Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Participation in Policy Implementation on Poverty Reduction: A Comparative Analysis of Nigeria and Ghana

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Abstract

The paper examines the people's perceptions of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) participation in policy implementation on poverty reduction: A comparative analysis of Nigeria and Ghana. This interrogation is necessary in order to improve the performance of CSOs and participate in the poverty reduction policies in Nigeria by borrowing a leave from Ghana. For proper analysis, key informant interview was carried out and relevant literatures were also reviewed. The paper revealed that efforts have been made by the CSOs to influence government policies on poverty reduction in Nigeria and Ghana for the benefit of the people but Ghana has made more progress. Despite poverty level has decreased in both countries; there is still much suffering in their rural areas. It is worst in Nigeria because of corruption, insurgencies and economic recession. The CSOs in both countries faced repressions and manipulation over the years. From 1990s Ghana CSOs enjoyed symbolic relationship with the state while its Nigeria counterpart struggle for space. The paper recommends that there is need for the governments in both countries to do more by ensuring CSOs participation in policy decisions on poverty reduction. The Nigeria government should borrow a leave from Ghana on building more relationship and partnership with CSOs on policies on poverty reduction. There should be collaborations and consultations between the government and the "major groups" at local levels on policy issues. The CSOs and the target beneficiary should be allowed to take joint ownership of policy decisions, processes and implementation to ensure accountability and transparency in order to reduce poverty in Nigeria and Ghana especially in their rural areas.

Keywords: *Comparative, Ghana, Nigeria, Participation, Policy, Poverty*

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Background to the Study

Globally more than 800 million people are still living on less than $1.25 a day. Much lacking access to adequate food clean drinkable water and sanitation. Majority of the poor people are in sub-Sahara Africa. In sub-Sahara Africa alone, more than 218 million people live in extreme poverty (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017). Nigeria and Ghana are among the countries in sub-Sahara Africa faced with poverty problem for many years.

Nigeria is a federation with 36 states and a federal capital territory. It has a population of about 182.2 million and over 80 million people representing about 64 percent living below poverty line (Opejobi, 2016). Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI) as at 2016 is put at 0.527 and multidimensional poverty index of 0.279 and is ranked 152nd country in the world (UNDP/HDR, 2016). Nigeria has potential to be great considering the endowed natural and human resources at her disposal: the most significant oil exporter with the most extensive natural gas reserves on the continent of Africa. It is unfortunate that it has not fully translated these resources into usefulness for its economic development and still over-dependent on crude oil.

In the case of Ghana, it is a unitary state with a population of about 25.5 million. Agriculture dominates Ghana economic activities and one of the leading exports of Cocoa in the world. Oil was found in Ghana in 2007 and has contributed to the nation earning immensely (GhanaWeb, 2017). The Human Development Index of Ghana is 0.579 and ranked 139th country in the world and with the multidimensional poverty of 0.147. Although, the World Bank stated that poverty has declined in both countries, but the number of poor people has increased due to population growth (World Bank, 2016).

The decline in poverty and the progress made so far is attributed to the growing influence of local, national and global CSOs and networks in driving policy change. People are now conscious that the contribution of CSOs to policies and programmes successes matter a lot. Policy Digest (2013) explains that "Nongovernmental organization (NGOs), community organization, professional associations and other civil society group are regularly called upon to contribute to policy design and implement poverty reduction strategies and their participation is also built into specialized initiative". The CSOs attention is now focused on effective development to ensure poverty reduction and other factors affecting development such as human rights, participatory democracy, social and environmental sustainability and gender equality"

The contribution of CSOs to poverty reduction policies in Nigeria and Ghana is immense. Nigeria and Ghana make for interesting studies in that, these two sub-Saharan nations are both former British colonies that passed through hundred years of slavery colonization and post-colonization before gaining independence in 1960 and 1957 respectively. They also faced locally after independence wicked and corrupt military and political regimes. The two countries are on the western coast of the African continent. This paper, therefore, examines people's perceptions of CSOs participation in policy implementation on poverty reduction: A comparative analysis of Nigeria and Ghana.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study include to:

i. Examine the people's perception of CSOs participation in policy implementation on poverty reduction in Nigeria compare to Ghana.

ii. Analyze the extent to which CSOs participation has influenced government policies on poverty reduction in Nigeria to compare to Ghana.

iii. Explain the extent to which CSOs repressions have hindered participation in policy implementation on poverty reduction in Nigeria compare to Ghana.

