

# **FAITH BASED ORGANISATIONS' (FBOs) PARTICIPATION IN POLICY PROCESS IN NIGERIA**

**By**

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CHAN	Christian Health Association of Nigeria
CISCOPE	Civil Society Coalition for Poverty Eradication
COCIN	Church of Christ in Nigeria
CRUDAN	Christian Rural and Urban Development Association of Nigeria
ECWA	Evangelical Church of West Africa
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
FBOs	Faith-Based Organizations
FBNGOs	Faith-Based Non-governmental Organisations
FCs	Faith Communities
FGs	Faith Groups
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FOMWAN	Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria
IDIs	In-depth Interviews
JDPC	Justice, Development and Peace Commission
JNI	Jama'atu Nasril Islam
NASFAT	Nasrul-Lahil-Il-Fathi Society of Nigeria
NEEDS	National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NISER	Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research
PFN	Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria
POD	People Oriented Development
PRSPs	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
RaD	Religions and Development Programme
WFDD	World Faiths Development Dialogue

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background to the research project**

The Religions and Development (RaD) Research Programme Consortium is an international research partnership that is exploring the relationships between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction. The programme is comprised of a series of comparative research projects that address the following questions:

- How do religions values and beliefs drive the actions and interactions of individuals and faith-based organisations?
- How do religious values and beliefs and religious organisations influence the relationships between states and societies?
- In what ways do faith communities interact with development actors and what are the outcomes with respect to the achievement of development goals?

The research aims to provide knowledge and tools to enable dialogue between development partners and contribute to the achievement of development goals.

The immediate background to this research component of RaD on “Faith communities and the development process in Nigeria” is the attempt by the World Faiths Development Dialogue (2002-4) to increase co-operation between donors, including the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), NGOs, governments and faith-based organisations (FBOs) at both international and in-country level, not least with the achievement of the MDGs in mind. Whilst international co-operation was fostered by high-level meetings between faith and development leaders, the focus at the in-country level became the PRSPs and faith communities (FCs). Three consultations were organised: in Canterbury in 2002, when participants from FCs in 15 countries (mostly HIPC) reported on their experiences; and in Ghana and Tanzania in 2003 when members of inter-faith networks discussed the contribution of faith insights to policy-making. Full reports of these consultations are available from WFDD.

Emerging from these consultations was (a) the expression of a need for more systematic information about the role being played by FCs in poverty reduction and development including their participation in the PRSP processes and, (b) the recognition that many, though not all, leaders of FCs lacked understanding of the economic issues involved in PRSPs and, as a result, confidence to engage with them. Subsequently some further information gathering was done in Tanzania and a workshop for faith leaders on economics was in an advanced stage of planning when funding ran out.

There is an extensive literature on the PRSPs including reports from Eurodad and “Between Grassroots and Government: Civil Society Experiences with PRSPs” (mainly in Honduras, Nicaragua and Zambia) (Posing, 2003). They paint a varied picture of the involvement of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the PRSPs. The process has increased awareness and stimulated civil society mobilisation for lobbying purposes. Consultation by governments has been patchy, sometimes tokenistic and sometimes non-existent insofar as the voices of poor, rural communities have not been heard. Whilst CSOs have been sources of information and partners in monitoring outcomes, they have not greatly affected policy making as such, which has in any case often been over shadowed by the macro-economic policies of the donors. Posing

and others question the narrow focus of CSOs and the PRSPs on the important issues of health and education to the neglect of wider issues including agriculture and trade.

Nigeria set in motion the process of preparing its Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP) in December 2000. The PRSP was, in principle, expected to be country driven, involving broad-based participation by the private sector and civil society inclusive of FBOs. The broad impression from observers of this process, however, was that the first two attempts at producing a PRSP failed to meet these requirements. In response to this shortcoming the civil society autonomously organized some parallel activities to deliberate on the PRSP. One such activity was a workshop called by the Centre for Public-Private Cooperation in the northern Nigeria city of Kaduna and funded by OXFAM. Attended by over 80 representatives of CSOs (including FBOs) drawn from the six geopolitical zones, the workshop noted that the Federal Government had not consulted adequately with stakeholders in preparing the PRSP, and more fundamentally, that there is a discernible lack of coordination and cooperation in the relationship between the government, civil society and the private sector on crucial issues of economic and political governance. Similarly, Taiwo (2006) reported that the coalition of civil society groups called "Civil Society Coalition for Poverty Eradication (CISCOPE)" which evolved as a mechanism for rapid social mobilisation around the issue of poverty reduction could not make inputs into the almost completed I-PRSP. The development and eventual adoption of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) led to the abrupt termination of the PRSP process in December 2003 NPC (2005, 2006; CEDAR, 2005). Consequently, NEEDS is widely considered Nigeria's equivalent of the PRSP.

For all stakeholders active in the area of development to claim participation in either PRSP or NEEDS, they ought to have been involved in sensitization; consultation with stakeholders; programme (or needs) identification and documentation; programme (or needs) prioritization; vision statement; goal formulation; target setting; statement of objectives; statement of strategies; drafting of document; briefing and review; and preparation of final document. In NEEDS, there is the provision for CBOs/FBOs to participate in public mobilization and sensitization; preparation; implementation monitoring; outcome monitoring and evaluation; feedback; and support for improvement.

However, what happened was a caricature of participation which took the form of consultation at the draft document stage involving a 35-member committee comprising various stakeholders. Thus the process of drafting the NEEDS turned out to be similar to IPRSP in terms of the measure of involvement of CSOs (including FBOs). According to Taiwo (2006), akin to what occurred during the IPRSP process, CISCOPE autonomously carried out zonal consultations to deliberate on the NEEDS vision and strategies. Again the coalition adjudged the process as faulty and devoid of real participation. In a communiqué issued by the CISCOPE South-South of Nigeria, it submitted that "we are not aware of any consultation in the region preceding the preparation of the NEEDS document". The CISCOPE consultant in the South-West concurred that the exercise that was carried out at the time ought to have come before the drafting of the NEEDS document and that the outcome of the consultations ought to have been considered as input into the NEEDS.

Several factors account for the low participation of faith groups in the IPRSP and NEEDS in Nigeria. The publicity given to the processes were rather tame. Perhaps, knowledge of an open invitation to make input may have stimulated them to join both processes. Moreover, FCs still face poor information flows within their network, resource constraints particularly shortages of skilled manpower, poor funding and weak appreciation or understanding of the mechanics of development planning, implementation and monitoring.

Adedoja (1996), FADU (1997), Adeyeye *et. al.* (2002) and Ariyo (2005), have cautioned that the blame for the weak participation of FBOs in IPRSP, NEEDS-1 and NEEDS-2 should not be placed at the doorstep of the government alone. They surmised that a share of the responsibility may be ascribed to the attributes and/or set-up of the faith groups:

## **1.2 Reasons for the research project**

Research on the role being played by FCs in poverty reduction and development including their participation in the PRSP processes has been based largely on literature reviews (PRSP documents, commentaries and evaluations, books, etc) and interviews with members of CSOs, governments and universities. In the literature research, a number of suggestions are made for strengthening the contribution of CSOs to PRSP processes including:

- a more formal, fair and clear basis for their inclusion,
- increasing the capacity of CSOs to contribute to policy discussion and economic planning (coupled with a greater willingness on the part of governments and donors to take their views into account),
- giving sufficient (i.e. more) time to the process,
- greater efforts to listen to the needs of the rural poor via CSOs,
- provision of tools, including indicators, for monitoring expenditure and outcomes.

The obvious gap in this research is any mention of FCs. They may be part of civil society, though they are not always happy to be seen as such, and they, or their agencies, are not always easy to distinguish from FBNGOs, but they are a discernable group, rooted in local communities round churches, mosques and temples, linked together by regional and national (and international) networks and uniquely placed to raise the voices of the poorest. Little, apart from the preliminary work of WFDD, seems to have been done to clarify the role they have or have not been playing, or the reasons for it, or how to increase their capacity to participate.

This present research project attempts to begin to fill that gap. Since FCs already have a track record of service provision (through schools, hospitals, community health schemes etc) and considerable presence and influence in local poor communities, the question is not whether they have a contribution to make to poverty reduction but how it can be strengthened by greater participation in PRSP processes.

The methodological approach includes the study of documented evidence and structured interviews but add a more active dimension. Having clarified, in the early stages of the research, what might well increase the capacity of FCs, a limited number (due to financial limitations) of attempts to do so was actually made, monitored and evaluated. This is seen both as a way of increasing knowledge of what might work but also of contributing to capacity building on the

assumption that there is an urgency about poverty reduction including, as one aspect of it, the need to maximise the impact of the PRSPs.

### **1.3 Purpose and objectives of the research project**

As stated above, assessments to date have generally failed to differentiate faith-based from other civil society participants in PRSPs. Building on earlier work, this action research has the following objectives:

- To record the nature and extent of faith communities' engagement to date in consultations, policy making, implementation and monitoring of PRSPs in Nigeria (NEEDS and SEEDS)
- To assess their capacity for participation and, if constraints are identified, assess how that capacity might be increased
- To build the capacity of interested faith communities (and inter-faith bodies) by methods to be determined by the actors involved
- To assess the impact of capacity building on further participation in PRSP processes (on the basis of agreed indicators and from the perspective of different stakeholders)

### **1.4 Organisational arrangements and personnel**

As earlier stated, this research on "Faith communities and the development process in Nigeria" is one of the components of the Religions and Development Project, funded by the Department for International Development (DFID). The overall coordination is led by the University of Birmingham at the UK end, while the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) coordinates at the Nigerian end. The overall responsibility for the management of the RaD programme lies with Prof. Carole Rakodi (International Development, University of Birmingham), to ensure achievement of its objectives related to research, capacity building and communications.

For this particular component, Prof. Michael Taylor was the UK-based coordinator. He had the task of coordinating practical activities to make cost effective use of resources, quality control and coordinating the final publications. He offered direction with respect to the methodological approach and design of data collection instruments, monitored the research process and provided advice and guidance. The Nigeria-based team leader was Prof. Olakunle Odumosu, whose role was to coordinate the research component in Nigeria, organise workshops, meetings, etc., and coordinate report writing. There were three other Nigerian researchers working with the team leader, viz: Prof. Victor Adeyeye (first phase only), Louis Chete and Sunday Alonge. While the UK coordinator had largely a project management/advisory role, the Nigeria country team was responsible for carrying out the research.

A total of 35 FBOs were involved in the different stages of the research. From within the FBOs, an FBO Management Group was formed, whose role was to organise the activities of the participating FBOs, including fostering inter-faith cooperation, monitoring data collection at the grassroots and synthesising information received from the field into a report for submission to government.

## **2. REPORT AND OUTPUTS**

The purpose of this section is to provide a record of the activities undertaken during the first and second phases of the project with reasons for the decisions taken.

### **2.1 Processes and Methodology for Phase One**

The aim of the first phase was to record the nature and extent of faith communities' engagement to date in consultations, policy making, implementation and monitoring of PRSPs in Nigeria (NEEDS and SEEDS). The methodological approach for this first phase included the review of documented evidence and structured interviews. This phase started in July 2006 immediately after the first component meeting with a review of literature chronicling reform efforts in Nigeria and assessing involvement of Faith-based organisations in poverty reduction processes.

The research aspect is of a qualitative character seeking to identify the nature of faith community participation in the NEEDS process through in-depth interviews with key information from faith groups and other stakeholders acting as a control group. Therefore, enumerators solicited comments via an open-ended questionnaire to help ascertain the knowledge, attitude and practice of key informants and to shed light on the role of faith communities in the NEEDS process. Prior to this, enumerators had agreed a schedule of questions embracing various themes including level of participation, mandate or voice carried, impact of the representation; attitude of faith groups to poverty reduction, government and processes; capacity issues and inter-faith cooperation. The action research began in January 2007 with pilot interviews held in Oyo State, and carried out on the following research subjects: 8 Faith Communities participants (i.e. those who participated in the NEEDS document), 5 stakeholders, and 2 non-participating FCs, making 15 respondents, altogether. The purpose of the pilot was to be able to determine who should be interviewed during the main survey and to estimate the number of interviews that could reasonably be accomplished in a day, among other questions. This experience enabled the team to plan and organise the substantive survey appropriately.

At the project meeting of March, 2007, it was agreed by the project team that the main survey be conducted in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja, Plateau State with additional interviews in Oyo State. Abuja was selected as the seat of the federal government and host to national headquarters of several faith groups. The idea was that invitations to consultation sessions on NEEDS are likely to be dispatched to national offices. Plateau State has a heavy concentration of FBOs who are active in the realm of development and related matters, a couple of which also doubles as national head offices. Budget considerations more than anything else limited the study sites to these three places. This main survey began in March 2007 and was concluded in July 2007.

One of the decisions taken in this phase was the preparation of a report from the findings of the field work which was to be presented at a Dissemination Workshop with a mixed audience comprising policy makers and FBO representatives. This report, which includes the review of literature chronicling reform efforts in Nigeria and an assessment of involvement of FBOs in the NEEDS processes, was subsequently presented at this workshop in August 2007 which was extremely well attended and highly interactive. At the workshop, there was a coalescence of

opinion on the fruitfulness of FBOs focusing on policy implementation as the theme of their planned contribution to the policy process. The anticipation was for the process of producing a respectable Submission to government on how policy implementation could be improved. The Submission was to be hands-on for the FBOs in the sense that they were to fully take on the various stages including data collection as well as report writing. During the course of this dissemination workshop, it was unanimously agreed that there is the need to build capacity of FBO members on how to conduct research for them to better engage the policy process. At this workshop, it was also agreed that the Research Team should carry out prequalification assessment of capacity of FBOs to undertake this task.

