DOCUMENTING FAITH-DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORY IN AFRICA: CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONTESTATIONS

Abstract

This article focuses on faith and work particularly in Africa. It highlights the important role of faith-based organisations in development. Specifically, it reviews the history of faith-based social provisioning; however, particular attention is devoted to the contributions of faith-based organisations towards enhancing delivery of social services to the disadvantaged and vulnerable people in Africa. To compliment the foregoing, a comprehensive review of existing relevant literature on achievements and contradictions attributed to faith-based social provisioning is examined. In short, this article concludes that Faith-based Organisations, in line with their myriad social and developmental activities have become a veritable institution that caters for the vulnerable and disadvantaged people, particularly in remotes areas and societies where expenditure on public services has been cut by the governments.

Keywords: Faith, Faith-based Organisations, Development, Africa, Social Provisioning.

Introduction

Long before the emergence of issues surrounding the civil society group in many parts of the world, social scientists have grappled with the idea that people live in a two-sector world that comprised the state and market/economy. However, the emergence and attainment of prominence of activities of civil society organisations in recent times have engendered a shift from the previous two-sector to a three-sector analysis (Edwards, 2004). These separate sectors, state, market/economy, and civil society or Non-governmental Organisations play different but interconnected and indispensable roles in society. The first (the arrangement is not in accordance with their importance) is the state or what is sometimes referred to as the public sector, it. is constitutionally mandated to ensure that certain goods are provided for public use. Unlike the private sector, public sector has nobody, persons or groups that could be recognised as its owners. Therefore, it is not a profit-making enterprise and its resources are used for public good and consumed mainly within the same society (James, 1983; UN, 2003).

The private sector, on the other hand, is seen as a profit-making oriented sector that is not interested in the provision of goods and services for other purposes rather than profit making. This sector is owned by private individuals and corporations and the aim is to distribute profits or whatever dividends accrued to the sector (Salamon et al., 2003). The third leg of the three sectors and the most relevant to this article is the civil society or what is known as Non-governmental Organisations (Faith-based Organisation is a variant of Non-governmental Organisations or Civil Society Organisations). The attributes of civil society groups hinge on their non-profit character, social mission, non-payment of taxes and volunteering (Salamon et al., 2003). As evidently displayed in many countries, civil society organisations emerge to provide for the needs of marginalised and vulnerable people, particularly in societies where expenditure on public services has been cut by the governments (Shefner, 2007). Indeed, the provision of social services by civil society organisations transcends meeting the basic needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in most parts of the world. They have also spread their service-provisioning dragnets to other areas of human endeavours such as gender relations, food security, health, education and many other developmental projects (Scholte 2004; Wodon & Ying, 2009).

Conceptualising Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs)

Faith-based social services have long existed even before the word “faith-based” was coined (Cnaan & Boddie, 2002). Indeed, the tradition and practice of working with the poor, vulnerable people and the oppressed began through the hands of individuals from the church. For long, faith communities have sustained the practice of being a source of social service support for communities and societies throughout the world. Even, before the enactment of faith-based legislation, churches especially in Europe and America were already at work helping and assisting people in many communities in the world (Cnaan & Boddie, 2002).

Over the years, the social provisioning role of faith organisations has spurred intensive academic discussions; there is a growing body of literature emphasising the increasing positive role of faith and faith-based organisations in enhancing social change. Beginning from the 1990s, faith-based organisations have risen significantly to prominence among activists, policymakers and donors, hence, their increasing feature in the scholarly literature on development and civil society (Tadroz, 2010). Consequently, FBOs have come to be recognised as important actors on the landscape of development in many parts of the world.

In spite of the substantial recognition accorded FBOs and the increasing number of academic research endeavours in this arena, definitions of what actually constitutes FBOs tend to vary and are somewhat shrouded in controversy (Haar & Ellis, 2006; Sider & Unruh, 2004). Although, there are ample definitions of what faith-based organisations represent in the literature, yet a substantial number of these have more at variance than in common. This consequently indicates, that a single, common, all-encompassing, and generally acceptable definition of faith-based organisations is still elusive. Indeed, this lack of conceptual and definitional consensus is one of the problems affecting how to determine the effectiveness of faith-based programmes.

