

Original Paper

Access to Grants and Other Resources for Growth and Poverty
Reduction by Community Development Association's through
Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) Opportunities in
Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper observes that excruciating poverty in African developing countries requires multi-stakeholders interventions. It specifically identifies corporate social responsibility opportunities in the areas of grant disbursements and other resources availability as veritable means of contributing to rapid development of African communities. The paper posits that there are key resources that are available through CSR opportunities for pro-active developments and to solving African development challenge. It specifically exemplifies available categories of corporate organizations and their social responsibilities potentials in Nigeria community development landscape. It concludes by highlighting steps through which Community Developments Associations (CDAs) can access CSR opportunities across Nigerian communities for high development impact.

Keywords

Corporate Social Responsibility, Grants, Community Development Associations, Nigeria

1. Introduction

The seemingly intolerable level of development crisis in Africa might have been attributed to so many cause(s). These include the effects of extremely damaging slave trade pillages; colonialism and unequal exchange; devastating colonial legacies amidst other conflicting interpretations and resolutions (Ake,

1982; Paul, 1992; Olanrewaju & Shola, 2015). Statistics and development indicators over the years have continued to give a negative picture. The 2017 African Human Development Reports published by UNDP presented a gloomy picture. Nearly half of children in Sub-Saharan Africa are living in extreme poverty. Africa has the second largest number of hungry people with about 233 million people next to Asia. The hunger siege is aggravated by poverty, conflict, environmental dynamics that precipitated drought, climate change, low agricultural productivity, malnutrition, disease and population growth (WHES, 2015).

As the whole world cross the 2015 MDG deadline, report of development audit also shows that African continent is still very far from Eldorado. The situation has not changed from the way it was in 1987. Rather, it has become worse. In 2018, Africa has conveniently taken over from India as global poverty hub (Intervention, 2018).

One critical point to note is that development crisis in Africa is diverse and complicated. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2017) for instance, insists that Africa has reached a full-blown development crisis such that reversing the health, social and economic gains; the continent needs to work for decades. African anti-development traits are so pervasive. It include monolithic economic base, low standard of life, extremely low Gross Domestic Products (GDP), high children and maternal mortality rate, illiteracy and unemployment (Adeyeye, 2015). The negative development index is also reflected in the abysmally low level of infrastructure.

Specifically, the development crisis in Nigeria is not anything different from other countries across Africa. It is all about growth retardation across each of the development variable such as education, technology, health, infrastructure, agriculture, social services among others that have suffered pitiable growth and development backwardness (Dike, 2011; Gberevbie et al., 2013). This gloomy picture is without regard to the fact that Nigeria has huge resources both human and materials with whom the country can rapidly catapult into a developed country. The Nigeria infrastructure is in dire state of deterioration. Health systems are bad such that the rich travel abroad for medical attention. Medical facilities are far beyond the reach of larger percentage of citizenry. The education system in Nigeria has not successfully imparted on technological growth. It has also not successfully transform quite a number of citizens. Other key sectors that are crying for urgent include the agriculture which is basically undeveloped; Nigerian citizens took solace in imported food. The entire Nigeria development landscape requires massive development intervention (Eneh, 2011; Banji, 2014).

Countries in Africa need to invest trillions dollars in roads, electricity and water over the next 20 years if they are to lift themselves out of poverty quagmire (Anne, 2018). On this, investing in infrastructure is a priority and should be seen as crucial to a country socio-economic development. The World Bank estimate that year-on-year, economic growth in Sub-Sahara is slashed by two percentage points due to lack of infrastructure. The bank insists that the level of infrastructural decay is so vast that it cannot support any growth whatsoever. It also posits that an estimated \$100 billion is needed annually to address infrastructural deficit in Africa. United Nation Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

observes that Africa has urgent need to address infrastructure deficit because massive infrastructural growth is key to economic transformation and attainment of development.