The UK Coordinator of this research, at the University of Birmingham, provided overall guidance and intellectual oversight throughout the life of this project. This include reviews and revisions of various interview guides, choice of study locations, prospective respondents, suggested reports outlines and reviews of draft reports, advice on workshop programmes and prospective invitees, modalities for disseminating the draft Submission and so on.

The research team oversaw the organisation of the dissemination workshop including what papers to present, choice of resource persons from the FBOs and government sides and allocation of topics of workshop papers to resource persons. Only one workshop was held in Phase I where the findings of the report on extent of FBOs involvement in policy work was shared with an audience comprising government officials and FBOs.

## **2.2 Processes and Methodology for Phase Two**

The aim of the second phase of the project was basically to build the capacity of the FBOs in order to be able to better engage in the policy process. In order to accomplish this, there was the need to find out which capacity building was needed and how this can be effectively carried out. The planned Submission to government to engage FBOs in the policy process required FBOs to visit local communities to harness grassroots views on a set of questions bordering on policy implementation. The methodological approach included the use of In-depth interviews (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) meaning that the study is of a qualitative character seeking to find answers from key informants in grassroots communities on why policy implementation is failing. To ensure the proposed Submission gets off on a solid footing, it was considered important to get perspectives of FBOs who were interviewed at the first phase of the research on a whole range of issues including the nature of questions to take to the grassroots people, the FBOs research gathering experience, type of contact they have with the grassroots and their human, material and communication resource profiles. These FBOs were party to the consensus that implementation of government policy rather than policy formulation was the missing link in Nigeria's effort at achieving meaningful development. The reason for this approach is to assemble a core checklist of critical questions that should be in the instrument for collecting information from the grassroots and assess FBOs relative strengths and weaknesses and consequently their preparedness to undertake the assignment. This exercise, carried out by the research team, was the first stage of Phase II.

At the FBOs Management Group meeting held with the research team at NISER in May 2008, a summary of the findings in the Phase II, Stage 1 report was presented by the Research Team.

The report of the research team's assessment of capacity challenges among FBOs was considered and on the strength of these, the Group concluded that for the Submission to be of high quality, a pre-fieldwork training on qualitative research methods incorporating data collection through interviewing, transcribing, summarising interviews, etc., was absolutely essential. Thus, in the judgment of the Group, qualitative research method offers the best approach for gathering the kind of data required for writing this Submission. The FBOs Management Group also unanimously agreed that FBOs should focus on how to improve policy implementation in the areas of agriculture and health. This decision was justified by the fact that agriculture and health are two sectors whose impact potentially touches on all strata of society. The argument is that while food is vital to sustaining life, health is crucial to well-being. The FBOs Management Group also resolved that all FBOs involved in Phase I should participate in preparing the Submission. The essence of this is to ensure that the goal of building capacity for policy work among FBOs is as inclusive of many of them as possible. The meeting also advised each FBO to send to the capacity building exercise, one or two representatives, who would eventually take on the role of researchers on the project.

The capacity building workshop was subsequently planned, scheduled and held. The capacity strengthening exercise focused on the mechanics of qualitative research [In-depth interviews (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)]. At the end of the capacity building exercise, the FBOs' researchers proceeded to the field work. Each researcher was required to conduct 2 IDIs and 1 FGD. The respondents were everyday people including farmers, traders, civil servants, traditional leaders, women leaders, retired nursing officer and pharmacists, etc. The focus groups included women groups, farmers' cooperative, etc. The field surveys were confined to 3 locations: Ibadan (Oyo State), Abuja (Federal Capital Territory) and Jos (Plateau State) which have been the traditional sites for the study.

In essence, the FBOs who were the enumerators solicited comments via an open-ended set of questions to shed light on the policy implementation challenge in Nigeria. The schedule of questions around which IDIs and FGDs are organised have earlier been agreed with the Project Management Team as comprehensive enough to illuminate the issues and focus on the following:

- Respondent's Knowledge about Government Policies
- Evidence of Failure in Policy Implementation
- Factors responsible for failure in Policy Implementation
- Ways by which Community members reach the Government
- Suggested Strategies to ensure successful Policy Implementation

During the course of the fieldwork by the FBOs, the RaD Programme provided logistics support in the form of transportation and for field materials such as cassette tapes and batteries for the interviews, while FBOs supplied tape recorders and other consumables such as papers, biros, pencils, etc., also for the interviews. This demonstrates elements of resource sharing between the FBOs and the RaD Programme.

As part of capacity building for the FBOs, they were required to transcribe and do a summary of every interview and FGD conducted. A write-shop was held in December 2008 where the findings from the field were packaged by representatives of FBOs into the report planned for

Submission to the government. The draft Submission was presented at a workshop held on February 2009, attended by representatives of the entire FBOs involved in the project, which attracted comments and suggestions on areas of the report to modify or improve. The FBOs Management Group subsequently effected revisions on the earlier draft to produce a final Submission.

The UK Coordinator also provided overall guidance and intellectual oversight in this Phase of the project. The research team supervised the field work carried out by the FBOs. At least one interview was conducted by the FBOs' researchers in the presence of one research team member, which made for assessment of the extent to which the researcher had internalised the capacity training and provided opportunity for the research team to offer advice at that point.

The FBOs Management Group offered constructive insight especially regarding topic for the FBOs submission, areas of capacity building, modalities for the survey exercise, mode of the Submission to government, while also actively facilitating the distribution of the Submission to policy circles and prominent citizens in the country.

Seven major contacts were made with the FBOs at this Phase. The first was when the research team visited them to ascertain their capacity strengths and weaknesses. The second was at the capacity building workshop. The third was during the actual field survey when the research team distributed field materials and blank evaluation forms to both managers and researchers (to evaluate the capacity building exercise) and also supervised their activities on the field. The fourth was when the research team went round to collect the field returns including cassettes, transcriptions and summaries and evaluation forms. The fifth was the write-shop where the findings from the field were packaged by representatives of FBOs into the report planned for Submission to the government. The sixth was the workshop where the draft Submission was reviewed by representatives of the entire FBOs involved in the project, and the seventh was at the forum where the Submission was billed for formal handover to the government.

### **2.3 Ethics of the Research**

The entire process of this research from inception to completion was undertaken in a way that ensures its integrity and quality. Realising how sensitive and potentially explosive faith issues could be, the enumerators took extreme care not to place the research subjects at risk or incite social conflicts. Specifically, the following ethical issues guided the research:

- Take responsibility for ensuring that respondents are not affected by the research (physically, socially, financially and psychologically)
- Explain clearly our purpose and identity, and especially what we cannot offer;
- Gain appropriate collective consent before commencing research in organisations and communities;
- Gain informed consent from individual research subjects; imposing no coercion on respondents to start or continue participating;
- Accord respect to respondents' view and record faithfully how they see the world, even when our perspectives differ;
- Present findings accurately and fully, recognising the partiality of our own knowledge, assumptions and capabilities;

- Seek the views of those who may lack voice in social and political arenas;
- Show sensitivity to the desire for privacy, values and beliefs, and cultural practices of the groups under study;
- Ensure confidentiality and anonymity are respected when people desire it;
- Recognise the importance of other calls on respondents' time and their other priorities;
- Show appreciation for respondents' time and inputs;
- Share research findings with respondents where possible and respect their concerns about the possible harm caused by their content or presentation;
- Admit the limitations of the research findings.

## **2.4 Difficulties Encountered**

It is worthy of mention that initial contacts were not easy due to lack of FBOs map in Nigeria. There is no comprehensive directory of FBOs in Nigeria. Therefore the study made use of the list coming out of the FBOs Mapping Project (a component of the RaD programme) and also adopted the snowballing method to make initial contacts with FBOs in Federal Capital Territory, Oyo and Plateau States.

There was also the initial reluctance on the part of the respondents to volunteer information. There was also problem of communication between partners in Nigeria and Birmingham mostly due to electricity failures from time to time. In some situations, inadequate security hampered travels especially journeys to Plateau state where ethno-religious crisis engulfed the state several times during the course of the research. In these instances, travels were delayed until the situation was calm for the researchers to visit the state and conduct interviews.

## **2.5 Submission to government**

The idea of FBOs participating in the policy process through a Submission to government arose during the discussions at the dissemination workshop of August 2007. The FBOs Submission focused on how policy implementation in agriculture and health sectors could be improved in Nigeria. The decision was based on the fact that implementation of policies has been the bane of socioeconomic development in Nigeria, while agriculture and health are central to poverty reduction in the land. The data obtained from grassroots communities on reasons for implementation failures and approaches for improving implementation were used to prepare the Submission. The FBOs Management Group led the way in packaging the Submission under the facilitation of the research team.

A number of entry points for submission of FBOs' report were envisaged. In the first place, the aim was for the Submission to be made available to the government before the publication of NEEDS II at national level and SEEDS II at the state levels. Unfortunately, the publication of NEEDS II was abandoned. The team now targeted the successor to NEEDS, namely the "Seven Point Agenda" which up to now is yet to be published as well. The research team used several instrumentalities and approaches to disseminate the Submission to relevant policy quarters and influential religious leaders with some leverage in government. Some of the individuals and government who have received the document include the Head of the Muslim Community in Nigeria and Sultan of Sokoto, President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN),

Governors of Oyo, Lagos, Ogun, Delta and Rivers States, Houses of Assembly of Oyo and Plateau States, Ministers of National Planning, Agriculture and Water Resources and Health. Chairmen of Senate Committees on Health, Agriculture and National Planning; and Chairmen of the House of Representatives Committees on Health, Agriculture and National Planning.

As part of efforts to disseminate the Submission, a forum scheduled for December 1, 2009 intended for FBOs to formally present the document to representatives of the government and hopefully extract some form of commitment from them regarding the implementation of the proposals contained therein, turned out a huge disappointment.

## **2.6 Creation of Networks**

With regards to the creation of networks, FBOs have been bunched by locations into three groups. These are Oyo State, Plateau State, and the FCT Abuja. Each group has a Chairman to coordinate activities of the group. The groups are encouraged to meet at least every quarter to brainstorm on issues pertinent to the survival and sustainability of the network and procedures for making periodic policy engagements.

## **3. RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **3.1 PHASE ONE**

#### **3.1.1 Objectives**

The purpose of this project is to analyse the nature and extent of faith groups' participation and influence in the NEEDS processes in Nigeria. Specifically, this piece of action research seeks to:

- Record the nature and extent of faith communities involvement in the PRSP process;
- evaluate their capacity for participation;
- prioritise issues for capacity building;
- assess impact of capacity building; and
- expose advantages of interfaith cooperation.

#### **3.1.2 Findings**

This section presents findings from the interviews with FBOs. The discussion is split into sub-sections reflecting various issues pertinent to involvement in the NEEDS/SEEDS/FEEDS<sup>1</sup> processes.

##### **3.1.2.1 Awareness of NEEDS/SEEDS/FEEDS**

Several of the interviewees demonstrated shallow knowledge or complete ignorance of what NEEDS is all about. In many cases, the respondents could not spell out the meaning of the

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<sup>1</sup> NEEDS refers to National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy which is an initiative of the national government. The equivalent for the component states of the Nigerian Federation is the State Economic Empowerment Process (SEEDS) while the Federal Capital Territory labelled its equivalent economic blueprint "FEEDS".

acronym while others merely exhibited general idea of the strategy. A relatively smaller fraction of the respondents were quite aware of SEEDS and in fact were consulted early in the process.

Their primary mode of gaining knowledge of NEEDS is through the media (i.e., electronic and print media), and through their activities in other sectors such as education and health, particularly HIV/AIDS. Indeed, there appears to be more consultations and interactions between the FBO community and government on these sector-specific issues than in the framing of broad economic vision for the country as a whole.

### **3.1.2.2 Extent to Which FBOs are Involved in NEEDS/SEEDS**

There is an overwhelming sense that faith groups are largely being left out of the NEEDS drafting, monitoring and implementation processes. This is a perception that resonates in interviews held at Ibadan, Abuja and Jos. Despite official rhetoric purporting the active involvement and participation of the NGO (inclusive of FBO) community in this process, a common theme in several of the interviews is that the only shades of consultations that took place were held when the documents have already been fully developed and therefore seemed programmed as rubber-stamping exercises. However, there are refreshing insights on the participation of few organisations referred to by the authorities to as “development-oriented FBOs<sup>2</sup>” in the packaging of SEEDS in Plateau State.

There is a disturbing reference to usurpation of the role of the faith communities as a block by certain influential members of the group who are close to the corridors of power and therefore claim to represent the interests of the block without recourse to the mandate of the group. These persons, who are usually top echelon members, effectively divide the ranks by posturing as the mouth-piece of the respective faith groups and usually have the ears of federal and state governments<sup>3</sup>.