Researchers and scholars alike have attributed the lack of definitional consensus of FBOs to factors such as the extremely diverse groups that make up faith communities, which in turn makes meaningful generalisation very difficult. In the words of Payne (2005), FBOs are as diverse as the religious leaders, pastors, the congregations, the lay leaders and the denominations that create them. Some other factors responsible for the complication and inexactness of definitions of FBOs include the following: FBOs play different roles, take different forms and shapes in their engagement in social and welfare work; FBOs as an analytical category are complex, often unclear and difficult to grasp; and the portrayal of FBOs in the literature as organisations that are non-governmental and not driven by profit motive like the private sector, while there are many FBOs that benefit from high levels of government funding and exhibit some of the features of bureaucracies (Payne, 2005; Lewis & Kanji, 2009).

By implication, the elusiveness of a common definition has brought in its wake ambiguity around the concept of faith-based organisation (Goldsmith, Eimicke & Pineda, 2006). As a result, many scholars have concluded that faith-based organisations are easily recognisable than defined. However, an extensive literature search on the definition of faith-based organisation reveals that most studies on faith communities did not actually define or conceptualise FBO, but rather focus on outlining its features, as well as engaging in classification that emphasises what FBOs do rather than what they are (UNDP, 2014).

Against the background of elusiveness of a single, comprehensive definition of FBOs, this article undertakes an analysis of some operational definitions employed in the literature. As depicted by Bano & Nair (2007:9), FBOs are “non-profit, tax-exempt organisations”. One conspicuous shortcoming of this definition is that it fails to differentiate clearly between FBOs and their secular counterparts that do not pay tax and are also non-profit making organisations. Clarke & Jennings (2008:6) and United Nations Development Programme (2014) refer to FBOs as “any organisation which derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within the faith”. As concise as this definition is, its weakness lies in its silence on the role of faith in development.

For Ibrahim, Wakili & Muazzim, FBOs are “religions that engage in social provisioning and seek to generate social change” (Ibrahim, et. al 2006, p 4); while Berger (2003: 16) who chose to use the term ‘religious NGOs’, refers to them as “formal organisations whose identity and mission are self-consciously derived from the teaching of one or more religious or spiritual traditions and which operate on a non-profit, independent, voluntary basis to promote and realize collectively articulated ideas about the public good at the national or international level”.

Leurs & Tomalin (2011) described faith-based organisation as “NGO-type that arose or reshaped themselves in response to the new political climate that sought to elevate the role of faith traditions in many aspects of public life, including international development”. In an attempt to produce a comprehensive definition of faith-based organisation, UNFPA (2009, p. 12) refers to FBOs as “religious, faith-based, and/or faith-inspired groups, which operate as registered or unregistered non-profit institutions”. Although this definition is not all-encompassing, yet, it has helped in delimitating FBOs as ‘religious’, ‘faith-based’, or ‘faith-inspired’; a categorisation which is of utmost importance in differentiating FBOs from other ‘non-tax’ and ‘non-profit’ civil organisations (Smith & Sosin, 2001).

Closely related to the above is the fact that the dearth of a comprehensive definition of ‘faith-based organisation has made scholars to resort to the use of typologies in an attempt to explain the concept in a way that will help development practitioners and other stakeholders understand the nature of faith-based organisations they collaborate with (James, 2009). The adoption and use of typologies has helped significantly in differentiating FBOs from other secular non-governmental organisations for the purpose of comparative analysis of their effectiveness in social delivery (Leurs, Jegede, Davis,Sunmola, & Ukoha, 2010). For instance, Goldsmith, Eimicke and Pineda adopted four typologies which include faith-based religious organisations and coordinating bodies, faith-based sponsored projects and organisations, faith-based non-profit and ecumenical interfaith (Goldsmith, Eimicke & Pineda, 2006).

For the purpose of this article, FBOs are described as “organisations that derive inspiration and guidance for their activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within that faith” (UNDP, 2014).

