

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA:

ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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ABSTRACT

The civil society organizations (CSOs) in Nigeria have come to play crucial roles in returning the country to civil rule. Since then, it ensured that the state is checkmated while at the same time help to realize the dividends of democracy and sustainable development. Substantially, these roles of civil society in democratization and consolidation processes have not been quantitatively and qualitatively realized in dealing with issues of urgent national importance confronting the country. Within the framework of political participation and state-society relation theories, an eclectic approach, the paper examined issues of civil society and the role it can play in democratic consolidation. It argued that the character of civil society engagement with the state has not altered the socio-political and economic condition of Nigerians. The CSOs in the country are more reactive than proactive due to daunting challenges of leadership, internal democracy, autonomy, finance and cohesion which have affected the manner it conflates and or co-operates with the state and society at large. Drawing experience from the globalized era, it is the position of the paper that to make reasonable contributions towards democratic consolidation in Nigeria, CSOs should as key indicators of democratic audit, ensure effective internal democracy, improve its capacity, funding and autonomy, and maintain cohesion necessary for collective actions, among other measures.

Keywords: Civil Society, Challenges, Consolidation, Governance, Democratization, Development, Nigeria, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

The role of civil society organizations in the struggle for civil rule, democratic consolidation and sustainable development in Nigeria cannot be overstated. Indeed, they were at the vanguard for the liberation struggle that culminated in the achievement of independence in 1960. In pre-colonial and post colonial government especially during the military regime, the Nigerian print media was the standard bearer of the civil society organizations as they sought to expose acts of authoritarianism, mismanagement, and corruption in the polity.

The return to civil rule in 1979 after years of military interregnum, raised expectations for a possible resolution of the hydra-headed socio-political and economic crisis bedeviling the nation since independence in 1960. But that hope was truncated by the military junta who felt that politicians have learnt nothing from the despicable and objectionable practices of the first attempt at democratic rule in Nigeria. The military that had little or no experience in governance when they first took power in 1966, gradually settled down in government.

The late 1980s and 1990s saw the campaign by pro-democracy groups and political organizations for the democratization of African states, in what has been described as the second liberation movement. The first liberation movement was said to have been inconclusive because it was hijacked by reactionary forces who sought to truncate the philosophy and ideology behind the liberation movements which brought independence to most African States.

The resort to authoritarianism and one party rule in most African states demonstrated the lack of direction and vision: factors which sustained the liberation movements and achieved independence for most African States. The very people that the first liberation movement sought to liberate became victims of economic mismanagement, social degradation, and political high-handedness. While the euphoria that greeted the return to multi party democracy in most Africa States was partly credited to internal forces championed by civil society organizations, external forces gave the process impetus.

However, the expectations that democratization in Nigeria since 1999 would stem the tide of economic decline, political dislocation and social emancipation has largely been unfulfilled. It would appear; the civil society organizations have lost its steam or have been cowed by the totalizing influence of the state. These are some of the issues this study seeks to unravel.

To address issues germane to the subject of discourse, the paper is pigeon holed as follows: The first section chronicled conceptual and theoretical issues central to the paper. The second examined the types and nature of civil society organizations. The third discussed the interface between civil society and democratic consolidation. The fourth analyzed challenges facing civil society in the context of democratic consolidation. The fifth prescribed ways civil society can consolidate the gains of democracy in the country, then concluding remarks.

METHODOLOGY

The paper adopts qualitative research design to gain an insight into the nature and character of civil society organizations in Nigeria and their struggle in democratic consolidation in country. The researchers used descriptive analysis to examine the issues and challenges confronting civil society organizations in Nigeria. The paper which is theoretical in nature draws its argument

basically from secondary data which include journal publications, textbooks and internet sources. Statistical data were also used where necessary as empirical evidence portraying our argument. To improve on the reliability and validity of the paper, multiple secondary sources were used to minimize risk of error.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

In discussing issues salient to this topic, it is pertinent to consider and clarify some concepts in order to situate them within the context of our discussion. Civil society has received extensive scholarly attention in recent years especially in the quest for consolidation of the reform agenda of the post cold war global system. This era is dominated by socio-economic and political reforms which are essentially of the neo-liberal variant. According to Haynes (2001), in an effort to consolidate changes that has seen most third world countries embracing neo-market reforms and political liberalization leading to multi-party democracy, civil society organizations are seen as veritable tool for achieving these goals.