### **3.1.2.3 How FBOs were Involved**

The respondents contend that the semblance of dialogue that took place on NEEDS between the government and the FBO community (as part of engagement with the civil societies) is usually a one-off or at most, two-time seminar or workshop primarily intended to sensitise them to the main elements and building blocks of the NEEDS or SEEDS or evaluate the previous SEEDS and that no follow-up activities or engagements ensued. The seminars or workshops typically draw presenters from government, donor agencies, private sector, academics and even representatives of NGO community. There may be a lead paper which essentially outlines the overriding vision, basic goals, objectives and strategies of NEEDS/SEEDS, etc. The FBOs, alongside other participants may be divided into thematic groups depending on their specialities and often afforded them opportunities to react or critique presentations by resource persons selected by the organisers or prepare technical reports in each of the groups.

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<sup>2</sup> This refers to FBOs engaged in development work notably poverty alleviation initiatives and includes FBOs such as CHAN, FOMWAN, NASFAT, POD-ECWA which dominate our sample for this study.

<sup>3</sup> This perspective emerged during interview with an official of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) which is the umbrella organisation for all Christians in Nigeria.

The delegates of the FBO and FCs to these consultation sessions normally carry the mandate of their respective organisation and articulate its position which is harnessed during pre-consultation meetings within the organisation. The Coalition of Civil Society Organisations (CISCOPE) - the umbrella body of all civil society groups - may also be in attendance and would be articulating the positions of its 'constituency'<sup>4</sup>. Intriguingly, all of the FBOs interviewed in Jos (capital of Plateau State) who made contributions at the summit for the Plateau State SEEDS claimed not to have set their eyes on the final output several months after they made their contributions. This is because the process was interrupted by political upheavals and therefore did not culminate in the printing of an operational SEEDS document for Plateau State as in several other states in the country (Plateau State Planning Commission). This makes it difficult for the respondents to judge with certainty the extent to which their proposals at the sessions were taken on board.

According to the National Planning Commission (NPC)<sup>5</sup>, there is some difference between the consultation processes for NEEDS and NEEDS-2<sup>6</sup>. In the case of NEEDS-1, an advance draft copy was sent to stakeholders and the document was subsequently presented to stakeholders (including NGOs) at a forum called by the Chief Economic Adviser to the President who was the head of the National Planning Commission. The stakeholders then presented position papers on the draft. The document was also placed on the website and elicited contributions from within and without the country which was useful in revising the draft. The consultations in regard to NEEDS-2 were more wide-ranging and began well ahead of the preparation of the draft. It started with the development of the framework and invitation of representative of NGOs. Several independent international NGOs such as Action Aid also called workshops to discuss this framework. The recommendations from all of these sessions were collated and formed inputs into the draft. Consultations on the draft were subsequently held in the six zones of the country<sup>7</sup>.

### 3.1.2.4 FBOs and Government Behaviour

FBOs regard floor discussion at the consultation sessions as typically abridged and that the drift of the discourse suggests that the authorities have predetermined positions on several of the issues on the agenda. They surmise that in the face of such overwhelming odds, they are left with no option than to go with the flow. Some interviewees contend that in the final analysis, their positions are often not discernible or disappear from the final outcome. The authorities however describe the contributions of FBOs at such forums as unnecessarily blame-gaming and accusatory and devoid of rigour and substance<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Moreover, there is always the danger that the sole representative of the CSOs may be expressing his personal opinion rather than that of the collective.

<sup>5</sup> The National Planning Commission is the organ of government with the responsibility for developing the NEEDS.

<sup>6</sup> NEED-2 was the sequel to NEEDS. The former is regarded as generally less successful than the latter having been developed at the twilight of President Olusegun Obasanjo's regime and expected to run during the rule of his successor. President Yar'Adua made what he called "7 point agenda" the centrepiece of his administration's programmes which largely overshadowed NEED-2

<sup>7</sup> This elaboration of material differences between the NEEDS and NEEDS-2 processes emerged from discussion with the NEEDS Coordinator at the time.

<sup>8</sup> This was the opinion of the NEEDS Coordinator at the time during interview held with the research team at her NPC office.

### 3.1.2.5 Why FBOs Were Not Involved

The reasons advanced for the non-engagement of many FBOs' in consultations with government vary from lack of information or knowledge of the event, late arrival of invitations as well as apathy due to frustrations from previous experience. There is a broad consensus that the authorities have totally kept them in the dark on the NEEDS/SEEDS processes. On rare occasions when invitations are despatched to attend what appears to be sensitisation activity, they contend that it usually arrives too close to the event to allow for necessary logistical and intellectual preparations. Some sections of the FBO community however feel a sense of indignation and frustration owing to the jettisoning of prescriptions or outputs of previous engagements which stirs up in them a feeling of scepticism or futility of the exercise. There was an interesting distinction drawn between 'consultations' and 'participation'. The argument is that the way to go is involve FBOs alongside Civil Society Organisation (CSOs) from the scratch in developing the overarching vision, strategies, targets and all other elements of NEEDS or SEEDS to ensure they make contributions at every stage of the process (i.e. participation), rather than being invited to "listen to what looks like a *fait accompli*" (i.e., consultation)<sup>9</sup>.

The exclusion of the gamut of faith groups may arise from the manner invitations to the consultation sessions are managed. Invitations are sometimes issued to the head of the apex body of the larger CSO in his self recognition on the presumption that his attendance at such meetings translate to bringing in CSOs including FBOs into the process. Again the timing of these invitations often does not allow time for harvesting and collating the views of the component organisations. On occasion, invitations are despatched to CSOs as a group, and FBOs may be marooned or squeezed out<sup>10</sup> from the actual selection of organisations to attend the consultations.

On the charge by FBOs of being kept out of the loop, one respondent submits that faith groups will need to prove themselves and show accountability and transparency in their operations<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, they could frame the debate or set the agenda by preparing parallel NEEDS or doing own-SEEDS benchmarking exercises as a bargaining chip with government and to demonstrate their capacity and competence to handle frontline issues<sup>12</sup>. The challenge would seem to have been picked up somewhat by some FBOs which have developed successful in-house empowerment programs for their church members<sup>13</sup>.

### 3.1.2.6 Faith Community Activities to Influence Policy

In theory, rather than allow themselves to be completely shut out of the debate, faith groups may proactively make their voices heard by mounting activities of their own even if independent of government support or approval where they could ventilate their views and express their preferences on NEEDS or SEEDS at any of the stages of the development of the framework.

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<sup>9</sup> This distinction emerged from the interview with head of the national body of CSOs in Nigeria (CISCOPE).

<sup>10</sup> FBOs are only a subset of a large CSO community in Nigeria and selection of participants to policy dialogue may leave them with paltry representation or none at all.

<sup>11</sup> CISCOPE, Abuja

<sup>12</sup> NPC, Abuja

<sup>13</sup> These are poverty reduction programs with components such as micro-credit, skill development, trainings, etc designed to improve the economic lot of the local church members e.g. COCIN

These activities could span the wide spectrum of making representations, circulating policy positions, monitoring activities, organising workshops, initiating meeting with government officials, making submissions and consultations.

The surveys indicate that FBOs have been somewhat laid back on this score. The predominant mood among these organisations is to stand some distance from the policy process in the absence of explicit invitations to such consultations by simply focussing on 'doing their own thing'. Thus, independent or autonomously-induced actions to influence the process are the exception rather than the rule. A significant segment of the FBO community actually does carry out parallel activities of several of the kind mentioned here in their primary area of mandate (i.e. organising workshops, monitoring projects and the like), although the outcome of these events and programmes are seldom forwarded to policy circles nor do government officials necessarily honour invitations to attend these events. Interestingly, there is implicit recognition of the great role FBOs can play in implementing and monitoring SEEDS because of the monumental successes they have recorded in running their local empowerment activities<sup>14</sup>.

Opinions differ on the level of autonomous actions taken to influence the framing of policies in other domains – particularly in the sphere of education, health and HIV/AIDS<sup>15</sup>. Some sections of the FBO community contend that they have had to make representations and circulated policy positions usually developed in-house to the government drawing on the pool of expertise available among the laity or religious faithful who usually does this *gratis* and that this has usually not elicited response from the authorities, spun-off any collaboration between the two entities or snowballed into future mutual engagements<sup>16</sup>. FBOs have not been contacted to implement NEEDS or SEEDS or any of its components, instead they have concentrated on developing and implementing own empowerment programmes for their members<sup>17</sup>. Considerable monitoring activities was carried out by a large spectrum of FGs but this has been limited to the recently held population census and elections<sup>18</sup>, and for a smaller segment, the HIV/AIDS intervention programme<sup>19</sup>; MDGs and budget tracking. All respondents affirm that they have not been involved in monitoring NEEDS or SEEDS as a package. The non-involvement of FBOs in implementing or monitoring NEEDS or SEEDS is probably due to the fact that the government has its own self-designated monitors or a conviction that FBOs should be watchdogs, not implementers [NPC, Abuja].

Workshops and seminars are routine activities among the FBOs although they invariably focus on issues germane to their area of activity and designed for their members.<sup>20</sup> The communiqué or

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<sup>14</sup> This was the opinion of an official of the Budget and Planning Department in Plateau State. Indeed, FBOs such as POD-ECWA, NASFAT and FOMWAN have empowerment initiatives in form of credit facilities, health services and a leprosarium in the case of POD-ECWA for their members and immediate communities which have proved hugely successful.

<sup>15</sup> Other areas include child rights bill, malaria and tuberculosis control [NSCIA, National].

<sup>16</sup> Methodist Church, Abuja and Anglican Church, Abuja and CHAN, National.

<sup>17</sup> These are predominantly micro-credit and skill development programmes e.g. by COCIN, POD-ECWA and TEKAN.

<sup>18</sup> JNI, Jos; JDPC, Abuja, NASFAT, Abuja, FOMWAN, Jos, Methodist, Ibadan.

<sup>19</sup> For example JDPC, Abuja; NASFAT, Abuja. CISCOPE avers that CSOs are currently monitoring and evaluating 2006 MDG project spending. This was corroborated by FOMWAN, National. CHAN, National participated in budget tracking.

<sup>20</sup> For instance, CHAN National headquarters has been implementing the Global Fund on Tuberculosis

report of these colloquia or roundtable are sometimes placed in newspapers and may be forwarded to specific department of governments. Again, it does not seem to ignite interest or spark follow-up actions from the other end according to the respondents.

A considerable number of FBOs claim to have attempted shadow consultations as a tool for swaying public policy in their favour by virtue of their closeness to the seat of government or presence of their followers in the executive and legislative arms of government<sup>21</sup>. They however agree that the results of such efforts are not necessarily positive or salutary in the sense it has not always led to influencing the particular policy in the manner or direction they desire.

According to CISCOPE, CSOs mounted dialogue sessions on NEEDS in the country's six geopolitical zones, each of two days duration. The reports of these sessions were consolidated at the Federal Capital, published and forwarded to the National Planning Commission<sup>22</sup>.

### **3.1.2.1.7 Reasons for Not Taking Independent Initiative on NEEDS/SEEDS**

It is unclear why FBOs have largely not taken independent actions specific to the NEEDS or PRSPs and attempts to unearth remote and immediate reasons for this did not yield much fruit. One conjecture is that FBOs still carry hangover of the bitter rivalry and antagonism between them and the authorities during the military era when they were randomly accused of meddlesomeness or destabilising the government using funds obtained from the international donors and which may have forced them to confine themselves to their 'operational boundaries'.

### **3.1.2.8 Capacity to Engage and Participate in the NEEDS Process**

Majority of the respondents were upbeat on their capacity to engage and participate in the NEEDS processes. This assertion is doubtless for a number of FBOs which operates an organised national network and has considerable pedigree in managing programs of a nation-wide kind<sup>23</sup>. However closer scrutiny of a vast number of them reveal yawning capacity gaps – human and material<sup>24</sup>. Respondents were unanimous that involvement in policy work does not necessarily conflict with their mandate or mission; reflecting the broadening of the mission of the faith communities beyond narrow preoccupation with liturgy or the soul plane to include secular concerns and kitchen table issues (Taylor, 2003). Opinions are not monolithic on the adequacy of resources kept aside for activities associated with the process of engaging in development policy. While some hold that they could marshal the resources to participate in consultation with the government on policy even if they had to borrow to do so, not a few of those interviewed assert that current budget provisions for such tasks are insufficient. The principal mode of gathering resources for this kind of activity is through levying the membership, registration and membership dues or requesting for voluntary help. Some of the FBOs in fact, dip into the pool of funds derived from investment in properties including real estate development, running of guest

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<sup>21</sup> For example NASFAT, Abuja, POD-ECWA, National and CHAN, National.

<sup>22</sup> This exercise could not be repeated for NEEDS-2 due to lack of financial resources to organise it.

<sup>23</sup> These include CHAN, NASFAT, JDPC and FOMWAN.

<sup>24</sup> These include shortage of qualified personnel and operational tools such as vehicles, computers, photocopiers, etc.

houses and financial assets such as stocks. Broadly, the preponderance of FBOs obtains large chunks of their funding from international donor support.