Research Questions

i. To what extent are CSOs participating in the implementation policy on poverty reduction in Nigeria compare to Ghana?

ii. In what way CSOs have influenced government policies on poverty reduction in Nigeria compare to Ghana?

iii. To what extent has CSOs repression hindered their participation in policy implementation on poverty reduction in Nigeria compare to Ghana?

Conceptual Framework

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

The concept of CSOs varies and it depends on the perceptions of the authors and writers. Vandyck (2017: p.1) defines CSO as "an ecosystem of organized and organic social and cultural relations existing in the space between the state, business, and family. It builds on indigenous and external knowledge, values, traditions, and principles to foster collaboration and the achievement of specific goals by and among citizens and other stakeholders". In another perspective, CSOs often viewed as alternative associations established to check on state power for the existence and sustenance of democratization process aligning it with neo-liberal governance agendas (Hammett, 2014). Other writers conceived it as a watchdog of the state and never its appendage or supporter (Friedman, 2010).

In the opinion of Conor (1999), civil society composed of independent associations which develop a dense, diverse and pluralistic network. Habib (2005) holds the view of a heterogeneous set of voluntary associations upholding a different set of political and social agendas culminating in diverse. Therefore, CSOs in its umbrella form refer to organizations that are voluntary, not-for-profit, and non-state actors, which include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), international NGOs (INGOs), community-based organizations and voluntary associations. According to VanDyck (2017), there are different typologies of civil society which include:

i. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) comprising NGOs, faith-based organizations, and community-based organizations that have an organized structure and mission and are typically registered entities and groups;

ii. Online groups and activities, including social media communities that can be "organized" but do not necessarily have physical, legal, or financial structures;

iii. Social movements of collective action and identity, which can be online or physical;

iv. Labour unions and labour organizations representing workers and

v. Social entrepreneurs are employing innovative and market-oriented approaches for social and environmental outcomes.

The CSOs and the citizen's involvement are to bring about improving change in overall quality of the decision-making and also the variety of scientific opinions. In the opinion of Passarani, (2017) the input of CSOs contributes to the process of production of knowledge. In other words, CSOs provide insight to influence the decision-making process and align the belief system of regulators to their own.

Passarani (2017) explains that the complexity and uncertainty faced every day by policymaker necessitate the involvement of the CSOs to gain rationality, legitimacy and credibility in its decision making. Feldman & March (1981. p. 178 quoted in Passarani state that, "using information, asking for information, and justifying decisions regarding information have all come to be significant ways in which we symbolize that the process is legitimate, that we are good policy-makers, and that our organizations are well managed".

However, Milbourne and Murray (2017) argue that civil society activities have been facing growing restrictions in recent time through increased regulation. These regulations are often embedded in law or through ideological deprecating the local state and allied civil society organizations while extolling the virtues of market economics and large corporations. According to Hills et al. (2015), the unfavourable austere economic conditions also make the matter worst in most impoverished societies. "Fields of service, including housing, health, social care, and criminal justice are all experiencing major policy upheavals, leading to impoverished services for the most vulnerable" (Milbourne and Murray2017).

Poverty
There are different dimensions of poverty. First, it linked with various alienations and deprivations (UNDP, 2006). In the opinion of Anyanwu (1997) such deprivations include among others, the lack of human capabilities, reduced life expectancy, poor maternal health, illiteracy, inadequate nutritional levels, insufficient access to safe drinking water and perceptions of well-being. Second, it means physiological and social deprivations, vulnerability, inequality, violation of fundamental human rights (World Bank Report, 1999). Third, it includes the apparent disadvantage of the local community or the wider society or nation to which a depraved individual, family, household or group belongs (Zupi, 2007). According to Ajulor (2013), poverty is a complex human phenomenon with the unacceptably low standard of living.

There are different ways of measuring Poverty. Three of them include the absolute poverty, relative poverty and Human Development Index (HDI). The theory of absolute poverty was later developed further as the theory of poverty line. It usually defined as the cut off standard of living which a person is classified by counting the people whose income is below the poverty line. The new international poverty line was raised to $1.90 per day regarding Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in 2011 from $1.25 in 2005 (World Bank, 2015). The global poverty line is normally updated periodically to reflect the changes in the cost of living across the world, and it is used primarily to track extreme global poverty and to measure progress on global goals set by the World Bank, the United Nations, and other development partners (World Bank Report, 2015).