Faith and Works: The Discourse on Development

Faith, as commonly used among development scholars, is unarguably one of the most topical issues in the discourses centred on voluntary social service delivery or helping people in need. Faith and religion are vital to development. Indeed, both have become fields of socio-philosophical and sociological interests. Particularly in times of social and political changes, faith and religion have become subjects of immense public and scientific attention. As amply demonstrated in the literature, the global relevance of faith and religion in development is on the increase. Marshall (2007) argued that the growth in the number of religious followership in developing countries since1950 has outgrown the population increase within the same period. For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, there has been an increase in the proportion of Christian population from 9% to 57%, while the population of adherents of Islam has equally increased from 14% to 29% since 1900 (Pew Forum, 2010).

Until recently, development agencies had for long sidestepped issues relating to faith, religion, faith organisations, and FBOs’ roles in development (Lunn, 2009:93; Dugbazah, 2009). In effect, religion had suffered from long-term and systematic neglect in development theory, practice and policy making. The neglect, however, has a far-reaching effect on faith and religion in both the development arena and academia (Severine & Rakodi, 2011).

Diverse explanations were offered by scholars to situate appropriately reasons for many years of neglect of faith in development. VerBeek (2000) specifically traced the reluctance of development agencies to embrace faith organisations to the dearth of research work in the area of spirituality in development literature**.** He clearly strengthened his argument with findings from survey that appeared in three well-respected development journals between the years 1982 to 1998. VerBeek (2000) discovered that within the period mentioned above there was no published article on the topic of 'spirituality', only 16 articles were published on 'religion', while 120, 163 and 170 articles were published in the areas of environment, gender and population respectively. The above, to an extent captures the effect of long-term neglect of the role of faith in development.

In line with the argument highlighted above, literature is replete with wide-ranging factors that buttress the long term neglect of faith-based organisations in development. Rakodi (2012) particularly notes how the history of religious competition for dominance and state control in Europe had resulted in the preference for church-state separation. This act nonetheless occasioned reluctance on the part of many agencies of government to be linked with activities that could be seen as favouring one faith over another. Also, the general belief in the capacity of governments and potency of governments' economic policies to deliver prosperity, economic stability, growth and wellbeing is another plausible reason that elicited such neglect (Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011).

Closely related to the above is what Hovland (2008) identifies as the secularisation of project, an ideological stance advanced by Enlightenment thinkers, which stipulates a stern bifurcation of religion from politics in liberal democracies, and which eventually resonated into realignment and relegation of religion to the private sphere. By this, faith, particularly from Western perception, was regarded as an irrelevant issue as far as development was concerned. There is consensus in the literature on other factors responsible for the initial side-lining of faith and faith communities in development. Factors such as lack of reliable methods to address spirituality and the fear that discussion on faith might degenerate into conflict in fragile areas are common. Another commonly cited reason is the claim that social development programmes of faith-based organisations are usually garbed in the cloak of proselytisation (Mburu, 1989; Johnson & Wilson, 2000).

Within the last few decades, however, the relationship between development agencies and faith-based organisations has changed dramatically. Increased engagement of faith-based organisations in recent times, which has consequently replaced their previous estrangement, has been largely attributed to the improved understanding of the role of faith in development. One common example is a research work titled “Development Dialogue on values and Ethics” sponsored by a World Bank unit. The focus of the work is on improving understanding of faith, ethics, and service delivery. In 2000, the success of this work culminated into collaboration between development agencies such as The Department for International Development (DFID), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and several faith-based organisations so as to ensure that some countries are able to realise the Millennium Development Goals (Severine & Rakodi, 2010).

Specifically, recent remarkable interests in faith-based human service organisations by development agencies have been propelled by two major events that occurred in the United States. The first is the promulgation of the welfare reform legislation of 1996 and the Charitable Choice provisions that afforded religious organisations the opportunity to compete for government contracts. The other is the support of administration of President George W. Bush in his 2000 presidential campaign which subsequently metamorphosed into the creation of a special office in the White house to promote the involvement of FBOs in government-supported human services (Ebaugh et al, 2003; Clerkin & Gronbjerg, 2007; Conradson, 2008; Tadros, 2010). As a whole, the aforementioned factors have in many ways contributed significantly to the removal of some of the factors (regulatory and contracting) inhibiting the participation of faith-based organisations in development.

