

Democratic governance and socio-economic development in Nigeria: An assessment of the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), 1999-2024

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ABSTRACT: This paper sought to contextualise the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as a change agent and catalyst for development in a developing country like Nigeria. It examined the socio-economic impact of NGOs in Nigeria's federal capital Abuja, focusing on how it complements government developmental efforts in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), one of the six local government areas in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The paper adopted liberal theory as the framework of analysis. The methodology used is mix-method, both qualitative and quantitative with primary data generated and supported by secondary data. Primary data was generated from an interaction with the staff of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (an international NGO) in Abuja, and the personnel of both the Social and Welfare Unit of Education Department, Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). The study concluded that governments in Nigeria's three tiers have shown latent hostility to NGOs and are subtly not supportive and ready to provide the political will required to enable the dividends of democracy to reach the underprivileged and the grassroots. The paper therefore recommended that this unhealthy relationship between government and NGOs, which is 'problematic' needs to be overcome to enable an improvement in democratic governance to citizens and renewed vigour on the welfare of the people in Nigeria's political system. The paper also recommended an intervention by Nigeria's national legislature, the National Assembly, to enact a law that would provide a statutory mechanism for collaboration and joint decision-making on welfare programmes between the government and NGOs.

Keywords: Complementary, democracy, development, economy, governance.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, democratic governance has become a global phenomenon. The yearning for this method of governance is sweeping across nation-states in different continents of the world such as Europe, America, Asia, and Africa amongst others. It is evident that democratic governance as a result of its enormous advantages has convened momentum across the globe. Nigeria has had a lengthy history evolving around democratic governance

but it seems not to have gotten it right. Kimeu and Karugu (2020) posit that emphasis on the significance of support being offered by financial institutions with respect to service delivery cannot be overemphasized; especially in relation with the need to collaborate closely with government agencies and other stakeholders to boost democratic governance.

As it is today, there are several challenges militating

against Nigeria's socio-economic development such as lack of free, fair and credible elections vis-a-vis the ineffective administrative skills adopted by the electoral umpire, abuse of power, human rights abuses, disobedience to the rule of law, corruption, judicial inconsistency etc. with respect to democratic governance. It is most necessary to note that in this part of the world, democratic governance points to the replica of oligarchy; which points to the government by the few with little or no substantial service delivery to the people. Furthermore, Vanhanem (1990) believes that for democratic governance to be meaningful, there should be a level of transparency, accountability, protection and preservation of individual and group rights. Ingrams (2019) states that public policy efforts within the context of data applications would most likely determine democratic governance in a political environment.

Despite the ills associated with democracy, many countries in Africa including Nigeria have accepted democratic governance in place of authoritarianism except most recently, in the West African sub-region, where countries such as Guinea, Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali returned to military dictatorship, the same with Sudan in Central Africa and Malawi in East Africa respectively; perhaps, to checkmate the excesses of the politicians and the political class in those countries. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are groups that function independently of government but, at the same time complement the effort of government with regards to service delivery to the people. They are non-profit making establishments; in other words, they are set up to provide welfare to support the government. NGOs are established on international, national and community levels towards addressing socio-political and socio-economic challenges.

To this end, in the year 1992, representatives from 60 NGOs met and dialogued with several national and international agencies amongst which are Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Health and Nigeria Society for Family Health. Others are the World Health Organization, World Bank, Department for International Development, British High Commission and the British Council on issues of development. This meeting led to the formation of the Nigerian Network of NGOs and without hesitation commenced operations with the role of complementing the government's effort towards providing welfare to the people (United Nations Report, 2019). According to Clark (1990), NGOs are often rewarded with fiscal benefits by donor agencies especially when they have demonstrated that they are not in any way profit-making entities; but, out to work for public good.

