

Relationships between FBOs, NGOs and the state

The relationships between FBOs, between FBOs and NGOs, and between both and government vary. Most of the FBOs studied are members of umbrella organizations, but not all of them collaborate with other FBOs, especially across faith/denominational boundaries. NGOs and FBOs may collaborate, for example CSADI works with two Muslim hospitals (including the Al-Noury Hospital) to deliver treatment and care for PLWAs in Kano and its environs. However, FBOs only cooperate with organizations that share their values, restricting their choice of partners.

In some instances religious and secular organizations compete with government for scarce resources; in others they collaborate. For example, SWAAN works with the local government in Nassarawa and with other NGOs and FBOs.

Both Christian FBOs and NGOs find it difficult to work in largely Muslim Kano State. POD-ECWA responds by downplaying its religious identity and concentrating its activities in villages with mainly Christian populations (the result of earlier conversion efforts). It does not work with Muslim organizations or NGOs, which in Kano State are almost all run by Muslims. NGOs working in this context find that traditional religious leaders (and Islamic FBOs) can provide them with legitimacy and access to local communities. Thus the context in which an organization works matters and this may affect its performance more than any religious/secular difference.

Conclusions and implications for policy and practice

- A standardized preference for NGOs, based on their assumed advantages over governments, has led to the emergence of many less than ideal types of NGOs, donor dependence and a lack of local accountability. Religious organizations should be aware of this history in their quest for additional funding.

- FBOs and NGOs engaged in development have many similar characteristics but differ in some important ways, with respect to their mission, funding sources, organizational characteristics and modes of operating. However, these characteristics and the ways in which faith is manifest in their activities also depend on the context in which they operate. Decisions by donors and policy makers about whether and how to engage with FBOs must be made on a case-by-case basis, based on an understanding of individual organizations and their context.
- NGOs and FBOs both have strengths. For example, the wide reach, legitimacy and moral authority of FBOs can make them appropriate partners for government and NGOs. This is especially so in highly religious areas, where traditional leaders are also religious leaders, and when dealing with religiously sensitive issues. NGOs may have greater expertise and access to international funding, but can be more successful in such contexts by working with FBOs and religious leaders.
- Additional research is needed to develop a thorough comparative understanding of FBOs from different religious and denominational traditions; whether and how faith is manifest in both FBOs and NGOs; the nature and outcomes of partnerships between FBOs and other organizations; and the outcomes, effectiveness and impact of FBO and NGO programmes. Involving the organizations concerned can provide them with improved evidence on the outcomes of their activities and encourage them to act on the findings.



Focus group discussion about POD-ECWA's work (photo by Comfort Davis)



Religions and Development Research Programme

Are FBOs distinctive? Religious and secular NGOs' approaches to HIV/AIDS-related work in Nigeria

It is often claimed that faith-based organizations (FBOs) have distinctive characteristics and approaches that give them advantages over non-religious NGOs when engaged in development activities. An apparent increase in religiosity in many countries, renewed international interest in religious organizations and donors' ongoing search for more effective ways of delivering development programmes mean that it is important to assess claims about FBOs' distinctiveness and supposed advantages (see Box 1). This study makes a start by examining two Muslim, two Christian and three secular indigenous NGOs active in HIV/AIDS-related activities in Kano and Lagos States in Nigeria.

The research examined whether and how FBOs' approaches to development activities are distinctive, by comparing them with NGOs engaged in similar activities in the same local contexts. It aimed to

- understand the history of FBO and NGO operations in selected States and Local Government Areas (LGAs), and to examine their relationships with each other and government
- compare the development aims, values, activities and organizational characteristics of FBOs and NGOs
- assess the perceived performance, outcomes and effects of FBO and NGO activities.

Box 1: FBOs' supposed advantages

- They draw on spiritual and moral values
- They can mobilize religious believers estranged by secular development discourse
- They have a strong organizational structure that extends to rural areas and are trusted
- They are close to the poor and responsive to their needs
- They are well-networked nationally, including in government, and are much respected
- They have good international links
- They are less dependent on donor funding than NGOs
- They have capacity and expertise in key development areas.

The study focused on

- Kano and Lagos States, the former a largely Muslim state with an Islamic government that has recently adopted Shari'a law and the latter a religiously mixed state in the south
- programmes related to HIV/AIDS, because (a) there has been much international funding for such activities and (b) it is likely that religious and secular organizations adopt different approaches.
- well-established and reputable organizations, so that comparisons would not be undermined by ineffective performance or allegations of malpractice and corruption.