Civil society as a concept belongs to the “tribe” of contested concepts, which generate disputes over their actual meanings. From a broad perspective, civil society refers to those non governmental organizations which stand between the state and society which either cooperates or conflates or both with the state in the course of their activities. For Ekeh (1991) civil society refers to those areas in the overall society in which there are institutions and associations that exist and function independently of the state. This view is supported by Arato and Cohen (1993) by advocating for the independence of civil society from the modern state. Taking a functional and concrete view of the concept, Osaghae (1997) contends that the CSO refers to the non-state sector of the public realm which mediates relations between the individual and the state. The basic features inherent in this understanding of civil society are that they are autonomous of the state and public to the extent that they are involved in setting the normative order for the state especially in pursuit of the common good. It is clear from the fore-going that civil society not only conflates but could cooperate with the state in realizing the goal of better citizenry and society.

Flowing from the above, the big question that keeps begging for answer however, is to what extent has civil society done these to ensure improvement in the well-being of the citizen, democratization, political stability, national integration, good governance and sustainable development in Nigerian evolving democracy.

Democracy as a social process has been in deficit as shown in the deteriorating state of the human person in the continent. Poverty, hunger, disease, lack of basic infrastructures and social amenities are all reflective of this deficit (SeeAke, 1994;Osaghae 1994; Nzongola-Ntaleja, 1997; UNDP HDI, 2012). It is argued that liberal democracy could resolve all these challenges (See Huntington, 1991; Diamond, 1999). While electoral democracy is in place in much of Africa, substantive democracy is still a far-fetched possibility (Haynes, 2001). Hence, democratization is embraced in order to achieve the core values of democracy.

Democratization can be regarded as a gradual process whereby a regime becomes increasingly democratic. This means that democracy is never a finished business, it is work in progress. Its processes require gradual measures captured in not only the divide between democracies and non democracies but differences in degrees of democratic qualities (Lundberg, 2008).

Perhaps, what is important in the democratization process is that political, social and economic re-engineering efforts should bring about qualitative changes in the lives of the people, while the building and remodeling of political institutions and structures go on. Civil society has important role to play in ensuring all these especially where political parties are inchoate. In pursuing these goals, civil society may cooperate or conflate with the state.

Extant approaches and perspectives on civil society from Western theorists tend to emphasize the historical experiences of the West which may not be directly applicable elsewhere (See Baker, 1998). Civil society theorists like Cohen and Arato (in Baker, 1998) argue that civil society would prefer to relate with a limited constitutional state that can facilitate rather than wipe away, by administrative fiat, the growing “tribe” and exertiveness of society. In particular, it is interested in how its communicative forms of democratic opinion and formation could be institutionalized. Though there is the fear that such “discursive authority to encompass decision making as well as opinion making would threaten the autonomy of public opinion, for then the public would effectively become the state, and the possibility of a critical discursive check on the state would be lost” (Fraser, 1992). Be that as it may, the overriding objective here is to extend the frontier of democracy and sustainable development through civil society activities.

According to United Nations (2009), sustainable development is seen as “development that meets our present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The United Nations identified three elements which should work together to ensure sustainable development. These are economic development, social development and environmental protection (UN, 2009). Ayeni (2010) argues that these three components must be conceptualized together, planned together and implemented together to achieve the desired results. Here lies the importance of civil society organizations as watch dog of the citizens in keeping government alive to its responsibilities.