The study observes that the government seems not to be very comfortable with NGOs' complementary role; hence, the refusal to give them a free hand to operate; over the years, scholars have not identified the root cause for this attitude being exhibited by the government. This is a gap that this study seeks to close. In Nigeria, democratic

governance has been a theoretical knowledge empty of practical experience vis-a-vis poor decision-making processes. In the past to this present day, Nigeria has witnessed a number of successive administrations with little or no adequate dividend of democratic governance. Meanwhile, politicians, more often than not canvass for the continuation of the system of democracy; yet, they don't seem to be ready to deliver the required dividend of governance to the people. It only suggests that democracy is used merely as a tool to gather votes, win and occupy public office and thereafter, dump the electorates whose votes might have catapulted them to their exalted positions; but, deny the people the requisite service delivery. Mwase and Kilru (2016) in their contribution to institutional theory, state that NGOs function within a broader institutional context that influences their behaviours and outcomes with regards to their contribution to the socio-economic development in the various communities spread across the world. Sitanggang (2021) states that the purpose of NGOs is not only to assist the government through their complementary role but also to act as a backbone for the poor and vulnerable, particularly during economic hardship within a nation-state.

The study revealed that Nigerians have given the federal government headed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu the benefit of doubt with his renewed hope mantra showcasing the interest in developing the country vis-a-vis the capability to deliver on his electioneering promises. Therefore, Nigerians are anxiously waiting to see whether a significant number of the promises made by the President would be sealed in a box waiting for the next four years as demonstrated by previous governments. Furthermore, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have since identified the shortcomings of government and have taken it upon themselves to continually play a vital role in bridging the gap that exists between the period of electioneering campaigns and the period of service delivering in relation to the provision of democratic governance to the people of AMAC in the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria.

Aims

This paper aims to examine the fundamental factors responsible for the mismanagement of economic resources with respect to democratic governance in the Abuja Municipal Area Council. It is also to evaluate the extent to which Non-Governmental Organizations have provided social amenities to the people to complement government efforts in relation to democratic governance in Abuja Municipal Area Council. Furthermore, it is to examine the basic complementary roles being played by NGOs such as the provision of counselling services to the authorities of AMAC meant to checkmate the mismanagement of economic resources vis-à-vis democratic governance in

Abuja Municipal Area Council. Also, it is to assess the extent to which Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have provided social amenities to the people in relation to democratic governance in Abuja Municipal Area Council.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual clarifications

Governance

Governance is the totality of the exercise of authority in the management of a country's affairs which comprises the complex mechanism, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests and exercise their legal rights as well as mediate their differences (UNDP, 2022). Over time, NGOs seek to promote sustainable community development through capacity-building and empowered activities. Accordingly, capacity-building is the process by which NGOs enhance community development. Besides, NGOs are formed to help people promote their capabilities; hence, are commended for promoting community autonomy and empowerment through their assistance to community groups in trying to facilitate participatory processes.

World Bank (1998) states that actors from multilateral banks to NGOs now play a much greater role in developmental strides; hence, technological change has revolutionized the way that business floats.

Democratic governance seeks in common with good governance, efficient institutions and a predictable economic and political environment that makes economic growth possible and public services effective (United Nations Development Project, UNDP Report, 2021 October 4). As it is today, NGOs are observed to be trying very hard to complement the government in shaping, financing and delivering public services in a variety of ways such as in the areas of health, education etc. This has created the basis for asking for synergy with the government of which state institutions have now acquired greater legitimacy in the improvement in performance through the development of responsive working relationships with NGOs that draw on reservoirs of social capital built up in local communities. (Kelsall, 2005). According to Kothari (2008), efforts to enhance transparency in governance by NGOs have contributed to poverty reduction by way of helping citizens to monitor the delivery of developmental resources by bureaucrats and local elites through checks and balances. Sepulveda *et al.* (2020) posit that in making high-quality public service, the government often create democratic governance characterised by governing arrangements for the community, stakeholders and cultural organizations.

