

# Foreign Aid and National Development in Nigeria, 2012-2022

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**Abstract:** *This study on foreign aid and national development in Nigeria, 1999-2021 interrogated why in spite of the robust and huge foreign aid given to Nigeria between 1999 and 2021, the country has not really maximized the benefits to attain the expected national development. To this end, this study examined how foreign aid affected Nigeria's development. The World System theory was applied to explain the existing relationship between the advanced donor countries and Nigeria which is a Third World aid recipient country in the periphery. Mixed design via interview and documentary sources was adopted for data collection and an analysis of data for the study was deductive. Findings reveal that national interests of donor countries are indeed the underlying motive for aid delivery to Nigerian state rather than altruistic benevolent penchant for driving national development of the country. It, therefore recommends that for foreign aid to be effective in eliciting Nigeria's national development, both donors and Nigerian state should strike a robust partnership in conjunction with the beneficiary communities to determine areas of priority to engage viable projects that will be effectively monitored to avoid negative growth in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Foreign aids, National Development, Nigeria, Donor

## Introduction

It is germane to note that about half of the Nigerian populace lives in extreme poverty line of US\$1.90 per day. This makes the country one of those with very large number of poor people in the world, and has overtaken India in 2018 (International Finance Corporation, 2020; Adebayo, 2018). Going by the report of the Nigerian Living Standard Survey (supported by the World Bank) conducted between 2018 and 2019 released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), it stated that about 40 percent of the Nigerian population representing 83 million people, live below the poverty line of less than \$1.9 per day. As such, there has been a growing debate on the subject matter of foreign aid with regard to its utility and effectiveness in championing growth and development in a developing country such as Nigeria. This ensuing debate has necessitated the emergence of two contending groups: the foreign aid optimists and the pessimists. Whereas the optimists are of the view that foreign aid has impacted positively on the development of the recipients (Goldstein, 1999; Mathew, 2009; Park, 2019), the pessimists on the other hand opine that foreign aid is detrimental to the growth and development of the recipients (Ajayi, 2004; Aluko & Arowolo, 2010; Moghalu, 2014). However, beyond these perceptual rhetoric, it is the resolve of this study to empirically and objectively investigate the real impact of foreign aid on Nigeria's national development in terms of real positive impact, utility value to the economy, and its negative impacts in terms of underlying motives of the donors, mode of utilization and misapplication contrary to the purpose of national development, as well as factors responsible for ineffective channeling of foreign aid towards Nigeria's national development. This approach has become pertinent because, in spite of the acclaimed massive aids that has been funneled into Nigeria, like many other developing countries poverty still looms large, while problem of development persists. Nigeria's condition has been one of a kind in that it debases the essence of development in the state which continued to reveal a miserable image of the state where such aid is diverted into private pocket leaving the essence to suffer (Moghalu, 2014).

This balanced approach to the study of foreign aid transcends earlier blanket views and sweeping remarks that either condemns foreign aids in totality or rationalizes it as wholly successful in the development of recipient's economy in relation to Nigeria. To this end, the study examines the impact of foreign aids on the development of Nigeria.

## Methodology

The World System theory was applied to explain the existing relationship between the advanced donor countries and Nigeria which is a Third World aid recipient country in the periphery. The implication is that it shows the level of dependence on the west by Nigeria and the poor commitment to making sure that the aid is utilized judiciously. Mixed design via interview and documentary sources was adopted for data collection. The population focused Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Affairs, National Institution of International Affairs and Lecturers in the Department of Political Science with bias in International Relations where two persons were selected for interview using purposive sampling techniques and analysis of data for the study was deductive.

