

Civil Society Organisations and Public Policy Influence: The Nigerian Experience in the Fourth Republic

MICHAEL A. POPOOLA, DAVID O. ALAO
Babcock University, Ilisan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Abstract. One of the key ways by which the government responds to the challenges which arise from governance from time to time is the formulation of public policy. Public policies are expected to promote broad based socio-economic growth and harness the views and aspirations of every social class of the country.

However, the government, either by accident or design, undermines the concerns of the spectrum in the society. For this reason, the involvement of non-governmental actors like Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in public policy process is imperative. This research sought to unearth the extent to which CSOs in Nigeria were able to influence public policy in the country and it discovered that the efforts of CSOs in this regard resulted into minimal success. Their policy influence were limited by several factors such as the failure of the government to accept CSOs with open arm, the aura of secrecy which surround government documents and activities and the inept manner the CSOs sometimes go about their agitation for policy influence among others.. The paper recommended that for public policy to match with practice, the government must come into terms with the crucial role of CSOs in public policy and give them the necessary support to function effectively and efficiently. CSOs are also advised to learn a better way of pursuing their agitation for efficient policy influence. The research is historical and it depends mainly on the analysis of secondary data.

Keywords: civil society, public policy, policy influence, policy process, policy engagement, peacebuilding

1. Introduction

The socio-economic development of a nation unarguably constitutes the central focus of every sovereign state. In performing these functions, government encounters challenges from time to time which it needs to respond to. The response may take the form of an ad-hoc arrangement to proffer a temporary solution or through the formulation of a policy that is aimed at a more enduring panacea to the issue at stake. Government also formulates policies to ensure optimal performance of its functions and to guarantee the maximum benefits of governance to the citizenry.

Public policy can be described as a dynamic, intricate and interactive system through which challenges that are of public nature are identified and tackled by creating a new public policy or by the modification of an existing one (Momoh and Quadri, 2015). The onus of formulating and implementing public policy lies with the government or government agencies, while that of policy influence resides with the actors outside the government circle.

Public policies are expected to promote broad-based economic growth, improve basic services, promote a conducive political environment and ensure that the views of the poor are considered

in policy discussion. This is why the active involvement of non-state actors, like civil society, is required in the policy process to galvanize and present the aspirations of the masses to the policy makers and as well bring about a progressive synergy between policy formulation and effective implementation.

The strength of democracy as a government of popular participation lies in the ability of individuals and groups to contribute their will to the general will. A democratized political system would not only give room for constant interactions between the state and non-state actors, it would also value the imputes of non-state actors like civil society organizations, whose engagement with the state could have positive influence on the state. This agrees with the view of the incremental approach to decision making which states that decisions emerge after a compromise between different actors who sometimes have conflicting goals and priorities.

Civil society constitutes the sector which is capable of challenging the state over the issues of transparency, efficiency and legitimate building. It is considered a welfare sphere where the course of the masses can be adequately defended. Hence, the involvement of civil society organizations at every stage of public policy process is imperative. While emphasizing the importance of civil society organizations in public policies, Copic (2000) opines that any decision or policy made by the government without the consideration of the interested group may be termed 'legal' but not 'legitimate'. According to her, the only thing that boosts the efficiency and effectiveness of actual policies is when the process of decision making is synergetic and different actors are identified, acknowledged and carried along in the process. She says further that mutual Obstructions may arise as a result of ignoring one of the partners in the decision making process and that in turn, may make power to lose its essence.

While emphasizing the role of the "Third Sector" (civil society) in public policy, Gordon (2001) opines that 'harnessing the support of the public, the audience and the private sector can have a critical influence on government

attitudes. This is what is called 'policy influence'. Gordon posits further that policies which reflect the views of civil society are more likely to be effective and sustained than the policy which is imposed on the people from the center.(top down) The involvement of civil society would guarantee full monitoring in order to ensure full implementation of the programme particularly if such NGOs are sincere and truly reflect the aspiration of the society.

