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Roles of international organisation on national development

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ABSTRACT

International organisations play a vital role in national development but they also hamper economic and manpower development. They create national debts as most of the foreign aids are wrapped with debts in disguise. They breed corruption and promote national dependence on foreign aid. Despite all these, Nigeria should not hurriedly exit any of the international institutions of which she is already a member without first assessing the relevance of such membership. The citizens should know these international bodies and the reasons for any intended withdrawal. This will ensure the exit from these organisations is not a ploy by Nigeria to avoid international sanctions in the light of the current continuous breach of fundamental human rights by the military, political impunity and judicial intimidation in this country.

Keywords— International organisation, Development, National dependence, National debt, Human rights

1. INTRODUCTION

Although organizations within the United Nations system are the first to come to mind when we speak of International bodies, the term refers to a plethora of organizations, inter-governmental, governmental and non-governmental, whose origin may be local, national, regional or global but whose outreach is “international”. These institutions may be found in all countries, developed, developing, middle-income, countries in transition, those in or emerging from conflict, and so on [1]. The formation of International organisations began with the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 1889. This later became the League of Nations in 1919 with the main purpose of creating a forum to advance dialogue and promote peace amongst the nations. There are many international organisations. They include the United Nations which metamorphosed from the weakness of the League of Nations. Others are the World Health Organisation (WHO), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), The European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), the Organisation of Asian Countries (OAC) to mention but a few. Some of these international Organisations are the various arms of the United Nations. These bodies have different interests. Some have specialised service concern such as the world health organisation. Others may share Political affiliation or economic interest such as the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). A

number of them are created to protect regional interest such as the European Union and African Union.

The Purpose of this study is to explore the role of these organisations in the development of a nation. Before considering these roles, the paper will attempt to look at development generally and what drives development. One can then discover if these bodies have driven development in Nigeria. This paper will also seek to know if these international entities in any way hinder national development. It is imperative we examine this considering the recent announcement by the Nigerian Minister of Finance that Nigeria is contemplating exiting the membership of ninety organisations out of three hundred international bodies to which it belongs. The main reason given for this intention is the fact that Nigeria is in so much debt and currently not able to meet with the financial obligations of belonging to these institutions. A reasonable choice can only be made if the impact of these organisations is objectively assessed. Where the liabilities outweigh the benefits, it will then be wise to exit such bodies.

2. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The word “national development” refers to all aspects of national life. It considers all dimensions and does not treat a sector in isolation. I would, therefore, define “national development” as the advancement of various dimensions of national life which includes the empowerment and development of individuals in the nation. One cannot, therefore, mention “national development” without first recognising that the nation cannot be developed with ignorant and under-developed citizens. On the other hand, a country cannot be said to be developed where the citizens live below the internationally defined poverty level; or rather where the basic needs of the nationals are not adequately met. This, therefore, means that to assess national development, one may need to look at the issues that affect the citizenry and their standard of living as a tool to define the extent of national development. These factors include the provision of health facilities and health care delivery, the availability of social amenities and necessities like good roads, water, electricity and communication. Others are the guarantee of the fundamental human rights for the citizens especially with freedom of expression and right to liberty, maintenance of economic stability by combating inflation and creation of jobs. Above all, one cannot talk about national development without a stable government, political freedom and guaranteed security of lives and properties. The formal and informal education of the

citizenry is fundamental to the successful implementation of the aforementioned national development criteria [2].

From the foregoing, we can classify development into six major areas of impact on the national and individual lives. It is these areas of development that we shall address to see if the international organisations in any way have played any role in Nigeria. These areas are social, political, economic; science and technology advancement, as well as Industrial development, production; and National security.

2.1 Role of International Organisations

The role of any organisation is dependent on the aim or purpose behind the formation of such a body. There is always an interesting area that attracts member states. The present-day realities show that international entities play various roles which range from intrastate, intra-regional to international roles. However, the general roles of international organizations include: acting as a forum for interaction among the member states and aiding cooperation, assistance in solving problems that are beyond state capacity, acting as instruments for furthering foreign policy interests for states etc. They are also involved in organizing states around their common interests and in pointing out the benefits of cooperation. Large regional bodies such as EU, have worked extensively to promote economic cooperation. Others such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization of African Unity (presently African Union), have controlled and managed conflict in their own regions” [3].