Relative poverty stresses social exclusion from the regular pattern of life in society through lack of income (Aina, 2014). The measurement is in three ways first, through the low-income family statistics, second, through income and, third, through disposable income. Analysis of poverty through low-income family statistics is to first take the own government level of income support plus an allowance for housing as a guide. The amount added up to approximately 140% of income support (Moore, 2000). Measuring poverty through disposable income is used in the European Union (EU) by setting a threshold at 60 percent of median household disposable income, with each person attributed to the adjusted income of the household to which he/she belongs (OECD, 2009).

Moore (2000) explains further that there are problems with statistics of poverty based on income; are: first, only a snap shot of poverty at one time is shown. It does not show how long people have been living in poverty. The longer people have been in poverty the worst is their situation. Second, all statistics underestimate the extent of poverty; they exclude the homeless and those in residential care.

Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite measure of life expectancy, literacy, education and worldwide living standard. It is used to distinguish whether the country is developed, developing and underdeveloped and also to measure the impact of economic policies on quality of life. Human Development Index was introduced by the United Nations in 1999, and it is computed for a specific welfare and suppressed to a value of between 0 and 1. The cut-off points of the HDI for grouping countries from 2014 are: HDI below 0.550 is low country, 0.550 – 0. 0.699 is at the medium range, 0.700 – 0.799 is high range while 0.800 and above is the very high level of HDI (UNDP/HDR, 2016).

In Nigeria, poverty is extreme. In spite of its substantial economic progress and social advancement, there is still much human suffering, and the country faces tremendous challenges in pursuing its development (Gangas, 2017). Poverty in Nigeria increased from the absolute poverty of 54.4% in 1996 to 60.9% in the 2010 (Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, 2012) incidences of poverty released in 2012 by Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics. The economic indices of growth which were used to declare Nigeria as the largest economy and the highest GDP in Africa in 2015 by the World Bank were not interpreted to impact on the life of the common man in Nigeria. According to Maduabum (2016), Nigeria remains one of the poorest countries in the world as it could not achieve any of the eight goals by 2015 when Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was terminating and replaced by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

According to Aderonmu (2010), Poverty is more rooted in the rural areas than the urban centres in Nigeria. He attributed the poverty challenges to the neglect and failure of the successive government since 1960 to extend the poverty reduction policies and programmes to the rural areas in Nigeria. In the opinion of Alila (1998), the reason why poverty is more pronounced in the rural areas is lack of good governance, poor management/implementation, corruption, lack of commitment by government and weak development support institutions for this segment of the society.

In Ghana, the overall poverty rate has declined as a result of strong economic growth in the past two decades. However, Borgen (2015) argues that the three regions in the northern Ghana have seen only marginal decreases. Poverty rates in the northern Ghana are two to three times the national average, and chronic food insecurity remains a critical challenge there. The dry savannah region covers roughly two-thirds of Ghana's northern territory. Unlike the south, where there are two growing seasons, the plains of the north are drought-prone and vulnerable to climate change and present relatively limited economic opportunities (Cooke, Hague, and McKay, 2015). The challenges of the rural areas in Ghana include subsistence farming, lack of infrastructure, insufficient agricultural inputs and technology, rural, urban migration, youth unemployment and lack of access to education (Borgen, 2015).

CSOs Participation in Policy Implementation
The operational phase of any policy is the implementation stage. It is where policy translated into action with the hope of solving some public problem (Theodoulou and Kofinis, 2004). Elmore (1985) identifies four main ingredients for effective implementation. It clearly specified tasks and objectives that accurately reflect the intent of the policy, a management plan that allocates responsibilities and performance standards to subunits. The citizens must be actively involved to direct the policy to the best satisfaction of the receiving locality (Imurana and Annin-Bonsu, 2014).