## Foreign Aid and the Development of Nigeria

Nigeria has benefitted from all manner of foreign aid. Just as in the recent past prior to 1999, the base year for the present study, from 1999 to 2018, socioeconomic growth and development have remained gloomy in spite of the net inflow of foreign aid (Olatujoye et al., 2016). The net inflow of aid from all donors into Nigeria amounted to US\$152 million in 1999. It rose to US\$185 million in 2000, and by 2004, it climbed to US\$573 million. In 2005 the influx of aid was US\$6.799 billion with upward swing in 2006 to the tune of US\$11.78 billion. It declined in 2007 to US\$1.385 billion, slightly increased to US\$1.401 and US\$1.638 billion in 2008 and 2009 respectively (Abdulhamid, 2008; Alabi, 2012). In spite of decades of foreign intervention, Nigeria's development indices are yet to improve, rather foreign aid appeared to have adverse effect which in development parlance amounts to negative impact on economic growth in the country (Adeyeye, 2013; Mbah & Amassoma, 2014, pp.16 & 17).

Within the period under study, foreign trade presented a mixed result. In terms of improvement of health and education in terms of enrollment, foreign aid inflows supported improvement in those social capital projects. It follows that the periods with higher inflow of foreign aid supported improvement in health and education in terms of decreased infant mortality rate and higher primary and secondary school enrollment. However, it was revealed that aid flow had marginal positive impact on other development indicators like macro economic growth, capital formation, number of paved roads etc (Ubi & Ebi, 2021). Comparatively, using retrospective indices, during the lean periods of foreign aid in the periods 1991-1995 and 1996-2000 when foreign aid declined with an average reduced rate of -2.02 per cent and -2.76 percent, respectively; computed average rate growth rates between 1991 and 1995 performed poorly, with exception of infant mortality which presented a reduction rate of -0.38 per cent and a number of paved roads with increased growth rate of 4.73 percent. Again between 1996 and 2000, despite the decline in foreign aid, there were improvement in some development indices such as health and education but there were marginal cum insignificant growth in per capita GDP, capital formation and number of paved roads (Ubi & Ebi, 2021). Between the 2000 and 2005 period when there was highest recorded average growth in foreign aid to Nigeria with an average growth of 234.28 per cent, there was improvement in selected development indicators such as education and health with exception of the average growth in the number of paved roads, which presented a falling rate of -1.61 per cent. Though there was positive average growth in foreign aid between 2006 and 2010, and 2011 and 2015 represented by 2.73 percent and 4.3 percent, such positive growth in aid led to improvement in selected development indicators (such as education and health) with an exception of average growth in the number of paved roads with falling rate of -2.26 per cent and -0.63 percent respectively (Ubi & Ebi, 2021).

On the whole, Respondent 1 states that apart from improvement in social capital sectors like improvement in school enrollment and reduction in infant mortality rate, foreign aid given to Nigerian State appear to be have marginal positive impact on national development using real economic growth indices such as real per capita GDP growth, capital formation and number of paved roads (Ubi & Ebi, 2021). These findings corroborated the observations of Burnside & Dollar (2004) and Fasanya & Onakoya (2017) that aid-aid development relationship yielded mixed results in different countries due to differences in a country's fiscal, monetary and trade policies. Fasanya & Onakoya (2012) specifically stated that the political situations in aid recipient country could be responsible for mixed results as we have seen in the case of Nigeria. The European Union infrastructure aid executed in Nigeria from 2002 to 2013 could go a long way to buttress the mixed development impact of foreign aid on national development of Nigeria. Between 2002 and 2013, the European Union embarked on three Micro-Project programmes in the Niger Delta states. The three programmes, were referred to as MPP3, MPP6 and MPP9. The official document of the project documented that through it, over 2,000 communities have been provided with what was referred to as "socially and economically relevant micro projects; which have contributed to the reduction of tensions and communities" (European Union, 2019, p.1). The first phase, which was referred to as MPP3 (covered 3 states; Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta), funded 858 micro projects (Anam, 2014). The MPP6 which was the second phase involved six states of the Niger Delta in Nigeria comprising Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Imo, and Ondo referred to as MPP6. The project value involved 5,585,100 € (Five million, five hundred and eighty-five thousand, one hundred Euros). The project was intended to assist poor populations in the six states of the Niger Delta to improve living standards on a sustainable basis (Agriconsulting Europe SA, 2022). The micro project programme (MPP6) was involved in several poverty alleviation projects in the six Niger Delta states. These include boreholes drilling and water supply schemes, health care delivery projects, building and renovation of classroom blocks as well as environmental protection projects (Basse, 2014). The MPP9 programme is funded by a grant of 9.2 billion naira from the 9 European Development Fund and marks a continuation and extension of earlier EU micro project interventions in the Niger Delta (MacRae, 2012). The project led to the execution of 1900 micro projects and now the third phase, MPP9 (Okon, 2012). The MPP9 was targeted at 1200 micro projects (Martins, 2013), however, 710 number of projects were successfully completed.