Reacting to the disparagement levelled against the contributions of faith-based organisations in the face of their active status in development, Goulet (1980:481) described development experts of the period as “one-eyed giants”. Recently, however, the influence of secular orientation of development has waned considerably; and this has culminated into the re-conceptualization and change in development thinking. This no doubt has helped considerably in placing the twin issues of religion and faith on the front burner of development. Thus, the issue of development now transcends adopting increased Gross Domestic Products (GDP) as the primary indicator of progress. Indeed, the connotation of development in recent times, has now given way to more inclusive and holistic concerns for human well-being and environmental sustainability (Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011).

As amply demonstrated in the literature, the waning influence of secular orientation of development has also contributed towards the current surge in popularity of faith and spirituality among development practitioners and donors. The rationale for this paradigm shift has been attributed to a plethora of issues. One of them is the recent recognition and appreciation of poverty as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Others include the stance and claim of post-development scholars that critiqued the Western dominance of development debates; outright rejection of local culture and agency by development stakeholders; and lack of recognition for the contribution of social movements and grassroots mobilisation as a vehicle for enhancement and realisation of alternative visions of wellbeing and means to achieving social change (Escobar, 2006). Closely related to this is the adoption of the contribution of Wilber & Jameson (1980) that highlights that gauging of development should be premised on people's values and not only on things external to them. In addition to this, the human development and capability approaches which are well conceptualised in the works of Amartya Sen have also helped significantly in integrating religion fully into development thinking. In the words of Sen (2006), religion is an important force that determines people's values and what they consider as valuable and worthwhile.

Aside the factors emphasised above, literature is equally inundated with a constellation of factors responsible for FBOs' rise to prominence in policy, practice and, increasingly in scholarship. Notable among the lot is the effect of neoliberal ideology and policies on the disappearance of the welfare state and the emergence of civil liberty organisations as reliable providers of services. The prominence and dominance of neo-liberalism in the late twentieth century which partly resulted into the deregulation of the state to provide social services has occasioned a situation where more attention is shifted to the role of FBOs in the delivery of social services (Kelleher & Klein, 2011; Ingle, 2014). In fact, the operation of neoliberal policies in many parts of the world and its attendant hardship on the poor ushered in an increased role for civil liberty organisations to fill the gap left behind by governments in terms of meeting welfare needs (Ingle, 2014). A relevant example is how Pentecostal churches in Nigeria gained popularity through their provision of spiritual and material assistance to alleviate hardship occasioned by economic adjustment policies of the government (Marshall, 1991).

Another relevant factor that has brought faith-based organisations to prominence is the changing nature of scholarship in civil society. Mainstream literature on civil society had been criticised on the ground that it was skewed in favour of development of NGOs at the expense of FBOs. This is sufficiently discussed in the works of scholars such as Benthall & Bellion-Jourdan (2003) and Clarke (2006). These scholars identified different types of civil society and established how the literature has focused almost exclusively on secular NGOs.

Also, the rise of identity politics in many parts of the world has unwittingly led to an explosion of FBOs, most especially, among adherents of Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. The increasing wave of activities surrounding identity representation and recognition has led to the creation of large number of FBOs. Closely related to this is FBOs' successful service delivery among the excluded groups in many deprived urban-rural neighbourhoods and the portrayal of FBOs as repertoires of spiritual sustenance and social networks (Tadros, 2010). In the same manner, the growing recognition of faith communities as organisations that have a comparative advantage over their secular counterparts in service delivery is vital to their recent prominence in development. FBOs' holistic approach which proffers solutions to both the spiritual and physical well-being of people has been highlighted as another noticeable institutional advantage of faith-based organisations (Tadros, 2010). As the above indicates, few other writers have linked the rise in prominence of faith-based organisations to the fact that faith communities, unlike their secular counterparts, see and treat people as "subjects of their lives" instead of "objects of development" (James, 2009).

In the 1980s and early 1990s events soon eclipsed whatever neglect faith might have suffered in development. Faith-based organisations which were hitherto engaged infrequently by development organisations now experience intensive engagement from donors despite earlier predictions from some development scholars that modernity would inevitably supplant faith (**Willison, Brazell & Kim,**

2011). Over the past decades, renewed interest in the roles of FBOs in addressing social maladies has grown noticeably. Though their engagement in social issues is not a recent phenomenon, this has generated rising scholarly and media attention as governments particularly in the United States of America, through their political initiatives have provided new and expanded role for FBOs in social service delivery (Willison, Brazell & Kim, 2011). For example, The World Bank in 2000 created a unit known as “The Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics” with the aim of improving links between faith, ethics and service delivery. In relation to this, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) also provided a substantial grant for a research programme on Religions and Development in Birmingham University (Marshall & Keough, 2004).