In addition to these, international organizations have also provided to the Member States training, capacity development and a variety of direct services to support victims of violence and to help develop national institutions to be better positioned to address this scourge [4 []]. International organisations (IOs) play a growing role as standard setting bodies in supporting regulatory co-operation. Evidence shows that IOs contribute to International Regulatory Co-operation (IRC) by:

- Offering platforms for continuous dialogue on regulatory issues;
- Facilitating the comparability of approaches and practices;
- Providing member countries with flexible mechanisms to identify and adapt to new and emerging regulatory areas or issues;
- Contributing to the development of a common regulatory language
- Developing international legal and policy instruments. [5]

In the words of Ernest Udalla,

“First, the existence and operations of IOs bring about some form of policy convergence in the international system. This results in some degree of uniformity and conformity of nation-states to global guidelines and standards of policies that govern them. Municipal policies must conform to international standards which are usually set by these international organizations. This also provides an opportunity for policy exchange between and among nation-states. Second, it sets before sovereign states blueprints of public policies and goals which they can look up to in formulating their municipal policies. This reduces the burden and time of articulating new policies by states. Third, the multiplicity of NGOs across borders helps to spread world best practices across the world. NGOs help in the spread of democratic and human rights principles by transferring knowledge and empowering the civil society of nations to be able to make demands on their governments concerning different policy issues that need attention. Tendon (1991) while making case for NGOs and civil society in a state, posits that “NGOs need to be seen as public institutions of civil society, engaged in

the process of strengthening civil society in its relationship vis-à-vis the state and the ruling elites”. [6]

For an organisation like the United Nations, the prime goal of the United Nations since its inception is maintaining peace and international security as well as the promotion of international economic and social development, respect for human rights for all people, and the rule of law. From the foregoing, the pertinent question to ask is how relevant are these International organisations to national development? Have they been of any relevance to Nigeria as a nation in its development processes? Let’s look at the development of the Nigerian Economy for example.

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development is the development of economic wealth of countries, regions or communities for the well-being of their inhabitants. From a policy perspective, economic development can be defined as efforts that seek to improve the economic well-being and quality of life in a community by creating and/or retaining jobs and supporting or growing incomes and the tax base, Economic development is a policy intervention endeavour with aims of economic and social well-being of people. Typically it involves improvements in a variety of indicators such as literacy rates, life expectancy, and poverty rates. Essentially, a country's economic development is related to its human development, which encompasses, among other things, health and education. [4]

Looking at the various definition of economic development, it is obvious that it is primarily about the living conditions of the masses which in turn affect the national output and income. Nigerian economy has been swinging and very unstable over the years. According to UNICEF, “Nigeria possesses a stark dichotomy of wealth and poverty. In spite of the country’s vast oil wealth, the majority of Nigerians are poor with 71 per cent of the population living on less than one dollar a day and 92 per cent on less than two dollars a day. Although the country is rich in natural resources, its economy cannot yet meet the basic needs of the people. Such disparity between the growth of the GDP and the increasing poverty is indicative of a skewed distribution of Nigeria’s wealth”. [8]

Since the economy of a nation is majorly about the living standard of the citizens, can we safely say that the International organisations of which Nigeria has been a member have done anything to improve our well-being? The current Nigerian government is consistently emphasising diversification of Nigerian Economy from oil-based economy to agricultural and technological economy. In response to that, the World Bank, an international organisation under the United Nations granted a credit facility to the tune of two hundred million dollars (\$200,000,000) in March 2017 to enhance Agricultural productivity and improve livelihood in Nigeria.

In his words, Rachid Benmessaoud, World Bank Country Director for Nigeria, “The project supports the country policy thrusts on food security, local production, job creation and economic diversification. It responds to the recurring issues of low productivity, limited farmers’ participation in agribusiness supply chains, and institutional realignment in the agricultural sector. [9]” The project will tackle the key constraints of the Nigeria agriculture sector, such as low productivity, lack of seed funds for establishing agro-processing plants, lack of access to supportive infrastructure, and low level of technology adoption and limited access to markets.