Typically, many of the FBOs surveyed operate a small secretariat with core staff ranging from as little as 4 to about 15 which serves as clearing houses or administrative units. The mainstay personnel are deliberately kept small for budget reasons. Consequently, sporadic recourse has to be made to the larger church or Islamic community for expertise and intellectual input when they are invited to events by the policy authorities<sup>25</sup>. There are some with a more formalised structure comprising standing technical groups in various disciplines who act as the 'brain-box' of the organisation<sup>26</sup>. When invitations arrive from any of the government agencies, they are forwarded to the relevant committee or boards for intellectual contribution or for them to nominate delegates to the event. Members of this technical backbone are co-opted from the laity on the strength of their academic qualifications or experience and may not necessarily possess crucial bargaining, negotiating and lobbying skills to enable them extract the best deals from the standpoint of the FCs at the dialogue or consultations sessions. Moreover, some members of this technical group are unable to honour invitations to policy forums due to pressing engagements of their own. Notwithstanding, technical and analytical skills remain grossly deficient in the FBOs. FBOs appear forceful on moral issues and are lacking in handling intricate government policy matters<sup>27</sup>.

Materials deficiencies are common in several of the FBOs. The number of computer terminals tends to be short of requirements; transportation difficulties are acute since many of them own one or two vehicles which are sometimes in dilapidated state; Internet facilities are grossly inadequate or completely lacking.

### **3.1.2.9 Faith Groups Core Activities and NEEDS**

There are apparent commonalities in core activities of faith groups and the NEEDS. While not necessarily abandoning their primary duty of moulding spiritual and moral character, a large segment of the FCs has detoured into more down-to-earth concerns. Indeed, the exclusive concentration by these groups on the core apostolic goals of spiritual transformation is on the wane as are theologies that eulogise poverty as a distinctive hallmark of spiritual and material wholesomeness (Taylor, 2003). Poverty reduction, rural development, health and education provision are some of the spheres where FBOs now wield considerable influence. The majority of respondents identify with the new mission and stand ready to align or partner with government in advancing work on these frontiers.

### **3.1.2.10 Difficulties Experienced Participating in the NEED/SEEDS Processes**

Access to government officials is considered problematic by a cross section of respondents. Efforts to penetrate the policy arena to express their opinions about particular policies or articulate their interest on policy have often met a brick-wall. They attribute this to unnecessary bureaucracy and protocol associated with the functioning of government agencies and a culture

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<sup>25</sup> This was the position of the NASFAT and JDPC officials interviewed

<sup>26</sup> For example, Christian Association of Nigeria

<sup>27</sup> This is according to the NEEDS Coordinator

of secrecy. There is also what some interviewees refer to as the 'human dimension'. By this they mean the uncanny attitude of subordinates to shield their superiors from scrutiny or inquisition by 'shadowy groups or persons'. Moreover, the reluctance of government officials to accept faith groups as partners in progress is also considered a bump on the road. When FBOs try to initiate contact with government, the latter regards them as beggars or irritants who have no business prying into government activities. Some respondents defeat the bureaucratic walls by using informal means to gain access to particular officials if there are issues they feel strongly about. They do this through contacts with members of their faith community who work in certain offices or agencies of government.

Accessing information from government quarters is similarly challenging. The foremost perception is that it is often not a cake walk. This is especially so if the information requested has to do with budget matters which is often considered a 'no-go area'. Thus attempts to carry out budget tracking<sup>28</sup> effectively as part of FBOs monitoring activities have been tough. Again, here, personal relationships with desk-officers have frequently been employed to open the door to information where they exist and if the need is pressing enough. Not a few officers however contend that crucial information is usually not accessible or obtainable in usable form. Overall, the respondents agree that lack of access to information stifles their ability to effectively join and function on the policy train.

The picture is uneven regarding level of conversance with the issues on the agenda at the consultative meetings on SEEDS. A considerable number of respondents maintained that they have little problem relating with the subjects or topics discussed at these various forums because they invariably identify competent persons in the relevant fields from the larger religious community who attends the sessions as delegates of the organisations.

The snag, in their view, is that invitations to consultation sessions do not reach them early enough making it difficult to contact and brief specialists within the fold to gain their consent to attend and afford them sufficient time to apprise themselves of the issues on the schedule. It should be mentioned that few respondents conceded that understanding the issues under considerations at these sessions may pose some difficulty beyond the expertise on the ground. In this case, they may resort to hiring experts from outside their organization. The umbrella body of CSOs (CISCOPE) however counsels FBOs to specialize in the area of their core competencies, rather than striving to be 'jack of all trade'.

There are problems associated with raising funds to facilitate participation in policy discourses. This is especially so when meetings are scheduled out of station or location of the FBOs. Paucity of funds also constrains the hiring of experts required for policy dialogues and similar engagements when such expertise are lacking in-house; and may shut out participation in the policy process when invitations come from the government. Money could pose a problem to participation especially when there is no budget allocation covering expense on the exercise. To circumvent perennial financial difficulties, FGs engage in money-making ventures including investments in real estates, financial assets, running of guest houses, writing proposals for

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<sup>28</sup> Budget tracking is a process of tracking allocation of funds in the government budget to specific activities, projects and programmes to the end of ensuring that the monies are not diverted from intended uses.

funding among others. Others merely levy their members to raise money to finance their activities<sup>29</sup>.

Respondents were unanimous that faith attitudes to poverty is not a hindrance to participation in NEEDS process. They see a convergence in the teachings of the principal personalities associated with the two faiths of Islam and Christianity (Prophet Mohammed and Jesus Christ) and emancipation of the poor and down-trodden. Clearly, respondents do not see a contradiction between liberation from the shackles of poverty and squalor and the phrase “you will have the poor with you always” (Matthew 26:11) Again, political involvement by faith communities is given a somewhat liberal interpretation. The predominant disposition is that the fine line between politics and religion has all but evaporated. Indeed, many FGs openly encourage their laity to venture into partisan politics as sanitising force<sup>30</sup>.

There is considerable ambiguity in responses to questions on whether internal organization issues impede FGs’ participation in the policy process. While some admit that bureaucratic bottlenecks may sometimes bog down participation, a large segment of interviewees does not see this as a problem. The latter group point to informal mode of operation and clear organisational practices that, in the absence of the boss, allows the officer next in line to act on correspondences, effectively bypassing undue protocols and red-tape. For the former category, there are indications that efforts are afoot to reform internal structures and existing norms to ensure rapid response<sup>31</sup>.

The general attitude of FBOs to the NEEDS initiative is positive. Their sense is that NEEDS is a well-thought policy and that they stand willing always to support any program or activity targeted at reducing poverty in the country. However, they are critical of the lack of real participation and hollowness of the execution of the bottom-up approach the strategy professes.

### **3.1.2.11 Assistance Needed By Organizations/Faith Communities to Enhance Participation in the NEEDS/SEEDS Processes**

Capacity building initiatives are resonant in responses on the nature of assistance needed by faith communities to unlock their potentials as effective participants in consultation processes on the NEEDS/SEEDS. This omnibus term was unbundled to include skill development, training through workshops and seminars on policy development. There was a clear realisation that policy development is an intricate endeavour requiring a high degree of technical knowledge. Workshops by seasoned consultants are one modality they propose for bringing this about. Some would want training in their principal field of activity. Money was considered bottom-line in the responses to the mode of assistance required. The faith groups rationalises that money would practically purchase every resource – human and material. Indeed, money will come handy for activities such as making representation during policy formulation on concerns bordering on poverty reduction. The dearth of information and knowledge on contemporary discourse was also considered a major bottleneck. Here the respondents are desirous of receiving assistance in stocking their libraries or providing Internet facilities to keep them at the frontier of

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<sup>29</sup> For example, COCIN.

<sup>30</sup> This includes Anglican Church and NSCIA.

<sup>31</sup> This is the view expressed at the National office of the Anglican Church.

knowledge in their sphere of activity and abreast of current development dialogues. The respondents affirm that the capacity building assistance could be provided through workshops and training by relevant agencies of government as well as international bodies keen on rendering assistance. They also maintain that experts in the area of policy formulation should facilitate such workshops and trainings. The NEEDS authorities concur that FBOs badly need major assistance in improving human capital and skill that will 'bring them to the fore front of current economic issues'. "They should be proactive and be aware of current best practices in the world", the NEEDS authorities concluded (NPC, Abuja).

With regard to implementation of the NEEDS, FGs cherish sound training on implementation strategies to facilitate execution of projects and programmes embedded in the strategy. This capacity enhancement could be provided through workshops and training by specialists in this field. The training should encapsulate frameworks for implementation. Similarly, a cross-section of respondents maintains that support in form of provision of vehicles would be appreciated to ease implementation of programmes. Others submit that money is critical to any implementation enterprise since government programme will invariably stretch over a large geographical area. The bolstering of numerical staff capacity was also considered a necessity for implementation to succeed.

Respondent retort to what was needed to monitor NEEDS programmes did not differ dramatically from requirements for programme implementation. In their judgement, monitoring of activities require plenty of money which is often not there. Therefore to effectively monitor government activities support must come in the form of money to fund this activity. Equally significant is capacity building training programmes on frameworks for monitoring as well as critical indicators to watch during the monitoring exercise. Since monitoring will involve moving from one location to the other, the respondents reckoned that support in the form of provision of vehicles is crucial. Additionally, they will value opportunities for internship in reputable firms working in the area of monitoring and evaluation "so as to sharpen the knowledge of those to be involved in monitoring of government programmes" (CISCOPE, Abuja).

### **3.1.2.12 Priority Areas that Needs Immediate Attention**

A common thread in prioritisation by the respondents of support required to effectively participate in the NEEDS processes was financial assistance. Their logic was that money is crucial to day to day chores at the offices and for hiring competent hands that could represent their organisation respectably at consultation sessions with government. Capacity augmentation is also considered high priority. This, they posit, could take the form of training workshops, seminars and the like in order to improve their knowledge base of policy and related issues and bring them up to speed with cutting-edge concepts, tools and methodologies. In the respondents' view, there is the need for training in their specific areas of activity including policy development, monitoring and information technology. For illustration, they would want a network of FBOs that is working on poverty to undergo budget training. Moreover, they support the organisation of programme or project-specific workshops in response to emerging challenges. They argue that networking and coalition are basic for effective performance by the FBOs and therefore there is the need to build synergy among them. Another major priority area

of assistance to virtually all of the respondents is Internet connection and website design; the networking of computers and provision of softwares for monitoring.

### **3.1.2.13 Inter-Faith Cooperation**

The respondents posit that the prevailing form of inter-faith cooperation in the country was not designed specifically to fight poverty. Rather, the existing liaison aim at building confidence between the two main religions in the country and facilitating deeper understanding of shared beliefs and common values so as to stave off ethno-religious crises. There is a committee in place called Nigerian Inter-religious Council (NIREC), whose mandate is to build bridges and foster unity among adherent of Islamic and Christian faiths and rein in conflicts and confrontations between them. Some respondents however see congruence between the assignments of this Committee and potential poverty reduction ends. Only one Christian organisation was categorical that they have worked in the rural areas with Muslim groups in fighting poverty through skill development and micro-credit to the rural people<sup>32</sup>. All respondents agree that inter-faith cooperation focused on poverty and development is potentially very fruitful.

## **3.2 PHASE TWO STAGE 1**

### **3.2.1 Objectives**

The aim of Phase II was to build the capacity of FBOs to participate in policy work. This capacity strengthening exercise was to pave the way for the preparation by FBOs of a competent, constructive and united written submission to government examining why generally acceptable policies often fail to be realized and how their implementation at whatever level, from national to local, could be improved.

To ensure the proposed submission gets off on a solid footing, it was considered important to get perspectives of FBOs who were interviewed at the first stage of the research, and who were party to the consensus that implementation of government policy rather than policy formulation was the weak link in Nigeria's effort at achieving meaningful development, on a whole range of issues including the nature of questions to take to the grassroots people, the FBOs research gathering experience, type of contact they have with the grassroots and their human, material and communication resource profiles. The reason for this approach is to assemble a core checklist of critical questions that should be in the instrument and assess FBOs relative strengths and weaknesses and consequently their preparedness to undertake the assignment.

### **3.2.3 Findings**

#### **3.2.3.1 Nature of Questions to Ask**

The sense from all of the respondents was that the preliminary sets of questions prepared by the study team are basic to gaining insights into policy implementation questions in Nigeria. They

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<sup>32</sup> This was the position of JDPC which strikingly was echoed in all three locations of Ibadan, Jos and Abuja

consequently approved of the following line of questioning for the research subjects (grassroots people):

1. What is the evidence that generally acceptable policies often fail to be realized?
2. What factors are responsible for failures in implementing policies?
3. What can be done to improve policy implementation?

The respondents were however requested to think up additional questions. This drew disparate views from them. Many of the FBOs maintained that the starting point is to understand how the policies were developed in the first place before delving into implementation matters. Their logic was that implementation of even the best policies may be undone by the process of arriving at the policies. Therefore, answers to policy implementation questions invariably drifted to policy formulation issues at the instance of the respondents.

In the end, the respondents suggested a catalogue of supplementary questions which in a strict sense fall within the ambit of the three listed above.

### **3.2.3.2 Data Gathering Experience**

The data gathering experience of respondents was very diverse. In general almost all of them have had some form of experience using qualitative and to a limited extent quantitative research methods. Prominent among the qualitative research methods claimed to have been employed by the respondents are structured, semi-structured and key informant interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation or simple observation methods, participatory rural appraisal, organizational assessment, community entry processes. The specific subcategories of this research techniques relating to some of the FBOs are: interview, periodic meetings with representatives from different districts and communities, situation analysis, FGDs, questionnaire administration, semi-structured interviews, open space meeting with the people, observation methods, opinion polling, feedback mechanism and so on.