In fact, the robust participation of faith-based organisations in development, both locally and internationally, in recent times, has made Robert Calderisi, a former director of the World Bank at the fifth Westminster Faith Debate of 2014 to describe FBOs’ provisioning of human and social services as unobjectionable and indispensable. In a similar fashion, global Institutions such as World Bank and United Nations have all acknowledged that FBOs have a unique role to play in facilitating development outcomes especially in societies where state development models have failed to produce desired results (Lunn, 2009).

FBOs and Development: Some Selected Cases in Africa

The responses of FBOs to pressing health and social needs of communities are not new in Africa; indeed, FBOs have been part of development, health, education, and social service delivery in the continent since the nineteenth century (PEPFAR, 2012). Particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, it is estimated that 40 percent of healthcare services are provided by FBOs. Examples of these are the Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau of Uganda, the Christian Health Association of Kenya (CHAK), and Al-Noury specialist hospital, Kano, Nigeria, many of which serve the most rural areas and the most marginalised people (PEPFAR, 2012; UNDP, 2014). In similar fashion, the Christian Health Association of Nigeria, with its 140 hospitals and 187 clinics spread across the country, has successfully catered for people with Tuberculosis (Olarinmoye, 2012). Similarly, the Salvation Army in South Africa is well-known for caring for AIDS orphans and was involved in such care-giving long before the first feature story on AIDS in Africa appeared in USA Today in 1999 (PEPFAR, 2012). Thus, the robust participation of FBOs in both social and political spheres, coupled with their capacity to deliver critical services, mobilise grassroots support, earn the trust of vulnerable groups and influence cultural norms, have made them vital stakeholders in development (Ilo, 2014; UNDP, 2014).

Without mincing words, faith-based organisations particularly in sub-Saharan Africa have impacted positively on the lives of significant number of people who were entangled in different vicissitude of life. According to a report credited to United States Agency for International Development (USAID) quoted by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), FBOs are responsible for 50 percent of health provision in the Republic of Congo, 40 per cent in Kenya and Lesotho, and 55 per cent in Uganda (UNDP, 2014). In Sierra-Leone, according to Nishinmuko (2009), both Islamic and Christian faith-based organisations have complemented the colonial state in the provision of education and health services. Up till the year 2004 in Sierra-Leone, over 75 per cent of primary schools are owned and managed by FBOs (Bennell, Harding & Rogers-Wright, 2004). Notwithstanding the fact that many FBOs particularly the Christian ones in Africa are seen as offshoot of colonialism, they are also regarded as the timely ‘guiding light’ as far as the provision of education and health care services is concerned. They have also been eulogised for their stance in not engaging in religiously or denominationally orchestrated preferential treatment in the discharging of their responsibilities (Oladapo, 2000; Chikwendu, 2004; Ferris, 2005).

Specifically on health-related issues in Africa, existing research has shown that faith-based organisations have for long contributed to the continued delivery of primary health care in Africa (Baer, 2007). According to the report of World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2014, FBOs have a long-standing and distinguished history in providing primary health intervention and services for the poor and the vulnerable in the society. In line with WHO’s estimation, FBOs in the Democratic Republic of Congo have been responsible for the provision of 50 per cent of all health services and also co-manage around 40 percent of the country’s 515 health zones (Baer, 2007). Also in Kenya and Tanzania, scholars have shown that FBOs provide more than 40 and 60 percent of health services in these countries respectively (Belvins et al., 2012).