In some developing states, public policy stands alienated from social aspirations and representativeness. In such states, the concept of democracy only exists in principle but defective in practice. This often results into wide spread corruption, abuse of power, diminution of the political space and dwindling voter participation. All these create a wide gap between the government and the governed. This is why civil society, which serves as the people's voice, needs to go beyond reactive actions and move to the stage of creative and sustainable engagement with the state, particularly on the issue of public policy. The central focus of this paper therefore is to assess the level of involvement of civil society organizations in public policies in Nigeria. This is to determine the extent to which Nigerian government makes its governance system open for the participation of civil society organisations, the vibrancy of civil society organizations in the country and the extent to which civil society organizations were able to influence public policies in the state. The importance of this is to stress the fact that CSOs are not supposed to be locked in zero-sum game with the government, rather their roles should be complementary to the government's effort of developing the state.

The scope of this work will cover the role of civil societies in public policy formulation and implementation with specific reference to budgeting, formulation and passage of bills, enhancing the capacity of government institutions, peace building as well as advocacy for electoral reforms. This is by no means limiting their invaluable roles to those mentioned above. The research adopted historical approach and relied mainly on the

analysis of secondary data inclusive of relevant test books, Journals and Internet materials.

2. Conceptual Clarification.

For the purpose of avoiding any ambiguity, it will be appropriate to clarify the basic concepts used in this paper. This is necessary because the concepts may be given different interpretations in another context.

2.1 Civil Society Organisations

Civil society organization connotes any organization which operates between the state, the private sector and the household but interacts with the state to demand for concession and call for accountability and transparency from the state. It is an arena where the citizens act collectively to mold, constrain and restrain the state power so as to make power holders responsible to the citizens they represent. However, the interactions of civil society organizations with the state are not with the intention of replacing the state but to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of the state. That is why Aderounmu (2010) defines civil society organizations as the various voluntary associations of the mass of the people that operate in the public spheres and with the goal of influencing governance without taking over power.

The above definitions aligns with the position of Hendricks (2002) who views civil society as a public sphere which gives room for the various discourses and ideas to be voiced and politically made efficacious. He contends that civil society's activities are channeled towards influencing public affairs as it acts as networks of public opinion which communicates the people's point of view to the government. Civil society organizations include; professional organizations, trade associations, labour unions, women groups, faith based organisations, community base groups and other Non-Governmental Organizations (Akume, 2012).

Civil society organizations can influence public policy through the performance of activities such as advocacy, educating the policy makers

and the entire citizenry, embarking on research to provide alternative analysis, informal oversight, independent monitoring, policy support and service delivery

It must be noted, that the degree to which civil society organisations can influence the government depends on the power, influence and the resources at their disposal. The availability of social and economic resources gives them privilege access to useful information and personnel that will enable them to be more organised and gain access to the state. Therefore, when we are talking about the ability of civil society organizations to influence the government policies, we may really be referring to the strong and influential groups within civil society that have sophisticated political strategies to access government and influence policy rather than the smaller or semi-organised community based groups. This is why civil society organisations need to always engage in coalition building. Coalition is the only strategy that can make both the powerful and the weaklings within the arena work together as a team.

2.2 Public Policy

Public policy can be described as an action taken by the government to address an issue of public concern by making laws, regulations, or decisions, which are pertinent to the problem at hand (Ezeigwe, 2013). It can be described as measures adopted by the government for the intention of creating changes in the state of social system, including changes in the policy system itself". Public policies are meant to achieve some values; either values as ends in themselves or values as instrument to achieve other ends. In words of Dahida and Maidaki (2013) it is a mechanism or course of action pursued purposefully by the government to achieve an intended objective of impacting the lives of the citizenry in a positive way. Theodoulou (1995) posits that public policy involves not only the decision to pass a law. it also covers other actions of implementing the law, enforcing and evaluating it.

It has also been defined as a system of courses of action, regulatory measures, laws and funding

priorities concerning a given topic promulgated by a governmental entity or its representatives. According to Anderson (2011) public policy is a relatively stable, purposive course of action or inaction, pursued by the governmental actor in dealing with a problem or matter of public concern. public policy may cover both the formal and informal sector of the society.

In a nut shell, public policy is all about identification of issues, defining what the issues are, placing them on political agenda, formulating policy to address them, implementing the policy and evaluating the extent to which the policy has achieved its objective

Public policy may cover a wide range of social, economic and political affairs. Such as education policy, food policy, industrial policy, employment policy, electoral policy, foreign policy, exchange rate policy and so on.