### **3.2.3.3 Who Speaks for Grassroots People and Mandates They Carry**

According to the FBOs surveyed, the purpose of the research invariably determines who the research subjects will be. Respondents are carefully selected in a way to ensure that the objectives of the study in question are accomplished. In general, most of the studies the FBOs conduct invariably involve speaking with community and religious and opinions leaders to either break the ice or gain their consent or authorization to carry out the study in the locality or among a congregation. The goals of the research will inevitably determine the colouration and shape of other subjects. It is evident from the responses of the FBOs that women and youth and in some cases, children and elderly feature regularly among their research subjects. This is clearly because virtually all of the FBOs tend to be involved in reproductive health issues including HIV-AIDS advocacy.

Concerning what mandate the spokesperson carries, again the respondents retort was 'it depends'. If the research sets out to elicit their personal views, then they would be speaking in that capacity. In contrast, if the idea is to have them speak on behalf of groups of people, whatever comments they make or suggestions they proffer would be viewed in that light. There

are a few others who may have to wear both caps. One FBO talked about triangulation – “for example in the case of reproductive health we discuss with religious leaders, youth leaders in the church, young women, etc”<sup>33</sup>.

#### **3.2.3.4 Nature of Contact with Grassroots**

As highlighted in Phase I of this study, several of the FBOs in Nigeria have elaborate structures and network of offices across zones or states of the country notably CHAN, FOMWAN, JDPC, CRUDAN and NASFAT. These organizations clearly have direct contact to the extent that they can connect with their branches or offices on the ground in relevant sites to get the job done. Quite a number of other FBOs interviewed claimed to also have direct contact as well. What is also clear is that indirect contacts are common. In this wise, FBOs collaborate or network with other FBOs (NGOs) or affiliate groups to reach certain grassroots communities.

#### **3.2.3.5 Human Resource Capacity**

There was a variety of responses by the FBOs surveyed to questions relating to existing human resource capacities within their organization or skill capabilities to accomplish the planned assignment. In general, all of them were quite emphatic on the existence of requisite expertise and experience within their organisation while putting estimates to the personnel they could raise or make available for the task. According to them, many of their staff are graduates spread across their zonal offices and some, especially programme officers, have considerable pedigree handling projects of this sort. Of course for organizations such as NASFAT, JNI, CAN, FOMWAN this expertise may have to be drawn from the laity or local congregation.

#### **3.2.3.6 Skill Strengthening Needs**

The chronicling of areas that require capacity strengthening by the FBOs shows pervasive weaknesses in data gathering and data analysis. In their view, experience and expertise are not evenly distributed across the organization as some hands may be co-opted into the project that will need to be brought to a certain minimum level of analytical competence. Several of the FBOs were of the opinion that every project has its philosophy, focus and expectations and that it is often good practice to reorientate all participants to all of this and sharpen their skills were necessary prior to commencement of the assignment.

#### **3.2.3.7 Material Resource Needs**

In profiling material resources within their organizations, it is evident that while desktops are a fixture in all of these organizations, ‘endowments’ differ markedly. For instance, while FBOs such as CHAN National has up to 20 computers, FOMWAN in Jos and NASFAT in Ibadan have just one. Laptops and photocopiers tend to be less common in the organisations. Concerning whether they have a shortage of these materials, the FBOs indicated that there is no absolute answer to the question and a lot depends on the size of the assignment they are being asked to undertake which at the moment is unclear to them. In the final analysis, all the FBOs contended

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<sup>33</sup> The FBO is called Total Foundation

that they could also make do with more of these materials if any form of assistance is forthcoming for them to access.

### **3.2.3.8 Communication Requirements**

Most FBOs do not have functioning Internet facilities or are not connected at all. Telephones (cell-phones) are more widely available; and vehicles too, although by the submission of the FBOs, these vehicles are often old or in poor conditions.

### **3.2.3.9 Expected Outcomes**

All the respondents were positively disposed to anticipated measures of success of this endeavour i.e., submission of a constructive and competent contribution to policy making by FBOs in Nigeria presented before them by the study team, viz.:

- A positive and respectful reaction from government officials
- Some signs of commitment by government to take up the proposals
- Improved confidence and skills among FBOs in relevant information gathering from grassroots communities
- A usable FBO network and a working model for continuing collaborative work on policy.

Perspectives differ on what should be considered the most important outcome of this process. Many of the FBOs consider the second indicator as the most important but added a qualification that it should go beyond sign of commitment to willingness and actual adoption of the proposals. Others choose a usable network and working model of FBOs collaboration as the overriding measure of success.

## **3.3 PHASE TWO STAGE TWO**

### **3.3.1 Preamble**

The second stage provided the opportunity to find out if the capacity built could be used to effectively engage the FBOs in the policy process. For this second stage of Phase II, which involved collecting information from grassroots communities for the purpose of preparing a Submission to government on why policy implementation is such a challenge and how to address the problem, a schedule of questions was agreed by FBO representatives and their members were trained on interviewing techniques. Interviews were conducted at the grassroots by FBO representatives in July and August 2008 in Oyo and Plateau States and the Federal Capital Territory. The findings were written up, as a draft Submission by a select FBO management group, discussed and revised at an FBO workshop in Abuja in February, 2009.

This Submission which has been forwarded to relevant government quarters examined issues such as evidence of failure of implementation in respect of agriculture and health policy initiatives, reasons for failure and strategies for ensuring successful policy implementation.

### **3.3.2 Findings**

#### **3.3.2.1 Respondents' Knowledge of Government Policies: Agricultural Sector**

Although not exactly framed the same way, respondents perspectives show, in bits and pieces, evidence of knowledge of government policies in the area of agriculture as enumerated in the NEEDS document. In particular, many touch one way or another on specific themes including irrigation, storage, agricultural credit, physical infrastructure, input supply and distribution system. Generally therefore, respondents were at home with contemporary/recent policies in the agricultural sector, e.g. the Presidential Initiative on Cassava, Farm mechanization, and Irrigation, Fertilizers, farm inputs, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, rodenticides and improved seeds, storage systems. What was also evident was that many of the respondents had a sense of history of these policies by referring to agricultural policies that were in place in the 1970's and 1980's (e.g. Operation Feed the Nation, OFN; Green revolution; Agricultural Marketing Boards; Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs). However, for many of the respondents, their knowledge was rather scanty, shallow and superficial. The broad knowledge base of the respondents for agricultural policies reflects the fact that it touches on food security and poverty which are kitchen table issues for most households in the rural areas and because the policies are usually widely propagated in the media.

#### **3.3.2.2 Respondent's Knowledge of Government Policies: Health Sector**

A comparison of the responses for agriculture and health sectors concerning knowledge of respective policies elaborated in the NEEDS document shows, that respondents appear less aware of health policy initiatives relative to agricultural policies. While radio and television jingles about running health services (especially donor-propelled programmes) often also enjoy considerable airplay, many rural folks patronise traditional healing centres and therefore are to a great extent disconnected from modern medical facilities.

#### **3.3.2.3 Evidence of Failure in Agricultural Policy Implementation**

The general sense among the respondents' is that the bulk of government policies while usually well framed and brilliantly formulated often do not translate into concrete projects and programmes on the ground. Some were dismissive outright of government policies as mere paper proposals that mostly do not leave the desk where they were crafted or at best kept in shelves to gather dust. This scenario according to many of the respondents is responsible in the minimum, for escalating food prices. This sentiment resonates in the various elements of agricultural policies including fertiliser procurement, mechanisation and storage of agricultural commodities, agricultural credit, etc:

#### **3.3.2.4 Fertiliser Procurement and Distribution**

Fertiliser allocation and distribution is a prominent component of agricultural policy or agricultural service delivery in Nigeria. Typically, the Federal Government and State Governments are engaged in importation and distribution of this commodity. For instance, the Federal Government makes bulk purchases of fertiliser every year which is distributed to all

states in the Federation. This allocation to states is usually further subsidised by the state authorities and further still by the local governments. Thus, the Nigerian governments devote considerable financial resources to the purchase of fertiliser destined ultimately for the farmers at least in theory. The process of distribution to farmers is however typically bumpy and rancorous as intended beneficiaries (farmers) frequently claim that the commodity do not reach them having been hijacked by politicians for their wards or cronies or ended up with middlemen who profiteer from selling the commodity at prices far exceeding the subsidized rates set by the government. Aside widespread diversion, other problems with fertiliser distribution mentioned by the respondents includes limited supply, wrong timing of delivery and astronomical pricing.

### **3.3.2.5 Agricultural Mechanization**

Agricultural mechanization is yet another agricultural policy that was subjected to close scrutiny by the respondents. Several state and local governments have a running policy of making tractors available or hiring them out at subsidized rates to enhance land tillage and land preparation for cultivation at the beginning of each farming season. The chief concern here is that governments have not been making good on its promise of delivering this service or that farmers do not have access to government tractor hiring services leading to delay in land tillage and since agriculture is a heavily time-bound activity, farmers invariably incur avoidable losses. For some other respondents, tractor hiring has become the monopoly of the rich in the society, the small farmer can hardly get them to hire when they desire. Where tractors are available, they are poorly maintained by the tractor hiring departments making them prone to frequent breakdowns and in some instances, farmers are forced to pay for their repairs causing delays in cultivation and waste to man-hours.

### **3.3.2.6 Poor Storage Systems**

Storage problems have been a perennial bane of Nigerian agriculture. This absence of storage infrastructure leads to huge annual losses to agricultural commodities especially in the case of perishable products. Policy intervention in this regard has been limited to selective provisions of Silos but storage problem remains widespread. Specifically, respondents denounce apparent inaction of the government in this area, which they contend exacerbate hunger and starvation in the land especially during off-agricultural seasons.

### **3.3.2.7 Agricultural Credit**

The credit and micro-credit delivery strategy include supporting self-help groups in their savings mobilisation and credit delivery efforts, modifying the credit delivery system to include cooperative and community-based organisations as delivery channels to reduce transaction costs and modifying terms of credit such as interest rate, eligibility criteria, legal requirement, etc., to enhance access. The respondents' views on agricultural credit schemes include outright repudiation of loan promises by the authorities, late release of credit facilities beyond the farming season and failure of government to redeem promises to purchase commodities produced from utilizing the loans forcing farmers to sell them at 'give-away' prices in order to meet repayment deadlines.

### **3.3.2.8 Dilapidated Physical Infrastructure**

Most agricultural activities take place in rural communities. Unfortunately these communities suffer acute lack of basic physical infrastructure such as roads and bridges linking them to markets in urban centres. This makes the supply of inputs and evacuation of outputs extremely difficult. Various efforts at upgrading rural infrastructure have been tied to the need to boost agricultural production. The respondents however do not consider prevailing efforts as sufficient. Indeed they decry the absence or poor state of roads linking farms to markets and the general neglect of the transportation sector.

### **3.3.2.9 Drudgery of Farm Work**

The issue here according to the respondents is the laborious nature of farming which makes it unattractive as a vocation to everyone particularly young people. This is responsible for a preponderant ageing farming population as many youths do not feel sufficiently incentivised to take up farming as occupation despite the relative paucity of paid occupations or employment opportunities in the economy.

### **3.3.2.10 Other forms of Agricultural Support**

Beyond provision of fertiliser and tractors, Nigerian governments have in the past offered agricultural support in form of providing other inputs such as herbicides, insecticides, improved seeds, extension services and veterinary drugs. According to the respondents, herbicides promised are either not accessible or when provided are ineffective for controlling weeds. Similarly, improved seeds are also either unavailable or unaffordable by the average farmer according to them. In effect, the respondents argue, there is a general problem of lax supervision across the delivery chain as well as gaping accountability lapses.

### **3.3.2.11 Evidence of Failure in Health Policy Implementation**

The predominant sentiment from respondents for the health sector as well is failure of policy implementation. This is illustrated, in their view, by mismatch between rhetoric and reality. Many of them claim to pick up information about government free health policy from the electronic media (radio and television), but that when they visit the hospitals, only free consultations is provided while prescriptions slips are issued for them to purchase the drugs from the open market. Respondents' opinion on evidence of implementation failures in the health sector is discussed under the following heads:

### **3.3.2.12 Medical Consumables (e.g. Drugs)**

There is a general concern about drug shortages in hospitals or health centres. Respondents reflections include the perpetuation of the 'out of stock' syndrome for drugs and other consumables, the diversions of drugs meant for public hospitals into private patent medicine stores and general lack of operating facilities in medical installations across the country.

### **3.3.2.13 Donor Initiatives**

To a great degree, respondents expressed positive feelings for polio immunisation campaigns. Apparently, many respondents view health policy within the lens of polio immunization - a donor driven project that often generate tremendous publicity and awareness campaigns and consequently adjudged as resoundingly successful. Other health programmes such as Guinea Worm Eradication, Malaria and HIV/AIDS which respondents consider reasonably effective are also donor-propelled and therefore strictly not Nigerian government funded initiatives. Other types of immunization programmes (e.g. against measles) which are not as manifest as polio because of lack of donor-support did not get any mention from the respondents as having positive impact on them.

### **3.3.2.14 Systemic Health Issues**

Some respondents took a comprehensive approach to assessing health sector challenges. The range of issues include the dearth of medical personnel, lack of bed space, lack of facilities for surgery, crowded medical environment, high cost of assessing medical care, incessant work stoppages by medical staff, high incidence of infant and maternal mortality due to poor services, etc. Overall, the responses seem profoundly negative or bleak.