President Jonathan has had to accuse civil society of being bias and used by opposition elements in the public sphere to uncritically mobilize the people against his administration. But the government has also found reasons to mobilize civil society organizations to drum up support for his administration in a political environment where crowd of whatever name could be hired for a token to canvass and press for all kinds of personal and group agenda.

The subject matter of the paper could be predicated on several theoretical platforms, especially in the social and management sciences where perspectives often differ based on a scholar’s orientation and worldview. It is in the light of the foregoing that we undertake this endeavor. To scientifically analyze the subject of discourse, we anchor the paper on eclectic approach of political participation and state society relations theories because of the advantages they present in analyzing the issues germane to the paper. While political participation could be seen as means of reaping the reward of holding political offices, others see it as avenue of affirming one’s efficacy in the political system. Yet, political participation offers opportunities for changing the governing officials and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing contenders for political office, ensure they are politically accountable and in the process promote good governance (See for example Lipset, 1960).

State – society relations take place in the context of politics which itself is grounded in the nature of society. As Osaghae (2011) has argued, “the nature of politics in Nigeria is largely determined by the nature of the society, especially the values

which governs behaviour in the public realms”. He then asked rhetorically, what is the implication of the premium placed on wealth (material possession) and status on politics? What are the consequences for politics of highly plural and divided Nigerian society? Answers to these questions could be found in extant perspectives on Nigerian politics which relate political tendencies and formations to the character of the society. The interface between state and society becomes relevant here, as the core of Dudley’s (1982) state – society relations aptly argued.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION: TYPES AND NATURE

In the wake of waves of democratization in hitherto one-party authoritarian and military dictatorship, civil society constituents experienced exponential growth with the flowering of a motley of organizations claiming to pursue goals which promote the democratic agenda of popular participation, human rights monitoring and protection, economic liberalization, promotion of social welfare and well-being of the people particularly, in the rural areas among others. Though the political roles of civil society were initially downplayed due to the World Bank interest in pressing for Structural Adjustment of Africa’s economy, the civil society was considered vital for “...strengthening private sector initiatives and participation and reversing the top-down approach to development for a more participatory bottom – up approach” (Osaghae, 1997).

It is important we go beyond the rather narrow treatment of the concept in the World Bank perspective, to examine it within the larger liberalization: political transition and democratic consolidation contexts in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. Several organizations have come to form what is commonly referred to as civil society constituent. This can be categorized into two broad groups: the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Liberty/Pro-democracy Associations. This attempt at categorization of what has come to be referred to as civil society may not be clinical but it should suffice for our purpose in this analysis.

In the context of Nigeria’s search for democracy, Aiyede (2005), identifies two broad categories of plural organizations involved in the democratic struggles in Nigeria since the 90s. The first category is made up of organizations which aim at extending the frontier of liberal democratic practices within the country such as: Civil Liberty Organization (CLO), Campaign for Democracy (CD), Constitutional Right Project (CRP), Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (CDHR), Joint Action Committee of Nigeria (JACON), Democratic Alliance (DA), United Action for Democracy (UAD), among others. The list presented here is by no means exhaustive but these political organizations contributed in no small way to the opening of the political space and ensured that the military was forced to relinquish political power against their wish.

The second category comprises of interest groups whose activities and actions were not directly focused on the pursuit of democracy but implicitly affected its progress. Their major concerns however, centers on monitoring and protecting the “rules that regulate the relations of domination in a particular area” (See Aiyede, 2005). In pursuance of this goal, they either conflated with the state or cooperated with it. In the process they were able to maintain the constitutional requirements for the regulation of relations among interest groups to ensure that they follow due process and prevent the emergence of dominant groups that could monopolize the political space, (Olukoshi, 1997).