2.3 Policy Influence

Public policy process includes stages such as agenda setting, policy formulation, policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Policy influence refers to the ability of external actors or non-governmental actors to interact with policy process with the aim of influencing policy position, approaches and behavior at every stage of the process. (Court, Mendizabal, Osborne and Young, 2006) The right to formulate and pronounce public policy in response to any issue unarguably resides with the government. But since the development of a nation does not depend on the government alone, several actors including corporations, non-profit organizations, interest groups and some powerful individuals compete or collaborate to influence policy makers to tailor their decision in a particular way that would suit the position which the individual group advance.

Suffice it to understand that each stage of the public policy process involves a variety of actors. Court et al (2006) opine that some actors are important across the process while some other actors play key roles at certain stages of the process. Hence, for non-governmental actor

to make any effective influence on public policy, they must understand the actors involved at every stage and be acquainted with the appropriate strategy and technique of exerting pressure and communicating with the actors in order to have maximum policy influence.

3. Influence of CSOs on Public Policy

3.1 Budget

The national budget is an annual framework through which the government manages the economic development of a nation. It is an important policy instrument for a government to deliver goods and services to its citizens (Ibrahim, 2005). Civil society organizations can get involved in the budget process to ensure that the interest of the masses and the marginalised are well taken care of. The involvement of CSOs in budget circle can take the form of advocacy, partnership and networking, tracking and monitoring as well as participating in public hearing.

The crucial role which CSOs can play in budget process was publicly acknowledged in 2017 by the Nigerian Minister of Budget and national Planning, Senator Udo Udoma as he said that “Civil society can involve in advocacy monitoring and evaluation of the budget and through that strengthen budgetary control”. He said further that CSOs can engage in independent monitoring as well as collaborate with budget office in monitoring and evaluation of field work to ensure that funds are actually used effectively for what they are meant for” (Guardian, 2017)

Some civil society organisations in Nigeria engaged in budget monitoring by analyzing budget estimates to determine the extent to which they reflect the needs of the people. For instance, the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and three other NGOs formed a coalition to engage in budget monitoring and to mobilize the citizens for participation in the budget processes. The network emphasised the need for public hearing on budget as well as the democratisation of government audit reports which would enable the public to scrutinise government spending

(Aderounmu, 2010). Similarly, ActionAid made several efforts to mobilize the citizens for involvement in budget process, especially on issues such as HIV/AIDS, education and agriculture. The Center for Public Private Cooperation (CPPC) also held workshops and seminars to build the citizens capacity on budget monitoring and tracking.

These efforts encouraged some other CSOs to start monitoring the compliance of government Ministries and Departments with budget estimates and the level of effective implementation.(Giwa, 2008). The consciousness of Nigerian government in budget monitoring was aroused as well. For instance, in 2009, the budget office of the Ministry of Finance, in conjunction with the representatives of some CSOs embarked upon a nationwide monitoring of government projects (Giwa, 2008). Furthermore, the advocacy of CSOs for open budget system has made the National Assembly budget a bit open. The National Assembly now break down and itemize its budget rather than presenting a block budget as it used to do. The National Assembly also held a consultative forum with CSOs on the budget for the first time in 2016. (Igbuzor, 2017).

While one cannot deny the fact that the efforts of CSOs on budget have resulted in some sparing positive results, the obvious truth is that CSOs in Nigeria have not been able to impact the budget process in a dramatic way. The budget circle contains; budget preparation, budget approval, budget implementation, budget monitoring and budget evaluation. But CSOs have not been actively involved in influencing the national budget either at preparation stage or at the implementation stage. They have not been able to ensure that the views of the poor whom they represent are collated and considered as inputs by the various Ministries and Departments of the government. The reasons adduce to these are many. Apart from the fact that many civil society organizations in Nigeria lack the required skill to adequately participate in budget process, the current structure or budget circle gives little or no room for any effective involvement of non government actors in the process. In most cases, civil society

organizations find it difficult to gain access to information relating to the budget like the record of government revenue and expenditure. Public officials believe that budget preparation is the exclusive right of the government, so an aura of secrecy still envelops the budget process. Added to this is the lack of legal framework that may assist the CSOs to get the needed information.