As development crisis continued to exacerbate across these countries with experts citing limited resources as excuse to fast-track growth momentum, the problem as far as this study is concerned is majorly about the combination of quantum of resources needed; the multiple sources from which to look for fund; the priority project to spend resources on; and proper utilization of resources. It is also the position of this study that it has become very clear that government alone cannot shoulder the enormous responsibility. Apart from domestic effort through statutory national government intervention by way of resource generation and massive development expenditure; there are options of assistances from multilateral agencies such as World Bank, Economic Commission for Africa, UNDP, ECOWAS and other Bilateral Assistances from friendly countries. But more importantly, the idea of multi-stakeholders' approach to harness alternative sources have been identified as the only way to guarantee resilient and sustainable infrastructural development. Apart from World Bank, African Development Bank, European Union, ECOWAS and other support systems that are needed to activate infrastructure for development, the study isolate and insists that there is great potential from the angle of multinational corporations through their CSR support scheme (Adeyeye, 2015).

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs of multinational corporations have enormous capacity to help Africa particularly Nigeria out of their development crisis. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become phenomenal in recent times in the way it has helped to making business come alive to the exigencies of pro-active involvement in the affair of its stakeholders. The corporate social responsibility agenda is the growing unwritten law which stipulates that business cannot afford to operate in a sustainable manner without due consideration to stakeholders in all its operational activities (Henry, 1978).

Aside from the fact that business profitability is gradually being tied to effective corporate social responsibility practices in modern business practices, any attempt to feel unconcerned by business about responsible practices has begun to attract high moral condemnations. It has also been observed that organisations that embrace corporate social responsibility practices have assurances of secured sustainable engagements; but far more than all these people are already witnessing corporate attitudinal change that emphasis responsibility, accountability due process environmental concerns and spectacular giving to social cause (Herman, 1998; Elegido, 1996; Olusola, 2001).

The implication of this is that business organizations are taking corporate social responsibility issue with the seriousness it deserves. Corporate social responsibility whether voluntarily or as a consequence of pressure from regulatory authorities have propel various middle level and big businesses across countries to make provisions in their annual budget for programs, activities and projects to impact immediate operating environments.

The programs, activities, and projects offered by CSR have strong abilities to spur growth horizon as well as contribute significantly to enhancing pro-active development. Evidences abound where companies

through Corporate Social Responsibilities platform intervene in educational developments, build infrastructure, establish and furnish hospitals, donate life-saving drugs, invest in community services, etc. (Hayley & Sara, 2015; UN Global Impact, 2014). This kind of interventions by corporate organisations to growth and developmental aggregate are huge. It is the candid position of this study that these opportunities can further be optimized in order to take full advantage for monumental growth and development benefits.

Inside Africa and Nigeria in particular, corporate organisations are scattered across communities doing one business or the other. There are various corporate multinationals and international business organisations that are springing up on a daily basis. These organizations are expanding their activities. They locate different stages of their production operations in different locations in order to maximize their competitive advantage. Recent Researches indicates that there are multitudes of multinational corporations that are developing on daily basis. They have bestridden African continent like a colossus (Davidson, 1971). Among these are MTN, Addax, Sahara Energy, NOKIA, EXXON, Mobil, Nestle, Sony, Toyota, etc. The financial worth of these multinational corporations run into trillion of dollars. These organizations are primarily guided by profit objectives, but the exigencies of good corporate citizenship has made it compulsory for them to give back part of their profit to the society through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Most business oriented organizations are taking CSR issues with the seriousness it deserves. As a result of this, the interests and renewed vigor to prosecute CSR activities by corporate multinational have increased tremendously. Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) has become phenomenal in recent times in the way it has helped to advance world benefits (Lessinger. M. 2005). CSR has to do with the responsibilities of corporate multinationals and international business organizations to the society. These organizations provide opportunities for communities to scale up their development horizon.

When communities avail themselves of CSR opportunities, developments activities can be quickly facilitated. Various interventionist programs are embarked by business organizations as contribution to the growth and development of communities. For instance, many schools can be renovated and equipped in the process. Hospitals could be supported through supply of much-needed equipment. There could be provisions of community link roads. Community halls could be built, market facilities enhanced. Some basic education programs with strong development impacts could be embarked upon. Examples of these are the HIV/AIDS education campaign; basic health hygiene, awareness on maternal mortality through basic emergency response like oral rehydration therapy (O.R.T) could be deployed. With CSR, subsidized community energy provision such as Solar Power can also be provided, etc.