“Priority value chains under the project will include products with potential for immediate improvement of food security, products with a potential for export and foreign currency earnings (cocoa and cashew) and enhancement of the national production of crops including rice, maize, cassava and wheat.” El Hadj Adama Toure, Lead Agriculture Specialist at the World Bank., said “The number of project’s direct beneficiaries is 60,000 individuals, 35 per cent of which will be women. Overall, about 300,000 farm household members are indirect beneficiaries.[6]” The Loan is said to be at a very low-interest-rate to be paid over a period of 25years. Just within the same period the World Bank also granted another two hundred million dollars (\$200,000,000) facility for the multi-sectoral crisis recovery project for North-Eastern Nigeria. This is to cover projects on primary and secondary education, health facilities, rural and urban road project. The duration of the project is between 2017 and 2021 [6]. These two are just a few of the numerous projects being executed in Nigeria by the World Bank.

UNICEF, another International Organisation under the United Nations with a specialised interest in the welfare and education of children, is currently contributing to the welfare of children internally displaced or disadvantaged by the Boko Haram crisis in North East Nigeria. “We are making a difference in the areas we can reach, With the World Food Programme and other partners, we are treating acutely malnourished children. We are vaccinating children against measles and polio. We are providing safe water and sanitation services” [10]. In line with this assertion, the United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF) has been a major key player in the promotion and provision of vaccines for immunization of children in Nigeria and the welfare and education of the girl child. In 2015, the UNICEF through the sponsorship of Melinda and Bill Gate Foundation spent more than six million dollars on the immunization and welfare of children in the North East of Nigeria [11]. The United Nations and the Organisations under it are not alone in funding projects with the aim of boosting the Nigerian economy and the welfare of the masses. The European Union is part of this effort. Currently In the economic sector, The European Union is involved in increasing access to sustainable electricity, supporting efforts to improve conditions for economic growth with a focus on improving competitiveness and diversification, development of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures and strengthening public finance systems at state and federal levels, to create a stable environment for trade and investment activities. The Union is doing this through its allocation of five hundred and thirteen million (513,000,000) Euros over a period of 2014-2020. The EU contribution has been for the eradication of polio and the rehabilitation of people affected by the Boko Haram crisis in the Chibok area of Bornu States.

Beyond the contribution to the economic stability of the nation, Nigeria has also received help in the security of lives and properties of its citizens from international organisations. The one that readily comes to mind is the role of the African Union in the combat of Islamic insurgency in Nigeria. Islamic insurgency (Boko Haram) is a national menace and embarrassment. The terrorist group through suicide attacks, indiscriminate bombing and community attack, made Bornu state a nightmare. The level of insecurity got to unimaginable height, and almost beyond the national troops. The African Union, however, came to the aid of Nigeria through the Chad troops. The troops drove the Islamic militants out of the border towns which marked the beginning of victory over the terrorist group. The Commonwealth of Nations of which Nigeria is a member has been contributing immensely to the security issues

in Nigeria. Just recently, the British foreign Secretary Boris Johnson was in Nigeria during which he visited Bornu state, the Boko Haram enclave. Thereafter it was confirmed that the British government has over a period of time trained more than twenty-eight thousand (28, 000) Nigerian soldiers in counter-terrorism. The budget to be spent on Nigeria security issues is two million pounds (£200.000.000) which will be spent not just on military personnel training but also on infrastructures to enhance the welfare of the victims of these terrorist attacks. While announcing this foreign aid, the British foreign minister said “This is about helping a Commonwealth partner in its time of need as well as addressing the root causes of international challenges such as migration. [12]”

British international development secretary Priti Patel, who was heartbroken at the sight of the horrible situation said “It is catastrophic that at least 20,000 people have been murdered by Boko Haram’s terrorist regime, and over 5 million people have been left hungry and many homeless. Babies’ bodies are shutting down and mothers who have lost everything are fighting to keep their children alive”. Different international organisations at various times had played a very key role in the promotion of the health and welfare of the poor masses in Nigeria through financial and technical aid. Apart from contributing immensely to the economy and security of lives and properties, the IO’s have made a serious impact in our health sector through the WHO by funding human resource and capacity development, provision of medical supplies and specialised medical services to very disadvantaged rural areas of Nigeria. Some religious international organisations like the Salvation Army are contributing immensely to the provision of specialized optical services in Nigeria.