Though the above three EU projects could be said to have contributed to poverty reduction in rural and semi-urban communities through the promotion of community/ rural participation in the process (Arugu & Ogedi, 2018), emerging studies have shown that, despite intervention of donor agencies to complement government efforts in providing social services, the development gap are still widen (MacRae, 2012; Martins, 2013). Besides, after the projects, there has been no sustainability as the projects are littered over the nine states lying fallow. Most of them are no longer in use. Also, it was targeted at some communities being a micro project that

adopted piecemeal approach in its execution, thus, taking a Niger-Delta wide view, it is a far cry from covering a substantial portion of the nine Niger Delta states, nonetheless capable of igniting national development.

In addition, Respondent 1 opined that foreign aid has dangerous or harmful effects on Nigeria because of the conditions attached to aid coming from the advanced or donor countries. Aid is condition specific, which culminates in a dependent relationship. Nigeria, for instance, is one country where majority of its citizens or peoples standard of living are very low because there exists economic inequalities among the teeming population as very many of them are living in abject poverty. Yet it has abundance of natural resources that are not tapped and where they are tapped, they are mismanaged, misappropriated and are of no benefits to the masses.

It is for the promotion of a good quality life of the citizens that the United States continuously indulges in giving grants, aid and other means of assistance to third world nations which Nigeria is among. Interestingly, it is worthy to note that foreign aid from the developed world has similar roles to play in other countries like Tanzania with the same aim of ameliorating poverty and to enhance economic tie between them. Some other countries for which the United Nations have made foreign aid available and accessible include Iraq, Zambia, Kenya, Egypt, Uganda, Jordan, Israel and Afghanistan among others. Despite the fact that Nigeria has been receiving aid from developed countries, abject poverty still looms large number of Nigerians and the worst is that underdevelopment persists which makes it evidential that foreign aid does not affect Nigeria's economy positively. Rather according to Fasanya & Onakoya (2012), in spite of the series of foreign aid that Nigerian government benefited in getting, yet the socio-economic development has constantly remained so gloomy. Adeyeye in Ogah & Aliyu (2022) corroborated this view by asserting that Nigeria's advancement indicators have remained unimproving, as a matter of fact, even worst not withstanding over forty years of constant opportunity of benefiting from foreign aid and still a good number of Nigeria's population, about two-third (2/3) are living on below one dollar daily.

The fact remains that in spite of reports of huge financial injection into the Nigerian economy as foreign aid, particularly from leading donor countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Japan, the country still possess all the indices of underdevelopment. For instance, the Organization Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD's) data for 2005-06 show that the total net official development assistance (ODA) provided to Nigeria by the members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) was up to the tune of USD 1.4 billion in 2006 (of which USD 1 billion is debt relief). In spite of these huge financial assistance, as at 2006, the country still sprawled at a gross national income (GNI) per capita in purchasing power parity terms of USD 1 050. Also, the 2006 Baseline Survey, conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics, estimated that 54% of the population lived below the dollar-per-day international poverty line, while 92% were living below the two-dollars-per-day (OECD, 2008).

