



FRIDE

Assessing Democracy Assistance:

Nigeria¹

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This report is one of 14 undertaken under the rubric of a project assessing the views of stakeholders in target countries on the effectiveness of democracy assistance. The project aims to gather views on how democracy support can be re-legitimised and its impact enhanced. Other case studies and a synthesis report can be found at www.fride.org.

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Nigeria returned to civilian rule in May 1999 after three decades of military rule, interrupted only by the 1979–83 Second Republic. Since 1999, Nigeria has held three general elections. The quality has declined consistently, to the point where the April 2007 elections that brought President Umaru Yar'Adua to power were decried by international observers as 'failed' and 'discredited'.² The key player of the past decade was Yar'Adua's predecessor, President Olusegun Obasanjo. Obasanjo came to power in 1999 amid enormous public expectation of a 'democracy dividend' and tangible increases in economic and political development. Obasanjo delivered a number of important reforms during his two terms (eight years) in office, including reform of the military; establishing an aggressive anti-corruption commission; paying off the majority of Nigeria's external debt; restructuring the banking sector; and providing a measure of macroeconomic stability that saw the oil-dominated GDP grow 6 per cent per year on average and the non-oil sector grow by more than 8 per cent from 2006–08.³ In terms of political development, however, Obasanjo did little to reverse the neopatrimonial political culture he inherited. He ultimately reversed the country's democratic gains – and undermined his own reform programme – by attempting to amend the constitution to extend the number of terms a president may remain in office and, when that failed, creating an election crisis severe enough to declare emergency rule, which also failed. To achieve his goals, Obasanjo and the cadres of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) built vast clientelistic networks

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² BBC website, 'What Nigerian Election Observers Say', April 23, 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6582979.stm>.

³ The Economist, November 7, 2007.

of opportunistic supporters fuelled by corruption and, increasingly, violence. This ensured the continued dominance of a small, multiethnic oligarchy over the political, economic, and social systems. This oligarchy looted billions in oil revenue (Nigeria earned USD 70 billion in 2008 alone), while 92 per cent of Nigerians lived on less than USD 2 per day.⁴

However, important democratic progress has been made over the last ten years, in spite of the ruinous activities of the elite. Both the National Assembly and the judiciary have shown increasing independence from the dominant executive in the last decade. The Assembly began impeachment proceedings against President Obasanjo on three occasions and also refused to grant him a third term in office. The judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court and the federal appellate courts, passed a number of landmark rulings, which overturned rigged elections, decided key disputes over revenue sharing, and addressed a number of key constitutional matters important for democratic consolidation. Civil society groups and the media also flourished following the transition to civilian rule in 1999: by 2009 the government estimated that some 46,000 NGOs had registered.⁵ Most of the larger and older civil society groups, such as the trade unions, the Bar and professional associations also rebuilt their internal structures and regained political influence.

Raising hopes that his sham 2007 election would be the last, Yar'Adua inaugurated a twenty-two person Electoral Reform Committee (ERC), which submitted its report the following year. Civil society groups have seized on the ERC report as articulating an important standard for election reforms, including securing an independent electoral commission. Yet the Yar'Adua administration promptly rejected most of the key recommendations of the ERC, almost guaranteeing that the 2011 election will be as bad as or worse than that of 2007, unless President Goodluck Jonathan, who took office upon Yar'Adua's death in 2010, reverses course. Not surprisingly, public opinion surveys show increasing disapproval of the performance of the nation's democratic institutions.⁶

Overview of trends and patterns in donors' activities

Throughout the last decade of civilian rule, donors have attempted to fight the negative trends outlined above, while supporting the positive developments in government and civil society. Nigeria is atypical within Africa, as its vast oil wealth means that very little of its government budget depends upon donor funds.⁷ Consequently, foreign donors have much less influence than elsewhere in Africa, even at the local level. For instance, USAID's democracy and governance budget in 2003 was approximately USD 3 million, which is less than what a single gubernatorial candidate spent on average on his own election campaign that year. The 469 members of the National Assembly were accused of receiving USD 1 million each as a bribe to vote for President Obasanjo's third term amendments in 2006.⁸ By comparison, foreign democracy assistance budgets were paltry. In addition, some donor self-assessments⁹ note that international funding arrived late and assistance was not sufficiently coordinated.

In the 1990s, military rulers were subject to increasing international pressure to democratise, especially following the annulment of Nigeria's June 1993 election. Between 1993 and early 1999, the European Union (EU) and other international bodies imposed limited sanctions on Nigeria. The United States, United Kingdom and other countries recalled their ambassadors. The Commonwealth countries suspended Nigeria's membership, and both the United Nations and Organisation of African Unity condemned Nigeria for its human rights record. The EU led the way by suspending project development cooperation with Nigeria. Even while sanctions were imposed against Nigeria, however, emergency and humanitarian aid continued. On the initiative of the European Parliament a budget line was established for 1998 and 1999 to provide EUR 7 million to support human rights and democracy in Nigeria.¹⁰ Thus, some Nigerian NGOs and human rights organisations, within the framework of decentralised cooperation, benefited from EU assistance in the areas

⁴ World Bank Development Indicators 2006, available at <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,contentMDK:20899413~pagePK:64133150~piPK:64133175~theSitePK:239419,00.html>

⁵ THISDAY (Lagos), September 23, 2009

⁶ See the nationwide Afrobarometer surveys, available at www.afrobarometer.org.

⁷ Nigeria is obviously not an aid-dependent country; aid represents only about 1 per cent of its GDP.

⁸ Sunday Punch, 7 May 2006

⁹ Based on the authors' analysis of some of the evidence in several assessments and evaluations of democracy assistance programmes and projects by some of the major donors and development partners in Nigeria, notably USAID, DFID and UNDP.

¹⁰ The Delegation of the European Union to Nigeria, 'Nigeria-European Community Country Support Strategy and Indicative Programme for the period 2001–2007', <http://www.delnga.ec.europa.eu/docs/CountryStrategy.pdf>. p.18.

of human rights and democracy, as well as poverty alleviation. For example, EUR 400,000 was disbursed in 1998 to provide shelter for the 1000 Ogoni families displaced as a result of the internal conflict between Ogonis and Adonis in southern Nigeria.

In mid-June 1998, the new military administration of General Abdulsalam Abubakar came to power following the sudden death of General Abacha, and quickly put in place a programme of transition to civil rule. In response, bilateral and multilateral donors restored aid and assistance relationships with Nigeria, supporting some aspects of the political transition. They provided technical assistance to key institutions including the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECs), the emerging political parties and associations, and civil society groups. Donor activity in the areas of democracy and good governance promotion increased significantly following Nigeria's return to civil rule in May 1999. During 1999 and 2000, the EDF Committee approved financing proposals valued at a total of EUR 100 million for projects including micro-project programmes in the Niger Delta (Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta states; EUR 21 million); micro-project programmes in six states of the Niger Delta (Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Imo and Ondo; EUR 42 million); small town water supply projects in Delta, Adamawa and Ekiti states (EUR 15 million); the economic management capacity building programme (EMCAP; EUR 10 million); support to the National Authority Office (NAO; EUR 6 million); and support to the National and State Assemblies (EUR 6.6 million).¹¹

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is the largest bilateral donor of democracy aid to Nigeria. In 2009 USAID estimated that it would provide USD 17.552 million for various forms of democracy assistance in Nigeria. In 2008, it spent USD 13.448 million, a 28.5 per cent decrease from the total actual expenditure for 2007 (USD 18.790 million).¹² Other key donors in Nigeria are the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), whose funding for the broader category of governance increased from about GBP 85 million in 1997 to over 322 million in 2008,¹³ and also has a budget of GBP 950,000 million for the period 2009–2014,¹⁴ and the European Commission, with its long-standing interest in supporting elections and human rights activities in Nigeria (notably support for electoral bodies, civic education and election monitoring and observation). Others include the World Bank and the UN agencies, particularly the UN Development Programme (UNDP). The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) only recently expanded the scope of its support to include assistance towards promoting democracy and good governance. There are a few other small donors with interests in election assistance, including Japan through the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), France, Norway, and Germany. Private foundations that provide democracy assistance in Nigeria include the Open Society for West Africa (OSIWA), the John and Catherine MacArthur Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

USAID's democracy assistance to Nigeria during the period of military rule was restricted to humanitarian assistance. Since 1998, the US Government has invested over USD 74 million to strengthen democracy in the country.¹⁵ Under USAID's 1998–2003 transitional strategy, one of the strategic objectives was to address democracy, governance and conflict resolution with the aim of strengthening the foundations for democratic governance. The US Government assisted the Federal Government of Nigeria by providing USD 5 million in election support for the training of poll workers, domestic election observers, election supplies and logistics for the 1999 elections. After the 1999 election, an additional USD 2 million was made available for the training of 10,300 elected officials in the fundamentals of representative democracy, accountability, transparency, constituent relations and coalition building.¹⁶

When the transitional period ended, USAID began its Country Strategic Plan 2004–2009. The plan supports Nigerian civil society in demanding openness and accountability from the government, as well as helping certain government institutions including the National Assembly and anti-corruption agencies to respond to

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ USAID, 'Fact Sheet: FY 2007-09 USAID-State Foreign Assistance Appropriations'.