Democracy

There has been a remarkable development in the literature

that addresses democracy from multiple perspectives such as socio-political development in which the relationship between democracy in a given community and democracy in the state is discussed (Aliye, 2020). Democracy offers an option of choice to citizens for political participation and franchise. Adekola (2015) however posits that the opposition in Nigeria is gradually going into extinction as the democratic process is gradually becoming a one-party state with the ruling party-All Progressives Congress (APC) becoming autocratic. For instance, these days, the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) seems to have mellowed down in its responsibility as an opposition party and this has been a thing of concern to many Nigerians because they insist that it is not healthy for democracy and democratic governance.

Howell and Pearce (2001) state that the emergence of democracy points to the manner in which political leaders use power to promote social and economic development in both theoretical and practical terms; closely associated with the issues of public accountability, transparency and efficiency in the conduct of government business. To this end, NGOs perform three primary functions: (i) providing direct services such as shelter) providing educational services such as awareness about education and critical analysis of social environment. (iii) defending public policy such as corruption prevention.

Anti-democratic governments most times do not listen to NGOs because of their role in ensuring that authorities act in public best interest. Aside from this, they assist the public in keeping an eye on politicians who are either misusing public funds or abusing the rule of law and also take responsibility for speaking for children, women and the elderly against social injustice meted on them by the government (Kothari, 2005). NGOs are typically non-profit institutions. They are sometimes called Civil Society Organizations and are established on community, national and international levels to serve a social or political goal such as a humanitarian cause on the protection of the environment (Kothari, 2008).

Development

There is an existence of a clear-cut relationship between public policy and developmental strides within a given renewal project in a political environment (Yang and Park, 2020). According to the development theorist, Walter Rodney, there is a many-sided process especially the developmental process that requires the input of civil society through the participation of NGOs which serves as an area of interest. Lewis (2017) asserts that NGOs are concerned with the mobilization of resources to provide goods and services to people across a wide range of fields such as emergency relief, healthcare, agricultural extension, microfinance and human rights advocacy. NGOs are increasingly responding to man-made emergencies or

natural disasters with humanitarian assistance through the contracts awarded to them by the government and donor agencies to carry out specific tasks. Path (2004) states that over the years, NGOs have inspired, facilitated and contributed to improving thinking which has promoted social transformation in developing countries such as Nigeria and effort was directed towards individuals and groups in local communities through grass-root mobilization, group formation, gender empowerment, lobbying, advocacy, attempts to influence wider policy processes through innovation and policy entrepreneurship.

Again, partnership reflects the growing trend for NGOs to work with government, donor agencies and the private sector on joint activities such as providing specific inputs within a broader multi-agency programme or undertaking social business initiatives as well as the activities that take place among communities such as capacity building. United Nations Development Project, UNDP Report, (2007) assert that since the creation of UNDP, in 1966, the project has been at the centre of the United Nations' operational system working both at the community level with non-state actors like NGOs around the countries of the world. Androniceanu (2015) asserts that development vis-a-vis democratic governance is based on national and local interests in relation to the needs and expectations of the citizens in both public and private organizations as well as amongst other stakeholders within a given community.

Empirical review

This study is meant to review related literature on democratic governance with respect to the problems, prospects and significance of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the enthronement of modern democracy and the promotion of democratic governance in Nigeria. The following six functions of NGOs are critical to development vis-à-vis democratic governance: (i) Infrastructural development and operation. (ii) Facilitation of communication in the sense that NGOs can facilitate communication upward from the people to the government and downward from the government to the people. (iv) Technical assistance and training (v) Research monitoring and evaluation (vi) Advocacy; by this, NGOs play several roles ranging from advocating for the poor to being the implementers of government programmes (William, 2022). These themes include communism, welfare, universalism as well as cooperative modes of theme. Ishkanian (2006) states that Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have gained recognition in the area of human rights advocacy, humanitarian services, environmental services and other areas of public life from the post-2004 tsunami reconstruction efforts to the 2005 Make Poverty History Campaign for aid trade reforms and debt cancellation in developing countries like Nigeria.