### **3.3.2.15 Factors Responsible for Failure in Policy Implementation**

Respondents' gave a variety of reasons for why policies in agriculture and health sectors are not getting implemented. For convenience, the responses are bunched into three: governance failures, exclusion of local communities from policy implementation, and other issues:

### **3.3.2.16 Governance Challenges**

Governance is clearly a broad term and the responses reflect various dimensions of the concept. There was for instance widespread disgust expressed over official corruption especially relating to fertiliser procurement and distribution. A related concern is betrayal or insincerity of elected government officials who engage with them during electioneering campaigns only to abandon them to their fate after they get elected or simply channel whatever support is on offer to their friends, families and political acolytes. There was also some degree of blame placed on nepotism and politicisation of agricultural and health service delivery as a factor responsible for failure to implement policy. The point here is that competent hands are mostly sidelined and appointments go to relatives of government officials even when they are eminently unqualified. Moreover, they contend that political party members are favoured over the larger population in the distribution of agricultural support while the mass of farmers are neglected.

A cross section of the respondents points to specific facts relating to the budget process as contributing to policy implementation challenges. One such issue is delay in the passage of Appropriation Bill by the National Assembly. Although some improvements may have been recorded in more recent years, for several years following the onset of democratic governance in 1999, debates on the Federal budget often drags and on occasion, stalls in the National Assembly usually over disagreements with the Executive, leading to delay in its passage well

into the appropriation year. This freezes several activities planned for the year. Respondents consider this a major reason for implementation slippages.

Truncation of implementation due to frequent changes in policies, flaws in administrative procedures within the government, including excessive bureaucracy, improper coordination of implementation schedules as well as poor monitoring and evaluation infrastructure are other important facets of governance highlighted by the respondents as leading to failure in implementing agriculture and health policies.

Some respondents were critical of the policy packages themselves which they contend contribute to eventual implementation breakdown. In their views, many of the policies are merely recycled from year to year while policy inconsistency in certain cases, generally provoke abandonment of projects initiated by preceding regimes.

### **3.3.2.17 Exclusion of Grassroots People from the Implementation Process**

According to the respondents, the second major reason for collapse of policy implementation is the exclusion of grassroots communities from the implementation process. There are various dimensions to this position. The first is that the authorities in general do not consult with the people right from the time of deciding on what policies to implement which increases the probability of failure at the implementation stage. Second, elected representatives often ignore the electorate at the grassroots while resorting to unilateral decision on their behalf.

### **3.3.3 Strategies for Successful Implementation of Policies**

#### **3.3.3.1 Improve Governance**

On strategies that would promote successful implementation of policies, improvement in governance is logically the first step in the opinion of the respondents. Indeed, the governance correction flagged by them includes placing right people on the job, reorienting the values of leaders and led, placing women in positions of influence as a result of their centrality to family life and significantly motivating professionals to enhance their dedication to the job. A second strategy is to deliberately involve grassroots communities in policy implementation. From the spread of the responses here, there are various dimensions of this involvement including engaging grassroots communities in monitoring of project/programme implementation. In the view of the respondents, the sense of ownership so engendered will make them commit to seeing the projects to a fruitful end, and safeguard them from vandalism or bastardisation on completion.

Another dimension of this involvement of grassroots people is by guaranteeing direct access by communities to government officials where farmers for instance, are unimpeded from exploiting available clear channels to ventilate their complaints about flaws and inadequacies in programme or project implementations to the appropriate government quarters and periodic arranged meetings between farmers' representatives and government officials.

### **3.3.3.2 Involve Grassroots Communities**

Yet another strategy for involving grassroots communities so as to boost implementation is by entrenching governance from below, the so-called bottom up approach to development. This may include carrying our regular needs assessment to determine the community's expressed priorities, administration and supervision of government facilities by the communities and right to elect their representatives who would engage with the authorities.

### **3.3.3.3 Engagement of the Faith Based Organizations**

One other strategy prescribed by respondents was to directly engage FBOs in preference to politicians in the process to ensure sound policy implementation. This derives from their acclaimed high moral ground in the society and professed fear of God. This engagement according to the respondents will significantly reduce incidences of misappropriations and ensure that facilities and services are delivered to the right folks.

### **3.3.3.4 Roles FBOs Can Play to Improve Policy Implementation**

The faith based organizations involved in this research submit that they have had little or nothing to do with the government by way of collaborating to foster policy implementation. As a result, the group resolve to explore the prospects of working with the authorities to improve policy implementation in Nigeria. Specifically, they propose to partner with government in the following areas:

- Sensitization and awareness creation on policy implementation;
- Supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of government programmes in order to eliminate corruption;
- Feedback implementation challenges, progress and outcomes to the government;
- Setting up accountability committees at the grassroots level in order to make political office holders answerable to the people;
- Advocacies at different levels of governance;
- Acting as agents for distributing services at grass root level.

## **3.4 SUMMARY**

In Nigeria, FBOs have witnessed exponential growth in the last thirty years and for majority of them, their mantra or mission is cast round poverty reduction and allied social concerns. Over the same span of time, Nigeria has changed development policies frequently in the manner of a change of clothes, the most recent including the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and its successor National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS).

The chief rhetoric surrounding the processes leading to the formulation of NEEDS is the trumpeted active involvement and participation of all stakeholders in crystallizing the final product. This is often held as a major point of departure from historical economic policy formulation experience in Nigeria. Although Civil Society Organisations' (CSOs) visibility and activities in the area of development has increased greatly in Nigeria in the past few decades, the extent of their participation and involvement in policy development and implementation remains

largely unclear. Indeed, perception of their involvement varies from mere token gestures to outright exclusion. For instance, there is a widespread view that the so-called consultations that attended NEEDS is a façade, apparently lacking basic ingredients for effective dialogue and thoughtful exchanges, and appear designed to railroad participants to endorse or authenticate pre-determined government positions. NEEDS-2 would, with slight modifications, essentially seem to be repeating the same cycle.

Given FBOs numerical expansion and growing influence, it was considered pertinent to probe into the extent to which they may have been involved in policy formulation in Nigeria. The results of this study reveal widespread exclusion of FBOs from the policy process. More instructive was the charge from the government officials that FBOs do not show enough capacity and competence to step up to plate as far as the serious business of policy making was concerned<sup>34</sup>. At the stakeholder forum where the report of this study was presented and discussed<sup>35</sup> and which drew the participation of some of the crafters of Nigeria's NEEDS, a consensus emerged that development failures in Nigeria are due for the most part, to non-implementation of the proposals outlined in successive policy documents. The logical step in this stream of research was to contemplate and reflect on the role FBOs could play to address this concern. Following a capacity building exercise on the rudiments of qualitative research, FBOs as a group decided to prepare a competent, constructive and united written submission to government building on their grassroots contacts and local knowledge, examining why generally acceptable policies often fail to be realized and how their implementation at whatever level, from national to local, could be improved. Thus the research effectively rolled into its second phase.

To ensure the proposed submission to government gets off on sound foot, it was considered appropriate to get perspectives of FBOs, who were interviewed at the first stage of the research, on a whole range of issues including the nature of questions to take to grassroots people, FBOs research gathering experience, nature of their contact with the grassroots and their human, material and communication resource profiles. These FBOs were party to the consensus that implementation of government policy rather than policy formulation was the weak link in Nigeria's effort at achieving meaningful development. The reason for this approach is to assemble a core checklist of critical questions that should be in the data gathering instrument to take to the grassroots communities as well as assess FBOs relative strengths and weaknesses and consequently their preparedness to undertake the assignment. The interview of FBO members took place between July and August, 2007 in the three study locations of Oyo and Plateau State and the Federal Capital City of Abuja. This was the first stage of Phase II of the research.

For the second stage of Phase II, which involved collecting information from the grassroots to prepare the submission to government, a schedule of questions was agreed by FBO representatives and the interviews were conducted at the grassroots by FBO representatives in July and August, 2008 in Oyo and Plateau States and the Federal Capital Territory. The findings were written up, as a draft submission, by a select FBO management group, discussed and revised at an FBO workshop in Abuja in February, 2009.

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<sup>34</sup> See Odumosu, O, V. Adeyeye, L. Chete and S. Alonge (2007), *Faith Communities and the Development Process in Nigeria*, November.

<sup>35</sup> Workshop held at Abuja, August 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> 2007

This submission which has been forwarded to relevant government quarters examined issues such as evidence of failure of implementation in respect of agriculture and health policy initiatives, reasons for failure and strategies for ensuring successful policy implementation. Among strategies recommended by the respondents are improvements in governance. The governance correction issues indicated by them include competent hands on the job, reorienting values of leaders and led, placing women in positions of influence as a result of their centrality to family life and significantly motivating professionals to enhance their dedication to the job. A second strategy is to deliberately involve grassroots communities in policy implementation. From the spread of the responses here, there are various dimensions of this involvement including engaging grassroots communities in monitoring of project/programme implementation. In the view of the respondents, the sense of ownership so engendered will make them commit to seeing the projects to a fruitful end, and safeguarding them from vandalism or bastardisation on completion. A final strategy is to engage FBOs in implementation duties in such areas as sensitization and awareness creation on policy implementation; supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of government programmes in order to eliminate waste and corruption and feeding back implementation challenges, progress and outcomes to the government.

## **4. EVALUATION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The chapter reviews the planning and implementation of this research. The evaluation focuses on issues of concept, process and impact. Perspectives in terms of methods, outputs and possibly outcomes are highlighted to determine strengths and weaknesses of the underlying actions and decisions taken at various stages of the assignment and to ascertain if this research could have, in retrospect, been more effectively accomplished if alternative courses of action have been followed. This evaluation is carried out by the research team. The aim is to have the team stand back, carefully document and appraise the process from beginning to end, taking care to highlight positive actions and negative impulses over the course of the study. The evaluation benefited from interviews with participants at the various implementation layers of this research including FBOs as interviewers and managers of the project, Advisory Committee members and policy officials. The ensuing discourse is organised round the following set of questions:

- a) Do you think we achieved what we set out to do (and what is the evidence);
- b) Do you think we did it in the best way;
- c) Do you think we highlighted the main reasons for non-participation;
- d) Did we correctly identify the areas of incapacity;
- e) Did we select the right area for capacity building;
- f) Was the training of good quality and effective;
- g) Were skills improved and can they be maintained;
- h) Did we begin to create a repeatable, sustainable 'model' for making FBO contributions to policy work;
- i) Comment on the Submission;
- j) Did we improve the prospects for inter-faith co-operation;

## 4.2 Do you think we achieved what we set out to do (and what is the evidence)?

The study was organised into two phases. The first phase which focused on establishing the extent and level of FBO participation in policy formulation process in Nigeria using their involvement in the NEEDS (at the national level) and SEEDS (at state level) as barometer was expected to culminate in the preparation of a report addressing this issue. This report which embodies associated issues of nature of involvement of FBOs in policy formulation, reasons for non-participation or exclusion, nature of capacity requirements to facilitate future participation and level of interfaith cooperation in Nigeria, has provided evidence-based knowledge and sensitised the government group who attended the dissemination event at this stage to potential partnerships they could forge with FBOs in the area of policy work. The report of this stage of the research was submitted to the U.K. Coordinators of the *RaD* Programme and awaiting publication in the various dissemination outlets available under the Programme.

The plan for Phase II was to build the capacity of FBOs to effectively participate in policy work. This capacity training was successfully undertaken and which inspired FBOs in the group to contemplate and subsequently collaborate to prepare a Submission to the government on why generally acceptable policies fail to be implemented and how implementation could be improved across the country. The knowledge afforded by the capacity training facilitated FBOs interviews with grassroots respondents for the task of gathering, processing and analysing data and subsequently writing-up a Submission to the government on policy implementation challenges in Nigeria. As was the plan, this Submission has been forwarded to a number of relevant government functionaries and influential persons with some muscle in the policy arena in the hope that the proposals elaborated would be found useful and adopted so government policies can become more positively impactful on the people.

Here are some respondents' views regarding whether the research achieved its set objectives:

*Really the project was able to ascertain the level of FBOs participation in policy formulation, going by the information received from various organizations as to their knowledge in terms of policy formulation and implementation, as many of the organizations complaint of not being involved especially when it comes to formulation of policies that affects people by government (CHAN, Plateau State )*

*As far as policy formulation is concerned, we are yet to be fully involved at all levels. However, FBOs have been sensitised enough and the different levels of government are aware of our presence and what we have to offer to improve policy formulation. We now have evidence based documents presented to government even though it was not discussed at a round table as desired. We shall continue to advocate until we are heard (CHAN, Plateau State).*

*Yes, at least we were able to get the people talk about government's performance and failed and unfulfilled promises (JPDC, FCT).*

*Yes we did. First through the various initial workshops that brought FBOs together and follow up by NISER staff and through the practical research done with the*

*common people of Nigeria in the two states and FCT, we definitely were able to establish the extent of FBO participation in policy formulation.(CRUDAN, Plateau State)*

#### **4.3 Do you think we did it in the best way?**

Both phases of this study employed qualitative research techniques, specifically in-depth interviews. A checklist of questions was drawn up which formed the basis for interaction with the respondents. The choice of qualitative research derived for the capacity of this methodology to provide richer and more detailed information unlike quantitative research that tends to box in respondents to predetermined range of responses. Moreover, the conversation mode and free flow of ideas and information attendant to in-depth interviews allow insights into attitudes and behaviours.