¹² House of Commons International Development Committee, 'DFID's Programme in Nigeria. Eighth Report of Session 2008–09', Volume I, 13 October 2009.

¹⁴ The amount is essentially DFID's contribution to the JDBF under UNDP's Deepening of Democracy Programme.

¹⁵ This figure is based on information available in various official records of USAID/Nigeria on yearly estimates and expenditures towards the promotion of democracy and good governance in Nigeria.

¹⁶ USAID, 'The Role of Transition Assistance: The Case of Nigeria', Evaluation Brief No. 4 (USAID/Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination, 2002).

these demands. USAID's current programme to strengthen foundations for democratic governance in Nigeria also supports both government and civil society efforts to respond to the problems of ethnic, religious and resource-based conflicts.¹⁷

The Consortium for Electoral and Political Processes (CEPPS) has been the cornerstone of USAID's democracy and governance strategy in Nigeria, and is made up of three American NGOs: the National Democratic Institution for International Affairs (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). USAID's support to the national legislature is implemented by NDI. The main aim is to enhance the 'efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness' of the National Assembly by forging 'progressive partnerships that integrate support, skills transfer, and technical assistance to all members, key committees, National Assembly administrators, staff, executive officials, CSOs and citizens'.¹⁸

In 1999 NDI implemented a four year National Assembly strengthening programme valued at USD 4.54 million. The programme supported training in the areas of budget analysis, rules and procedure, role of committees, legislative drafting, constituency relations, civil society engagement and the development of a legislative resources and IT centre. Another NDI legislative strengthening programme with a budget of USD 6.2 million received USD 3 million in funding from the democracy and governance budget, under the USAID/Nigeria Country Strategy 2004–2009. Some aspects of the programme – especially the HIV/AIDS activity – were supported through 'buy-ins' from other portfolios in the strategy. Additionally, the Mississippi Consortium for International Development (MCID) was given USAID funding to provide technical support towards strengthening the capacity of state legislatures. In 1999, MCID implemented a four-year state legislative strengthening programme with a budget of USD 4.2 million, operating in the states of Adamawa, Benue, Edo, Enugu, Katsina, Lagos, Niger and Rivers.²⁰

Since 1998, USAID has also allocated funds to IFES to provide technical assistance and support to INEC. The aim is for INEC to increase its capacity to deliver more professional, efficient and reliable electoral services, especially in the areas of voter registration, voter education and the regulation of use of money by political parties. USAID initially committed USD 4.2 million under a cooperative agreement with IFES that ran until December 2003.²¹

After the 2007 election fiasco, USAID cancelled all assistance to INEC and ended the IFES programme. In April 2004, IFES received USD 188,000 in funding from the Australian government (AusAID), to support voter education efforts implemented in collaboration with the National Education Research and Development Council.

IRI managed USAID assistance to political parties and associations in specific technical areas, which include constituency building, platform development and management of relationships with civil society, with the prospect of the latter becoming increasingly involved as watchdogs to promote accountability. The underlying assumption is that an increase in political parties' capacity will lead to a more effective and representative role for citizens in public policy development. This in turn was expected to produce greater internal democracy within the parties, help to develop policy platforms on key national issues and increase the role of women in party structures. Between 1999 and 2003 USAID committed USD 2.75 million to IRI activity.

Other USAID-funded implementing partners have complemented the activities of CEPPS in supporting democracy and good governance. In 2003, USAID initiated and funded the Partnership for Advocacy and Civic Education (PACE) project, which was implemented by the US-based Center for Development and Population Advancement, US-based Global Rights (formerly the International Human Rights Law Group) and the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA). The goal of the project was to assist civil society in elections and election reform, constitutional reform, transparency and accountability, and conflict

¹⁷ USAID, 'Nigeria Country Strategic Plan, 2004-2009' (USAID, 2003), p. viii.

¹⁸ CEPPS/NDI, 'Semi-annual Report: Oct. 1, 2005–March 31, 2006'. USAID associate cooperative agreement #620-A-00-05-00124-00 under CEPPS Leader Cooperative Agreement #DGC-A-00-01-00004-00.

¹⁹ Yinka Oyinlola and Philip Griffin, 'Evaluation of Support for Electoral Processes, Political Party development and Legislative Strengthening in Nigeria', USAID: Task Order #1, Rapid Response; Contract # AEP-1-00-00-00008-00. 2003. /.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

management efforts. PACE experienced management difficulties, leading USAID to divide it into different programmes in 2006. PACT International, Inc. took over management of the Advocacy, Awareness and Civil Empowerment programme, and the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help is working on the Conflict Abatement through Local Mitigation (CALM) programme.

USAID recently launched a new five-year project - Leadership, Empowerment, Advocacy and Development programme (LEAD) - to assist and promote partnerships among state and local governments, civil society, and the private sector to improve local government capacity for service delivery. The project, worth about USD 40 million, has taken off in Bauchi and Sokoto States in northern Nigeria and may be expanded into other areas. This shift is important, as it marks a trend of donors defining good governance in terms of increased efficiency in the delivery of public goods to citizens. Also, this focus on local government may be part of a new preference among donors for decentralisation, in order to address corruption and over-concentration of power in the federal executive.

DFID support for the promotion and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria did not follow a clearly delineated strategic plan until after the 2003 elections. Part of DFID's post-2003 election review brought about the DFID's Strategic Roadmap Towards the 2007 Elections and the Election Support Fund. The roadmap was eventually implemented in 2005 by a consortium of three international NGOs – IFES, Global Rights and IDASA. The purpose of the project implemented by the IFES-led consortium was to work with a range of Nigerian stakeholders to ensure improved electoral outcomes in the 2007 elections. This in turn was meant to contribute directly to DFID's larger goal of improving the accountability of Nigeria's government to the legitimate demands of citizens, particularly the poor. The consortium's approach was focused on contributing in a substantial way to a more accountable, participatory and better-informed electoral process in Nigeria. DFID committed GBP 7 million to the Election Support Fund for the 2007 elections, which was disbursed in two phases and implemented by the consortium. The first phase began in early 2005 with a budget of GBP 3 million, focusing on electoral reform, civil society strengthening and participation, and transparency and accountability in political party financing. DFID used a further GBP 2.5 million to fund activities under the UNDP-managed joint-donor Basket Fund.²² The remaining GBP 1.5 million was spent on bilaterally funded activities outside the Basket Fund. DFID has progressively increased its funding for development assistance to Nigeria from GBP 20 million in 2001–02 to 120 million in 2009–10.²³ DFID identifies 'weak governance' as one of Nigeria's major challenges.²⁴ DFID interventions directly relevant to democracy and good governance are the Nigeria Governance Fund and Security, Justice and Growth initiative. In addition, an important part of DFID's assistance to Nigeria is working with the government to improve the spending of public resources. In 2005, with DFID's support, the Nigerian government created a system for monitoring debt relief gains, to make sure that they are spent on poverty reduction. In 2006, these gains resulted in the retraining of 145,000 teachers and the recruitment of 40,000 new ones. Also, technical assistance was provided to the Nigerian Budget Office to improve budget systems and link spending more closely to poverty reduction. In 2006 DFID helped the Nigerian government make savings of around GBP 850 million. In addition, DFID has supported the work of the Nigerian government's key anti-corruption agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, since it was founded in 2004. DFID also has a long working history with Nigerian civil society groups, and has a considerable understanding of their strengths and challenges. DFID support for civil society seeks to encourage Nigerian-led coalitions for reform. DFID's Coalitions for Change programme supports groups within civil society, the private sector, the media and government that are working together to counter the entrenched lack of accountability and poor resource management in government.

Unlike the other donors and development assistance providers, UNDP is an inter-governmental institution and thus was largely indifferent to the call by some members of the international community to impose sanctions on Nigeria in the 1990s. UNDP gave little support and assistance during this period towards the promotion of democracy and good governance and did not collaborate with or support civil society groups on these issues. In Nigeria the UNDP is restricted to being solely a 'manager' of resources provided by other donors rather than giving its own funds, and thus its support for democracy there has always depended on the attitude of bilateral and multilateral donors towards political developments in Nigeria.

²² IDASA/Nigeria Assessment of IDASA's Project Activities Under the DFID-Funded Consortium for the Implementation of the Roadmap to 2007 Election Programme', August 2006.

²³ House of Commons International Development Committee, 'DFID's Programme in Nigeria. Eighth Report of Session 2008–09', Volume I, 13 October 2009, p.3

²⁴ Ibid, p. 29.

In 2003, the Conflict Resolution Stakeholders' Network (CRESNET), a coalition of conflict resolution NGOs brought together and funded by USAID in 1999, went into partnership with the United Nations Election Assistance Project to promote non-violence and work towards peaceful 2003 elections. UNDP provided funding for some members of CRESNET to work on youth and violence related activities and also for civic and peace education aimed at disengaging youths from political violence, and discouraging those who sponsor or could sponsor these youths to perpetuate violence.²⁵

Since 2003, UNDP democracy and governance assistance has increased significantly. Its focus areas include: executive and legislature strengthening for good governance; human rights and gender empowerment; conflict prevention; transparency, accountability and anti-corruption; decentralisation and local governance; public sector reforms and capacity building; E-governance (ICT for development); and public-private sector partnership. In addition, for the 2003 elections the UNDP planned and implemented an umbrella project for electoral assistance in Nigeria within the context of the national governance programme that was supervised by the UN Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD). The EU, DFID, and other smaller donors, notably Sweden, Norway and Switzerland, financed the project. It was aimed at enhancing participation in the political process and contributing to the promotion of transparent and credible election results. In addition, UNDP's Capacity for Governance Programme currently supports democracy and good governance programming by strengthening government accountability, increasing public participation in governance, and through sustainable electoral processes.