Besides, majority of the foreign assistance given to Nigeria are not such that could directly spark off national development except by trickle-down effect, which amount to growth without development. For instance, the United States aid to Nigeria heavily anchored by the United States Agency for International development (USAID) is tilted more towards humanitarian assistance than direct assistance for industrial and technological development that could lead to take-off for industrial revolution of the country. In this context, a critical examination of the USAID intervention in Nigeria shows that the U.S. through USAID supported Nigeria in primary health care, education, agriculture, democracy and good governance, conflict resolution and assistance to internally displaced persons (APO Group, 2021).

Again, Respondent 2 stated that Nigeria's economic development is in all respect tied to the foreign participation to the degree that even the petroleum that is the major resource in the country is sold to the advanced nations at their condition and that same product is refined and sent back to us at exorbitant price (their own terms). The rate at which the advanced nations involved in the economies of the less developed countries like Nigeria is very high. Thus, it is described as state capitalism by political economists, which is a situation where capitalist state is met not only as a guarantor of the capitalist order but also an inventor in capitalist monopoly concern (Obijiaku, 2015). Nigeria's idea of implementation of privatization and commercialization policies as guided by the market forces under Babangida's administration was largely due to the general global political economy of the 1980s. According to Professor Akin Abogunje cited in Obijiaku (2015), the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) philosophy was used as a strategy of cutting monetary and external disparity with limited fiscal policy, the ultimate aim was to realize noninflationary growth and to stimulate domestic production of tradable goods. The programme was mainly implemented to achieve a continuous external debt service profile and improve domestic saving and investment and in the inflow of external resources.

**Table 1: Foreign Aid Received by Nigeria from 1999 to 2020**

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| Year | Net Value Received |
|------|--------------------|
| 1999 | \$151,990,000      |
| 2000 | \$173,800,000      |
| 2001 | \$167,820,000      |
| 2002 | \$299,550,000      |
| 2003 | \$309,850,000      |
| 2004 | \$578,770,000      |
| 2005 | \$6,401,790,000    |
| 2006 | \$11,431,960,000   |
| 2007 | \$1,958,600,000    |
| 2008 | \$1,293,720,000    |
| 2009 | \$1,639,230,000    |
| 2010 | \$2,052,360,000    |
| 2011 | \$1,809,860,000    |
| 2012 | \$1,916,170,000    |
| 2013 | \$2,515,720,000    |
| 2014 | \$2,515,720,000    |
| 2015 | \$2,431,540,000    |
| 2016 | \$2,498,190,000    |
| 2017 | \$3,358,790,000    |
| 2018 | \$22,016,000,000   |
| 2019 | \$655,642,000      |
| 2020 | \$5,639,000        |

Source: *IndexMundi (2012) and Adamu (2020)*

The foregoing table clearly reveals that Nigeria has over these years received billions of dollars from the European Development Fund (EDF), the United Nations Development Systems (UNDS), China through the Bilateral Agreement between the People's Republic of China and the Nigerian Government signed in 1972, and Japan activities in Nigeria through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Other donors include Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Department for International Development (DFID), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the German International Cooperation (GIZ). This foreign aid according to the Minister of State for Budget and National Planning, Mr. Clement Agba the foreign aid is in the form of funds for executing projects. However, according to him, the implication of the aid is that the donors do not give the funds for management, instead they work with the sectoral stakeholder and directly fund the projects after identifying the needs by Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) as well as states in accordance with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (Adamu, 2020).

In the case of health sector, it was reported that USAID supported Nigeria through training of public health workers, increased access to quality medicines, and improving leadership in health sector. A report estimated that USAID has protected 68 million Nigerians from malaria by donation of mosquito nets through the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI). This aspect of foreign assistance by the USAID was reported to have contributed to a drop in child deaths by 16 percent over ten years and reduction of malaria prevalence from 42 percent to 23 percent (APO Group, 2021, p.1).

