

# Corruption and the Utilization of Foreign Aids in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *This study interrogated the effect of corruption on the utilization of foreign aids in Nigeria. Over the years, the country has continued to borrow and receive foreign aid; yet tangible projects are hardly seen leaving the state worse than it used to be. To give credence to the study, two research questions were raised which include: why has foreign aid not been able to meet its major demands in Nigeria? How has corruption affected the utilization of foreign aids in Nigeria? The study employed mixed design, utilizing both documentary and interview section as its methods of data collection. It was thus analysed using deductive argument. It discovered that foreign aids in Nigeria have failed to meet its major objectives due to the deep rooted corruption ravaging the state. Again, it revealed that burdensome demand on the recipient states are major limitation to proper utilization of foreign aids in Nigeria. As such, the study recommends that there should be a review on the major institutions of government and make them more effective. That could be possible if the institution is ready to deal with the man stronger than the institutions who operate behind the screen.*

**Keywords:** Corruption, development, foreign aids, recipient nation and utilization,

## Introduction

No developing economy is free from external aid. The essence is to aid sociopolitical and economic development in those states. The Nigerian experience is one where foreign has not felt in terms of filling the void that necessitated it. Though one can say that Nigeria has not been worse off with foreign aids, but she has not been better so far. Accordingly, foreign aid pessimists such as Dreher, Eleche-Nanner, Gehring, Langotand, Lohamann (2015), Zimmerman (2007), Fasanya & Onakoya (2013), Adeyeye (2013), Osimen, Adenegan & Balogun(2013) Alabi (2012), Mba & Amassoma (2014) posited that although, Nigeria like other less developed countries has continued to benefit from all sorts of foreign assistance, nevertheless, her socio-economic development looks gloomy due to perceived combination of donor-related (exogenous) factors such as use of aid as a diplomatic control of recipients through donor strings and conditionalities.

In other words, foreign aid is often wasted on conditions that recipients must use over-priced goods and services from donor countries through threats of denial of market access for recipient countries products (Shua, cited in Oshewo, 2011); whereas endogenous (internal) factors associated with the recipients include, corruption, misplacement of priorities, and poor utilization of foreign aid (Tawiah, Barnes & Zakari, 2019; Anetor, Esho & Verhoef, 2020). For instance, about €220 billion (\$405 billion) of development assistance has been diverted from Nigeria's national coffers from independence to date by past leaders owing to corruption (Adeyeye, 2013; Internet Geography, 2020). Further report indicates that the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) recorded that an embezzlement of a staggering \$5006 billion worth of Official Development Aid (ODA) by the Nigerian authorities (Olanrele and Ibrahim, 2015).

From which ever angle the injection of foreign aids is looked at, there seems to be an established assumption by both optimists and pessimists that the rate of development in Nigeria does not reflect the quantum of foreign aid injected into the country, particularly since the country returned to civil rule in 1999 (Abdulhamid in Oluotuoye et al, 2016; Alabi, 2016; OECD, 2018; Nevin & Omosomi, 2019; UNOCHA, 2020). The crux of the matter is that aid represents a huge chunk of fund to assist in igniting development in Nigeria, at least in principle. Going by the above stated huge amount of foreign aid to Nigeria, there should be no reason for the country to lag behind in real development of its economy. It is assumed that the country's development trajectory should have improved much more than its present debilitating state.

As such, this questions why the country has remained backward, less-developed, with dismal socio-economic development that is marked by high rate of unemployment and poverty amongst its teeming populace in spite of the huge aid receipt (Ugwuegbe, Okaf or, Akarogbe, 2016; Adebayo and Olufumilayo, 2019; Park, 2019). This situation is a huge contrast to the purpose of foreign aids, which in principle is given for the purpose of development of the country experiencing balance of payment (BOP) deficits and humongous debts (OECD, 2018; Deessa, 2012). Beyond the polemical debate between the optimists and pessimists, the study interrogates in holistic terms how both internal and external factors, such as embezzlement and misapplication of the received aid by the recipient country (Nigerian) authorities, and the nature of the aid package itself, respectively, constitute impediments to the national development purpose of foreign aids (OECD, 2018a; 2018b). Thus, the study seeks to generate some research questions to guide the study.

## Methodology

In this study, WorldSystem 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. It tells more on the depth of corruption prevalent in Nigeria. 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.

## Effect of Corruption on the Utilization of Foreign Aids for Nigeria's National Development

This section interrogated the effect of corruption on the effective utilization of foreign aid for Nigeria's national development. Here, external and internal factors such as imposition of donor projects, burdensome donor requirements, and commercial cum political interests of donors; and corruption, misplacement of priorities, and weak and inefficient institutions of the recipient impede the effective utilization of foreign aid for Nigeria's national development are analyzed.