The relationship between Nigeria and the EU improved rapidly with the normalisation of relations in June 1999, when the Europeans lifted all sanctions against Nigeria. The European Commission (EC) resolved to focus future cooperation on poverty alleviation, promotion of democracy and good governance, anti-corruption measures and the integration of Nigeria into the global economy. Notably, the EC's democracy assistance programme has concentrated on support for the electoral process. In 2000, a country support strategy was signed between the EU and Nigeria. The country strategy was for the period 2001–2007 and had an estimated budget of EUR 600 million.²⁶ In line with its policy objectives, the EC allocated EUR 6.5 million to support the 2003 elections. This funding was channelled through the UNDP. EC assistance focused on civic and voter education, domestic and international observation and support to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) information and results transmission centre. Through its small grant mechanism, the EC has also worked with Nigerian civil society organisations on democracy and governance areas, including conflict management, notably the European Instrument on Democracy and Human Rights. For 2003–2009, approximately EUR 18.3 million was allotted to Nigeria for 87 micro- and macro-projects in the areas of gender issues (including women in politics and gender in budget transparency and accountability); citizen participation and civil society capacity building; budget transparency and the role of the media in budget monitoring and combating corruption; advocacy on the Freedom of Information Bill; issues related to Sharia; and human rights promotion.²⁷ One example was assistance provided to the Jos-based International Centre for Gender and Social Research (Inter-Gender) from 2003–2006, to support reconciliation and peacebuilding for men and women in target communities who are in conflict because of the introduction of Sharia.

The EC's support for the 2007 elections was implemented through the Financing Agreement between the EC and the Nigerian government, which allocated EUR 40 million to support the Nigerian Electoral Cycle 2006–2011. This funding is for a two-phase elections programme consisting of a pre-election/election phase (August 2006–August 2007) and a post election/inter election phase (September 2007–2010). Thus in July 2006, the EC Delegation took the lead in the establishment of the Joint Donor Basket Fund (JDBF) for the 2007 elections as a channel for funding and providing technical assistance to the electoral process in Nigeria, with UNDP, DFID, CIDA and INEC as contributing partners. The total budget of the Basket was USD 30 million and the EC's contribution for the first phase of the JDBF project (August 2006–August 2007) was USD 24 million, which accounted for more than 80 per cent of the total budget. Apart from being part of the Joint Donor Basket Fund for the 2007 elections, the EU committed EUR 40 million in funding for post- and inter-election activities towards the 2011 elections. CIDA contributed USD 1.7 million and DFID contributed USD 4.6 million. Through a preparatory assistance project, UNDP provided USD 1.2 million and managed the Basket through a Project Management Unit (PMU).

²⁵ United Nations Development Programme, 'Conflict Assessment for Nigeria's 2007 National Elections', August 2006.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 33.

²⁷ European Commission Nigeria: Project Timeplan', <http://www.delnga.ec.europa.eu/projects/Project%20TimePlan1.xls>

The Basket Fund adopted a two-pronged project strategy between August 2006 and February 2008, which aimed to strengthen INEC's technical and operational capacity to prepare and conduct elections and enhance civil society's contribution to the electoral process.²⁸ While donors such as USAID and JICA cannot directly fund the JDBF, they have continued to identify and coordinate with its goals. The United Nations Development Fund for Women drafted and co-implemented a gender strategy for the project, working with local partners to promote women's participation in the electoral process both as voters and as candidates for office. These efforts contributed to the increase in female participation in politics. A reasonable number of women were aspirants and/or contestants. Relatively good results were achieved regarding the number of women elected, especially if one compares figures from 1999, 2003 and 2007. Over the past three general elections, the number of women elected had increased by 2 per cent.²⁹

JDBF partners have recently discussed continuing and broadening the scope of the Basket to include other aspects of democracy and good governance beyond electoral activities. Members have proposed contributing USD 60 million to help build the capacity for democratic governance, through support for political parties, electoral bodies, women, and CSOs. Another aim is to fund improvement in local governance and public accountability through support of governmental institutions such as the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC).

The World Bank, for its part, has provided good governance assistance under its mandate as a multilateral development agency. A notable early intervention was its support for a 2001 Nigerian governance and corruption diagnostic study, the results of which were widely disseminated across the country. The study provided useful information for other development agencies and implementing partners, especially for the purpose of project design and programming. Also, the World Bank helps to coordinate the agendas and priorities of key donors which include DFID, USAID and the African Development Bank, within the framework of the Country Partnership Strategy. This effort is essentially aimed at enhancing the impact of donors' intervention in the country. The new Country Partnership Strategy provides a clear focus for donors' work over the next three years and sets out sensible priorities.

The World Bank's 2005–2009 Nigeria Country Partnership Strategy specified four areas in which the Bank is working with the Federal Government: i) financing investments in infrastructure (especially power, gas infrastructure and transport); ii) financial and technical support to improve accountability and transparency, and to fight corruption; iii) technical assistance on investment, to stimulate private sector led growth; and iv) support to national initiatives for human development, particularly those aimed at fighting HIV/AIDS, strengthening the health system and supporting the knowledge economy. Also, in some states that have been identified as having potential for growth and development, financial and technical assistance are provided to augment state efforts and resources to boost economic growth and development. The 2010–2013 Nigeria Country Partnership Strategy is aimed at helping to sustain non-oil growth, improving human development through better delivery of social services and improving governance.

The World Bank, DFID and UNDP have supported alternative priorities in other sectors that have contributed to democratic development and good governance. Together they provided assistance to the Federal Government (for the development and implementation of its 2004 growth and poverty-reduction strategy), the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (SEEDS). Both NEEDS and SEEDS targeted growth, better service delivery, reform of government institutions and the political system, and transformation of values to overcome corruption and inefficiency.

DFID, UNDP, USAID and the World Bank collaborated with the Nigerian Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution and the Presidency to undertake a Strategic Conflict Assessment for Nigeria between July and October 2002. Documents such as the World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy and other international

²⁸ The JDBF funded fifteen CSOs to work on twenty-four projects in all six geopolitical zones promoting citizens' participation. These include: International Centre for Gender and Social Research; Centre for Democratic Research and Teaching; Youth Adolescent Reflection and Action Centre; Centre for Democracy and Development; Legal Resources Ltd by Guarantee; Community Partners for Development; Centre for Development and Population Activities; Centre for Women's Studies and Intervention; Women's Environment Programme; Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre; Women's Aid Collective; Transition Monitoring Group; Civil Liberties Organisation; West African Civil Society Forum; and Centre for Constitutional Governance. In each of Nigeria's six regional zones, four partner CSOs worked in voter education, gender monitoring, media monitoring, and domestic observation.

²⁹ UNDP, 'Progress Report on the Joint Donor Basket Fund for 2007 Elections', January 2007.

donors' strategic development plans and country strategy documents benefited from analyses and conclusions in the Strategic Conflict Assessment. Threats to the political transition were key considerations in deciding where to conduct interventions and who were potential partners. Donors' strategic development plans and country strategy documents benefited from analyses and conclusions in the Strategic Conflict Assessment. Threats to the political transition were key considerations in deciding where to conduct interventions and who were potential partners.

Virtually all donors have stand-alone or cross-cutting projects in the areas of civil society assistance and gender and women's empowerment. Donors and development partners seem to agree on the need to improve the capacity of civil society groups. In the 1990s, bilateral and multilateral donors supported several human rights organisations and other civil society groups in order to sustain the struggle against the military dictatorship. Since 1999, donors have sought to revive civic consciousness and democratic culture in Nigeria after decades of military rule. Support for gender and women's empowerment programmes in the country has ranged from raising awareness to capacity building activities for the female population, with specific help for women seeking political office.

Conflict resolution has also been a donor priority in Nigeria. Assistance in this area has shared several assumptions. First, that there is an intrinsic relationship between conflict and development. Development requires a relatively peaceful environment, but it also has the potential to reduce the intensity of conflicts. Second, democracy cannot thrive in a situation of incessant conflicts, so violence must be prevented from derailing the political transition programme or working against the consolidation of democracy. Thirdly, to effectively prevent electoral violence, the capacity of civil society must be built. USAID's conflict resolution programme, for example, began in Nigeria in 1999 through its Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and focused primarily on capacity building for Nigerian organisations to acquire conflict resolution skills. One early beneficiary of OTI's conflict mitigation support was Academic Associates Peace Works (AAPW), which later became a leading partner for most donors working in the area of conflict management. At that time, AAPW conducted the training of local government officials, young people, and traditional leaders in Delta, Rivers and Bayelsa states, reunited former adversaries, and helped them to use conflict management skills as alternatives to confrontation. OTI also helped to establish and maintain CRESNET, a coalition of some 105 civil society groups, peace researchers and educators working in the area of conflict transformation and peace building.³⁰

CRESNET benefited from many democracy building programmes sponsored by OTI during 2001–2002. USAID also supported capacity building activities for CRESNET and two conflict resolution centres, at the University of Ibadan and the University of Jos. OTI funded community interventions through CRESNET and other conflict resolution organisations such as the Kaduna-based Interfaith Mediation Centre (operated by the duo of the 'Pastor and Imam'). This form of intervention included conflict resolution training for community leaders, religious leaders, youths, female leaders, government officials (at all levels) and other relevant stakeholders. Activities to mitigate electoral violence were also funded in areas with a history of violent electoral conflicts, especially where intense political competition was anticipated.