To these categories could be added a third. This comprises of interest groups whose pedigree dates back to the period prior to colonial rule. They started as indigenous interest groups but has since transformed in structure and organization. These are

socio-economic groups whose main activities are to cater for the interest of their members' i.e. professional or non professional groups such as: farmers, artisans, ethno-religious groups, occupational bodies, among others. From the World Bank view of sustainable development and structural adjustment, these groups are important as they help to promote bottom – up approach to realization of these goals. As the state recedes and or become weak, these groups step in to promote the welfare and well-being of their members. These groups “complement or provide an alternative to state – directed development which had been made virtually impossible because of the pathologies of the state” (Osaghae, 1997). To what extent have they achieved these democratic imperatives since the return to civil rule? This is x-rayed in the following section.

THE NEXUS BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

Civil society organizations have an age long relationship with struggle for democratization in Nigeria. The flourishing and vibrancy of civil society in the 80s and 90s was exponential, comparable only to the days of nationalist movements. Coalition of civil society organizations initiated the struggle or campaign for democracy. This was later given impetus by external influence and assistance. Their antecedence can be traced back in time to the colonial and nationalist eras. Several associational groups in the colonial era sought to restrain the colonial administration from enforcing unpopular laws like the imposition of taxes on some products. The Agbekoya revolt and the Aba Women Riot in the Western and Eastern Regions of the country respectively, were some of these activities of civil society. Thus, Ekeh (1994) has persuasively argued that:

The structures and processes that are currently labeled civil society are not new. Historians and social scientists in the pre- 1985 period used other concepts and terms to designate phenomena that this fresh construct of civil society now claims for its domain.

Given the amorphous nature of the term civil society, it may be necessary to reconcile the new and old understanding of the terms if it is to be fruitfully used for analytical purpose. It can be argued, that civil society is not conceptually homogenous, structurally and procedurally. For example, it could be said to be “the arena where contradictory forces contend for domination” (Osaghae, 1998). But of importance for the country’s democratization project, is how civil society can help the people and even the state realize the universal goals of freedom, liberty, egalitarian society and material upliftment of the people.

In western theorizing on civil society, emphasis seems to be, first on the need to curtail state excesses particularly in the area of its attempt to “subordinate every area of social life to its control, regardless of whether it has been captured by and represented previously oppressed classes” (Baker, 1998). The second area of emphasis is the need to recognize pluralism in the society, that is, private sphere that has to be protected from the totalizing tendencies of political power. The only state that can promote the Western agnatic individual freedom and liberty is the “...purposive, yet self-limiting one. Civil society can do business in the long run with a limited, constitutional state. This is because they want a state that will facilitate rather than obliterate administrative power - the growing self reflexivity of society” (Baker, 1998). In Nigeria and in the context of democratic consolidation, this self reflexivity of civil society is just emerging and is yet to take firm root. Thus, living the state with that public power to manipulate their process, structures and functions.

The initial goal of civil society organization was to push the military out of government and return the country to civil rule. The military in government had over-stayed its welcome having failed to act as corrective regimes. It actually became neck-deep in the vices of the civil politicians. After a protracted campaign for democracy, pro-democracy movements were able to force the military out of political power. Though the pact that brought civil rule did not quite give the people control of their governments, for example, the military constitution of 1999 which is still in use is clearly flawed with so much concentration of power and resources at the centre. In fact, the status quo since the First Republic remains intact.

The CSOs in Nigeria have been in the fore front in the fight for the non-inclusive manner these constitutions were drafted and imposed on the people by administrative fiat of the military. A constitution should be a compass with which the ship of state is navigated. But in Africa, it has actually become epi-phenomenon because of the failure to allow it mediate the conduct of political office holders. The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for example, was hurriedly put together by General Abubakar's administration and imposed on the people on the eve of the military disengagement from power in May 1999. The process of its formulation was elite driven and was not subjected to popular debates. This explains why the present constitution is inundated with several contradictions and complexities. The constitutional log-jam that characterized the handover of power to President Goodluck Jonathan after the death of Yar'Adua, is an apt example.