3.2 Initiating and Facilitating Passage of Bills

CSOs can engage in dialogue with the state parliament in order to generate change through initiating, influencing or facilitating the Passage of Bills by the parliament. The effort of CSOs in Nigeria in this area is noticeably successful on the issue of freedom of information.

It is common knowledge that the right to information is very crucial to the enjoyment of all fundamental human rights. Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that, “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, regardless of frontiers (CHRI 2008). The objective of the Right to Information (RTI) is to lay down a principle that would guarantee the right to be informed about administrative document as a necessary tool in ensuring that citizens can track, monitor and inform themselves on the activities of the government (Ibrahim, 2005).

Realising the fact that the conduct of government business in secrecy would only breed lack of transparency and accountability, some civil society organizations in Nigeria formed coalitions under various names such as, (a) Right to know Movement, (b) Media Right Agenda and (c)Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI, 2011). The coalitions presented the freedom of Information Bill to the National Assembly in 1999 but the bill experienced some challenges and it was dropped. It was represented again in 2003. The two chambers of the National Assembly passed it in 2007, but it was vetoed by the President, chief Olusegun Obasanjo who refused to sign it into law. Not relenting in their effort to see the Bill become a law, the civil society coalitions represented it

again at the commencement of the sixth National Assembly in 2007 under the presidency of Musa Yar'Adua. The Bill was eventually passed into law in 2011 under the presidency of Goodluck Jonathan and it received the assent of the president in the same year (OSJI, 2011).

CSOs in Nigeria also engaged with the parliament to facilitate the passage of the Federal Budget Bill, Fiscal Responsibility Bill and Public Procurement Bill. Another issue similar to the above was the seemingly arm-twisting of the National Assembly by civil society organizations in 2010 to empower the then Vice President to perform some functions of the president after the incumbent president, Musa Yar'Adua had left the country for 80 days for medical treatment. During the absence of the president Yar'Adua, some powerful cabals within the government decided to prevent the Vice President from functioning as Acting President, capitalizing on the fact that the ailing president did not transmit any letter to the National Assembly to empower the Vice President to serve as Acting president. Nigeria was like a nation without a leader then and the scenario was one of a serious national embarrassment to the country. In their bid to save Nigeria from the proverbial Sword of Damocles dangling on its neck, civil society organizations like 'Save Nigeria Group (SNG)', and 'Enough is Enough' mobilized Nigerians on a protest to the National Assembly to demand for the recognition of the Vice president as Acting President. The protest made the National Assembly to adopt a resolution referred to as 'Doctrine of Necessity' which recognised the Vice President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, as Acting President.

From the foregoing, one can say that CSOs in Nigeria have achieved some measure of success, particularly on the issue of FOI Act. But this can at best be referred to as staggered success. CSOs in Nigeria need more robust interaction with the country's lawmakers so as to make more impute into the legislative process. It is common knowledge that access to government documents in Nigeria is an uphill task, even with the enactment of the FOI Act. Rather than rest on their oars, CSOs ought to have continued the

struggle until policy and practice are matched and the content of the Act is fully implemented. The inability of CSOs to record much influence in this area may not be unconnected with the inability of most CSOs to embark on rigorous research in order to come up with very credible and feasible proposals or alternative analysis that would sound convincing to the legislators. If the policy position put forward by the CSOs is not evidence based or well packaged and communicated in a straight forward, clear and concise way, the lawmakers may not accept it as credible solution. Moreover, one cannot rule out the fact that the culture of suspicion and mistrust still exist between the government and CSOs. Although, the government tries to feign that it has cordial relationship with CSOs as it sometimes extends invitation to CSOs to participate in discussions on some issues, but the reality on ground shows that the government and its agencies are still very skeptical about ideas coming from non-government actors.

3.3 Enhancing the Capacity of Government Institutions

CSOs can influence public policy through their interactions with government institutions and public officials so as to equip them with the necessary skills needed to make them more effective, efficient, and conform to international best practices in discharging their duties of serving the public.