From 2002, USAID's PACE consortium made IDASA responsible for facilitating support to local NGOs in the area of conflict resolution, and for CRESNET in particular. Prior to the 2003 election, IDASA invested most of its energies and resources in strengthening the capacity of Nigerian CSOs to mitigate election-related conflicts. Thereafter, IDASA focused on four programmes: an eminent persons programme that deals with national topical issues; a training programme to equip peace practitioners; a community programme with local NGO partners on early warning systems for their communities; and a conflict intervention programme in the oil-rich Niger Delta region. USAID also gave a grant to the US-based Solidarity Center to implement its Labour Advancing Democracy, Development, and Economic Reform (LADDER) programme between 2002 and 2003. LADDER assisted labour unions in monitoring the 2003 elections, compiling information on election mismanagement and presenting the findings to tribunals. This outlet for post-election participation decreased the likelihood of mass protests.³¹

Donor assistance for conflict mitigation has become increasingly focused on the relationship between

³⁰ United Nations Development Programme, *op. cit.*

³¹ USAID, 'Nigeria Civil Society Assessment, Final Report Analytical IQC Contract', No. AEP-I-00-99-0041-00, Task Order 823, 2004.

conflicts and poverty reduction, and also on development in the Niger Delta region. A recent report by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) drew attention to the seriousness of the problems in the Niger Delta region and its implications for the West African sub-region. According to UNODC, the conflict in the Delta 'is rooted in the grievances of residents who, despite the wealth beneath their land, remain very poor'.³² Perceived deprivation and marginalisation have driven many, especially youths, to alternative means of survival such as theft and smuggling. Reflecting this change in focus, new programmes and activities were drawn up. IDASA's role as implementing partner ended in 2008, and the Conflict Abatement through Local Mitigation programme was introduced, implemented by the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help. The programme covers five states – Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Delta and Rivers – that are known for the prevalence of sectarian and resource-related conflicts. DFID funded a GBP 2 million programme to improve social cohesion and delivery by local government in Rivers and Delta states, known as Supporting Transparency and Accountability in the Niger Delta. The EU also signed a EUR 677 million pact with the Nigerian government to combat corruption and promote peace in the Niger Delta region, of which 166 million will be spent on peace and security.

Donor coordination

In recent years, donors around the world have sought to coordinate their activities to achieve greater impact and efficiency. Donor coordination of democracy assistance was largely absent from Nigeria during military rule and also in the early years of the Fourth Republic. After the 1999 general elections, however, some donors saw the need for coordination of democracy assistance among both donors and recipients – especially civil society groups – in order to have a more meaningful impact on the political process. This led to the establishment of the Governance Theme Group, which was jointly chaired by USAID and UNDP, to provide a platform for donor coordination. Even though USAID and some members of the donor community, notably UNEAD, explored the idea of developing a strategy for the coordination of donor election assistance, it did not yield any tangible results. Reasons for the group's failure included understaffed donor offices and the absence of a detailed map of existing initiatives that would have enabled donors and other development partners to identify the gaps. In the absence of a strategy for donor coordination, the Governance Theme Group gave way to a semi-formal forum that provided donors with a meeting point regarding election assistance. During the run-up to the 2003 elections, USAID funded the secretariat, and along with its development partners dominated the forum for election assistance coordination.³³

Coordination did not go far beyond a forum for donors to interact and share general information on their activities and, even then, not much interaction took place until the eve of the 2003 elections, when donors saw the need to keep one another informed of their activities with local NGOs. Donors managed to avoid stepping on each others' toes even when it was an open secret that none had sufficient information on the activities of others or even knew how they were going about them. Important information such as the details of who got what democracy assistance and for what purpose was not available, making duplication of support by two or more donors possible. TMG, for instance, was alleged to have received a grant from the Open Society Institute to carry out activities similar to those of the Electoral Reform Network (ERN).

A more efficient system of information sharing among donors coupled with effective tracking of development assistance would have made duplication of funding less likely. The UN engaged one of its experts to coordinate donor assistance in Nigeria, but the effort did not receive the expected cooperation from donors and therefore achieved little. INEC made a similar attempt, but it too failed to gain cooperation from the donors. Nonetheless, donors in Nigeria remain convinced that a more coordinated democracy assistance strategy is needed, and at several post-2003 election review meetings they concluded that international assistance for the 2007 elections would have to be more timely, targeted and coordinated. This resolve led the EU, DFID, and CIDA to take the lead in the negotiations that culminated in the establishment of the UNDP-managed JDBF in 2005 with a budget of USD 30 million until 2008. The implementing partners, INEC and the Federal Government of Nigeria (represented by the National Planning Commission, NPC) were also involved in the JDBF negotiations. JDBF partners committed to maintaining regular communication with all stakeholders in the Nigerian electoral process and were encouraged to collaborate with the wider donor

³² 'Executive Summary' in UNODC, 'Transnational Trafficking and Rule of Law in West Africa: a Threat Assessment', July 2009, p. 8.

³³ Insights into the early efforts at donor coordination by USAID and UNDP were provided during an interview with some USAID-DG staff members in Abuja in October, 2009.

community through the USAID-UNDP donor coordination initiative. Partners also sought to further strengthen and refine this mechanism in their support for democracy and governance in Nigeria.

The relative success of the JDBF can be attributed to its management by the UNDP, which utilised both the image of neutrality that it enjoys in Nigeria and its ability to gain the government's confidence to mobilise support for the effort. In addition, the involvement of UNDP gave credibility to the efforts of other donors. Against a background of mutual suspicion between donors and Nigerian stakeholders (CSOs and Federal Government of Nigeria), especially after the 2003 elections, UNDP was perceived to have kept strictly to its mandate as part of the structure of the United Nations and was generally regarded as a credible development partner free of political sentiments and prejudices. However, CSOs later changed their perception of UNDP, as discussed below. JDBF partners recognised the benefits of the UNDP's experience and management of the joint donor basket. Interactions with JDBF partners reveal that it was after exhaustive assessment of other options for joint fund management (nationally-managed, INGO-managed, donor-managed, UNDP-managed) that they agreed to a UNDP-managed basket fund as the only viable approach given the conditions in Nigeria. In addition, UNDP had successfully collaborated with almost all the partners in the implementation of assistance projects in other sectors. One example is the EC-funded national census project worth EUR 116.5 million that was implemented together with the UNDP. The project was designed to help the government improve its economic planning and also preparations for the 2007 elections. Given the UNDP's experience, it is understandable why the partners conceded significant powers to UNDP as the manager of the basket.

At present, JDBF-funded interventions are supporting activities related to the ongoing electoral reform and constitutional review processes, notably technical support to the Presidential Committee on Electoral Reform and the National Assembly Committee on the Review of the Nigerian Constitution.

It is ironic that improved donor coordination in election assistance in the form of the JDBF coincided with Nigeria's worst elections since 1999. The shambolic elections were not the fault of poor donor coordination, and donors were deceived by the machinations of INEC chairman Maurice Iwu, President Obasanjo, and the PDP leadership as much as many Nigerians were. Nonetheless, it does go to show that improved coordination does not guarantee improved election outcomes, and the apparent inability of the JDBF partners to scrutinise or push INEC to reform underscores both how little leverage donors have in Nigeria and how politically difficult it is for them to withhold their support once the initial strategic decision to support an election is made.

These experiments with donor coordination in Nigeria raise some important issues. The lack of a formal mechanism with tangible organisational structures inhibited the full commitment of most donors to coordinate. The dominant influence and control of home governments over donors has serious implications for donor coordination. For example, in the case of USAID and JICA, their regulations do not allow them to participate in a binding and obligatory coordination platform such as a joint donor basket fund. Donors (especially bilateral donors) whose aid policy and practice are usually linked to their foreign policy objectives are often not prepared to collaborate with other donors whose interests differ from their own. This is particularly problematic where provision of assistance is tied to foreign policy and security issues and is mostly shrouded in secrecy. Unfortunately the 'official secret' practice has been adopted to guide the management of assistance, especially by bilateral donors whose structures are mostly dominated by foreign policy bureaucrats. As may be expected, the result has been hoarding of information, mutual suspicion and, in some instances, competition for attention and recognition. For instance, prior to the 2003 elections, donors agreed to the idea of designing a donor matrix for election assistance, but ultimately few donors contributed information to it.