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Further information

Davis, C., A. Jegede, R. Leurs, A. Sunmola and U. Ukiwo (2010) *Are Faith-Based Organizations Distinctive? A Comparative Study of Selected Religious and Secular Non-Governmental Organizations in Nigeria*, Birmingham: RaD WP 56.

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NACA and UNAIDS (2010) UNGASS Country Progress Report (January 2008 - December 2009). National Agency for the Control of AIDS and UNAIDS.

http://data.unaids.org/pub/Report/2010/nigeria_2010_country_progress_report_en.pdf

Case studies of FBOs and NGOs engaged in HIV/AIDS-related activities in Nigeria indicate that

- Donors' and policy makers' decisions about whether and how to engage with FBOs must be made on a case-by-case basis, based on an understanding of individual organizations and their context – neither a general preference for FBOs nor a standard approach is appropriate, any more than it is for NGOs.
- NGOs and FBOs are not necessarily alternative partners for development activities: joint working may be particularly appropriate in certain religiously sensitive contexts.
- Additional research is needed to thoroughly understand the role played by FBOs and NGOs in development and to assess the effectiveness of their programmes.



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The study concludes that the FBOs and NGOs studied have many similar characteristics, but also that FBOs are distinctive in several ways and are perceived to have a number of advantages over secular NGOs.

Background and methodology

Islam has been established in Nigeria for centuries and Christianity since colonial times. Both play important roles in health, education and welfare provision. The numbers and scope of NGOs have expanded more recently, especially in response to poor state service delivery, the effects of structural adjustment policies, and external funders' preference for funding NGOs. These trends have encouraged States and other levels of government to seek partnerships with non-state organizations.

The first case of AIDS in Nigeria was reported in 1987. From 1.8 per cent of adults in 1991, HIV/AIDS prevalence had probably increased to 5.8 per cent in 2001 (and was estimated at 3.6 per cent in 2007). Especially after 2000, the government sought to curb the increase and to address the needs of people living with AIDS (PLWHAs) (nearly 3 million in 2009, and over 2 million AIDS orphans)

Its efforts have raised sensitive issues, as has the proliferation of NGOs attempting to implement HIV/AIDS-related programmes, especially in largely Muslim areas, where they are perceived as donor driven and lacking in credibility. Organizations engaged in awareness raising, counselling and testing, care and treatment, and the provision of support for PLWHAs and their families were selected for study (see Box 2).

The FBOs and NGOs selected for study included some that specialize in activities related to HIV/AIDS and some that are engaged in such activities as part of broader development programmes. To compare organizations operating in local contexts with different religious compositions and explore their links with government, comparable FBOs and NGOs were identified in one or two LGAs in each state:

- Ikorodu, which is equidistant from Lagos and Ikeja, the capital of Lagos State
- Nassarawa and Tarauni, both adjacent to Kano metropolitan area. POD-ECWA's Kano State branch is based in Nassarawa, but the difficult environment has led it to operate in villages with mainly Christian populations. Those studied are in Tudun Wada, more than 100 Km south of Kano.

The case studies were based on semi-structured interviews with selected local government and FBO/NGO staff (and with religious and other traditional leaders in Kano State), focus group discussions with beneficiaries and other local residents, available documentary information and observation. The study was undertaken by four Nigerian researchers and the data assembled during a 2-3 week fieldwork period in each location. The study relied mainly on information provided by and the views of key informants, so care must be taken in drawing general conclusions, especially on the performance of FBOs and NGOs.

Box 2: The case study organizations

Kano State

■ Nassarawa and Tudun Wada LGAs

NGO: Society for Women and AIDS in Africa (SWAAN)

FBO: People Oriented Development of the Evangelical Church of West Africa (POD-ECWA) (Christian)

■ Tarauni LGA

NGO: Community Support and Development Initiatives (CSADI)

FBO: Al-Noury Specialist Hospital (Muslim)

Lagos State: Ikorodu LGA

NGO: Humanity Family Foundation for Peace and Development (HUFFPED)

FBO: Nasiru-Ilahi Fati Society of Nigeria (NASFAT) (Muslim)

FBO: Methodist Church of Nigeria (MCN) (Christian)

FBO: Redeem AIDS Programme Action Committee (RAPAC) of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) (Christian)

Main findings

Comparing FBOs and NGOs

The study did not find significant differences in the development-related aims, values, activities and management style of FBOs and NGOs.