It is also common knowledge that faith-based organisations through religious actors play a vital role in conflict resolution. Recent research findings suggest that the field of conflict resolution now pays more attention to the role religion plays in conflict resolution as opposed to its former focus on the role it plays in making conflict intractable (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana, 2009, p. 177). The speech of Archbishop John Onaiyekan former Catholic Bishop of Abuja and former President of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in a conference organised by UNESCO in 2003 lends credence to the above. According to *(Onaiyekan, 2005: p. 133):*

> *…. The world community has gradually begun to recognise the positive role that religion can play in the affairs of the world. For a long time, the United Nations, for example, tries to avoid dealing with religion, condemning it at most to the margins of its activities. Of recent, however, it has begun to realise that the world neglects religion at its own risk, especially since religion features a lot in many of the conflicts in the world. It is a great thing that we are beginning to realise that religion can be not only a cause of conflict, but also a solution to it and other problems of the world …. The United Nations agencies, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNAID, etc. are beginning to take religious* organisations *seriously under the newly coined – 'faith-based organisations'. This certainly is a move in the right direction.*

As documented by Ilo (2011), religious groups such as Mennonites, Quakers and Catholic Leaders have all recorded landslide achievements in conflict resolution in different parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This also corroborates the claim of Sampson (1997), "that religious actors such as Desmond Tutu of South Africa, ThichNhat Han from Vietnam and many others have increasingly played the roles of peacemakers and peacebuilders". Unlike their secular counterparts, FBOs have shown the knack and capacities to provide necessary assistance and help for fragile states in the light of conflict and post-conflict restructuring. For instance, quite a significant number of FBOs in countries such as Nigeria, Sudan, and Somalia have provided humanitarian aids against the backdrop of states that are incapable of providing basic needs particularly during and after the war (Benthall & Bellioun-Jordan, 2003).

Reinforcing the centrality of FBOs' role in social provisioning in developing countries, Marshall (1991) describes how Pentecostal churches in Nigeria work relentlessly and assiduously in providing spiritual and material assistance for vulnerable groups against the backdrop of economic adjustment policies. She showed extensively how religious fellowship and followers establish informal faith-based initiatives to help co-religionists survive. Findings from her study indicate that small neighbourhood religious groups do not only provide spiritual support but also made available welfare support and services for followers, including financial resources, in-kind support and health services (Marshall, 1991).

In debating gender and faith-based organisations, a growing body of scholarship has critiqued how development has readily ‘demonised’ religion by putting a caveat on it as a great obstacle to women’s well-being. However, a review of the literature reveals a rich tapestry of studies showcasing the contribution of faith-based organisations in providing essential contraceptive services, and how these organisations have recorded success in raising awareness and advocating for family planning. For example, Barrot (2013) described how faith-based organisations such as the United Methodist Church, Islamic Relief, and Christian Health Association in Africa, among many others, have adopted family planning as an alternative means of helping women, children and families in their effort to promote global health. According to Barot, of 867 million women of reproductive age that were in need of contraception globally in 2012; 222 million of them were living in developing countries and were at the risk of unintended pregnancies due to their use of traditional family planning methods which she claimed were likely to fail; and the fact that many were not using any family planning method at all. For Barrot, the scenario above created an unmet need for the use of modern contraception.

In their efforts to tackle the scourge of HIV/AIDs through the provision of necessary treatment and assistance for people living with the disease in many parts of Africa; there is overwhelming evidence showing that FBOs have worked relentlessly, and are still working as a major provider of HIV-related services. According to the WHO estimates, FBOs provide between 30 and 70 percent of all health care in Africa (WHO, 2008; Morgan, 2011). In some communities within the continent, FBOs hospitals and clinics are the only available health-care facilities. Complementing this, FBOs are a major source of AIDS funding, due to their capacity to raise fund from other faith-based organisations in other developed countries of the world. For example in Lesotho and Zambia where FBOs provide up to 40 percent of all HIV health care and treatment services (WHO, 2008). FBOs distribute life-saving antiretroviral treatment to AIDS victims in rural areas and poor densely populated urban slums (PEPFAR, 2012). This feat was acknowledged in 2012 by U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) report, which emphasised the heroic role of FBOs in the provision of antiretroviral treatment for almost 4 million people living with HIV/AIDS in 2011. According to PEPFAR, the act was instrumental to the successful prevention of mother-to-child transmission in sub-Saharan Africa.