Donor visibility in the existing informal forum for donor coordination was inadequate, except for USAID and possibly UNDP, which prevented other donors from being very active or more committed to coordination. Both USAID and UNDP are engaged in a wide range of development assistance activities that have reinforced their good image. These bodies have both been involved in Nigeria's democracy and governance sector for a sustained period – longer than any other donor – which has no doubt made them much more visible than other donors providing comparatively small volumes of assistance (with the exception of the EU).

An additional coordination problem is the over-bureaucratisation of assistance management procedures.

In the case of the JDBF, donors provided sufficient grants for CSOs to undertake election activities, but the excessive bureaucratisation of the process imposed strict conditions and requirements before they could access the funds. In addition, many Nigerian CSOs feel that international donors and development partners have not involved them in the planning and implementation of their assistance programmes, and that they prefer the involvement of foreign consultants to that of Nigerian experts. Particular complaints were made about the JDBF's management team, which was essentially made up of foreign experts with little or no knowledge of Nigeria. CSOs also complain that donors generally prefer to work with international NGOs (INGOs) rather than Nigerian NGOs. Adequate consideration has not been given to input from local actors, resulting in growing hostility.

Nigerian perceptions

Nigerian views on the actual and potential benefits of democracy assistance vary, ranging from indifference to acceptance of it as a positive influence on democratic development. A recent Afrobarometer survey shows that a substantial proportion of Nigerians (58 per cent) either feel that international donors (apart from the United Nations) and NGOs 'do nothing/help a little bit' or 'don't know'. Just under half of those interviewed (42 per cent) felt that international donors 'help somewhat/help a lot'. When asked if international donors and NGOs have too little, too much, or about the right amount of influence over the government, only 14 per cent said that they have 'somewhat/far too much' influence, while 55 per cent either said they had 'far too little' or 'about the right amount'. 31 per cent of those interviewed said they 'don't know'.³⁴

While the majority of Nigerians interviewed (85 per cent) saw elections as critical to the process of democratisation, and therefore agreed with donor commitments to supporting elections and related activities, growing public disappointment with electoral democracy in Nigeria has raised questions about such support. This also raises concerns about the donors' reductionist conception of democracy that exaggerates the role of elections in democratic development. A representative of the Good Governance Group in Abuja said 'elections are important to guaranteed democracy and good governance. It is imperative therefore to promote integrity in our electoral system'. An independent consultant pointed out that although donors' support for the Nigerian electoral system has not achieved the desired results, they have found reasons to continue their interventions, which raises the question of what the real interests are in Nigeria.³⁵ Another expert indicated the limits of electoralism and advises that democracy be pursued to bring about 'structural transformation'.³⁶ The Nigerian experience has so far shown that mere repetition of elections does not strengthen the quality of democracy. In fact, elections in Nigeria have produced fraudulent leadership and erosion of legitimacy. The majority of Nigerians interviewed during fieldwork acknowledged that donors' support for election-related activities has made some contribution to the electoral process, but falls short of achieving structural transformation of the political process.

Although dissatisfied with trends in electoral competition in Nigeria and with the leadership these elections produced, a clear majority of Nigerians interviewed for this study still prefer democracy even though it has not yet resulted in proactive legislatures, independent courts, viable opposition parties and voluntary associations, or a free and viable press. They largely remain committed to democracy as the best form of governance. Despite the limitations of their country's electoral system, Nigerians acknowledge elections as a key democratic institution. This is supported by the findings of an Afrobarometer survey conducted in February 2007. The survey shows that four out of every five adult Nigerians interviewed say that they prefer to use 'regular, open and honest elections' rather than 'other methods' to choose leaders. Moreover, ordinary people see elections as meaningful and consequential events. Only one quarter thinks that, 'no matter whom we vote for, things will not get any better in the future', while two thirds consider that 'we can use our power as voters to choose leaders who will improve our lives'.³⁷ Nonetheless, more than half of those interviewed agreed that the Nigerian electoral system and other democratic institutions have benefited substantially from donor assistance, but that the necessary conditions for democratic consolidation have been absent.

³⁴ Eric Little and Carolyn Logan. 'The Quality of Democracy and Good Governance in Africa: New Results from Afrobarometer Round 4. A Compendium of Public Opinion Findings from 19 African Countries', 2008. See Tables 9.2 and 9.4.

³⁵ See W.O. Alli, 'Development Partners, the 2007 General Elections and the Consolidation of Democracy in Nigeria', *Studies in Politics and Society* 8, December 2007.

³⁶ Etannibi Alemika, 'Legitimacy, Rule of Law and Violent Conflicts in Africa', Centre for Social Science Research Working Paper No. 70, 2004, p. 5.

³⁷ Afrobarometer, 'Preliminary Observations on Nigeria's April 2007 Elections: The Public Mood', February 2007. See www.afrobarometer.org

Interviewees were generally quick to point out the absence of suitable conditions for democracy evident in the following: the fraudulent electoral victories that brought the PDP to power in the three general elections held since 1999; citizens' outright lack of trust in the political institutions; the rising level of violent conflicts; neopatrimonial politics; the governance styles of former President Obasanjo and his successor and the general deterioration in living conditions.

In line with the Afrobarometer data showing declining levels of public satisfaction with government performance in Nigeria, over two-thirds of those interviewed lamented that no concrete achievements have been recorded by the civilian governments since 1999. Deteriorating economic conditions also undermined government support, and respondents complained about the Obasanjo administration's economic reform programmes. In a series of Afrobarometer surveys carried out in Nigeria since 2001, over 70 per cent of Nigerians persistently said that 'economic policies have hurt most people and only a few have benefited'.³⁸ There was a decline in the proportion of Nigerians who believed that specific economic conditions such as job opportunities and reducing the gap between the rich and the poor were better now than in the past³⁹ Deteriorating living conditions have, in turn, exacerbated communal, ethnic, religious and regional identity conflicts. Since the transition to civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria has witnessed more than 500 separate incidents of communal conflict; some 11,000 lives have been lost.⁴⁰

Donor conditionality is a major issue for all types of foreign aid, but for democracy assistance it is particularly sensitive and susceptible to misinterpretation. Conditions imposed can be technical requirements relating to desired processes and outcomes in the management of assistance programmes, or political requirements that primarily reflect donors' political and diplomatic interests. Most donors in Nigeria have not openly declared or specified political conditionality, but they have indirectly included such conditions as benchmarks in programme implementation, particularly in the case of USAID and the EU. For the EU, for instance, the outcomes of the 2007 elections were critical conditions for its continued support under the JDBF's second phase. USAID refused further direct support to INEC because of the 2007 elections.

Because donors in Nigeria have not been clear on the matter of conditionality, nearly all representatives of Nigerian CSOs interviewed tended to misinterpret well-conceived, justifiable conditions and requirements for the award of grants and other forms of support. For instance, the USAID requirement that CSOs must show evidence of good track records of programme implementation for a number of years, registration with banks, as well as a history of managing donor funds easily provoke protestations, especially from new CSOs. Overall, responses to donor conditionality are mixed. It is generally acknowledged that donors do not just provide support and assistance without some strings attached, ranging from purely technical requirements to political conditions. Some CSOs therefore feel that tying strings to access to democracy assistance itself is an undemocratic act. Nonetheless, where donor conditionality is presented as being about promoting the practice of good internal governance in recipient civil society organisations, Nigerians are more receptive.

Impacts, outcomes and lessons learned

International donors and development partners complain that democratic institutions in the country are still very weak and scarcely capable of resisting destabilising forces. Underdeveloped political parties, a weak civil society, over-concentration of power at the centre, corruption and a lack of transparency and accountability underscore the fragility of Nigerian democracy. In addition, certain assumptions about democracy underlie donor support for democracy promotion in Nigeria. Bilateral donors such as USAID and multilateral donors like the EC have primarily supported the installation of the Euro-American version of liberal democracy, expressed overtly as support for rule of law, individual freedom and civil liberty, and free and fair elections. Regardless, donor assistance has made some contributions to democratic development, especially interventions that were targeted at civil society. These interventions have produced some desired results as well as unanticipated outcomes.

One of the findings of this study is that the geopolitical and economic importance of the country, as well as donors' initial high hopes regarding the prospects of democracy in Nigeria, prompted substantial funding for

³⁸ In the 2005 survey, 78 percent of respondents gave that response.

³⁹ Findings from nationwide Afrobarometer survey carried out in Nigeria from September–December 2005; available at www.Afrobarometer.org

⁴⁰ Peter Lewis, 'Identity, Institutions and Democracy in Nigeria', Afrobarometer Working Paper 68, March 2007, p.1.

democracy promotion activities. Some results were achieved and also had an impact on other aspects of Nigeria's development, including reforms such as privatisation, private-public partnership, NEEDS and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The absence of the conditions for democracy discussed above, however, coupled with the limitations of the technical approaches and methodologies adopted by the donors and their partners in the country often worked against these achievements.