## External Factors Impeding Effective Utilization of Foreign Aid for Nigeria's National Development

There are basically twelve factors attributable to external factors or the donor factors that impede foreign aid effectiveness in achieving national development of Nigeria. These factors were used to measure foreign aid effectiveness based on the World Bank benchmarks based on the 2008 Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration for Making Aid more Effective by 2010. The Paris Declaration is hinged on the premise that for aid to be effective, stronger and more balanced, accountability mechanisms remains key at all levels. Essentially, the Paris Declaration recognizes that aid becomes more effective when both donors and partner country governments are accountable to their respective publics and to each other in the utilization of resources and management aimed at achieving development results.

The twelve indicators are: a) Operational development strategies, b) reliable public financial management (PFM) systems, c) reliable procurement systems, d) if flows are aligned on national priorities, e) strengthening capacity by co-ordinated support, f) use of country PFM systems, g) use of country procurement systems, h) strengthening capacity by avoiding parallel PIUs, i) whether aid is untied J), use of common arrangements or procedures, k) joint missions, l) joint country analytical work, m) results-based monitoring frameworks and n) mutual accountability (OECD, 2021). On whether aid flow is aligned to Nigeria's national priorities, it was revealed that on aggregate, only 9% of aid disbursed by donors to the government sector was accurately estimated in Nigeria's government budget. One contributing factor is that Nigeria does not currently receive budget support as donor financial contribution accounts for less than 1% of its annual budget. The country report notes that this is due to donor support being provided through direct project intervention and donors not reporting their spending to government. The donors capitalized on the lack of capacity of the ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) to affect accurate book-keeping and the recording of donor activities. This contradicts the Paris Declaration which stipulated that comprehensive and transparent reporting on aid, and how it is used, is an important means of ensuring that donors align aid flows with national development priorities. Hence, the degree to which development assistance to the government sector is fully and accurately reflected in the budget provides a useful indication of the degree to which serious effort is made to connect aid programmes with country policies and processes. It also allows partner country authorities to present accurate and comprehensive budget reports to their parliaments and citizens (OECD, 2021). This shows that aids were not captured in the state budget and was practically executed by the west connecting the politicians that will make their dominance easier in the state. They are all products of a corrupt process.

On a similar note, on account of coordinating aid to strengthen Nigeria's capacity, the OECD Data for 2017 revealed that even though report indicated that 95% of technical co-operation to Nigeria by the five donors participating in the 2008. Survey was coordinated with country programmes, however, the World Bank's 2006 Aid Effectiveness reported that there were a number of challenges. The problems ranged from human capacity constraint in the civil service and project formulation by donors which include Canada, European Commission, Germany, Japan, United Kingdom, United Nations, United States etc. In most cases the host country (Nigeria) was not involved, therefore projects were not tailored to specific needs. The above condition necessitated the Paris Declaration to specify that donors should be committed to providing technical co-operation in a manner that is coordinated with partner country strategies and programmes. This Paris Declaration stipulated this condition having observed that capacity constraints significantly undermine the ability of partner countries to capture, co-ordinate and utilize aid flows more effectively. Thus, provision of aid by donors should be fashioned in a way that the recipient country capacity could be built to be able to define clear objectives to ensure that existing capacities are used effectively and that external support is harmonized within this framework (OECD, 2021).

Another external constraint to effectiveness of aid in Nigeria is the issue of using parallel implementation structures that are outside the Nigerian government structures. This is contrary to the Paris Declaration benchmark for making foreign aid effective. More often than none, when providing development assistance, some donors establish specific project implementation units (PIUs), i.e. dedicated management units designed to support development projects or programmes. A PIU becomes “parallel” when it is created strictly by the donor and operates outside the existing recipient country institutional and administrative structures. On the long run, parallel PIU often tend to undermine national capacity building efforts, distort salaries and weaken accountability for development. The number of parallel PIUs in Nigeria reported as part of the 2008 Survey stands at 11. The country report noted that donors having doubts about the recipient government capacity to implement projects effectively established parallel PIUs to improve the speed of delivery of projects and to enable them to use their own procurement systems (OECD, 2021).