The structural and economic pre-conditions necessary for its effective functioning are not readily available in Africa. For example, while in the West, the modern bourgeoisie with their commercial interest established the rule of law through the market philosophy and practice, the petit –bourgeoisies in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general are getting their wealth and its accumulation through the control and prebendal use of the state apparatus (See for example Baker, 1998; Joseph, 1987; and Dudley, 1982).

This underscores the imperative of strong independent associations to stand between the individual, society and the state. Civil society in the process of democratization should aim at maintaining the boundaries between state and society to prevent, among other things, encroachment upon matters outside state purview and statist centralizing and conformist development.

Popular opinion in Nigeria is harped on the belief that civil society cannot pursue consistently and persistently certain course of action either because they lack ideological and programmatic bases or their leaderships are more concerned with their personal gains. Perhaps, civil society is uncritically integrated into the processes of democratization without the necessary structural pre-conditioning especially in terms of functional separation of state and society. Presently, such relationship in Africa unlike in the West is in a precarious balance because of the totalizing tendencies of the state in Africa, poor financial base, among others.

CHALLENGES FACING CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN NIGERIA

Civil society as conceptualized in the West may not easily fit into the Nigerian socio-economic and political environments. Therefore, it may be difficult to talk about a universal understanding of the phenomenon of civil society in the age of democratization.

The structural and organizational constraints of civil society in Africa emerge, hitherto from the severance of society from the political realm which has led to what Ekeh (1975) calls the two publics, that is, the primordial and civic publics. Till date, civil society is still reticent in proactively involving itself in matters of public interest except where they affect the interest of their members. On few occasions however, they have tried to set the normative order for the state by canvassing alternative course of actions for it. Yet, they are much visible and active when they seek to conflate with the state.

Since 1999, the country has experienced some vibrant and robust associational life. New civil society organizations are springing up by the day in Nigeria. Notable among which are the Joint Action Front (JAF), The Save Nigeria Group, United Action for Democracy (UAD), Campaign for Democracy (CD), Trade Unions such as: The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), and Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC), among others, have joined the fray. They continue to press for more democratic openings and to promote the sanity of the rule of law. In some cases civil society has challenged mis-management and corruption in all branches of government even where such organizations have not been epitome of transparency and the rule of law. In the wake of the campaign for the return to civil rule, some publicly recognized progressive and pro-democracy activists were co-opted into joining the ruling military junta under General Babangida and Abacha and abandoned their pro-democracy constituency. Some are waiting in the wings to jump into the moving train of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) to enrich themselves.

This development in the civil society constituency has led to question the democratic credentials of civil society and its ability to mid-wife and deepen democracy in Africa. According to Gyimah-Baadi (1996) the ability of civil society to help deepen democratic governance and put it beyond reversal remains in serious doubt. For Ekeh (1991) this is among other reasons due to the fact that civil society in Africa is much interested in matters that the state shows little interest in, probably to maintain their autonomy or to avoid being contaminated by the ills of the public realm.

Yet, it would seem that some of the civil society organizations are not above manipulation by some powerful elements in the private sector as recently shown in the failure of civil society to condemn and campaign against the unpopular strike action by the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) over payment of fuel subsidy to those alleged to have breached the fuel subsidy regime of the Federal Government. For civil society to have taken sides with the oil cabal that is milking the country dry is anti-people and in dissonance with the democratic role of civil society.

Furthermore, civil society has failed to innovate in its mode of operation by evolving new political and economic culture in Africa. There is the "tendency to copy not just the constitutions of democracy from the West, but also, and rather incongruously, its norms" (Gyimah-Baadi, 1998). Such practices as in the days of implementing modernization precepts, have failed to bring about political and economic stability to Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. Contemporary activities of civil society are bound to face similar fate unless concrete efforts are made to change its *modus operandi and vivendi*.