USAID, through IFES, the United Nations Electoral Assistance Project and DFID, provided technical assistance towards building the capacity of INEC. This included expert advice and training in logistics management. Yet three-quarters of the representatives of Nigerian CSOs interviewed felt that a substantial part of democracy assistance was targeted at building the capacity of the election management bodies (INEC and SIECs) to the detriment of other stakeholders, notably civil society and political parties. This was felt to be especially true before the 2007 elections. Many JDBF partners interpreted USAID's project as a form of exclusive assistance to INEC. This misconception has been further strengthened by the chairman of INEC's regular public pronouncements acknowledging the 'generous contributions and support' of international donors. While the laudable contributions of the donor community towards building the capacity of Nigerian election management bodies are not in doubt, the over-emphasis on INEC and elections provided an opportunity for INEC to seek public patronage, having lost credibility among Nigerians and members of the international community. It is possible that donors assumed that increased assistance to government agencies was more likely to promote visibility than support to civil society groups.

Decades of military rule stunted the development of essential political institutions for the consolidation of democracy, particularly the legislatures, which lack institutional capacity, experience and memory. Donors and their development partners sought to strengthen the institutional capacity of the National Assembly, targeting critical areas such as the professionalism of staff, effective use of information and communication technology for planning and management processes, the improvement of legislative research and capacity building for legislators and staff. Increased CSO engagement with the legislatures and the National Assembly was also supported, through projects such as the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC). CISLAC and informal networks of CSOs worked effectively with both ministries and the National Assembly to get the 2004 Child Rights Act passed. Also, for more than eight years, CSOs and informal coalitions have pressed the government for a Freedom of Information Act. This was finally passed by the Assembly in 2007, but President Obasanjo vetoed it. Although the executive remains by far the dominant branch of government, the National Assembly has shown signs of increased independence over the last decade, instigating impeachment proceedings against President Obasanjo three times and rejecting his bid for a third term in office.

The remarkable absence of widespread violence during the 2003 and 2007 elections was partly due to conflict mitigation activities supported by donor assistance. Two key efforts included an IFES-led consortium funded by DFID that commissioned IDASA to engage civil society groups in conflict mitigation activities and the USAID-funded Electoral Violence Education and Resolution project. Both initiatives were carried out with the collaboration of networks of civil society groups, whose capacities were strengthened to identify, monitor and, where possible, mitigate and prevent violence during and after elections. The projects also promoted collaboration between civil society groups and other stakeholders in the electoral process, including the election management bodies, political parties, and security agencies.

Nigerian civil society groups have been the primary beneficiaries of international democracy assistance. Through donor assistance, some were empowered to actively participate in the election process, to mitigate conflicts and also to participate in election observation and monitoring activities. In the days of military rule some human rights groups benefited from donor assistance, and since the return to civilian rule new civil society organisations working on such issues as corruption, transparency, HIV/AIDS and the environment have joined the older associations such as labour unions, business associations, academic and professional associations and women's and human rights organisations. This assistance has helped Nigerian CSOs increase their capacity to influence government policies.

The scope and quality of civil society participation has expanded progressively with substantial assistance

from international donors. High-quality training resources and an information network funded by donors and development agencies enhanced the impact of civil society observation efforts, resulting in effective collation of observer reports and the timely issue of statements. With this support, monitors were able to issue initial statements within two days of the election based on extensive reporting instead of a few isolated anecdotes. Moreover, because the much larger contingent of Nigerian observers issued statements that highlighted exactly the same concerns as the smaller international observer teams, they helped to validate the smaller teams' findings, which in turn may also have bolstered the standing of local groups. This trend for better monitoring was sustained and even improved upon in the 2007 elections.

Donor assistance also helped to expand the scope of civil society participation in Nigerian elections, and in politics in general. For example, capacity-building assistance to CSOs was scaled up prior to the 2003 elections, which augmented their engagement with INEC, increased domestic monitoring and reduced electoral violence. In 2003, the Transition Monitoring Group saw its members increase from 66 to over 200 NGOs, and four other large civil society coalitions also monitored the elections: the Labour Election Monitoring Team; the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria; the Muslim League for Accountability; and the Justice, Development and Peace Commission of the Catholic Church. A number of smaller women's groups and conflict mitigation networks also participated. Apart from observing elections, Nigerian civil society was also involved extensively in civic education, with support from USAID and the EU. This expansion of groups involved in the process is an important step, indicating the ability of Nigerian civil society to monitor the electoral process. More broadly, this expansion was indicative of growing civil society participation in the political process overall.

A number of other areas for increased civil society engagement with the electoral process require donor attention. One of the most important is the monitoring of party finances and campaign finance reform, in which only very few donors have shown interest, notably USAID, DFID and International IDEA. International IDEA pioneered the monitoring of party funding in Nigeria, which was complemented by periodic dissemination of its findings in a newsletter. This initiative lasted until early 2004 after which IFES, and to some extent IRI, emerged as dominant sponsors of the activities of civil society groups in the area of party finance monitoring. So far, civil society efforts in this area have been limited to awareness raising activities, and donor-funded initiatives aimed at monitoring campaign finance by IFES, IRI and International IDEA have accomplished little. Despite donor assistance, civil society groups generally lacked the necessary resource base and organisational capacity to engage government, political parties or INEC to effectively advocate for political finance reform. The Political Finance Monitoring Group, a network of civil society groups and other stakeholders, established with USAID assistance channelled through IFES, and which meets periodically to discuss methods for developing solutions to problems of political finance, complained that its activities have been significantly hampered because of lack of funding. Political parties have become increasingly intolerant of civil society oversight, especially where campaign finance is concerned, preventing CSO access to information about party funding or expenses. With additional support, however, civil society groups would be able to scale up their efforts in this area.

The fight against corruption was further institutionalised in Nigeria through the operations of anti-graft agencies like the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), which had substantial support from members of the donor community, including UNODC, UNDP, the German Embassy, DFID, the Canadian High Commission, and the Norwegian Embassy. Of the two, the EFCC was by far the most effective, indicting several ministers and the head of the police, and initiating high-profile investigations of several of Nigeria's governors. As of 2008, the EFCC had a grant/credit portfolio of about USD 40 million from six bilateral and multilateral donors. Other forms of assistance to EFCC include non-monetary support such as training, capacity building, and intelligence report sharing.⁴¹ One EFCC source said that it has been able to assist other law enforcement agencies in the West African sub-region, especially in the areas of training and capacity building.⁴² Sadly, President Yar'Adua reduced the activities of the EFCC and most of its major cases were dropped.

The National Planning Commission (NPC) is the arm of the Nigerian government that is tasked with designing

⁴¹ Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, 'Waziri Commends Donor Agencies...Seeks More Support', www.efccnigeria.org, 2 September 2008.

⁴² Ibid.

and operating regulatory frameworks for the activities of donors and development partners. To date, the NPC has played only a minimal role, especially in terms of monitoring donors and development partners. This inadequate NPC attention is one reason for the domination of the international development cooperation platform by INGOs, which some Nigerian NGOs have called the 'hijack of donors' funding for democracy support'. Nigerian CSOs have repeatedly complained about the lack of protection from competition with INGOs for donors' funding. Over 80 per cent of Nigerian organisations and groups interviewed complained about unhealthy competition with INGOs, and also regarded NPC as either 'insensitive', 'unresponsive' or 'indifferent' to the plight of Nigerian CSOs. However, when asked for details of the procedures used to voice their complaints to NPC and other relevant agencies, only very few (as low as 10 percent) were able to provide evidence of their protests. For example, in 2006, member organisations of the ERN and TMG embarked on a protest and refused to participate in any election-related activities organised by the INGOs. The protest did not last long and it is difficult to determine the extent of its impact. However, the message was conveyed to the donor community that Nigerian organisations were resisting INGOs.

Donors need to review their strategies and scale up their engagements with the Nigerian government and its various agencies beyond the NPC. The Federal Government of Nigeria must draw up a national policy framework on donor assistance. The NPC released a report in 2008 that attacked Western donors and proposed an electronic monitoring system of their funds and activities, which the donors largely rejected. This lack of an effective national strategy for engaging donors and development partners also makes donor coordination highly challenging. For instance, donors have been increasingly shifting their assistance programmes towards state and local governments, assuming that the propensity for positive change is higher there than at national level. These assumptions must be reconciled with local priorities in order to enhance local ownership of these interventions.

On the whole, donors' democracy promotion activities have increased democratic progress in Nigeria. However, effective coordination at all levels – donors, Nigerian recipients and other stakeholders, especially government – is yet to be achieved in virtually every aspect of the management and administration of democracy assistance in the country. This has resulted in both donors and recipients duplicating programmes, providing poor follow-up and insufficiently harmonising initiatives that clearly should have been linked. Nonetheless, the mode of support delivery is changing considerably based on the principles of national ownership, transparency and effectiveness, which development partners are using increasingly as an irreducible condition for providing democracy support to Nigerian actors and stakeholders.

Failings, limitations and challenges

Democracy assistance in Nigeria faces a number of limitations in its assumptions. First and foremost is that there is little or no questioning of whether the neoliberal democratic model, which permeates Western donor thinking in this sector, is the 'best fit' for Nigerian politics or for its multicultural context. Frameworks employed in programme design, implementation, assessment and evaluation are focused on such questions as whether political power is concentrated in the executive branch or not, whether the legislature is able to perform oversight functions and whether or not electoral processes are transparent. Fundamental issues such as social and economic empowerment are typically ignored.