Another factor considered by the Paris Declaration for measuring aid effectiveness is that of whether aid provided are predictable or not. The ability to predict aid disbursements is measured in terms of both how much aid will be delivered and when to do so. This would help a recipient country manage public finances and undertake realistic planning for development, particularly enabling partner countries to implement medium- to long-term development plans and to optimize the allocation of resources within and across sectors. Two ways to measure predictability were, first, the combined ability of donors and government to disburse aid on schedule; secondly, the ability of donors and government to record comprehensively disbursements made by donors to the government sector. However, in 2007, on aggregate for the five donors reporting to the 2008 Survey, only 9% of scheduled disbursements were accurately recorded by the Nigerian government, although 73% of scheduled aid was actually disbursed. The country report lists a number of explanations for the gap, but data reported in the 2008 Survey indicate that the primary problem is that of reporting and recording disbursements. This finding has shown that bulk of the foreign aid disbursement is not predictable because they were not properly recorded while some were not disbursed on schedule (OECD, 2021). See table 5 showing the rate of scheduled and recorded disbursements by Nigerian government.

Furthermore, it is noted that tying of aid is one of the impeding factors to foreign aid effectiveness. In line with Paris Declaration, aid is said to be “tied” when it is given on the condition that the recipient country will use it to purchase goods and services from suppliers based in the donor country. Tying of aid with conditionalities increases not only the costs of goods and services delivered to recipient countries, but also increases the administrative burdens on both donors and recipient countries. On the flip side, untied aid helps build a recipient country’s capacity to provide goods and services. In spite of the OECD-DAC data from the 2006 Baseline Survey which claimed that 99% of aid to Nigeria is untied, it still evident that donors still impose “specific and stringent” requirements to which Nigeria should adhere, particularly relating to procurement. More so, the aspect of hiring of consultants is also often based on donor standards (OECD, 2021).

On the issue of harmonization of aid delivery projects, Respondent 1 reported that poor co-ordination of aid increases the cost for both donors and recipient countries, and by implication reduces the value-added of aid significantly. On the positive side, harmonization of aid delivery procedures and adoption of common arrangements help reduce duplication of effort and lower the steep transaction costs of managing aid. The Paris Declaration focuses on two dimensions of aid as a proxy for assessing overall harmonization: the use of common arrangements within programme-based approaches (PBAs) and the extent to which donors and partner countries conduct joint missions and share analysis. The state of harmonization of aid delivery in Nigerian state is found to be marginal and requires considerable improvement (OECD, 2021). In other words, there is considerable issue of poor coordination of aid related projects in the country with all its shortcomings such as increased costs and reduction in value-added of the aid.

In terms of use of common arrangements, aid effectiveness is enhanced when donors use common arrangements to manage and deliver aid in support of partner country priorities. A sound mechanism for aid co-ordination can be described as one that builds on shared objectives and that reconciles, in a constructive manner, the various interests of stakeholders. This is indicator based on Paris Declaration which assesses the degree to programme-based approaches (PBAs) which donors work together by measuring the proportion of total ODA disbursed within PBAs. Whereas the Paris Declaration 2010 target is for 66% of aid to make use of PBAs, data for 2007 (provided by the five donors that participated in the 2008 Survey) show that, overall, only 5% of aid to Nigeria makes use of PBAs, with no use made of budget support. The country report notes that very few donor projects meet all of the criteria for making use of PBAs, although a number of projects meet some of the criteria (OECD, 2021). Based on this finding, so many donors do not make use of PBAs and this has contributed in no small measure to impede aid effectiveness in Nigeria. Exclusion and limited role of the direct beneficiaries of aid’s projects as could be sieved from the narrative of the Chief Planning Officer, Ondo State Ministry of Economic Planning and Budgeting Akure, foreign donors execute projects without properly consulting critical stakeholders. This sometimes leads to replication of projects that had already been provided by previous donors (Olatujoye et al., 2016).

From the summary of indicators measuring aid effectiveness, it could be seen that there were no mutual accountability of foreign aid in place. Under such fussy situation aid is not accounted for and therefore, not transparent both for the donor and Nigeria, the recipient

country. These are some of the explicit external impediments to aid effectiveness to Nigerian National development. We therefore turn to the internal factors impeding aid effectiveness in driving national development in the country.

### **Internal Factor Impeding Effective Utilization of Foreign Aid for Nigeria's National Development**

Coming to Nigeria, it appears that the government takes the lead at both federal and state levels. At the federal level the National Planning Commission is saddled with the responsibility of coordinating grants while the Ministry of Finance co-ordinates credit. However, it was noted by the World Bank that there is no effective overall mechanism to co-ordinate external partners, despite establishing a number of sectoral working group. In all, the country has not the criteria for ownership for coordination of aid since it did not meet the medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF) both at federal and state levels (OECD, 2021).