According to the United Nations Development Programme, 2022, NGOs more often than not set up a process in which citizens work alongside government officials while NGOs play a complementing role in improving economic, social and cultural conditions of the entire society while enabling citizens to contribute fully to national progress thereby integrated into public life. Fadakinte (2013) posits that NGOs are popular in various ways such as in the delivery of services to the people in need, the administration of policy advocacy and public campaigns as well as the pursuit of social transformation. Others are in the areas of policy formulation and analysis, conflict resolution, human rights, democratic building, cultural preservation, environmental activism, research and information dissemination. Tvedt (1998) asserts that NGOs were first discovered and celebrated by the international donor community for putting forward fresh solutions to long-established developmental problems characterized by incompetent government and ineffective developmental projects, especially in third-world countries like Nigeria. Also, within the subsequent effort to liberate economies and roll back to the state as part of constitutional adjustment policies, NGOs were seen as cost-effective substitutes for public sector service delivery. Besides, the paradigm shift of advocacy for a new policy agenda of democratic governance through developmental outcomes witnessed the emergence of a balanced relationship between the government and the NGOs which evidently came to the limelight. An NGO is a legally established recognized entity created by private individuals or institutions to further political or social goals. In terms of work styles and purposes, NGOs tend to fall into two main categories, advocacy and operation.

According to Tvedt (1998), the new concentration given to NGOs had brought large quantities of aid to building their capacity to scale up their work, and this had led eventually to important changes in mainstream development including new ideas about participation, empowerment, gender and a range of people-centred approaches to poverty reduction in Nigeria and other African countries with respect to developing nation states. Furthermore, he argues that NGOs have embodied a philosophy that recognises the centrality of people in the development of policies and other factors that give them comparative advantages over government. However, too much was expected from them with regard to developmental problems which eventually led to a backlash against NGOs by the end of the 1990s when the evidence began to suggest that NGOs had only partially lived up to these unrealistically high expectations.

To this end, a global shift took place amongst donor agencies towards new ways of working with developing countries using mechanisms such as budget support and sector-wide approaches.

The study posits that the Nigerian authorities have been unable to harness the vast human and material resources

at their disposal in order to reduce poverty to the barest minimum since the country's independence on 1st October 1960, which points to the fact that the magnitude of corruption vis-a-vis the pressure for accountability in both private and public life are yet to settle down in spite of the push for developing socio-economic institutions in the country because rather than the country being at the service of the people, it is majorly at the service of the ruling class.

Rather than celebrate Nigeria's successive Independence Day since 1960 with the level of poverty in the country, the situation calls for worry because the country has not much to show for practising democratic governance this long as the standard of living has worsened under democratic governance (Jega, 2005). The various socio-economic challenges confronting Nigeria as a nation-state cannot be solved through partnership with organizations such as NGOs or Civil Society Organizations without credible and competent leadership. A credible and competent leadership cannot emerge through an electoral process riddled with corruption and violence in violation of the tenets of democratic governance which over the years had prompted military intervention in the body politics of Nigeria; an intervention often regarded as an aberration (Obasanjo, 1999).

With respect to democratic governance without NGO inclusiveness; Hickey *et al.* (2007) state that the inability of the Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC); an agency of the executive arm of government, to manage logistics during elections has paved the way for all sorts of manipulation, ranging from vote-buying and late arrival of electoral materials which had led politicians who may not have won election, to be declared winners because the electoral umpire, being overwhelmed with work, would not encourage NGOs to complement their efforts. Vakil (1997) and Hall-Jones (2006) see NGOs as self-governing, private, non-profit organizations that are geared towards improving the quality of life for disadvantaged people. Besides, NGOs have become important partners or allies in the developmental process in Nigeria in the sense that they pursue public interest rather than commercial interest. NGOs are formed to complement, supplement and offer alternatives to government developmental efforts.