In the education sector, within 2000 and 2018, USAID reported of assisting millions of youth to improve their lives through better early grade reading skills. Not less than 340,000 children whose education was stalled through conflict have been returned back to school (APO Group, 2021). Also, through USAID's Feed the Future programme, about 2.3 million smallholder farmers have benefitted from improved products, improved techniques, and access to and financing. Through its Democracy and Governance programmes, USAID has supported free and fair elections by giving assistance to about 230 civil society organizations working for more responsive governance and conflict resolution, particularly ethno-religious conflicts and farmer-herder conflicts. In fact, USAID has donated about \$343 million in commodities and logistic support to give internally displaced people access to food, health and human rights (APO Group, 2021).

### **Effect of Foreign Aids on the Development of Nigeria**

From the foregoing, it could be observed that foreign aid has championed variegated humanitarian and social capital aid, but is lagging behind in the area of aid that can have sustained positive impact and improvement that could spark off real national growth and development such as facilitation of national savings, real per capita income, capital formation and real growth in the economy.

Another crucial dimension in foreign aid is in the area of aid assistance. It has been revealed that foreign aid in terms of loan has entrapped Nigeria in the web of debt crises thereby impeding development. Due to persistent borrowing by successive governments in Nigeria, the country has been plunged into the web of controls by Western creditors. Findings revealed that Nigeria was granted debt concessions by its creditors on the condition that the country would initiate new economic reforms such as liberalization and commercialization of its economy to enable unfettered access to private sector participation (CIA World Fact Book, 2010). Three key policy reforms in line with IMF's conditionalities warranted some debt reliefs by the creditor institutions. These include: Nigeria's acceptance to deregulate its downstream oil sector leading to deregulation of fuel prices, privatization of the country's four refineries, and establishment of National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), which was tailored to satisfy the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility for fiscal and monetary management. It was not until these IMF's conditionalities were satisfied that in November 2005, the Paris Club approved a debt-relief package worth of \$30 billion of Nigeria's total \$37 billion external debt (CIA World Fact Book, 2008).

Thus, when loans are borrowed indiscriminately and spent on non-profit-oriented social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, road and bridges, radio and television stations etc., the government may not have the capacity to recoup the funds to service or repay such loans. These are capital intensive projects, which often time allowed to deteriorate due to lack of capacity to maintain them. Moreover, due to Nigerian government's inability to recoup funds to service these loans, it is usually pushed to embark on austerity measures that adversely affect the living standard of the population. Such austere measures include: cut in wages and salaries, placing ban on employment, retrenchment of those already working, stiff tariff measures, particularly high import duties that further increase inflation, imposition and increase on other taxes (such as increase on value added tax (VAT) as a means of generating internal revenue and reduction in government expenditure. The cumulative effects of these austere measures include different forms of structural violence as witnessed in the country presently that have manifested in acts of terrorism attacks, kidnapping, banditry, ritual killings, violent agitations and protests across the country etc (Aluko & Arowolo, 2010).

Ultimately, indebtedness to creditors has resulted to external control and manipulation of Nigeria's domestic economy by the advanced country creditors. Thus, in the bid to enforce loan conditionalities in the country, officials of IMF, World Bank and other creditors have invaded and influenced the economic policies and administration of the country's banking and financial systems. This in itself has increased Nigeria's dependency on the Western and Asian creditors (Aluko & Arowolo, 2010; Ekundayo, 2010).

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

This paper captured the dynamics of foreign aids and noted that despite the contributions of foreign donors through aids to Nigeria, the pace of National development in Nigeria is still very far from what is anticipated. It concludes that the contributions of foreign aid to Nigeria's national development have been marginal owing the nature of the aid, conditionalities attached to them, the sectoral allocation of such aid. Findings reveal that national interests of donor countries are indeed the underlying motive for aid delivery to Nigerian state rather than altruistic benevolent penchant for driving national development of the country. It, therefore recommends that for foreign aid to be effective in eliciting Nigeria's national development, both donors and Nigerian state should strike a robust partnership in conjunction with the beneficiary communities to determine areas of priority to engage viable projects that will be effectively monitored to avoid negative growth in Nigeria.

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