Participation is the essence of modern democracy; it is important that the beneficiary of a particular policy be allowed to make input not only at the stage of the policy conception but also at the implementation. Oviasuyi (2010) recognizes the fact that there is need to involve the target beneficiary in every stage of the policy implementation process to ensure transparency and accountability. He is of the opinion that a programme carried out with the consent of the target beneficiary will not be sabotaged. Oshita (2008) explains that the problem non-involvement of the target beneficiary in the policy-making and implementation in Nigeria dates back to the colonial period when the authorities set the agenda and formulated policies convenient to the objectives of the colonial administration. Policies were context-dependent and were creations of the colonial administration. Policies imposed without the consideration of the interest of the colonial people and their environment. At independence, the public policy processes continued to be top-down in conception, design, formulation, implementation, and evaluation. The local elite that replaced the colonial officers continued with the paternalistic and known-it all approach to public policy making and undermined citizen participation as an essential part of the public policy development process. The years of military rule in Nigeria helped to legitimize this imposition of public policies and their civilian governments' counterpart in democratic dispensation did not do any better as they have not been able to democratize policy decisions even under the democratic regimes (Oshita, 2008).

The contributions of CSOs to shaping government policies in the contemporary world cannot be overemphasized. Civil society is now widely recognized as an essential 'third' sector. Its strength can have a positive influence on the state and the market. Civil society, therefore, is seen as an increasingly important agent for promoting good governance like transparency,

effectiveness, openness, responsiveness, and accountability. Civil society can further proper management in many ways. First, by policy analysis and advocacy; second, by regulation and monitoring of state performance and the action and behavior of public officials and third, by building social capital and enabling citizens to identify and articulate their values, beliefs, civic norms and democratic practices; fourth, by mobilizing particular constituencies, particularly the vulnerable and marginalized sections of masses, to participate more fully in politics and public affairs; and fifth, by development work to improve the wellbeing of their own and other communities.

Theoretical Framework
Essien (2014) states that civil society is an old term that was first introduced in the 17th and 18th centuries. It has recently been revived by a variety of thinkers to emphasize the capacity of societies to organize themselves through the active cooperation of their members (Diamond, 1999). The notion of civil society is contrasted with rival theories which see social order either as the necessary outcome of economic and technological forces or as an imposition from an outside agency such as the state. At the same time, the idea of civil society also represents one version of the democratic ideal: the aspiration toward a form of social life in which individuals would set the patterns of social life by reasoned discussion and responsible choice (Karp and Sullivan, 1997). Many scholars are of the opinion that civil society is a product of modern capitalism and formal democracy.

Moyo 2010 cited in (CIVICUS, 2013) explains that CSOs played major role in many contexts in Africa, in the fight for independence of African countries but were neglected after independence because one-party system was in vogue which does not tolerate much opposition. He theoretically identified their type of CSOs in the context of Africa which includes first, Collegial and Collaborative – this is where states work closely with service delivery CSOs. Second, Adversarial – Where state fiercely clamps down on CSOs, particularly human rights groups. Third, is the situation that CSOs do not develop any relations with the state. The attention of this study is to focus on the collegial and collaborative theory and to examine the extent of CSOs participation in the poverty reduction policies concerning Nigeria and Ghana.

Research Methodology
The paper relied on secondary data with the review relevant literatures and internet sources. Key informant interview was also carried out on the leaders of Trade Unions, Business and Industry; scientific and Technological Community and farmers. Their leader was interview in both Ghana and Nigeria. the paper also used materials from the study carried out by the Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC) in collaboration with WACSI in 2013.

Comparative Analysis of CSOs in Nigeria and Ghana
Chikoto and Uzochukwe (2016) explain that the government of Nigeria has faced pressure from the CSOs and international community over the year on the repressive tendencies of successive administrations in Nigeria. Oshikoya (2014) argued that pressure has been mounted as a result of past military authoritarian rule and massive government corruption especially surrounding its oil economy. According to Obe (2015) and Oshikoya (2014), there

are 54 registered CSOs with fewer in the northern part of the country. It is because the population in the northern states in Nigeria are dominated by Muslim community who may not tolerate too much of antagonism in governance. They accept injustice and endure inequality and poverty. In Nigeria, the political landscapes are bedeviled with the plethora of challenges such as polarization, distrust, human rights violations, corruption and authoritarian regimes. These attributes provoke adversarial relations with the CSOs community. The CSOs in the Southern part of Nigeria leverage on greater autonomy to operate and highly educated labor force. They are more likely to attract funds from an international donor than their northern counterpart (Walker, 1999).