The list is inexhaustible and it can be safely said that the international organisations have and are continuing to contribute to the Nigerian national development. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund through their grants have contributed to the structural development especially with housing in the various part of this country. One may need to know if all these reliefs and assistance are without conditions or obligations. Are there negative implications? Indeed it has been argued over the years that foreign aids are a major hindrance to development in African nations. In the first place, support offered by international organisations has fuelled corruption in most countries that receive foreign aid. Most times, the materials donated never get to the masses or victims for which such donations were made. These funds are diverted by corrupt officials who receive these aids on behalf of the victims. The funds are used for things other than the project for which they were meant for. Most times where these projects were ever executed, they were overpriced with no questions as to the accountability of the use of these allocations. With respect to corrupt practices and the Boko Haram saga, have we ever asked what was the worth of things destroyed by the terrorist attacks and insurgency? Can we compare the worth of those things to the number of donations made to these victims by way of local and foreign aids? Why has it taken so long to rebuild and resettle the victims despite the enormous amount being received? How many displaced victims are on record and how much does it take to feed each person? How many have been resettled so far? What was the financial and economic status of the officers and the contractors running the internally displaced camps before the commencement of this assignment and now? Even when there have been allegations of misappropriation of funds and relief materials, the results of investigations carried out, are never made public which could have served as a deterrence to further looting.

Another major disadvantage of receiving donations and aids from international organisations is that in the real sense of it, they are not free gifts. They are Trojan Horses. They are debts wrapped and labelled as “aid”. In describing the impact of foreign aid, Jonathan Lea said

“Foreign aid’ is quite a comprehensive and encompassing term. Most people don’t realize that loans are usually embedded in aid packages, either directly or as a condition of foreign aid donations being given in the first place. An overload of debt combined with punishing interest rates creates the condition of economic subservience to the creditor nations and institutions and ties down, in a perpetual manner, most of the Third World Countries to underdevelopment, dependency and poverty”[13] US libertarian advocate of Austrian economics, Perkins says as follows:

“Yeah. To think of USAID, the Agency of International Development, as a charitable organization is, yeah, that’s certainly totally erroneous. For the most part, our foreign aid, U.S. foreign aid, like that of most countries, is out there to serve the interest of U.S. corporations and now multi-national corporations. There are small amounts of aid that really go to helping people, particularly when there are times of catastrophe, to send tents and food and water to help people that are, you know, destroyed- their lives have been destroyed by earthquakes or by tsunamis or something, but that’s pretty minuscule and only lasts for a very, very short time. And then after that, the aid that we send in to help these countries is primarily there to help the corporations. That’s the job of USAID and the Export-Import Bank and the World Bank and other similar organizations. [6]”

No wonder, no matter how much aid we receive from International Organizations, Nigeria continues to struggle with poverty and economic crises associated with very huge debts to pay. Sometimes, one of the conditions for releasing these development funding is that such project will be executed under the supervision and expertise of expatriates. This cripples the local industries and enterprise. These expatriates are paid heavily and from the development grant, thus indirectly siphoning the fund granted to the nation and at the same time sustaining the unemployment of indigenous qualified skilled personnel.

Other negative implications include, over dependency on foreign aid in such a way that creativity, enterprise and productivity are grossly hampered. Most times, even when the projects fully executed, these are not maintained because no one takes responsibility for the maintenance of such projects or infrastructure. Another major impact of international bodies is the erosion and replacement of culture through policy formation and implementation which could be negative or positive. Oftentimes an international organisation through its member obligations imposes certain practices that ordinarily are not in conformity with the acceptable norms of the citizens of a nation. Such norms come in the guise of enforcement of fundamental human rights especially with regards to laws against discrimination. The Western World through these organisations has promoted issues like homosexuality and if possible would compel member states to recognise the rights of people with different sexual inclinations.