Reaffirming the critical role and importance of faith-based organisations in development, particularly wellness, Herman's (2013) evaluative study on experiences of recovering addicts in a faith-based home in the Western Cape, South Africa, revealed that involvement of inmates in social reintegration programmes of FBOs is associated with increased levels of well-being, hope, purpose and educational attainment. Herman's study indicates that all the female recovering drug-addicts in the faith-based organisation received vocational training and were also assisted in securing employment after the expiration of their programmes. The study further gives credence to the claim that social reintegration programmes of FBOs promote an array of pro-social behaviour among recovering drug-addicts and thus enhance various beneficial outcomes. Reflecting a parallel shift from pathogenic (disease) to 'salutogenic' (wellness) approaches in medicine, psychology and criminology, FBOs have emerged to provide access to supportive structures of housing, education (including vocational training) and long-term employment which are crucial elements of preventing social exclusion and promoting social reintegration of recovering drug-addicts (Wardle, 2012; Sumnall and Brotherhood, 2012; Krentzman, 2013; Lyons, Deane, & Kelly, 2013). As part of their reintegration efforts, FBOs are visibly involved in assisting in the provision of community restoration and successful resettlement for recovering drug-addicts (Rossman, Sridharan, Gouvis, Buck, and Morley, 1999; UNODC, 2012).

Placed side by side with their secular counterpart in development, faith-based organisations in respect of their myriad contributions to the needy and vulnerable groups have been adjudged globally to have overwhelming advantage as far as social provisioning is concerned. They have been specifically extolled for their uncommon ability to partner even with the most downtrodden group of people and ultimately provide efficient and effective services that timely benefit the targeted group (Thaut, 2009). For instance in the United States of America, the horde of ensuing benefits from the partnership between faith-based organisations and the government has been described by analysts as unprecedented, grossly successful, indispensable and transforming works (Whitehouse, 2001; Cameroon, 2004). Unlike the antecedents of the public sector agents in the delivery of similar services, which have been oft described as bureaucratic, lacklustre and unfit to elicit the desired change in the lives of the people they claim to serve; the contributions of faith-based organisations in many parts of the world have been described by many social commentators as steps in the right direction (Whitehouse, 2001).

According to Harris (cited in Johnsen 2014), the involvement of faith-based organisations in all aspects of development has shown, though in part, a steady increase in recognition of FBOs as a group that is not only holistic in its approach but also has a comparative advantage over other secular voluntary organisations. Thus, FBOs are portrayed as organisations with repositories of staff and resources for the promotion of social goods. This explains the rapidity of offers and support they receive from development institutions, donors and even the world’s non-religious bodies who engage them as agents of development needed to fill the gap left after the supposed withdrawal of the welfare state in several domains of public life, particularly in social welfare and in social protection (World Bank, 2005; James, 2009; Lunn, 2009).

Consequent upon the above, faith-based organisations are now recognised as important stakeholders in development especially in developing world. Indeed, the monumental upsurge in the popularity of FBOs and their involvement in service delivery are accompanied by a corresponding growth of academic scholarship on the subject; a development that brings a paradox in its wake. This is paradoxical in the sense that FBOs’ resurgence in social services delivery has generated debates within the development literature. While proponents highlight the positive role of faith and faith-based initiatives in enhancing social change, critics contest the potential for positive FBOs’ engagement in service delivery (Tadros, 2010).

Critics hinge their argument on FBOs’ lack of comprehensive framework on which to judge their claim of huge success in social service delivery. They argue that FBOs’ superior effectiveness mantra lacks demonstrable evidence and is therefore based on conjecture and anecdote (Johnson *et al.*, 2002; Fischer & Stelter, 2006). Critics aver that the perfect success rate of FBOs programmes is a product of summary statistics based on in-house data compiled by FBOs and ministries (Johnson, Tompkins & Webb, 2008).

Another ground in which FBOs have been widely criticised is that it is difficult to hold them or their leaders accountable for roles they play in development, unlike their secular counterparts, particularly in developing countries. As James (2009) noted, some powerful religious leaders often resist the development of systems which may curtail their powers with checks and balances. To make the matter worse, the stance of congregations has not even helped matters. Indeed, the common perception of many members of faith communities is that religious leaders ‘are closer to God than any other person,’ and that questioning them amounts to questioning God. For example in Malawi, where the resulting culture of an organisation is inextricably linked with leadership; deeply-held religious views on leadership authority from God ensure that certain issues in church-based agencies should be treated as private. Airing such issues to the public may be seen as gossip and criticisms which are seen as acts that are un-Christian (James, 2009). In these environments, accountability is seen as to God but not to man. There is also the claim that the sensitive nature of state regulation of religion and associated issues of religious freedom in developing countries has made FBOs not to be fully accountable to the public like their secular counterparts (Hackett, 2011).