CSOs in Nigeria are not required to register with the federal government (Obe, 2015; Honey and Okafor, 1998; Oshikoya, 2014; Chikoto and Uzochukwe, 2016). They must be registered or incorporated under the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA Act) of 1990, if they wish to enjoy the benefits of having a legal personality, or the limited tax advantages that may be available to them (GoN 1990). The CAMA Act also regulates for-profit organizations. Consistent with historical and current trends, some CSOs consider registration a tool that the government uses to meddle in and potentially restrict their operations (Bratton 1989; Elone 2010; Dupuy, Ron, and Prakash 2014). As at the time of carrying out this study law is before the national assembly that will be used to regulate the activities of CSOs. Nigeria government now considers CSOs as capable of undermining the activities of the government. Another fear being entertain by Nigeria government is that CSOs with political or government accountability orientation and who may challenge the performance and budgetary activities and those that may bring to light the corruption or mismanagement the government make their registration cumbersome and may be denied or revoked for political and national security reasons, as well as any other unspecified reasons (Chikoto and Uzochukwe (2016). The Foreign Contributions (Regulation) bill imposes some restrictions on the ability of organizations to operate independently and receive contributions from foreign sources (Obe, 2015). If this bill is finally passed the offending CSOs will bag two-year imprisonment (NNNGO, 2015).

In Ghana, there are four levels of CSOs: communal groups, community-based organization (CBO), national CSOs and the networks and coalitions. "Communal groups and CBOs are believed to be fast growing in Ghana. Most of these are cooperative associations, which tend to be easily formed by community members, informal, loosely organized, have membership accession criteria, and exist to enhance the socio-economic well-being of members" (Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC) and West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), 2013). In the Study carried out by GACC in collaboration with WACSI in 2013, found that "most CSOs in Ghana are engaged in public sensitization and education, advocacy, or capacity building and professional development. Motivations identified behind decisions to specialize in a particular area included responding to identified social needs, funding and capacity".

CSOs in Ghana also have the problem of mistrust in their relations with the state. The state sees CSOs as confused bodies that are not articulating and aggregating their demand, and therefore they do not have the support of the state despite the fact that the state recognized them in the government's medium-term development framework. As a result of this, the CSOs rely on external support financially. The CSOs in Ghana are not under pressure or restricted like their counterpart in Nigeria.

GACC and WACSI (2013) argue that 'the main impacts of CSOs in Ghana are on influencing public policy, empowering citizens and responding to social interests'. CSOs in Ghana have been known to influence public policy in three main ways: through being at the table during the early stages of policy formulation; advocacy; and indirectly, by influencing the choices made by political actors. CSOs in Ghana also empower people to better their lives physically and economically and help them to engage better or participate in community and state issues, in two main ways: capacity-building and awareness creation. Another area of impact is in the ability of CSOs to respond to social interests. CSOs in Ghana undertake this function in three main ways: providing social amenities, undertaking voluntary work, and influencing social norms and attitudes. However, this impact can be slow to see. For example, CSOs advocated for some years before family planning was added to the National Health Insurance Bill. CSOs' input is visible in governance and education issues.

The CSOs in Ghana are, however, faced with numerous challenges but the major one is lack of funding, competition for external funds, lack of adequate communication, the lack of local ownership of decisions and actions, the short duration of programmes, and competition for visibility and funds among CSOs. Other problems are: the lack of a common voice from CSOs, and CSOs seeing each other as competitors rather than partners; the lack of downward accountability by CSOs, which means that CSOs often undertake projects without input from constituents; the overdependence on funds from foreign donors, to the extent that Ghanaian CSOs have failed to seek other ways of sustaining themselves, calling into question their sustainability; and the lack of staff members with sufficient training to carry out their functions, whether in advocacy or service provision.