It is on record that the net average volume of Official Development Aid (ODA) to Nigeria between the year 2000 and 2009 stood at US\$2620 million and average capital growth rate for this period was ₦601,878.85million. During the year 2005, Nigeria ranked the second largest recipient of ODA while between 2009 and 2011, the country became one of the tenth highest recipient of foreign aid in Africa. Within these periods, the net bilateral development aid was reported to be US\$1657 million, US\$2062 million, and US\$1813 million, respectively. However, in spite of the receipt of this huge amount of ODA, the country has not shown any commensurate growth and development due to the following reasons: Non-utilization of the aid for appropriate purposes and looting the aid funds received (Olanrele and Ibrahim, 2015). Large chunk of the received aid package were looted, even the recovered funds were equally re-looted. The report by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission reported in 2005 that the total amount of the ODA fund that was looted accounted for about \$506 billion, which amounts to equivalence of total aid to other countries in Africa in the preceding decades (Olanrele & Ibrahim, 2015).

As argued by Bauer in Isiyaku, Zasha and Suleiman (2022), foreign aid has severe, distorting costs in the political life of recipient countries. Thus, it is generally transferred to the governments of those countries that tend to increase the government's power, resources, and patronage in relation to the rest of the society and, consequently, the stakes in any struggle for control of that power. The tendency for people to spend comparatively most of their time focusing on the result of administrative and political decisions diverts attention, resources and energy from economic activities that are more productive. That may heighten tension and instabilities that can lead to the outbreak of civil armed conflict (Isiyaku, Zasha & Suleiman, 2022). In many cases, foreign aid has sustained governments in their chase of economically counterproductive political and economic policies. Such policies include the persecution of particular sections of the society, limitations on private trade and the inflow of private capital and ventures, confiscation of properties, price policies which discourage agricultural production, and the expropriation of foreign capital and enterprises. To make the situation worse, when the tracking down of such policies gets worse, the economic prosperity of an aid recipient, the country may be eligible for yet more aid because its situation is deteriorating (Isiyaku, Zasha & Suleiman, 2022).

In point of fact, foreign aid has by and large benefited the ruling elite and top management of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) which makes the ultimate goal of foreign aid unachievable. A study reveals that rather than creating wealth, prosperity and economic development, most of the African countries have over the past few decades realized a net decrease in their standards of living. On the contrary, the ruling elites became richer. According to Mathew (2009 on the *Daily Gambia Echo* in Murshed & Khanaum, 2013):

... over the period that foreign aid was being pumped into Africa, the per capita GDP declined by an average of 0.59 percent annually between 1975 and 2000. Foreign aid has been found to do more harm to Africa leading to a situation where Africans have failed to set their own pace and direction of development free of external interference.

Basically, the aid given to less developed countries only increases what is found in place. If the recipient country has good government and strong economic policies, foreign aid will make the government better and its economic policy more viable. But if the country has corrupt government officials and weak economic policy, the tendency for that country to be weaker economically, as a result of the aid, is high. However, it is not possible that those countries that pursue counterproductive economic policies do not in any way derive some benefits from the foreign aid they receive. This is because; programs such as child immunization do benefit and are likely to continue benefiting the less developed countries irrespective of the strength or otherwise of their economic policies. Nonetheless, it is an undeniable fact that countries that pursue productive economic policies benefit more from foreign aid than those that pursue counterproductive policies (Murshed & Khanaum, 2013).

Corruption and misplacement of priority holds sway in Nigeria in relation to foreign aid. Sometimes the leaders see aid as a largess and windfall which they can swoop on to satisfy their ostentatious lifestyle. It is an established dictum that foreign aid exacerbates the problem of corruption in Nigeria. This is corroborated with the Transparency International Corruption Index which placed Nigeria as 148 out of the 180 countries in corruption index mainly because instead of using the aid to embark on projects that could equitably impact on the people positively or use it to facilitate growth to the benefit of those that need it most, the fund is spent on

white elephant projects and fraudulent government contracts. Because foreign aid is not properly utilized to execute infrastructural projects for which they were provided, we find Nigerian politicians patronizing hospitals in Europe when they get sick leaving the populace at the mercy of dilapidated hospitals they have failed to equip in spite of the huge sums of aid from donors like the World Bank, IMF etc. (Salami, 2022).

Furthermore, misplaced priority in the disbursement of foreign aid was found out to be a major challenge confronting foreign aid effectiveness. The aid inflows are scarcely channeled to critical areas to address developmental challenges (Adeyeye, 2013). For instance, a large sum of foreign aid receipt in Nigeria for 2010 was spent on administration, which gulped 26.9% of total aid, whereas, critical sectors such as agriculture, energy, mining, industry and trade and transportation received only 5.4%, 9.4%, 1.9% and 6.8% respectively (Alabi, 2012).