These aforementioned programs and activities have strong capacities to contribute significantly at scaling up development at local community level. It must be clearly noted that the bulk of development deficiencies that takes place in African developing countries occurs at the local community level such that poverty situation in African countries is aggravated by absence of basic infrastructures and other critical social amenities like education, health facilities, recreation outlets, town hall, access to energy,

etc., across communities. Any bold attempt to address this critical challenge will go a long way to solving excruciating poverty and development crisis. This is particularly so because substantial percentages of active population are resident in rural communities and they wallow in abject poverty due to lack of basic necessities of life. The critical challenge however is how communities particularly in the context of Community Development Associations (CDAs) can take advantage of these available CSR opportunities.

This study highlights steps by which community development associations across Nigeria can fully take advantage and maximize corporate Social Responsibilities opportunities of corporate organisations for the growth and development of their respective communities.

2. Different Categories of CSR Organizations That Are Relevant to Community Development Activities in Nigeria

1) Proximate Organizations within the Community Axis

These are corporate organizations that operate within a particular community axis. Each of the corporate organisations in this category is seen as a neighbour within the proximate community. They share common environment in terms of contiguous geography, security and interactions with the people in the same community. It is possible for a community to have small, medium and large corporate organization residing in the same neighbourhood. For instance, Ewekoro community has the popular West African Portland Cement Company now called Larfarge. It also has a red brick company and the new Ofada rice milling company. Some communities may not be as lucky. They may have only one small company as their neighbor.

2) Corporate Organizations with Strong Influence across the State

These are peculiar forms of corporate organizations. Such companies have influence beyond their immediate neighbourhood communities. But such influence may not extend beyond the state. They engage in services and products that appeals to state-wide audience. More often than not, in addition to immediate community, such companies still see themselves as belonging to entire community of the state. Very good examples of these categories of organisations are estate corporations and other related private companies that are popular and enjoy patronage across state.

3) Multinational Corporations

The multinational corporations are super companies. They are big and stupendously rich. Their products and services appeal to the entire world. The numbers of their employees are high, sometimes into thousands and more. They deal with very popular brands and their sales runs into millions and billions. They also make fantastic profits. They are very plenty across Nigeria. Some of these categories of companies are quoted on the Nigeria stock exchange while most of them are not. In Nigeria, some of those that are quoted include Cadbury Plc, Guinness Nigeria

Plc, Julius Berger Plc, CAPL Plc, AP, Flour Mill, Oceanic Bank, Okomu Palm Oil Plc. Others that not quoted include MTN, Celtel, Mobil Producing Unlimited, SONY, etc.

4) Quoted Companies in the Nigerian Stock Exchange

These are companies that are listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange. The investing public owns these categories of companies. The rules governing the management of those companies are defined by law and the rules of corporate governance. More than any other categories of companies, they are at great advantage to benefits communities across the country.

This is due to the fact that the rule guiding their operation does not only enjoin commitments to Corporate Social responsibility (CSR) practices. It also make it mandatory for them to declare their actual expenditure on CSR in the account book and annual report. Incidentally, we have very many companies that are listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange. We have the first tier and second tier securities based on their worth and other indices.

The poverty siege in Africa and Nigeria is so excruciating such that it has become expedient for concerned communities to take pro-active steps rather than just waiting. Communities can make moves linking up with concerned and relevant corporate organizations for necessary interventions. Development: **How to Access Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Opportunities by Community Development Associations (CDAs).**

There are certain steps each Community Development Associations (CDA) must follow in order to access CSR opportunities for the development of their communities leveraging on available CSR organizations.

(a) Step one: Critical Assessment of Community Needs

The first step is for the Community Development Associations (CDA) to embark on a critical assessment of need or the gap that is peculiar to the community. This is very important. The assessment must evidently show that the community lacked something of value, e.g., Roads, Community Hall, Recreation Centre, School Development, Rehabilitation Work, Youth Capacity-Building Programmes, Building of Police Post, etc. It should be obvious that the problem is very apparent. The problem identified should also require urgent intervention and assistance.

The interesting thing about this aspect is that, the need of community “A” may not always be the same as that of community “B”. While community “A” may be in dire need of a community centre, the problem of community “B” may be that of a police post to stem the of tide security threats. In another community, it may be an urgent need to give orientation to community teenagers on skill acquisitions, problem of HIV/AIDs and other related orientations.

In assessing the needs of community, some very important factor must be taken into consideration Community Development Association (CDAs) for it to be worthy of attention by CSR organisations.

- It should not be designed based on individual selfish interest.
- It should reflect the need of average member of the community.

- It should focus on program in which every member of the community will be able to feel that his or her need will be met.