Findings

1. It is discovered that the CSOs in both Nigeria and Ghana have been participating in poverty reduction programmes. Although, they have not done much to influence government policies for the benefits of the rural people and the governments have not done much to ensure CSOs' participation. However, the CSOs in the form of NGOs have contributed to poverty reduction by carrying programmes that benefited the rural people. For example, there are numerous NGOs involving in poverty reduction programmes in Tamale Municipality in the northern Ghana where there is a high level of poverty without much support from the government (Ghana.Net, 2017).

ii. The interviewees in Nigeria disagreed that poverty has reduced in the rural areas while those of Ghana agreed that poverty has decreased. In overall, the World Bank (2016) argued that poverty has declined in both Nigeria and Ghana. This study further discovered that there still much suffering in Africa as poverty and hunger persist. In Ghana, despite the fact that there has been a substantial overall decline in the incidence of poverty, it is still prevalence in the rural areas, especially in the north. In Nigeria, economic recession and Boko Haram insurgency have allowed the condition of living in the rural areas to deteriorate further. Most of the gain recorded has not been interpreted to affect the lives ordinary people in Nigeria positively.

iii. The interviewees in Nigeria agreed that factors are militating against CSOs. While that of Ghana undecided in overall, the study showed that there are factors militating against CSOs in Africa. The CSOs in both countries had encountered state repression and manipulation over the years. Of recent; Ghana CSOs enjoyed a symbolic relationship with the state while its Nigeria counterpart has continued to struggle for space. Chikoto Schltz and Uzochukwe (2016) explain that CSOs in Nigeria is regulated by Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA Act) of 1990 and that the government makes the registration difficult especially if the government of Nigeria discovered that the CSOs might challenge its poor performance on budget based on corruption and mismanagement. CSOs are also denied registration based on political, and national security reasons; The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Bill was also to restrict the ability of CSOs to operate independently and receive contributions from foreign source (Obe, 2015) in the case of Ghana the CSOs are not facing many regulations as in Nigeria they are very active and have contributed immensely to influence government policies

iv. The interviewees agreed that further that CSOs could be useful in influencing poverty reduction policies in Nigeria and Ghana if well-funded. CSOs can do well if they help the government to promote the implementation of government policy in the rural areas through proper advocacy CSOs can adequately participate in ensuring poverty reduction in Africa if they are politically neutral CSOs have the capacity and capability to contribute to policy reduction policies by engaging the government and the local people.

Conclusion and Recommendations
The study has been able to establish that the participation of CSOs in poverty reduction policies in Africa could be an antidote to Africa development challenges if the governments of Africa countries are ready to accommodate the constructive criticism of the CSOs. It is evident that Poverty in Ghana has reduced than it is in Nigeria which is still battling with economic recession and Boko Haram insurgency. Ghana CSOs are allowed to operate freely and they were able to contribute not only to political process but have participated in poverty reduction policies for poverty reduction in Ghana. It is not the same in Nigeria where the government now perceived CSOs as enemies and a bill to further regulate the operation of CSO has been passed, in this bill, the government will be empowered to check the activates of CSO because they are now seen as security risks in Nigeria. It is also worth to note that the CSOs have not been engaging the local people enough especially the people in the rural areas. There is no connection between the primary groups like the women, the youth the farmers, etc.

Lastly, we further conclude that the government should engage more of the CSOs in the local communities in the target beneficiary of a particular policy than the CSOs in the urban centres. It should also be noted that policies are often forced on people and since the people are not consulted for their input into the policies, they, in turn, distance themselves from the government's genuine programme meant to improve their lives and can even go as far as sabotaging such programme (Ajulor 2018).

The importance of the civil society, nongovernmental organization and epistemic community and the mass media in influencing policy for the good of the people cannot be overemphasized. But the interest of these groups cannot also be taken for granted. The question is if their interest is contrary to the interest of the target beneficiary of the policy, what happens? Therefore, even when the civil societies are involved, the target beneficiary of the policy should be able to take ownership of the policy that will affect their lives. The non-inclusion of the target beneficiary in the formulation and implementation of policy has serious Implication on policy failures in Nigeria.

In light of the above study, we recommend that there is a need for government in Africa to ensure the participation of target beneficiaries in policy decisions in Africa rather than CSOs alone. There should be collaborations and consultations between the government and the "major groups" at the local levels on policy issues if poverty is to be reduced in rural Africa. CSOs should realize that they are partners and not competitors; CSOs need to find new ways of generating funds locally to fund their activities, pay their staff and sustain their organizations; CSOs should harmonize their activities; and CSOs should develop their human resource functions to redress the impact of high attrition levels, do more to build the capacity of staff members internally and make every effort to attract and retain experienced staff.

Target population and the CSOs should be allowed to take joint ownership of policy decisions, processes and implementation to ensure accountability and transparency and prevent sabotaging good policies and programmes that will bring about development effectiveness and reduce poverty in the rural areas in Africa.

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