Sequel to the above, bulk of the foreign aid funds are channeled to use and this impedes it from promoting growth and development in the country (Mbah and Amassoma, 2014). As a result, most of the foreign aid projects are not sustainable thereby impeding its effectiveness in driving development of Nigeria. Due to corrupt tendencies of the Nigerian contractors they collude to put in place substandard projects so as to make huge profits. Using the European Union project in Akure South Local Government Area for example, though European Union projects have contributed to road construction, electrification of communities, and have facilitated to some extent improved economic activities, thereby raising the standard of living of the people in the area; however it was revealed that the projects are not sustainable. This was corroborated by the Chief Planning Officer at the Ondo State Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, Akure. He stated that:

... going around, many of the projects are short-lived, they do not last. Sometimes projects are executed without consulting stakeholder (in the area) and as such, they replicate projects that have been done by others in the past. In addition, most of the projects they have done are moribund. Basically, there is no maintenance system put in place in the country like they do overseas. In addition, nonconformity to standards is also another problem (Chief Economic Officer, Ondo Ministry of Economic Planning and budget, Akure, cited in Olatujoye et al., 2016, p.5).

Citing a Community Leader in Gaga Community, Akure South Local Government Area in Ondo State who lamented on the consequences of the corruption being perpetrated by contractors that handled the project donated by European Union in his community he stated thus:

The contractors mismanaged the funds for the project donated by the European Union. We are not happy that the project was not completed and not properly handed over to the community. They only came and took pictures of the physical structures when many important works were left undone. We had to gather individual contributions from the community members before the project could be concluded (Olatujoye et al., 2016, p.6).

It was further revealed that a hand pump borehole of a World Bank assisted project at Oke-meji Community in Ward II Akure South LGA became nonfunctional within one year of its construction (Olatujoye et al., 2016).

Another pertinent internal factor impeding aid effectiveness in Nigeria is the aid dependency syndrome. This is a situation where the Nigerian government has become used to receiving aid and giving the false impression that it cannot really develop the country without foreign aid. By so doing, successive governments do not see the need to invest on sustainable economic ventures because they believe that there is always foreign aid to the rescue. This in itself is not sustainable and impedes economic growth and development (Salami, 2022).

In sum, aid dependency syndrome amounts to economic mismanagement and failure of the Nigerian State to meet up with its loan obligations in terms of keeping to the terms of conditions stipulated by donors/lenders. For instance, Nigeria's debt profile was reported to be at the tune of \$31 billion while its foreign reserve grew to eight billion US dollars. Nigeria by estimation prior to the debt forgiveness ought to have been servicing its debt by paying at least \$4.9 billion annually in keeping to its contractual agreements over repayment of foreign loans. This colossal amount included a total of \$1.1 billion required by state governments to service their foreign debts and \$3.8 billion required by the Federal Government to service its foreign debt. It is on record that the country was in default of \$22 billion worth of Paris Club debts owed sovereign lenders, and was struggling to service its \$3.5 billion London Club obligations (CIA World Fact Book, 2008). Abia and Niger states were the topmost states having the debt service requirement of \$89 million and \$85.5 million respectively, followed by Lagos State with \$79.2 million, Imo State with \$78 million, Plateau State with \$70.3 million. In the least debt service requirement, we have Zamfara State with three million US dollars, followed by Katsina State with \$3.7 million, Kebbi State with \$4 million and Cross River State with \$11 million (Ekundayo, 2010, p.13).

Above findings corroborated the study of Stewart (1998) who argued that foreign aid only degenerate into debt crisis when the loan is either mismanaged, misappropriated or not committed to development oriented projects. Stewart further observed that Zimbabwe and many other African countries are entangled in a vicious cycle of debt trap catastrophe due to misdirection of foreign aid funds on unproductive and non-profitable social service related projects which do not regenerate the money.

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## Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that the external and internal factors such as imposition of donor projects, burdensome donor requirements, and commercial cum political interests of donors; and internal factors such as corruption, misplacement of priorities, and weak and inefficient institutions of the recipient impede the effective utilization of foreign aid for Nigeria's national development. As such, the study recommends that there should be a review on the major institutions of government and make them more effective. That could be possible if the institution is ready to deal with the man stronger than the institutions who operates behind the screen.

Furthermore, there is need to include in the donor projects design a proper delivery and planned handover of projects which encapsulates a well-thought out maintenance structure that will ensure security and maintenance of the projects. If this smooth transmission of the projects to the end beneficiaries is put in place and replicated across all foreign donor projects in the country, the projects are bound to be viable, and then foreign aid will be in position to spark-off the much desired sustainable socio-economic development in Nigeria.

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