In addition, the methods of sourcing data for democracy assistance efforts scarcely go beyond the desk study approach and short country visits by hired consultants. Foreign consultants are typically involved in programme design and strategy development, despite the fact that they are not likely to stay long enough in Nigeria to be able to filter through journalistic sources of information and make objective assessments. The biases and prejudices of donor-driven consultancy engagements have been of concern in some circles in Nigeria, especially among those who feel that data and information used for either designing assistance programmes or assessing the impact of democracy assistance should be based on direct and first-hand observation by unbiased observers. All the representatives of Nigerian CSOs interviewed said that most foreign consultants and experts have biased views that are heavily influenced by news and broadcasts by foreign media biased against Nigeria. They also complained about the overbearing influence of donors on the processes and outcomes of donor-funded consultancy engagement. One respondent summed it up with

a popular saying that: 'He who pays the piper dictates the tune'.

In addition to the NPC, other federal stakeholders like the National Assembly, especially the House Committee on Aid, Loans, and Grants, are increasingly concerned about donors' activities in the country, which they feel do not correspond to Nigeria's developmental needs. Some local stakeholders complained about lack of donor consideration for Nigerian realities in the design and implementation of assistance programmes. Almost all Nigerian respondents spoke out against donors' preference to fund programme activities without adequate consideration for institutional support in the form of salaries and costs other than direct project expenditures. A sizeable number of respondents (around 60 per cent) believe most donors are insensitive to issues of culture and religion.

The National Assembly expressed these concerns at a recent presentation of the '2010–2013 Country Partnership Strategy'.⁴³ The donors identified certain priority areas for interventions with high potential impact, but several legislators questioned the assumptions, analyses and conclusions made by the donors regarding Nigeria's developmental needs and potential for growth. The Honourable Abdul-Aziz Yari Abubakar, Chairman of the House Committee on Aid, Loans, and Grants, said that: 'There has been so much on paper, so much on the talk table but Nigerians see not very much [sic] in terms of deliverables at the end of the day'.⁴⁴ The Honourable Ita Enang also disagreed with donor strategies and asked for evidence of the results of donors' programmes. He said, 'What Nigerians need is skill acquisition and enhancing their capacities, not lectures and big, isolated programmes [...] Your money has to be spent on concrete, seeable areas, otherwise, your programme only helps consultants'.⁴⁵

The legislators may have overstated these points, but they reflect legitimate concerns over whether the donors' democracy assistance approach agrees with Nigeria's sovereign development agenda, goals, and objectives. The same concerns are levelled at recipient NGOs and CBOs benefiting from donor assistance: whether their donor-funded activities agree with Nigeria's development agenda, annual national budgets, Millennium Development Goals and the specific priorities of the current administration. Donors and development partners (for example at the World Bank Group, USAID and UNDP) maintain that their assistance programmes are in line both with the developmental needs of Nigeria and international best practices, but some Nigerian groups, especially umbrella organisations such as the ERN and TMG, feel this assistance has deviated from Nigeria's interests and needs and demonstrates an absence of local ownership. The testimonies of other respondents do not support this claim. It does however communicate the dissatisfaction of some Nigerians with the approach of donors who do not pay adequate attention to inputs from the target beneficiaries and other critical stakeholders. For example, on the implementation of the JDBF project, some Nigerians alleged that the project was designed and implemented without any significant input from and reference to the larger local stakeholders, notably civil society and political parties. Many interviewees, particularly representatives of civil society organisations, labour unions and political parties, felt that there was insufficient public information about the projects.

Nonetheless, the NPC has yet to demonstrate adequate seriousness and commitment to effectively guide and monitor the activities of donors in Nigeria, and lacks the technical capacity to respond in a timely fashion to the demands and opportunities of the donor community. Moreover, repeated delays in the execution of many proposed projects indicate a high level of indifference and inefficiency on the part of relevant implementing agencies such as the NPC and end users of assistance like CBOs/NGOs and government agencies and departments. The lack of development experts in the relevant Nigerian bureaucracies is also an obstacle as development assistance matters are left in the hands of inexperienced bureaucrats. These lapses in turn contribute to donors' concerns over local capacity and increase their likelihood of employing foreign consultants for interventions.

In addition to these concerns about local capacity, donors also complain that Nigerian government and some civil society actors are corrupt and lack effective internal governance mechanisms. Nigerian CSOs respond that most donors impose very stringent, unrealistic conditions based largely on circumstances that apply only in the donors' home countries. For example, about half of the respondents representing Nigerian CSOs

⁴³ World Bank and International Development Association, 'Country Partnership Strategy, 2010 – 2013', July 2009.

⁴⁴ Quoted in The Guardian (Nigeria), www.nguardiannews.com, Thursday 12 November 2009.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

complained of instances where donors had demanded registration certificates from potential recipients of grants as a condition. Some spoke of donors who asked for 'satisfactory evidence of track records', 'bank accounts' and 'references from previous funders' before they could be considered for grants.

CSOs also complained of the risks they faced from government agencies whenever they were perceived as anti-government or involved in activities that advocated policy change. This concern was most common among human rights groups, whose officials and personnel were constantly monitored by the security services. CSOs also risked being perceived as 'agents' of foreign interests and, in some extremes cases, blackmailed as unpatriotic 'saboteurs' because of their association with donors, who sometimes are seen as 'unguarded foreigners'. A case in point was the frequent attacks on some civil society groups and media organisations by the Professor Iwu-led INEC. From the testimonies of some of the CSOs that participated in the monitoring of the 2007 elections, it was understood that INEC regarded civil society groups that were critical of its performance as 'enemy CSOs'⁴⁶ and tried to prevent them from benefiting from the Basket grant for CSOs. This mistrust and lack of confidence has worked against effective execution of donor-funded projects in Nigeria.

The technical approach and financial procedures of some donors such as USAID and EC are not easy to understand and in certain cases appear to be too complex and shrouded in official secrecy. For instance, on several occasions while conducting interviews, donors deliberately left out details of funds allocated and disbursed. For example, some of the CSOs that received grants from UNDP complained about the time-consuming and overly bureaucratic procedures for reporting and fund disbursement. The consequence was that CSOs 'spent more time reporting than implementing'.⁴⁷ In addition to cumbersome financial procedures, other aspects of the contracting and grant relationship between donors and Nigerian organisations are not working well for either party. The majority of donors and implementing organisations interviewed agreed that this had been a major challenge for the donor community in Nigeria. They made efforts to refute the allegations made by some Nigerian CSOs that bidding and selection processes for sub-grants are usually lengthy and complex. They blame the difficulties on Nigerian organisations' lack of capacity and transparency, and the general absence of a culture of competition in Nigeria's non-profit sector. Also, more than 65 per cent of Nigerian respondents commented that the design, processes and activities of many interventions by donors and their partners did not have a scientific basis for their rationale. Rather, they suspected that many assistance programmes, particularly those of bilateral donors, are designed on the basis of assumptions and stereotypes about the country, or to project the interests of their home governments, and that some of the results and impacts on democracy in Nigeria were only by default.

Many respondents complained that the design and implementation of most development assistance projects discriminate against Nigerians, especially in the selection of implementing partners and the recruitment of development experts. There have been allegations of discrimination against national expertise in favour of international experts who are mostly from donors' home countries, especially in the case of bilateral donors. There have been cases where the long period of waiting to get 'international experts with requisite knowledge and experience' has resulted late mobilisation of appropriate expertise to manage assistance programmes efficiently, as in the case of the JDBF. It took a very long time before the donors and INEC reached a compromise on the profiles of who to recruit for key positions in the project management unit (PMU) of the Basket. Eventually the programme manager came on board in July 2006, the international CSO Specialist in January 2007, significantly after the critical inception phases when their guidance and input would have been essential. The delay in the appointment of international experts to key positions in the PMU no doubt affected its performance, and indeed the operations of the Basket.

Most donors turn to foreign NGOs over their Nigerian counterparts, which accounts for the proliferation of INGOs that are in fierce competition with Nigerian organisations for donor funding. In this regard, USAID's conventional practice of contracting implementing organisations to execute its democracy assistance interventions was strongly criticised by many Nigerian organisations. This donor favouritism and the technical limitations of INGOs have adversely affected outcomes of interventions and made local ownership of assistance programmes difficult to achieve. In some cases, Nigerian civil society groups have even boycotted INGO programmes to protest against this perceived discrimination. The majority of Nigerian stakeholders

⁴⁶ It was impossible to prove this allegation. However, the perceptions of CSOs interviewed were that INEC worked against their interests and desires to benefit from the grants.

⁴⁷ This came out from authors' previous interactions with some CSOs that were awarded grants under the JDBF's CSOs sub-grant component in September 2007.

interviewed said that donors have not paid adequate attention to the principle of Nigerian ownership of international development assistance programmes and the need to build national capacity for the planning and execution of development assistance programmes.

While most respondents acknowledge that donor assistance towards building the capacity of key political institutions in the country is desirable, the cultural insensitivity of some donors is seen as counterproductive. Several Nigerian respondents complained about the arrogance of some foreign consultants and experts brought in by donors to provide training in such areas as party organisation, legislative procedures and good governance.