According to Dada (2023, September 15) reported by punch Newspaper that former President Obasanjo urges Nigerians to have a rethink with regards to democratic governance involvement in peace making, security, stability, prosperity, wealth creation, employment and a wholesomeness in the society and that any democratic governance that nurtures poverty, unemployment, lack of peace and security is a failure and should be thrown overboard. Besides, he stated that a democratic governance bedevilled by insecurity, unemployment and other socio-economic challenges negates developmental strides; hence, should be ditched. In the course of this

study, it has been observed that scholars have dwelt mainly on traditional literature review which is essentially based on theoretical assumptions and postulations. In other words, there are no primary data presented by the scholars. This is another gap which this study seeks to close. Hence, the study adopted primary method of data collection to make it empirical; thereby, paving way for secondary data for incoming researchers to explore. Consequently, this can be regarded as the contribution to knowledge.

Historical perspective of the evolution of Non-Governmental Organizations

Facial development assistance provided through NGOs had increased from 4.6% in 1995 to 13% in 2004 and the total and volume had increased from US \$78.6 billion during the same period. In 2004, it was estimated that NGOs were responsible for about \$US 23 billion of total aid. Non-governmental Organizations were first called such in Article 71 of the Charter of the United Nations in 1945. While NGOs have no fixed or informal definition, they are generally defined as non-profit entities independent of governmental influence although may receive government funding (United Nations Annual Report, 2019).

Cernea(1988) assert that from the late 1980s, NGOs assumed a significant role in the developmental process. At that time, NGOs were discovered and celebrated by the international donor, community for putting fresh solutions to long-established development problems, characterized by incompetent government and ineffective development projects. In addition, with the subsequent effort to liberate economies and roll back the state as part of constitutional adjustment policies, NGOs were seen as cost-effective substitutes for sector service delivery.

During the Post-Cost War period, a new concentration was given to NGOs which brought large quantities and efforts at building the capacity of NGOs to scale up their work and it led eventually to important challenges in mainstream development including new ideas about participation, empowerment, gender and a range of people-centred approaches to poverty reduction. NGOs embody a philosophy that recognizes the centrality of people in developmental policies worldwide and this along with some other factors gave them comparative advantages over government. However, much was expected of NGOs, which came to be seen in some quarters as a quick fix for developmental problems which had led to a backlash against NGOs by the end of the 1990s when the evidence began to suggest that NGOs had only partially lived up to these unrealistically high expectations (Cernea,1988).

The history of NGOs dates back to the early days of Nigeria's independence. It was occasioned by colonial

rule. But in the post-independence era, many events that had arisen as a result of military rule vis-a-vis dictatorship, religion, violence, ethnicity and corruption led to the upsurge of NGOs in Nigeria (Abiddin *et al.*, 2021). Carol (1992) states that NGOs had a four longer history than this recent resurgence and retreat strategy in the sense that many of the world's best-known NGOs predate the emergence of the development industry, for instance, there are 'Save the Children Fund (SCF), an NGO which was founded by Eglantyne Jeb in 1919 after the trauma of the First World War. Furthermore, the NGO called Oxfam, which was originally known as the Oxford Committee against the Famine was established in 1942 in order to provide famine relief to the victims of the Greek Civil War and in 1946, CARE, another NGO started its work by sending US food packages to Europe in 1946 after the Second World Wars.

Theoretical framework

The study adopted Liberal Theory as propounded by Locke and Montuori (1689) is used as the basis of this research analysis. The theory, often regarded as John Locke's liberal theory states that liberalism is a negation of autocratic ideology and it is essential to the uplift of democratic governance. Against this background and in the context of this discourse, there is no gainsaying the fact that over the years, there have been socioeconomic challenges in Nigeria ranging from the prevalence of poverty, human rights abuses, corruption, election manipulation, inadequate provision of infrastructure, and insecurity among others. These challenges have been worrisome to the people of AMAC and the Nigerian People in general, and efforts to surmount these challenges have been difficult. However, the Non-Governmental Organizations in Nigeria are not resting on their shoulders in their bid to help correct these ills.