For instance, Civil society organisations like the CLEEN Foundation usually interacted with the Nigerian Police by providing training for them in order to boost their performance in the task of crime detection, provision of adequate security for Nigerians and policing elections (Chukwuma, 2011). The Network of Police Reform in Nigeria (NOPRIN) also engaged in building the capacity of the Nigerian Police especially on the issue of human rights and conflict management. The organisation which was committed to promoting safety, security, justice, police accountability and respect for human rights was established to provide opportunity for civil society to make a positive impact on police reform. This idea came on the heel of the police ineffectiveness in detecting,

preventing and investigating crime, NOPRIN conducted several seminars and workshops at various locations in Nigeria to boost the capacity of the police by acquainting the law enforcement agency with the best practices around the world, especially on the issues of crime prevention, humane way of dealing with crime suspects and other acts that could help to revamp the bad image of the police force in the country. NOPRIN also compiled a 'News Report' on the activities, performance and conduct of the police for some years. The documentation was to serve as advocacy tool that would lead to reforms and improvement in police performance and public relations.

3.4 Advocacy for Constitutional Reform

The advocacy for constitutional reform was championed by the Citizen's Forum for Constitutional Reform. The organisation observed that the problems plaguing Nigerian democracy were rooted in the inadequacies and shortcomings of the 1999 constitution. It had the objective of working towards achieving a people driven and process-led constitution that would serve as the basis for enduring democratic governance in Nigeria (Jibrin, 2004). From 2001 and 2002, the group organised debates and consultations with stake holders at national, state and local levels, on the contentious issues in the 1999 constitution. A national conference was conveyed in 2002, which produced the Model Constitution that served as the basis of the group's engagement with the government. The group advocated a constitution that would develop in a bottom-up participatory and inclusive manner and whose ownership Nigerians would claim rather than the military imposed 1999 constitution. In response to their request, the National Assembly set up a joint-committee of the National Assembly on the review of the 1999 constitution and this has resulted in some constitutional amendments.

3.5 Advocacy for Electoral Reform

Based on the fact that elections in Nigeria were always fraught with irregularities and lack of transparency, CSOs formed a coalition known as 'Electoral Reform Network'. The coalition

engaged in campaigning for electoral reforms which would deal with the knotty issues in Nigeria electoral process and guarantee free and fair elections in the future. Their advocacy was partly responsible for the inauguration of the Justice Uwais-led 'Electoral Reform Committee' (ERC) by Musa Yar'Adua (Ezeigwe, 2013). Following the inauguration of the Electoral Reform Committee, CSOs formed a group known as 'Civil Society Coordinating Committee on Electoral Reform'. The group submitted several memoranda to the (ERC) to offer useful suggestions on how Nigeria could improve the electoral process to meet with international standard. Its memoranda contained recommendations such as (a) appropriate sanction and punishment for electoral offences, (b) provision of unambiguous regulations for the conduct of both candidates and their political parties, (c) the need to strengthen the law enforcement agencies to curb the excesses of politician and political thugs, (d) the need to build an enlightened, informed and socially conscious electorates, (e) dealing with post-election tension, (f) creating a conducive environment for independent and impartial national election observers and (g) the adoption of the 2002 African Union (AU) Declaration on Principles Governing Democracy among others.

The Electoral Reform Committee presented its report (which included several recommendations made by civil society coordinating committee) to the President of Nigeria on December 12, 2008. In line with the recommendations of the ERC, the President forwarded 7 Bills to the National Assembly. When the Bills experienced some delays at the National Assembly, the civil society Electoral Reform Network swung into action again by organizing a Civil Society-Legislative Consultative Forum at the National Assembly complex in Abuja on September 15, 2009. The forum which attracted some national legislators, civil society groups and the media discussed the urgency of passing the Electoral Bill into law and the need for the review of the 1999 constitution generally. Eventually, the Electoral Act was passed by the National Assembly after making some amendments in 2010 and it was signed into law in the same year (ERC, 2011).

This narration makes it abundantly clear that CSOs made some tremendous influence on pushing for the formulation of the 2010 Electoral Act and in setting the process of the constitutional amendment in motion. While their efforts in this regard deserve some credit, they can be encouraged to always keep the tempo of their struggles alive rather than being complacent with sporadic success. For instance, not much has been heard about CSOs struggling to ensure the full implementation of the Electoral Act. Perhaps, if the same zeal they demonstrated to see the law passed, was sustained, Nigeria would have gotten over some electoral challenges which plague its democracy now and make it remain at the level of nascent democracy. Added to this is lack of sustained coalition effort. CSOs form coalition only when there is a serious issue to address. Soon after, they disintegrate into fragments and continue to compete for donor's fund. Building a sustainable network would have helped them to always present themselves as a formidable team to the policy makers for more results. It would have also enhanced the capacity of the different groups within the network as each group would draw from the expertise of the other members of the group.