Civil society in Nigeria tends to be reactive rather than proactive in engaging the state on matters affecting the people and the polity. More often than not, civil society has tended to rely on government for information and direction, thereby giving the government the head-start on sensitive issues. This may be pinned down to the weak structural and organizational bases of

most civil society organizations. All these go a long way to affect their ability to gauge public opinion and react to them in ways that would favour the democratic course.

In a political system dominated by brokerage politics, civil society is very much vulnerable to state repression and co-option due to, in some cases, its dependence on government for funds and other logistic supports. The lack of financial autonomy of civil society compromises their independent approach to issues and ability to carry out long term plans and programmes. This perhaps explains why they could not insist on a new socio-economic and political order in Nigeria prior to the return to civil rule. Also, with growing poverty in the land, members and the leadership of civil society are likely to capitulate in the face of the present economic realities that has pauperized majority of the political and economic elites. The poverty question therefore, is crucial to roles civil society can play in democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Organizationally, most civil society organizations are weak. Most of their offices are located in urban centers, in make shift buildings with hand picked staff that lacks the requisite skills and experiences to run such organizations. Failure of most civil society to link up with social formations in the rural areas as in the days of the nationalist struggle for independence in much of Africa, has deprived them of the support base they need to carry on a protracted and well organized campaign for an egalitarian and democratic society. This makes most civil society, Africa elitist and or personalized in nature and character.

Consequently, the mobilization orientation of these organizations is limited to urban centers and elite while important social forces in rural areas are neglected. Contrary to what the comparative literature has shown, most civil society in Africa unlike their counterparts in South America is shallow base. According to Ihonvbere (2000), this runs against popular opinion that civil society should be captured and incorporated into popular movements that can engage in political pedagogy that emphasizes the process through which social identities, particularly, among the poor in rural – urban centers can be captured and used to establish new relations between excluded citizens and the state apparatus

Paradoxically, many civil society organizations lack the very democracy they are trying to promote or sell to the larger society. Substantially, internal democracy is almost absent in civil society as its members are treated as second class citizens by their leaders/founders. Unless this abnormality is corrected and their internal operations subjected to the rule of law and separation of powers, particularly in the areas of the use of funds and recruitment and selection of their leaders, its contributions to the democratization process could be vitiated. Does one give what it does not have? For civil society to contribute to reshaping and deepening the democratization of the polity and society, it should first demonstrate that it has what it wants to sell to the larger society which is democracy.

Civil society in promoting the country's democratic agenda has not been consistent and persistent in the face of intimidation and attack by government forces against their activities. The way and manner civil society and labour coalition caved-in after threat from the federal government during the fuel subsidy crisis in January 2012, showed that they cannot engage the state in a protracted struggle as recently experienced in up-rising in the maghreb region. Also, the on-going struggle in Syria has seen the opposition groups take on government forces for months without backing down. Democracy is never won on a platter of gold. It is clear from the fore-going that civil societies in Nigeria are faced with several constraints. What then is way forward? This is the subject the next section addresses.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA: THE WAY FORWARD

In every challenge, there are opportunities. This means, challenges identified in the preceding section of this discourse could be harvested and turned into opportunities for democratic consolidation in Nigeria. However, only multi-dimensional efforts from all stakeholders could help bring about the desired changes that will deepen democracy.

Leadership is key to resolving most challenges besetting the nation's body politic. Achebe (1983) has rightly identified the leadership deficit in all facets of the country's life. Civil society in the democratic project in Nigeria is no exception. Civil society needs visionary and missionary leaders to be able to harness the country's potential and unleash them formational development. Men of integrity should congregate to pull ideas, efforts and resources together in pursuit of goals of national development. A critical mass of men and women sufficiently motivated to serve the common-wealth are urgently needed in this time of transformation. Statesmen are few and far apart in countries of the third world. Among civil society, they are much needed. These are persons whose minds are elevated sufficiently above the conflict of contending parties to enable them adopt courses of action which take into account great number of interests in the perspective of a longer period of time (Magstadt, 2006). Ability of civil society to draw into its fold this caliber of men and women will determine if its impact on society will be widely felt or not.