It is interesting to know that even within political dispensation, there is still the element of authoritarianism at play which needs to be persuaded towards doing the right thing; therefore, NGOs in AMAC have been engaging those at the helm of affairs while trying very hard to offer counselling services to policymakers; bringing their experiences to bear in floating welfare programmes; involving in problem-solving mechanism through dialogue; offering constructive criticism to government officials etc. All these, the NGOs do on a daily basis through synergy and effective collaboration with the aim of achieving a near-perfect democratic governance towards contributing to the political economy of AMAC and Nigeria as a whole.

Philosopher John Locke, the founder of liberal thought; often credited with founding liberalism as a distinct tradition based on social contract, argues that each man has a natural right to life, liberty and property and the government must not violate these rights. John Locke's

political theory argues that government has obligations to their citizens such as the provision of welfare and social security and government should have only limited power over the citizens. These have been a source of motivation to NGOs in AMAC to partner with government officials in the bid to play their complementary role in order to achieve laudable objectives while employing diplomacy; which in the context of this study connotes the art of building and maintaining relationship with the government and by this, it means conducting negotiations with the authorities of (AMAC) using mutual respect.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology deployed was the mix-method, qualitative and quantitative respectively. On the quantitative dimension, 100 copies of the formulated questionnaire were distributed to the two respondent groups and out of the 100 copies that were purposively sampled as the sample basis, only 65 copies were retrieved from the respondents, giving a return rate of 65% that was responded to.

The study used a descriptive research survey design method or technique. The responses to the questions as contained in the questionnaire were used to generate data which were converted to simple percentages and then presented for analysis and interpretation towards achieving results. Emphasis was laid on the use of frequency tables for data presentation. Answers to the research questions were provided through the comparison of the responses that had emanated from the respondent groups using the frequency rate and percentages alike. Finally, the data collected through the copies of the questionnaire were used to examine the specific roles that Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have played in ensuring democratic governance in Abuja Municipal Area Council and Nigeria in general.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The data generated from the survey research is hereby presented and analysed based on the responses of the staff of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (an international NGO) in Abuja, and the personnel of both the Social and Welfare Unit of Education Department, Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) purposively selected as the respondents.

The data in Table 1 reveals that a total of 25 (50%) of the respondents, the staff of the NGOs Konrad Adenauer Stiftung agreed that as a result of the non-implementation of vital suggestions made to AMAC by KAS in contribution to democratic governance, there is management of economic resources which has led to dilapidated infrastructure in AMAC. Whereas, a total of 21(42%) of the respondents disagreed with the item. However, 4(8%) of the respondents were undecided over the item. Concerning

Table 1. Reasons responsible for the mismanagement of economic resources in relation to democratic governance of Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC).

Item	Opinion	KAS (NGO) Staff	AMAC Personnel	Total
As a result of non-implementation of vital suggestions made to AMAC by KAS NGO in its contribution to democratic governance, there is mismanagement of economic resources which has led to dilapidated infrastructure in AMAC.	A	18(36%)	0(0%)	18(28%)
	SA	7(14%)	3(20%)	10(15%)
	D	18(36%)	10(67)	28(43%)
	SD	3(6%)	2(13%)	5(8%)
	U	4(8%)	0(0%)	4(6%)
Total		50(100%)	15(100%)	65(100%)

Source: Field Survey February, 2024.

Table 2. The extent to which the operations of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have enhanced democratic governance in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC).

Item	Opinion	KAS (NGO) Staff	AMAC Personnel	Total
NGOs are involved increasingly in the provision of social amenities to the people in improving their living standard and household economy vis-a-vis democratic governance in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC).	A	24(48%)	5(33%)	29(49%)
	SA	26(52%)	3(20%)	29(45%)
	D	0(0%)	5(33%)	5(7%)
	SD	0(0%)	2(4%)	2(3%)
	U	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Total		50(100%)	15(100%)	65(100%)

Source: Field Survey February, 2024.

the other side, a total of 3(20%) of AMAC personnel are in agreement with the same item as against a total of 12 (80%) who disagreed with the item, but none of the respondents was undecided on the matter.