It is pertinent to note that it is the membership of a nation to an organisation that empowers the organisation to be involved with the activities of that nation. Such memberships are maintained by complying with the financial obligations placed on members’ states and domestication of decisions made by such body. It,

therefore, follows that when a nation belongs to so many international groups, they have much more allies and external cooperation. They also would have more financial responsibilities to meet. These duties can be cumbersome and overwhelming if they are too many at a time. Having looked at the pros and cons of international organizations and their roles in national development, it is important that we now address the recent pronouncement of the federal government of Nigeria on its intention to exit at least 90 international bodies out of three hundred groups of which Nigeria has been a member. Discussing the legal implications of such decision and its impact on our economy and the welfare of the citizens are not the subject of this essay, we can, however, look at various reasons why a member state can choose to exit some of these bodies. It is not out of place for a nation to leave membership of an international organisation. Recently, Britain exited the European Union and just before that, Gambia had withdrawn from the Commonwealth of Nations. An important consideration is whether the withdrawing member is able to go it alone without the other members of the organisation. Often times the threat to withdraw is normally to achieve the desired goal.

However, the various reasons for leaving an organisation include but are not limited to the following:

- When a nation is no longer willing to comply with the organisational mandate and knows that it would be sanctioned, the country may withdraw to avoid organisational restrictions;
- To challenge international order and maintain their sovereignty;
- To accomplish domestic political goals;
- To express displeasure at the inefficiency and malfunctioning of an organisation
- When obligations outweigh the benefits of the organisation

Unfortunately, the reasons were given by the Honourable minister of finance for Nigeria’s intention to withdraw from 90 international organisations borders only on the country’s inability to keep up with the financial responsibilities to these institutions. None of the reasons mentioned above came up. This is doubtful especially in the light of the fact that delegates being sent to these meetings are often heavily sponsored, sometimes too many in numbers at a time. We could save so many funds from the unnecessary expenses associated with attending these meetings by reducing the number of representatives from the country. The Nigeria Embassy in any host country could be mandated to represent the nation in such IO’s meeting. We could also reduce the number of political aides attached to political office holders. That is not to say that Nigeria should not withdraw its membership from any of the international bodies that are considered to be of no benefit to the nation. Inability to meet up with the financial obligations is not a cogent reason if these bodies are great allies and of good benefit to the nation. Nigerians should know the list of these organisations from which it is likely to withdraw its membership. It is important to ensure that this is agreeable to the citizens. The list should be made public. One hopes that withdrawal from these organisations is not a ploy to empower the government to breach the fundamental human rights of the citizens without being answerable to any organisation. With the increase in human rights abuses by the Nigerian military, the impunity of Fulani herdsman, the fear of Islamisation, political intimidation and suppression of the Judiciary, one doubts if financial obligations are the only reason Nigerian Government is in a hurry to withdraw its membership from ninety IOs. Just as Isolation is the bane of any individual, it is the same for any nation.

To promote economic and social growth, it is important that we limit the foreign aids to only necessities during disasters. This is because most foreign aids are wrapped with debts and obligations that mortgage the comfort of the citizens.

4. CONCLUSION

International organisations play a very key role in national development. Nigeria had at certain times contributed to the national development of some other countries like the peacekeeping mission in Liberia under ECOWAS. However, Nigeria has benefited immensely from other international institutions. These organisations had played a key role in the various aspects of national development. It has also been seen that membership to these international bodies has some disadvantages. Just as they contribute immensely to the policy formation and implementations which enhance the living condition of the masses, they also diminish the potentials of a nation through the creation of dependence a mindset on the member state. Overall, the role of IOs is more positive than negative. Nigeria should therefore not withdraw its membership from certain international institutions as planned by the national government just because of the enormity of her financial obligations alone. The nation should evaluate the relevance of such membership and the organisations involved. Just as isolation kills an individual, it can also kill a nation.

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