urban biased and thus restrict their activities to state capital and few local government areas. In this regard, DGD support hardly trickles down to rural areas or community-based associations largely found at the rural level. It was observed that DGD support was provided to CSOs concentrated in the Nigeria's capital of Abuja, Lagos and few state capital. Impliedly, majority of these CSOs except religious associations such as Federation of Muslim Women Association (FOMWAN) and Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) are located in urban areas.

Although some CSOs claimed to have national or regional coverage, the reality is that they are hardly visible in rural areas or at the grassroots. For example, the activities of Alliance for Africa (AFA), Gender and Development Action (GADA) and Poverty in Africa Alternative (PAA) are located in Lagos, Port Harcourt and Enugu respectively. However, the inability of the CSOs to extend their activities to grass root areas could also be linked to the remoteness of some villages coupled with security challenges usually associated with the conduct of elections in Nigeria. Perhaps, the urban biased nature of benefitting CSOs has negative impact on the rural people as many of them required civic education in order to understand their role in the electoral process. Numerous community-based associations such as Al-umma social club, Nagarta Youth Associations in Sokoto and host of others across the country could not access international democracy assistance due to their location in rural areas. This implies that people in rural areas may not likely feel the impact of DGD support and thus affect the quality of elections in rural areas.

Another challenge affecting the CSOs is their neo-patrimonial character and their manipulation by the politicians for political gains. According to Santiso (2001), CSOs/NGOs are highly politicised in Africa and have been transformed as extension of political parties. Some CSOs in spite of international support connived with political elites and civil servants to falsify electoral reports and in return got pay-back for their actions. It was observed that domestic CSOs and journalist engaged in monitoring 2011 elections in different parts of Nigeria were alleged to have received money gifts from party and government officials in exchange for favourable election report even in areas not visited. Part of the explanation for this undemocratic attitude by some CSOs is that they are hardly provided with financial support from their organizations and thus, left with no option other than to accept money gifts from politicians. Apparently, this is not only applicable to CSOs but to other stakeholders such as the journalists, electoral officials and the security agents. There were alleged reported cases of extortion involving election officials and politicians to influence their electoral victory. While exposing some of these undemocratic attitudes exhibited during elections, we should not ignore the fact that where election officials are financially handicapped, the culture of impunity may be on the rise and thus will affect the overall quality of the electoral process. The irony of the culture of impunity is that it could not be easily dictated because it is often organized with high level of secrecy and confidentiality. This clearly indicated that reducing or eliminating corrupt practices is one of the major areas that require the attention of international development agencies towards credible election in Nigeria.

In addition to their neo-patrimonial character and the culture of impunity that characterised them, the civil society organizations lack effective internal democracy required for accountable and transparent conduct. Internal democracy is an important pillar for ensuring transparent management of resources by the CSOs. Arguably, the basis for internal democracy is to guarantee good governance, permits interest aggregation and strengthens participatory democracy both at micro and macro level of democratic politics. But where CSOs are internally undemocratic, effective utilization of donor support and their participation in credible electoral process will remain an exercise in futility.

Another major hindrance affecting DGD project relates to inadequate data on the CSOs operating in Nigeria particularly at the grass root level. Apart from the CSOs registered from urban areas, data on social clubs and community based-organizations (CBOs) in rural areas is non-existent. The need to include community-based associations in DGD project is eminent in view of their over-bearing influence in promoting credible election at the grassroots. This is because they are established by the local people and are familiar with each other and their political terrain. In this regard, such associations require adequate support towards credible electoral process at

the rural level. As pointed out earlier, community associations are not in the data bank of the DGD project. In fact, available records from the UNDP country office in Nigeria revealed that the registered CSOs have their operational base at the state capital. In addition, registered CSO, which was put at about 255 is grossly inadequate to ensure credible election in Nigeria. More so, some of these CSOs are not in areas of democracy and elections, rather they are established to champion the objectives of their members who are in most cases professionals working in areas such as the environment, inter-faith and trade unionism. Although building democracy require experts with different background and thus could be linked to the primary mandate of these professional groups, these groups however, lack the competency and skills to influence the conduct of credible election in the country.

In addition to the above, the DGD programme was designed by foreign consultants who do not have adequate knowledge about Nigeria's political terrain, especially the grass root. The implication of engaging foreign consultant is that there are certain problems that affect the electoral process but are neglected in programme design. For example, problems of vote buying, election rigging and falsification of results that usually occurred at the polling units and the local collation centres have not been given due attention in the project. More so, women empowerment has been over-emphasized whereas voter turnout among women was very high based on the report submitted by both government and non-governmental organizations that took part in 2011 general elections (PLAC, 2012; INEC, 2012; TMG, 2012). It is important to note that this is not only applicable to DGD project but to other international programmes involved in democracy promotion in Nigeria. In the words of Adetula et al. (2010), foreign consultants are typically involved in programme design and strategy development, despite the fact that they do not have adequate data on Nigeria and are not likely to stay long enough in the country to be able to filter through various reports by election stakeholders and provide objective assessment. Impliedly, lack of an integrated or enlarged framework that includes domestic CSOs in the design of DGD work programme hinders effective implementation of international supports toward promoting credible election in Nigeria. Individuals and groups would always want to be involved in the implementation of what they have initiated rather than what is imported to them. Closely connected to the above is the lack of commitment and consistency of support from some partners. This problem was also expressed by members of the DGD project in their report where they revealed that there is a lack of clarity on donor commitment to continue to support DGD II activities based on the electoral cycle approach, i.e. supporting activities outside the electoral period(for example ahead of 2015). This will significantly undermine the DGD project and by extension affect donors' effort towards credible election in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the Nigerian political environment is to say the least hostile and aggressive, especially with the rising insurgency of Boko Haram, communal and political violence kidnappings, witch-crafting and armed robbery in different parts of the country including Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Rivers, Bayelsa etc. In these volatile areas, the CSOs could not thrive and perform their expected role of promoting credible election. Indeed, due to security challenges, some election observer groups refused to observe the just concluded 2015 general elections in Borno and Yobe states. It is an acknowledged fact that CSOs in developing countries operate under a troubled environment characterized by human rights abuses by the leadership, conflicts and violence. Empirical evidence shows that citizens who have chosen to work in the CSO sector ended in jailed or been killed by political leadership and therefore outside support or aid may be the only option for their survival and that of democracy in developing countries. All these have strong implication to international support towards credible election in Nigeria

Conclusion

This paper examines international support towards credible elections with particular reference to DGD project in Nigeria. The paper identified various forms of democracy promotion and explains their relationship with credible election in Nigeria. Similarly, the paper using the DGD project identified some of major challenges affecting utilization of international support towards credible election in Nigeria. In view of the foregoing, this paper recommends inclusion of community-based associations located in rural areas in DGD project. This will greatly enhance rural participation and by extension influence credible election in Nigeria. The paper also recommends close collaboration with the media to report support provided to CSOs as a strategy for eliminating corruption in relation to effective utilization. Similarly, it is recommended that those involved in electoral malfeasance be sanctioned to serve as deterrence to those who often connived with politicians to commit all sort of electoral malpractices. In addition, there is also the need for proper coordination of international support in order to eliminate duplication and ensure that the assistance trickle down to the grass root where electoral malpractices are more visible. Moreover, international development partners should be encourage to develop an instrument of evaluation and tracking of support utilization as well as closely monitor the management of support at intervals in order to ensure proper conduct by the CSOs. This will not only help in ensuring democratic consolidation but also build citizens confidence on democratic governance in Nigeria.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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