3.6 Contribution to Peacebuilding

The precise number of NGOs in Nigeria particularly those involved in peacebuilding or intervening in conflict situations is difficult to determine while at the same time, their sincerity of purpose is challenging. However, Smith (2010) was of the opinion that as at 2009, many thousands are operating in Nigeria. Some of these organisations operated either as branches of international NGOs or as local NGOs.

Direct violence, militancy and of late, terrorism have significantly polarized and destroy many communities and still destroying some in Nigeria. Such violence include Boko Haram onslaught in Nigeria with specific reference to North East, militancy in the South South and South East, while kidnapping ethno-religious restiveness are common all over Nigeria. The process of moving from war to peace which include peace building to a large extent could not be left to the government alone and this

explains the involvement of civil society both local and international ones in this process. In order to assist the communities move above circle of violence, division and negative feeling towards each other, there is that need to establish a new peace environment that will meet the aspiration of both parties which the government through lack of political will might not be able to achieve.

Smith (2010) noted that various pillars of peacebuilding included political and institution, military and security, social, economic and environmental aspects. Though political, military and security reside largely within the control of the government, the paper argues that the roles of the civil societies are paramount in this respect. Among the numerous civil societies engaging in peacebuilding in Nigeria are the African Centre for Peace Research, Empowerment and Documentation, African Values and Heritage Initiatives (AVAHI), African Youth International Development Foundation (AFYIDEF), Centre for Peace Across Borders (CePAB) and African Centre for Development, Peace and Justice

Among the role played in Nigeria in respect of peacebuilding, Uzuegbunam, A.O. (2013) that “NGOs embark on problem solving workshops and seminars aimed at internal conflicts like the religious crises in Kano and Kaduna states, Bauchi and Plateau States, Enugu-Ezike crises in Enugu State where especially the women groups had series of meetings resulting in the following: 1) Deciding to engage in dialogue to resolve mutually intolerable problems; 2) Coming together to map the elements of the problems and the relationship that perpetuate the problems; 3) Uncovering the underlying dynamic of the relationships and beginning to see ways to change them; 4) Planning steps together to change the relationships and; 5) Devising ways to implement their plan”.

A critical review of the roles of the Civil Societies in peacekeeping reflected that most of the local ones see the activities as a means of attracting cheap funds for the international donor organizations and government to enrich themselves. In addition, little is presented on

their websites to develop a well-informed opinion about the challenges and successes while the organizations that are international in scope could be instrument in the hand of foreign governments to destabilize the host government. Reinmann, (2005) corroborated the above by that there has always been accountability issues, commercialization of their activities, and ideological issues or political interpretations of their rising influence which might limit their success.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has established the fact that the government does not possess the capacity or mechanism to monopolise public policy. Non-government actors like civil society organizations have a very crucial role to play in influencing what the government comes up with as public policy in order to make such represent the interest of the entire segment of the society, ensure good governance and reflect the international best practices. CSOs in Nigeria have through advocacy, made some efforts to influence public policy in the country that have resulted in some measure of success. However, their influence on public policy has been limited due to a combination of factors ranging from their inability to undertake empirical research through which they can suggest credible alternative to the government to the lip service which the government officials pay to acknowledging civil society as a critical partner in development.

The paper recommends that the government should make the political space more liberal and public process more transparent to make it easy for civil society participation. Civil society organizations have become more prominent, more diverse and have gained increase recognition as critical partners in development globally. The government of Nigeria can take a cue from the Ghanaian government which extends invitation to CSOs on regular basis to participate in deliberations and projects- a situation which has benefited the Ghanaian government immensely. CSOs also need to sharpen their intellectual and organizational capacities in order to have a constructive

engagement with the government. The study further recommends that the CSOs be more committed in their involvement in peacebuilding while this further requires their sincerity of purpose, minimize corrupt practices and be more accountable in respect of disbursement of resources at their disposal. Finally the CSOs with similar goal should endeavor to collaborate in their efforts to achieve greater result as this will assist in pulling resources, personnel and expertise.

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