There is also an emerging policy angle to the debate. For instance, in Nigeria, policies have been formulated to make FBOs accountable for their commitments and responsibilities regarding the standards of service, and the rights of clients and donors. These policies are to make FBOs (particularly the local ones that dabble into non-charity ventures such as schools, hospitals, tourism and hospitality) accountable for their actions and inactions (Olarinmoye, 2014). Closely connected to this is the fact that there is serious misunderstanding, and even confusion, around the claim of FBOs as ‘not-for-profit’ organisations. As noted by Obazee, the chief executive officer of Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria (FRC), a body saddled with the responsibilities of monitoring and enforcement of standards and corporate governance practices in both public and private sectors, many FBOs in Nigeria now dabble into non-charity ventures like schools, hospitals, hotels and many others. He also emphasised their non-compliance with financial reporting standards and rules on religious organisations. The report raised questions about FBOs' non-charitable activities within charity which it found to be unclear (*The Guardian*, November 30, 2015).

In consonance with the above, despite their ubiquity and claims of effectiveness, FBOs have been negatively appraised in a number of studies. With specific regard to their involvement in the rehabilitation and social reintegration of recovering drug-addicts, Sternthal, Williams, Musick, & Buck (2010) argue that social reintegration efforts of FBOs produce negative outcomes and are actually deleterious. For these writers, this explains why FBOs are yet to be seen as the ultimate source of solutions for problems associated with drug addiction. In a study conducted in an urban Midwestern city in the United States in which a sample of church rehabilitation camps was surveyed, DeWard and Moe (2010) found that the fundamental human rights of camp inmates were constantly infringed upon; they were subjected to an age-graded system aimed at subjecting previously independent adults to rules and tasks that were infantilising and demoralizing.

In South Africa, a report of an inspection conducted at the Noupoort Christian Care Centre revealed that the involvement of some charismatic churches in drug rehabilitation was "to a very large extent farcical" as the clients of such services were simply abused and used rather than genuinely helped (Mokoena, 2014). One scholar has even suggested that faith-based social services should be tightly regulated and monitored since they can easily "cross the line" (Olarinmoye, 2012).

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that FBOs have not only increased in numbers, but they have provided innovative and increasingly wide-ranging formal and informal services for the vulnerable, downtrodden and disadvantaged communities. On the one hand, FBOs, whether deservedly or not, have carved a niche for themselves as vital actors in the delivery of social services. This write-up attests to the fact that they have a comparative advantage over the state and their secular counterparts; therefore, they tend to contribute to development and social provisioning by complementing the government. These relationships, as a matter of fact, have profound effects on lives of vulnerable and poor people. In effect, faith-based organisations are now seen as high profile actors in the field of development, both as providers of services to vulnerable individuals and communities (Bartkowski & Regis, 2003; Ebaugh et al., 2003; Ferris, 2005). On the other hand, also, this article has brought to fore, that, despite several outstanding accounts in literature that echo FBOs' active roles in service delivery and other human development activities around the world; there exists considerable number of scholars that have critiqued FBOs and how their initiatives are delivered.

Scholars have also questioned the rhetoric about the superiority of FBOs' interventions over their secular counterparts in development (James, 2009). Though, most of these critics did not contest FBOs' potential for positive engagement in social delivery; nonetheless, they flag series of conundrums. As with other civil society groups, scholars and policy analysts have raised theoretical and policy questions about the expanding roles of faith-based organisations in providing services and empowering communities. Against the backdrop of the claim that FBOs, due to their grassroots connections, represent and stand for people's agendas, needs, priorities and values, Ghodsee (2007) quoted in Tadroz (2010) emphasised how FBOs can be both drivers of change and barriers to change. While there may be an appearance of plausibility in this supposition, findings from social research have shown that not all FBOs are progressive; given the rise in the current prevalence of dastardly acts of some religious groups like Al-Qaeda in the Middle-eastern part of the world and Boko-haram in Nigeria. As a matter of fact, the idea that all FBOs are out for common good is far too constraining.

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