The data in Table 2 shows that a total of 50(100%) staff at KAS NGO are in agreement that NGOs are involved in the provision of social amenities vis-a-vis democratic governance in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) while none of the respondents disagreed with the item and none of the respondents was undecided on the item. On the other hand, a total of 8(53%) AMAC personnel agreed with the same item. Meanwhile, a total of 7(47%) of the respondents disagreed with the item and no respondents were undecided over the item.

DISCUSSION

With respect to the data presentation and data analysis in Table 1, which points to the fact that the total number of respondents who are in agreement with the item which states that as a result of non-implementation of vital suggestions made to AMAC by KAS NGO in contribution to democratic governance, there has been a level of mismanagement of economic resources which has led to dilapidated infrastructure in AMAC. This was the response of AMAC personnel. These personnel outnumbered the

KAS NGO staff (respondents) who disagreed with the item thereby resulting in a conflict of opinion between the two groups of respondents. Consequently, looking closely and critically at the data presented in Table 1, a total of 80% of AMAC personnel had disagreed over the item as against 50% who agreed with the item. Therefore, it shows that the non-implementation of vital suggestions made to AMAC by KAS NGO in contribution to democratic governance does not significantly affect the management of economic resources in the Abuja Municipal Area Council; hence, this cannot be said to have led to dilapidated infrastructure in the Area Council. However, Aliye (2020) states that political engagement with non-state actors such as NGOs and citizen political participation are two critical factors that leaders ought to consider for effective democratic governance with the hope of rolling out the dividend of democracy in the form of infrastructural development and provision of social amenities. Tvedt (2003) posits that wealthy and socially dominant groups in society are able to organize themselves and by virtue of adequate funds within their disposal vis-à-vis their social status are able to exert considerable influence over government's decisions on democratic governance.

Certain collaborative efforts have been put forward by NGOs to the government through the offering of welfare and counselling services vis-a-vis the enhancement of socio-economic development in the society via different

means such as capacity building, youth and women empowerment, scholarship award and more importantly, the provision of social amenities like primary health centres, Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) outreach as well as Orphanage Homes outreach amongst others. But it seems that these segments of effort being propounded by NGOs have to some extent not enhanced motivation in view of the attitude of government by the deliberate non-consideration of notable suggestions related to poverty alleviation put forward by NGOs, probably because of the misplacement of priorities; leading to corruption vis-a-vis poor service delivery such as cosmetic infrastructure by government to the people. According to Malekpur and Sharifirad (2019), NGOs confront challenges associated with government regulations and societal deeds vis-à-vis cultural values in their effort to enhance socioeconomic development in different communities, spread across the nooks and crannies of the universe. Furthermore, Awino and Nabukah (2020) state that over the years, government institutional pressures on NGOs cannot be underestimated and this development has made NGOs unwillingly align their practices with institutional norms and values in order to attain legitimacy in the eyes of the government; if not for anything, but to improve their sustainability in contributing to the socio-economic development of communities.

Concerning the data presentation and data analysis in Table 2, the agreement expressed by KAS NGO respondents over the item which states that NGOs are involved increasingly in the provision of social amenities in relation to democratic governance in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) is super overwhelming, having recorded 50 (100%). In other words, none of these respondents disagreed over the same item. In the same vein, Rath (2019) asserts that in the last few years, NGOs have increased in number, hence, the increase in the provision of basic social services to communities and; assisting the government in its duty especially these days, when economic constraint has restricted the influence of government; thereby, limiting its ability to meet the developmental needs of the people, especially in the rural areas. Tvedt *et al.* (2007) view that over the years, a sizeable number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have prioritized the mobilization of financial resources from organizations in order to cater for social services like health, education etc. thereby raising the living standard of the people in various communities across the world. Pearce (2000) argues that in many countries worldwide, Non-Governmental Organizations have played very significant roles in mobilizing the people to participate fully in politics and public affairs with the aim of improving their welfare.