- The organizations studied largely share a commitment to humanitarian and service delivery aims; some are also engaged in development, advocacy and conflict resolution activities, especially those exposed to international development thinking.
- FBOs generally justify their activities, including their HIV/AIDS-related work, in religious terms and use religious language and practices in their work. In addition, both Christians and Muslims are encouraged to spread their religion, so FBOs believe that they have a responsibility to evangelize, and often see their humanitarian activities as a means to that end.
- NGOs, in contrast, express their mission and values in secular humanitarian terms, even when their founders, employees and volunteers have religious motivations, as many do in a society where almost everyone considers him or herself to be religious. Despite this, observers consider NGOs to be less able and willing to adhere to religious principles in their practices.

The design of FBO and NGO programmes and their organizational characteristics differ.

- An organization's values influence its HIV/AIDS programmes, for example, which groups are targeted, with only the NGOs (CSADI, SWAAN) targeting high risk groups who engage in behaviour of which FBOs disapprove, including sex workers. Organizations' willingness to advocate

condom use by the unmarried varies, with religious organizations stressing abstinence and faithfulness. Some foreign funders (especially those with religious affiliations) are willing to accept religious objections to condom use, enabling some FBOs (both Christian and Muslim) to access international funding.

- NGOs have a predominantly material focus, emphasizing improved physical wellbeing (through providing treatment and livelihood support), while FBOs combine material and spiritual aims. This influences the content and delivery of their programmes. Most beneficiaries seem to prefer FBOs' combined material and spiritual focus, which is seen as being more holistic.
- All the FBOs studied recruit staff from within their own faith tradition, at least for senior positions. Recruitment policy for junior staff and volunteers varies: some FBOs are less restrictive, to facilitate working in contexts with a religious composition different from their own faith affiliation. NGOs have non-discriminatory recruitment policies, although they may seek to ensure representation from both religions amongst their staff and board members.
- All the organizations have a top-down management style, in which founders, board members and senior staff take all the major decisions. This is stronger in the FBOs, where the authority of senior individuals is reinforced by their perceived status as leaders in wider religious bodies.
- FBOs display religious symbols through the dress of their staff, in their facilities and on their vehicles. They also (like one of the NGOs) observe daily prayer rituals.



Focus group discussion with SWAAN beneficiaries (photo by Comfort Davis)



Focus group discussion about POD-ECWA's work (photo by Comfort Davis)

Perceptions of the outcomes and impact of HIV/AIDS programmes

Organizations perceived as committed and reputable were chosen for this study. Unsurprisingly, their leaders, staff, local stakeholders and beneficiaries had positive perceptions of their performance, with few differences between FBOs and NGOs. However:

- while some beneficiaries feel that NGO advocacy of condom use is likely to be more effective, others prefer FBOs' focus on abstinence and their use of moral and religious language .
- the perceived quality of services matters most, judged in terms of the services provided, local presence and the frequency of contacts with local communities.
- few, if any, NGOs and FBOs do systematic assessments of the outcomes and impact of their activities, although those that receive official donor funds have to monitor progress against objectives. However, FBOs believe that whether their activities comply with religious values and injunctions is an important criterion for assessing performance.

The comparative advantages of FBOs and NGOs

Many beneficiaries feel that FBOs, in general, have advantages over NGOs (e.g. a long history, an ongoing presence, higher levels of trust, greater financial independence, and autonomy to set locally responsive development agendas). FBOs' (partial) financial independence depends on religiously mandated giving from their members and local congregations, which is significant for most of the FBOs studied, especially POD-ECWA, NASFAT and MCN.

However, several also rely on international donor funding (as do the NGOs), and in one case (NASFAT) on income from its own business investments. For example, the Al-Noury Hospital originally relied solely on (and continues to receive) religious giving (such as *zakaat*). However, it also receives international funding channelled through government. In 2009, 48 of its 72 staff and its testing and treatment programmes were funded from PEPFAR (the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief), channelled through a consortium of five organizations led by Catholic Relief Services. RAPAC also receives funds from this and similar sources.

Nevertheless, for some functions NGOs may have advantages, for example, greater expertise.