Beyond these unhelpful donor assumptions that 'West is best', the opposite concern of Nigerian over-dependence on overseas technical aid and experience is also a risk. For example, donors have embarked upon a new Policy Analysis and Research Project (PARP) with responsibility for capacity building in the National Assembly. After 10 years of donor support for the Assembly, however, the legislature needs to be less dependent and exhibit some autonomy in its quest for technical capacity. It must also show willingness to spend its own funds to achieve this. The emphasis on overseas training for Nigerian legislators and staff does not seem to add much value given its enormous expense. For instance, the PARP Project Coordinator's recent appeal to the Canadian Embassy to urge the relevant authorities in Canada to collaborate with PARP in National Assembly training was uncalled for.⁴⁸

Conclusion

More than ever, democracy promotion and protection of human rights are essential components of development cooperation policies and programmes of the OECD countries. However, those countries hunting for aid, trade concessions and other forms of development assistance now have to satisfy Western political conditionalities and, in most cases, subscribe to liberal democratic principles.

Despite the disappointment with Nigeria's democratic experiments, it is unlikely that donors will discontinue their support for the promotion of democracy and good governance. Arguably, given the outcome of the 2007 elections and the slow pace of political reform, some donors will probably evaluate whether further investment in Nigeria's electoral process is worth it. For example, as a logical follow up to its perception of INEC's poor performance in the 2007 elections, USAID terminated its election assistance through IFES. Similarly, the EU, the lead-partner in the Joint Donor Basket Fund, reassessed its support to the Nigerian electoral process under the Joint Donor Basket Fund following the EU's critical comments on the 2007 elections. Interactions with the donor community in the country appeared to suggest that Nigeria will continue to benefit from international democracy assistance not because of its remarkable performance, but for other reasons including its strategic importance as a regional power and its economic importance to the host countries of some of the bilateral donors, especially those from the West. It is however envisaged that support for poverty reduction and economic reform, improved service delivery, equity in resource allocation, anti-corruption initiatives and conflict resolution will receive more attention in the coming years.

With particular reference to democracy assistance, much attention is likely to be focused on the people as agents of change rather than government institutions and agencies like INEC. Thus it is envisaged that there will be more resources to support the activities of civil society groups in all sectors. There are indications that major donors are already providing support for the promotion of transparency and accountability in governance. This is particularly notable in the cases of the EU, DFID, World Bank and USAID, who are likely to scale up their interventions. This trend will probably attract other smaller donors to support activities in these areas. Also, the granting of amnesty to the erstwhile warlords and militants in the Niger Delta has ushered in some modest positive developments in the region. Although the donors interviewed were not at that time supporting the peace-building and youth empowerment initiatives of the Federal Government of Nigeria, it is expected that this will be a future area for democracy assistance.

Nigeria provides a unique opportunity to explore some assumptions and propositions on the values and benefits of democracy assistance, especially from the perspectives of its recipients. Bilateral and multilateral

⁴⁸ 'Canada Envoys Visit PARP', <http://www.nassnig.org/parp/activities.php>.

donors have made some important contributions towards the promotion and consolidation of neoliberal democracy in Nigeria, and they have synergised their interventions in other sectors with their democracy assistance programmes to a certain degree, which has further reinforced its impact on Nigerian democracy. Consolidated democracy, however, is still some time away, particularly in terms of regime responsiveness to citizens and political empowerment of the public. The dismal 2007 elections and the Yar'Adua administration's refusal to reform INEC in time for 2011 indicate that many of Nigeria's rapacious political elite are still working largely against democratic consolidation. Yet the public desire for 'dividends of democracy' has remained very visible throughout the country.

The Nigerian environment remains very challenging for democracy assistance. First, unlike many developing countries, Nigeria is less dependent on donor funds. Even if all the donors were to halt their assistance, it would probably not provoke any significant impact. Partly because of the status of Nigeria vis-à-vis international assistance, the relevant agencies of the Federal Government have been slow to put in place an effective system for the monitoring and supervision of the activities of donors and development partners. Secondly, the political environment remains deeply problematic and has grown largely unfavourable for democracy assistance, except for supporting civil society. Thirdly, the capacity of many local actors like CSOs and CBOs, the National Assembly, INEC, and the Judiciary are inadequate. Fourthly, the deteriorating security situation in the country is a risk factor. Donors and other international development workers expressed concerns over the growing insecurity in the country. Initially, concerns about risks were mainly articulated around the complex situation in the Niger Delta. However, the recent activities of small pockets of religious extremists in some northern states and the attempt by a young Nigerian Muslim to blow up an American airline in December 2009 have further compounded the external image of Nigeria as a 'risk zone'. Despite these obstacles, Nigeria has enjoyed the good will of donors since its return to civilian rule in 1999. Although the relationship of Nigerian stakeholders with the donor community has not been smooth, the country has received significant inflows of international democracy assistance for its political transition and its halting efforts toward democratic consolidation. Given the susceptibility of democracy assistance to abuse and political manipulation, clear definitions of goals and processes, as well as effective coordination of interventions, are crucial.

The project on 'Assessing Democracy Assistance' was initiated by the Steering Committee of the World Movement for Democracy following its Fifth Assembly in Kyiv, Ukraine, in April 2008. The World Movement for Democracy is a global network of democrats, including activists, practitioners, academics, policy makers, and funders, who have come together to cooperate in the promotion of democracy. More information can be found at: www.wmd.org.

Appendix: Country Report Methodology

Scope and aims of this report

This report assesses external democracy assistance in one country according to the views of local democracy stakeholders.

The report does not aspire to provide an exhaustive record of external democracy assistance to the country in question. Neither does it aspire to be a representative survey among local civil society at large. The scope of this project allows reports to provide only a rough sketch of external democracy assistance to the country assessed, and of the tendencies of local civil society activists' views on the latter.

Sample of interviews

The report's findings are based on a set of personal interviews that were carried out by the author between spring and autumn 2009.

For each country report, between 40 and 60 in-country interviews were carried out. The mix of interviewees aimed to include, on the one hand, the most important international donors (governmental and non-governmental, from a wide range of geographic origins), and on the other hand, a broad sample of local democracy stakeholders that included human rights defenders, democracy activists, journalists, lawyers, political party representatives, women's rights activists, union leaders and other stakeholders substantially engaged in the promotion of democratic values and practices in their country. Wherever possible, the sample of interviewees included representatives from both urban and rural communities and a selection of stakeholders from a broad range of sectors. While governmental stakeholders were included in many of the samples, the focus was on non-governmental actors. Both actual and potential recipients of external democracy support were interviewed.

Donors

The term 'donor' is here understood as including governmental and non-governmental external actors providing financial and/or technical assistance in the fields of democracy, human rights, governance and related fields. Among all the donors active in the country, authors approached those governmental and non-governmental donors with the strongest presence in this sector, or which were referred to by recipients as particularly relevant actors in this regard. An exhaustive audit of all the donors active in this field/country is not aspired to as this exceeds the scope of this study. While many donors were very open and collaborative in granting interviews and providing and confirming information, others did not reply to our request or were not available for an interview within the timeframe of this study. While we sought to reconfirm all major factual affirmations on donor activities with the donors in question, not all donors responded to our request.

We do not work to a narrow or rigid definition of 'democracy support', but rather reflect donors', foundations' and recipients' own views of what counts and does not count as democracy assistance. The fact that this is contentious is part of the issues discussed in each report.

Anonymity

External democracy assistance to local activists is a delicate matter in all the countries assessed under this project. It is part of the nature of external democracy assistance that local non-governmental recipients, especially when openly opposed to the ruling establishment, fear for their reputation and safety when providing information on external assistance received to any outlet that will make these remarks public. In a similar vein, many donor representatives critical of their own or other donors' programmes will fear personal consequences when these critical attitudes are made public on a personal basis. In the interest of gathering a maximum of useful information from our interviewees and safeguarding their privacy and, indeed, security, we have ensured that all interviewees who requested to remain anonymous on a personal and/or institutional basis have done so.

Interview methodology

In order to carry out field work, authors were provided with a detailed research template that specified 7 areas of focus:

1. A brief historical background and the state of democracy in the country;
2. A short overview of donor activities;
3. A general overview of local views on impact of democracy aid projects on the micro, meso and macro levels (including best practices and variations of the local and international understandings of the concept of 'democracy');
4. Local views on specific factors that have weakened the impact of democracy aid;
5. Local views on diplomatic back-up to aid programmes (including conditionality; diplomatic engagement; donor coordination; relevance, quality, quantity and implementation of programmes, etc);
6. An illustration of the above dynamics in one or two key sectors of support;
7. A conclusion outlining the main tendencies of local views on external democracy assistance.

Along these lines, semi-structured one-on-one interviews were carried out by the authors in the country between spring and autumn of 2009.

Key sectors of support

Transitions to democracy are highly complex political, economic and social processes. No study of this scope could aspire to fully justice to them, or to external assistance to these processes. Aware of the limitations of our approach, we have encouraged authors to let their general assessment of local views on external democracy support be followed by a closer, slightly more detailed assessment of the dynamics in one or two key sectors of support. These were chosen by the respective authors according to their estimated relevance (positively or negatively) in the current democracy assistance panorama. In none of the cases does the choice of the illustrative key sectors suggest that there may not be other sectors that are equally important.