A substantial role has been conceded by the government to NGOs to fill in the gaps in service delivery to both rural and urban communities in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) and Nigeria in general. In the same vein, Uddin and Feidousi (2021) posit that sound governance

practices boost NGOs' credibility, rendering them more appealing to foreign donors, partners and stakeholders; and as a result, assist them in gathering enough funds which they use in delivering welfare services to communities. Adomako and Danso (2016) assert that one of the factors that determine the financial sustainability of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Ghana is based on sound financial management practices. These days, NGOs are becoming increasingly significant stakeholders in global governance and business operations in the sense they provide support services when governments are unable to improve the growth indicators. Abubakar *et al.* (2021) state that the significance of the correlation between effective governance, funding strategy and sustainability for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) cannot be underestimated, in view of NGOs' approach to optimal governance practices, diverse funding streams and emphasis on sustainability in their organizational plans. However, Malekpur and Sharifirad (2019) opine that NGOs that are receiving funding from international donors may encounter difficulties in establishing trust with local communities and government officials who view them as advocating foreign agendas.

In the case of the expression made by the second respondent group, the AMAC personnel; with regards to the same item on the increased involvement of NGOs towards the provision of social amenities in relation to democratic governance in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), there was a total agreement of 53% which is above 47% expressed as disagreement by the respondents which lay credence to the affirmation of the item. Kimeu and Karuga (2020) assert that the dependence on collaboration with local governments and private sector entities in partnership; is meant to uphold NGO initiatives; and this partnership bolsters the legitimacy and credibility of the NGOs thereby making them effective in addressing community requirements by way of providing social amenities. Sukmana and Firdausy (2019) posit that concerning the sustainability of NGOs vis-à-vis abuse of power in countries around the globe such as Indonesia, NGOs have taken up the challenge of engaging government diplomatically, on its policies and programmes. However, Simionesu and Diaconu (2019) state that the governance framework influences the sustainability of NGOs which has affected their financial stability, transparency and efficacy in the discharge of their regular routines. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2023) asserts that good governance embraces management in terms of efficiency while curbing corruption which has been noticed to be inhibiting development, investment and accountability. According to Tredt (1998), Non- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are recognised as key non-state actors on the landscape of development, human rights, and humanitarian actions amongst others.

Conclusion

Over the years, the inability of successive governments in Nigeria to deploy political will to push for the implementation of socio-economic programmes vis-a-vis democratic governance has been a thing of utmost concern to many Nigerians. Rather than ask for complementing hands from non-state actors such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the government seem to pretend that it could do it alone. Therefore, the country has witnessed a number of administrations with little or no adequate democratic governance. For instance, more often than not, governments have turned down valuable advice offered by NGOs, particularly on the non-implementation of infrastructural development.

It is worrisome therefore that in view of this situation, political officeholders have not demonstrated enough political will to deal with the lingering problem of poor infrastructural development amongst other socio-economic challenges that have affected the general public; perhaps, because of the government's indirect refusal of the cooperation extended to it by the NGOs.

However, these days, NGOs like Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) having identified this problem, took it upon themselves to play a vital role in bridging the intervals that exist between electioneering campaigns and democratic governance in Nigeria. By and large, unless deliberate efforts are made by stakeholders to build adequate synergy between the government and non-state actors like NGOs, the problem will most likely continue to rear its ugly head.

Recommendations

This paper recommends the following items:

1. The government should ensure that it considers every active measure or advice offered by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) towards enhancing good governance in Abuja Municipal Area Council and Nigeria in general.
2. NGOs should not be discouraged by the government's attitude of antagonism, subtle hostility, lack of cooperation and suspicion against their operations on service delivery with regards to the provision of social amenities to communities vis-à-vis poverty alleviation within the ambit of the law.
3. NGOs should interface with Nigeria's National Assembly to seek a law to make them collaborative partners with government officials with respect to the decision-making process.
4. The government should implement vital suggestions made by NGOs towards democratic governance in the area of accountability to fix dilapidated infrastructure across the country and in Abuja Municipal Area

Council in particular.

5. The government at the three tiers should endeavour to deploy the required political will that would eventually translate the economic fortunes in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) into the desired goals needed for the uplift of the people from poverty in line with democratic governance.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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