(b) Step two: Development of blueprint/proposal

After the need of the community has been determined, the next step is the development of a blueprint on such a need. The blueprint should be in the form of a proposal. In the proposal, the need of community is expected to be developed into written summary form. The blueprint/proposal should contain the information such as:

- The Title page
- Introduction
- Abridged detail of community need/gap
- Cost of the project
- Impacts/benefits
- Sustainability

The title page should specify the name of the concerned CDA, the type of project and a clear statement on request for the sponsorship of the project.

The introduction part should be a captivating summary, which provides justification for what the CDA has in mind, the objectives, reasons, for choosing such procedure. The introduction should be convincing, brief, and straight to the point. The corporate affairs directors' of most corporate organisations may not have the time to read too voluminous write-ups. We help our self when are very brief with the objectives statement and a clear justification of our action plan and procedure.

In detailing the community needs, CDA's must be specific and highlights the urgency with which such needs require due attention. As earlier stated, the needs must truly reflect the wishes of the majority of people that live in the community. The section on cost detail must be carefully handled. Total cost of the project must be broken down to details. It must be written in a simple form so that people can relate with the budget very easily. Over invoicing or bogus budget must be seriously avoided or else, the financing organization will reject it. If the total cost of project is ₦5million the whole ₦5 million, must be justified in the budget estimate so that the project will not be seen as a scam. The blueprint should indicate the expected benefits of the project to the CDA. The benefits must be measurable. For instance, in a request for a town hall, part of the benefits should be that the whole community of 500,000 people should have access to it. It will be to the delight of a corporate organisation that the whole community will be positively affected by the project.

Finally, the issue of sustainability must be addressed by the proposal. We need to know that corporate organization will like to know how a program on project will be sustained over a long period of time. For instance, if the project is about community hall, it may be desirable to indicate how the community will ensure that the hall is going to keep going efficiently over a long period of time without recourse to additional support. In that case, the need to charge small amount as token fee for anyone who may want to use the hall is a good sustainability strategy.

Another example is skill acquisition program. Graduates of the first set may be converted into an association. After sometime, they may be required to contribute for a re-run of that program to an incoming generation. The advantage of this is twofold. First, it is capable of enhancing unity, secondly, it guarantee sustainability. A project with this type of sustainability index will attract the support of corporate organisation.

(c) Step Three: Submission of Blueprint/Proposal to potential CSR organisation

After the proposal has been prepared, the next step is the submission of the proposal to potential corporate organisation for sponsorship. In the earlier part, we indicated the various categories of CSR organisations that are available for CDA's, depending on the size of the project; CDAs' can approach any of the corporate organization. If the project is a small project, it is advisable to approach a proximate organization within the community axis. However, if the project is a big one, other alternatives may be preferable. The reason for this is that if CDA submit big project to a small proximate corporate organization, the organization may use funding as an excuse to turn down the request for sponsorship. In doing the final submission, the blueprint/project proposal should be accompanied with a cover letter properly addressed to the Corporate Affair manager of the organizations.

(d) Step Four: Follow-up

CDA's should also attempt to follow up their applications through correspondence where necessary. Reminder letters should be written. CSR opportunity is a board issue. Sufficient time should be allowed for decision on CDAs request for assistance. Above all, it is expected that CDAs' who want to access CSR opportunities should have two things.

- A well-organized internal administrative structure. There should be provision for the office of President /Chairman. Treasurer and Secretary as the case may be.
- They also need to install structures that give room for proper accountability and transparency.

The executive of Community Development Association (CDAs) and other members need to establish strong relationship with available corporate organisations. They should see corporate organisations as partners in program. They should be concerned about the welfare, security and progress of corporate neighbour. It is easier to enjoy benefits when friendly disposition has already been established. In that wise, access to CSR opportunities can only be propelled through reciprocal relationship. This is particularly true in a situation of relationship between corporate organisations and their proximate communities.

In conclusion, we challenge each CDA's to identify its proximate corporate organizations, determine their respective needs and develop a proposal for program of possible assistance. When communities take up this challenge, the multitudes of favourable responses that arise there-from through various development interventions shall go a long way to mitigating development crisis and excruciating poverty that has been the lots of Nigerian at the community level. It is the position of this paper that

future researchers should focus more attention on the issue of CSR intervention and its impact on growth and development in general.

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