For a country as mammoth and as culturally, religiously and ethnically heterogeneous as Nigeria, a case could legitimately be made for spreading the research sites for this study beyond the Federal Capital City (FCT), Plateau and Oyo State.<sup>36</sup> At face value, wider spread apart from highlighting regional or ethnic diversity, could also throw light into the extent to which the research questions are generalized or localised. However, the special nature of the chief concerns of the study may provide a plausible defence for limiting the study locations to a few spots. It should be reasonable to glean decent universal perspectives on the extent and level of FBOs participation in policy formulation – the aim of the first phase of this research – from interviews with FBOs in the FCT which is the seat of national government supplemented with insights from Plateau State (which has the heaviest concentration of FBOs in Nigeria) and Oyo State (which is the domiciliary base of the study team). The non-extension of the study to other parts of the country is defensible because it does not in any way diminish the evidence from the few locations on why FBOs are shut out of the policy formulation process (the subject of Phase I) nor does it negate the conclusions on reasons why policy implementation failures are rampant (a preoccupation in Phase II)<sup>37</sup>.

The process of arriving at policy implementation as the subject of the policy Submission to government was reasonably robust. It transpired that representatives of the FBOs and those of the government were sharply divided at a forum where the report of Phase I was presented. While the FBO group held that the government have not been keen to engage FBOs in the process of policy implementation often taking a “know it all” or “go it alone” approach, the government side argued that FBOs, as currently set up, lack the capacity to take on the arduous and intellectually rigorous task of crafting development policy. Naturally the house drifted to resolving the deadlock. The forum agreed that FBOs should proceed to prepare a competent, constructive and united submission to the government. This submission was to consider why implementation of policies was failing and how implementation from local to national levels

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<sup>36</sup> It is becoming somewhat of a convention in Nigeria to ensure representation of each of Nigeria’s 6 geographical zones in studies of a national type.

<sup>37</sup> However, from an analytical standpoint, it is safer to incorporate a rider that the conclusions and prescriptions drawn from both phases of this study may be considered firm in the case of the actual research sites but provisional for locations outside the scope of the study.

could be improved. This choice was informed by the reasoning that despite weaknesses or non-inclusiveness of the existing machinery for formulating policy in Nigeria, the policies emerging there from are not necessarily flawed or deficient. Where the real challenge lies is transforming the elegant policies into concrete ground projects and programmes. The FBOs' Management Group later resolved to zero in on government policies in two sectors: agriculture and health, as both are central to sorting out the poverty problem which is at the core of Nigeria's development challenges.

The respondents' perspective on whether the study was accomplished in the best way is enumerated below:

*NISER have been very helpful as it put the entire process in the best form and with all professionalism (especially regarding facilitating the preparation of the Submission to government). The team from NISER was made up of real professionals and the process was really handled in the best way possible and participant were introduced to what we can describe as the right way, as all the process was taken one after the other and in sequential (transition) therefore putting things at the right place (JNI, Plateau State,)*

*Sure we did. Nobody will doubt the quality of the research, giving the evidence produced and the calibre of the institutions working with the FBOs – NISER and University of Birmingham, UK.*

*I am not a research person, but I wonder how else we would have done the work. I wonder if there is any other method we could have used. What I mean by we did achieve is that the method you (NISER) came up with really brought out what you were out to study and that it was what you found from that study that was used in the subsequent efforts to get at the root of the problem [FOMWAN, Oyo State]*

*We didn't select location without good reasons. The places we selected were the cosmopolitan areas that are truly representative of the influx of people from all sectors of the country. So to that extent the locations were good. It was sure to give good samples of people from all sectors of the country would say [FOMWAN, Oyo State].*

*Health and agriculture are too important things that affect everybody in society – young, old, lame, rich and poor. So I think, these two items are truly representative of policy as it affects the people [FOMWAN, Oyo State]*

*Nigeria is divided into 6 geographical zones. FCT and Plateau, I think they are called North-Central now. Oyo is South West. We don't have South-South, we don't have North East...It is not properly distributed to me because all these people face the same problems as people in the areas we covered.. One state from each geopolitical zone could have given us more spread and we tend to know if the problems are general and that they are things in all these areas, Nigerian's face [JDPC, Oyo State]*

*The qualitative research and in-depth interview was done well as we were able to get materials from which a document was produced. Many of us testified that this approach to social research was new to us and we were glad to be part of it and now use the knowledge gained for other forms of social research with minimal guidance (CHAN, Plateau State).*

*The limitations that resulted into the selection of 3 locations only, two of which are within the same geo-political zone is not the best because we cannot say this is a true representation of the country. We should take at least 6 locations, one from each geo political zone before we can generalise our findings (CHAN, Plateau State).*

#### **4.4 Do you think we highlighted the main reasons for non-participation?**

The taxonomy of the reasons for non-participation by FBOs in the formulation of NEEDS and SEEDS was quite comprehensive, straddling issues such as non-invitation or outright shutout, late invitations, lack of capacity to engage, lack of funds to undertake expenses associated with participation. The respondents concur with this list as an exhaustive representation of factors inhibiting participation.

To the above question, here are a few of the responses:

*From the interviews conducted it became clear from the FBO submissions that there was clear non involvement, as evidenced by the fact that even though there are things we are capable of doing, we are not factored into any policy issue by the government. The questionnaires designed for the interviews and workshops held clearly brought these out. In addition the final document produced brought these out in clear terms (CHAN, Plateau State).*

*Yes we did. These reasons go a long way to explain why FBOs do not participate and if Government is wise, they will see their major weakness in this – the lack of deliberate involvement of FBOs which is a part of their responsibility to the community (CRUDAN, Plateau State).*

#### **4.5 Did we correctly identify the areas of incapacity?**

The areas of incapacitation highlighted by the FBOs and documented by the Research Team at the beginning of Phase II of the study covered human and material resource capacity needs; specifically, shortages in terms of computer hardware and softwares, vehicles, communication facilities, funding, staffing and skills. There were also indicated chronic weaknesses in data gathering and data analysis. Dearth of knowledge of qualitative research methodology resonated in FBO responses on preferred area for skill strengthening.

The respondents' opinions on whether the research identified correctly the areas of incapacity are presented below:

*Capacity gaps were identified during the workshops. Some of the areas that could be addressed within the limitations of the project like skills were identified and addressed, while those we can do in partnership with government are spelt out in the final document (CHAN, Plateau State).*

*Yes the project (facilitators) really explained to participants as to the main reasons, why most FBOs cannot perform professionally in terms of competing in the field of development work and other related fields due to lack of basic office equipments and things like the vehicles, computer, funding, skills and things like that (JNI, Plateau State).*

*Yes giving the fact that capacity is a broad term – I think we did. But of course this varied from organization to organization (CRUDAN, Plateau State).*

#### **4.6 Did we select the right area for capacity building?**

The commencement of field work for the purpose of gathering data to prepare the written Submission was preceded by training on the rudiments of qualitative data which was facilitated by the research team. The purpose was to get the FBOs to some minimum knowledge level of this tool which they were expected to bring to bear on their work in the field to the end of producing a respectable and analytically robust Submission. After training on the technique of qualitative research including in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, FBOs proceeded to grassroots communities for the field work. The deliverables they were required to submit to the research team from this exercise included transcripts of the interviews and summaries of these transcripts. Following from indicated areas of incapacity by the FBOs and to prosecute the planned assignment at the time (preparing a written Submission), knowledge of qualitative technique or skill appreciation on this tool was agreed critical if they were to systematically gather data from grassroots people on the extent and status of implementation performance (or lack thereof). The choice of qualitative methods is brilliant because this tool particularly, in-depth interviews, carry certain advantages over its quantitative counterpart by providing a template for extracting richer and deeper insights on the issues in question and offering perspectives into attitudes and behaviours. From the evaluation reports completed at the end of the training sessions, many of the participants' knowledge of qualitative techniques prior to the training was below scratch or at best, confined to participants and non-participants observation and to a limited degree, FGDs.

On whether the study selected the right areas for capacity building, the respondents reacted this way:

*I think did. Skill is everything. If you give a man knowledge, you give him all he needs. All other things can be manipulated but skill cannot. To that extent being given skill, is good enough (FOMWAN, Oyo State).*

*Definitely. I feel this was the first and major area that FBOs needed immediate help and it was given. Indeed participating in the entire process was a new school to many (CRUDAN, Plateau State).*

*Qualitative research method, interviewing, data collection, transcribing, collating, analysing. Yes the areas selected by the project, was another way of enriching and capacitating the FBOs in many areas where they are incapacitated, and facilitators really professionally did all they could to bridged that gap by the way they handled all these aspect to train the FBOs in these areas (JNI, Plateau State).*

*Yes the training preceding field work was one idea that was highly welcomed by almost all the participating FBOs in the project, as the technical knowhow was taught and then process was also taught to the participating FBOs by the team of the NISER facilitators (JNI, Plateau State).*

#### **4.7 Was the training of good quality and effective?**

Perspectives on quality of training and its effectiveness could be gleaned from evaluation reports filled in by two categories of FBO personnel: the researchers and their managers. While the interviewers who conducted the field assignment were expected to offer their thoughts on the extent to which the training proved useful on the field, the managers were to assess the impact the training is having on the execution of the organisation's regular line of work. Overall, FBOs that served as researchers expressed glowing sentiment on the usefulness of the following in the prosecution of the fieldwork: role play and practice session, importance of listening more, observing facial expressions, changes in tone and body language, breaking the ice, transcribing and summarisations and navigating through focus group discussions (FGD) to avoid domination by an individual or group.

Here are the views of some respondents on the quality and impact of the training:

*The training workshop was a real eye opener, I gained more insight into the actual process. The notion of removing influence of biases, prejudices and judgemental approach was very enlightening. I also learnt the best way of handling an individual that wants to hijack the discussion” (NSCIA, Abuja)*

*The impact was astronomical. I gathered ideas on how best to conduct one- on- one interviews and FGDs. Also improvement on transcriptions was on the ascendancy. Interview transcriptions has its trappings – emphasis, quality assurance and the like. The training workshop strengthened my understanding of the entire process” (NSCIA, Abuja)*

*It has made me know the types of questions to ask and not to ask, how a question can be phrased and the manners to use when approaching respondents (JDPC, Oyo State)*

*I think qualitative research methods as taught was good, it was adequate, it was well handled and I personally got the crux of what was involved. I don't think I would have preferred anything other than qualitative research method. We didn't just have instructions, we had role plays, we ourselves sitting could see where others made*

*mistakes and I made up my mind not to make mistakes and the ones I did not see, you pointed them out (FOMWAN, Oyo State).*

They however suggested a longer training period and use of tape and video recording in subsequent trainings which could form reference material for them to fall back on in the future as well as more practical group exercises and case studies.

*In future workshops dealing on the above topic, more time should be allocated say 5 days for thorough digestions of the intricacies and nitty-gritty of conducting interactive interviews. (NSCIA, Abuja).*

On the part of the managers, they claim to observe helpful impact of the training on the organisation's work:

*The officer has gained more knowledge in qualitative research training as a result of the workshop attended. Such an opportunity was very timely considering the type and nature of the officer's responsibility in working with grassroots people (CHAN, Plateau State)*

*The organisation has learnt a lot of lessons and would like to use similar methods for assessing its community needs (CHAN, Plateau State).*

*Yes the RaD Programme greatly improved the qualitative research knowledge of the officers. They have already started adopting the knowledge in our Needs Assessment and Situation Analysis to obtain baseline studies in our programmes. (NSCIA, Abuja).*

*Definitely it did. Most of the officers personally told me that their skills were sharpened. Particular mention must be made of the use of tape recorders which hitherto were not used but now this training has helped them to begin to do same in the organisation (CRUDAN, Plateau State).*

*Yes. It helped participants in formulating interview questions, preparing guides, selecting of informants, conducting and analysing interviews, checking for reliability thereby building the capacity of the officers to engage government from time to time on various developmental issues (POD-ECWA, Plateau State).*

#### **4.8 Were skills improved and can they be maintained?**

As would be expected, the materials that the FBOs delivered after the field work (i.e., transcripts and their summaries) were not universally good or useful for the purposes of the planned submission. Clearly, some FBOs were yet to fully assimilate or internalise the new skills. The most common deficiency was the treatment of every question as distinct, separate and unconnected to other questions in the interview guide. What was lacking was the power to probe or hot-pursue relevant responses or loop a question to earlier ones to check for consistency or contradictions. Thus questions of the 'why', 'when' and 'how' varieties were generally scarce

which restricted the extraction of richer, deeper insights as to the underlying factors explaining the issues or phenomena under investigation.

Thus it emerged that the quality of some of the field returns was generally below par by the rigorous requirements of robust qualitative research. In the substandard category are some returns with such gaping weaknesses and defects suggestive of a rushed or hurried job. Whatever shortcomings these presented was however offset by a number of excellent returns that covered the issues expertly. In the latter set are FBO categories that have some background or on-the-job knowledge of qualitative analytical techniques which was augmented by the formal training provided in the course of this research and which they applied to good effect. Overall, the transcripts were not short on substantive materials for packaging the Submission to government in the sense they covered the broad sweep of issues germane to the policy implementation challenge in Nigeria. When the messages are not conveyed by the FBO group in an articulate or clear-cut way, it fell on the Implementation Team to arrange those thoughts in a coherent and systematic fashion. This was done in a manner that did not dilute, unduly embellish, spin or distort the original ideas.