Yet, this can only take place where corruption is seriously reduced. Corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the entire polity. Corruption has arrested development in Nigeria. Thirteen years democracy, the morally debasing effects of easy money from a grossly mismanaged oil industry with less links to the national economy are still glaringly apparent. Indeed, oil rich Nigeria (is) actually importing gasoline". Given the pervasive nature of this pernicious phenomenon, the future of civil society and the state depend on its drastic reduction.

Indeed, there is a clear link between democracy, accountability and good governance. In most organizations in the public and private sectors, there is no internal democracy, accountability and separation of powers. For civil society to perform its roles in democratic consolidation, it should embrace universal best practices with all its ethos and norms for it to be efficient and effective. Some civil society organizations are run as personal estates by their leaders/founders with little or no element of democracy in its structures and processes. This has curtailed what they can do and how they affect peoples' lives.

Funding is a crucial element in the organization and processes of civil society. Most of these organizations get their funding from international aid and donor agencies and their members in Diaspora. While this practice is not bad in itself, if not properly monitored and managed could compromise the course they set out to achieve. They could have negative consequences for the autonomy of these organizations as their policies and programmes will be subjected to external influences. As the popular saying puts it "he who pays the piper dictates the tune". Civil society should explore and exploit independent sources of finance to run its affairs.

Furthermore, there is need for civil society to build a robust and functional bureaucracy, well staff with skilled and experienced personnel. In a developing country like Nigeria where skilled manpower is scarce, to recruit qualified ones and retain them cost much money. Even after recruitment, for them to work in all nocks and crannies of the country requires motivation that only a steady flow of funds can assure. Also, when such calibers of workers are selected, efforts should be made to ensure that they conform to the global best practices. Civil society organizations should domesticate the core values that have no respect for ethno- linguistic and religious affiliations.

Also, civil society in Nigeria should be linked both at the level of ideas and practice. As it stands, there is so much individualism in the operations of civil society. For broader reach and positive impact, “civil society organizations working in different sectors such as reproductive rights and health, environment, human rights, youths and so on, need to be encouraged to work together and to develop common platform for intervention and participation in shaping policies”. Also, sectoral networking will help among other things in capacity building, transferring knowledge across geographical areas and a national basis for civic engagement.

Now that full-blown party politics is on course in the country, there is need for civil society to carve a niche for itself. The garbage can conception of civil society will do no one any good. Some of them should be separated functionally and structurally from political parties. There are so many civil society organizations in the country that exist merely in names. Proliferation of civil society organizations cannot in themselves guarantee good governance and democratic consolidation. They should connect with the people to achieve relevance.

CONCLUSION

The waves of democratization, its consolidation and sustainable development in Nigeria cannot be effectively realized without civil society. In recent years there has been the flourishing of associational life. One of its outcomes was the return to civilian government after more than four decades of military rule. However, the expectation that the return to liberal democracy will stem the tide of sustainable development, socio-economic and political decay have not been effectively realized with poverty, crime, political/bureaucratic corruption and various forms of administrative malfeasance holding sway. Against these backdrops, civil society is expected to mitigate these crises attendant on democratization in the polity. To keep the democratization and sustainable development process on course, civil society ought to be proactive in engaging state policies and programmes. But they have tended to be more reactive and sometimes non-committal on issues they ought to initiate, control and pursue to its logical conclusion for the benefits of the populace.

The new roles given to civil society in the era of democratic consolidation and sustainable development should be situated within a context. Although the idea of civil society is not new to social formations in Africa, their structures, functions and processes have to be redefined. Efforts should be made to promote capacity building for civic organizations while civic sectoral linkages should be encouraged so that there could be collaboration and complementarity of efforts to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in their activities.

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