The quotes below highlight respondents' assessment of the training:

*I happen to have read sociology and I was tripped and I learnt a lot by that method of social research. Going to people to ask them direct questions .....You will remember that we had role play during which we were corrected. The mistakes that would have been made in the field were put right. So I think it was okay (FOMWAN, Oyo State).*

*Yes skills were improved. They will be maintained because FBOs are stepping down the skills to other people within the FBO community. In my organisations, we have been using it to modify some of our methods like we have now interviewed zonal leaders to discover areas of difficulty, why we are not reaching out to the grassroots and we are making improvements (FOMWAN, Oyo State).*

*Yes. My own skill in the area of information gathering. I don't work with people in the grassroots in my job. When this challenge came up, I was able to apply all that I have learnt. It improved my ability to do in-depth interviews, it improved my analytical mind. It improved my transcribing skills (JDPC, Oyo State).*

*Skills were improved as some of us are planning to replicate same in our communities to identify issues that can be articulated for presentation to our elected officers and at the LGA level (CHAN, Plateau State).*

*Yes skills were improved in terms of interviewing, data collection, transcribing, collating as well analysing. This can be seen through the performance of most of the participants during the assignment on field work for the in-depth interview most especially in the area of recording and transcribing interview. And really these skills of interviewing, data collection, transcribing, collating and analysing will surely be maintained by these FBOs, efforts towards that has since been discussed by most of*

*these organizations during brief meetings held during and even after the project as it will be of immense importance to maintain and continue with these skills acquired during the training (JNI, Plateau State).*

*Definitely, I have no doubt about that. Anybody who was involved in the process and who did it well had their skills improved and no one could take that away from them. For my organization, these are the skills used almost always. What I have used most which I was not using before is the use of Cassette recorder and transcribing and even analysis (CRUDAN, Plateau State).*

#### **4.9 Did we begin to create a repeatable, sustainable 'model' for making FBO contributions to policy work?**

The FBO network that has developed in the course of this assignment has embraced both Christian and Islamic faiths. In the early stages, Church or Muslim communities, i.e. congregations were originally in the party and were actually interviewed but their inability to flow with the orientation of the assignment led naturally to their fizzling out down the road. The inner core of FBOs<sup>38</sup> that began this assignment remained intact, although there were a few shuffle of personnel within the organisational set up of the FBOs, as for instance when a new *Almiral* replaced the incumbent at FOMWAN, Ibadan or in case of the NASFAT official at Abuja who moved on to another job. This fostered some level of bonding among the participating FBOs and the camaraderie and conviviality attendant to this was useful in seeing the assignment to the end. The enthusiasm, commitment and devotion to this task by the FBOs despite the challenges of combining it with their usual line of work or routine duties was extraordinary which greatly eased the burden of the implementation team.

Coordinating the assignment however presents certain challenges largely blameable on the poor state of information and communication infrastructure in the country. Since many of the FBOs are spatially or geographically apart, invitations to meetings or workshops have to be communicated through emails, surface mails or telephone. These invitations occasionally do not reach the targeted officers or get 'lost in transit' because of notorious weaknesses in Nigeria's communication infrastructure. But these are largely isolated incidences as the study team employed panoply of channels to ensure that contacts are ultimately established.

Since the prosecution of this assignment was heavily dependent on financial support from the government of the United Kingdom and facilitated by the coordinating roles of the University of Birmingham in partnership with the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER), one is left to wonder what happens when the financial and logistic support from these sources cease. There was broad consensus among the respondents that a model of this kind where FBOs could make contributions to policy work should not be a one-off, but should rather be perpetuated. Already there are preliminary discussions among network members about procedures for keeping the model in place. This includes having an FBO take on coordinating duties by, in the first instance, preparing and forwarding a list of members to everyone in the

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<sup>38</sup> This revisits the distinction between Faith Communities (essentially congregations) and Faith Based organisations which are NGO type organisations engaged typically in poverty reduction and allied concerns. By their task orientation, FBOs were better placed to catch the drift of this assignment.

network. Moreover, some of the FBOs now keep touch on their activities and increasingly share knowledge and intellectual resources. The question of how the mountainous challenge of raising the financial wherewithal for future activities would be addressed is unclear for now.

Here are thoughts from respondents on whether the study has begun to create a replicable model for making FBO contribution to policy work:

*We are already repeating what we got from you on policy formulation to improve our organisation and so I think it is repeating. We got that model from you and we will forever be grateful for that (FOMWAN, Oyo State).*

*At Plateau State level, we have resolved to form a coalition of FBOs to continue the good work that has been started (CHAN, Plateau State).*

*Yes, actually a repeatable and sustainable model for making FBOs contributions to policy work has been created. As most FBOs now seem to have realized the important role they can play in contribution to policy work been major stake holders in the area policy formulations and implementation. These the FBOs were made to understand during the training (JNI, Plateau State).*

*Yes we did. Consciously or unconsciously, FBOs will find themselves making contributions to policy work. It is like people who had been groping in the dark and now they have been shown the path to take. Every reasonable FBO will use this experience and so sustain the model. Even the use of Advisory Committee was very helpful for sustainability (CRUDAN, Plateau State).*

#### **4.10 Comments on the Submission**

In the end, the Submission was of respectable quality. From its layout - knowledge of existing policies in the domains of agriculture and health, assessment of status of implementation (failing or succeeding), evidence to support that assessment, what could be done to improve implementation – the Submission reveal a methodological and systematic way of approaching the subject which will likely engage the reader to the end. Thus the Submission reflects logical flow from the identification of the problem to proffering of recommendations. The Submission also shows a mix of anecdotal evidence and profuse quotes from the respondents. The introduction to every section was kept terse to allow greater space for quotations relevant to the issue at hand as a way of amplifying the voice of grassroots respondents. The narrative is not exactly ivory tower but presented in simple easy-to-read prose devoid of undue verbosity and complicated academic expressions. The credibility of this Submission partly stems from the fact that the FBOs did not project their own opinions and convictions, but rather presented the views of grassroots communities who are often the targets of government policies particularly in the areas of education and health, but who usually lack the voice or conduit to feedback to the authorities actual state of implementation of these policies, projects and programmes.

The jury is out on whether the Submission will make any impact in the policy arena. What is clear is that FBOs and the research team are using several instrumentalities and approaches to

disseminate the Submission to relevant policy quarters and influential religious leaders with some leverage in government. At the last check, the document has been delivered to an impressive array of people and offices including Head of the Muslim Community in Nigeria and Sultan of Sokoto, President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Governors of Oyo, Lagos, Ogun, Delta and Rivers States, Houses of Assembly of Oyo and Plateau States, Ministers of National Planning, Agriculture and Water Resources and Health. Chairmen of Senate Committees on Health, Agriculture and National Planning; and Chairmen of the House of Representatives Committees on Health, Agriculture and National Planning.

As part of efforts to disseminate the Submission, a forum scheduled for December 1, 2009 intended for FBOs to formally present the document to representatives of the government and hopefully extract some form of commitment from them regarding the implementation of the proposals contained therein, turned out a huge disappointment. As it panned out, no government official showed up for this meeting and no apology was sent. The perplexed gathering was left to speculate on why things turned out the way they did: first, the President of the country was ill and on admission in a Saudi Arabian hospital and the machinery of government was clearly suffering prompting frenetic meetings at the level of the Executive and second, the country was witnessing a debilitating fuel shortage with attendant socio-economic disruptions. Whatever might be the reasons for the absence of government officials, the FBOs were not fazed or downhearted as they rallied to map new channels for getting the Submission across to more people in the policy circles.

While the preparation of this Submission may remove concerns about FBOs competence to participate in policy work, it is unlikely to clarify whether submissions of this type would have effect in swaying policy contents and implementation modalities to make them more impactful on grassroots communities because there are often several unknowns and imponderables that determine the final texture or complexion of policy. Meanwhile the reception of the document has been inspiring with all recipients expressing pleasure at the thoughtfulness of the FBOs and promising to study the contents carefully. There is nothing to suggest that these reactions are merely the usual niceness or outpouring of positive emotions or courtesy such presentations would normally invite.

Some comments by respondents on the submission and its reception are presented below:

*I think it was a good submission because we didn't just generalise. We gave specific things that were said by the people, how it was said, how it cut across locations and to that extent we didn't just pick things that were non-representative of the opinion of the people. So I think the quality of that document was good (FOMWAN, Oyo State).*

*I think the reception was a disappointment. Given all the efforts that went into it, they (government officials) treated it so shabbily, nobody even showing up, it was bad enough and I only hope that when it reaches those it has been sent to, they will have a rethink (FOMWAN, Oyo State).*

*The document submitted to government is of good quality. The advance copy submitted to them has already jolted them out of their seats! The facts carefully*

*documented on key areas that affect the common man was a good choice as people spoke freely about them. However, our advocacy was weak which resulted in the government people avoiding a discussion that would have added value to their work for the benefit of poor people (CHAN, Plateau State).*

*The quality of work done in respect of the document is rather very interesting and of good quality. The submission process also was a good move towards bringing the attention of government as to the importance of bringing the people especially the organized communities (NGOs, CSOs, CBOs as well FBOs) in terms of decision making, policy formulation and implementation (JNI, Plateau State).*

*Although I was not physically there (at the workshop to present to government officials), I believe the quality of document was okay – of International Standard it can be accepted anywhere in the world. The choice of subject for research was also okay. These are the areas that common people easily identify with. Food and health are basic in life. Perhaps more advocacy skills were required by the FBOs to further strengthen their capacity (CRUDAN, Plateau State).*

A major contribution to the evaluation of the Submission to government is from an official of the National Planning Commission who was the desk officer for the NEEDS and who was at the workshop held on August 2007 where the report on level of participation of FBOs in the policy process was presented and discussed. She had these to say on the Submission and the exercise in general:

*I observed that the report did not highlight any opening/possibility on the Government side to be able to effectively engage with the FBOs. I believe that one thing is to identify what the FBOs/Community could possibly do with the Government to enhance policy implementation, but I also think it will be good to also highlight if there is any possibility or window of opportunity for Government to do so even with all these expressed desire by the FBOs/Community. One of such I remember I mentioned to your team was the need for the FBOs/Communities to organise themselves in an accountable way; they also need to build their skills in those areas they have expressed desire to participate at no cost to the Government. Definitely government will see them as volunteers which they are supposed to be.*

*Another area will be for them to perceive themselves as partners and not staff or consultants to Government which Government will have financial responsibility to pay professional fees. Recall that most consultants used by government belong to one faith group or another, so for government to engage with the FBOs through their structure, they need to see themselves as partners in development. This is where development partners could help because we all know that at the end of the day, it will be one of the most effective ways.*

*I have also highlighted that the FBOs/Communities can also play a good role in project/programme identification and not just implementation. The Community priority needs to start with identification.*

#### 4.11 Did we improve the prospects for inter-faith co-operation?

The excellent collaboration between FBOs who are practitioners of both Christian and Muslims religions that took place in the course of this research could become a platform for interfaith cooperation in Nigeria. It is instructive to note that debates and interactions at various levels and stages of this study were conducted in a climate of cordiality and absolute sensitivity to each other's religious beliefs and observance.

Here are some views from the respondents on the impact of this research on inter-faith co-operation:

*Those of us that participated know our phone numbers, we know ourselves. I and Mrs Oyero (the FOMWAN person) have decided that it will be nice if the FBO in the group will be meeting every three months to discuss the issues that concerns Christians and Muslims. So it has increased interactions between both faiths in the State (NASFAT, Oyo State)*

*I never knew that such opportunity will arise when Muslims and Christians would come together and agree on a common goal and accept their differences, eat together and interact with each other. In fact, it is a wonderful thing to me'. (JNI, Plateau State).*

*Since the study started, JDPC and FOMWAN had formed a good working relationship and FOMWAN at the national level had started to work with CHAN and it was through this study that all these came into being (FOMWAN, Oyo State).*

*Yes. We were together throughout the process and the coalition we are proposing is for both faiths. We spoke with one voice for the voiceless irrespective of faith (CHAN, Plateau State).*

*Yes the prospects of inter-faith co-operation have been improved. Right from the beginning of the project, it became an opportunity for the FBOs to now come together. A network has been formed. As a result of this project we now have in place a faith-based coalition (inter faith network). Meetings have so far been started in different states like plateau, and very soon we will be meeting across states (JNI, Plateau State).*

*Not deeply, but on the surface, yes. There was no forum for us to jointly do things together outside the workshop setting. If for instance we were paired together to conduct interviews with the communities, it possibly would have given room for more interaction in a different environment. This perhaps could have given opportunity to people to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the different groups and enable people to begin to appreciate the other more, perhaps? I still think though that it opened our eyes to what the different religious groups are doing and made us to*

*appreciate the groups more. Of course it has opened the door for inter-faith cooperation- the ball was set rolling (CRUDAN, Plateau State).*

## **5. CONCLUSION/ PROSPECTIVE EXTENSION SPACE**

There are still unresolved issues surrounding the most effective entry points for FBOs to make inputs or penetrate the policy arena. Long range visions like Nigeria Vision 20:2020 and medium term plans like the NEEDS were considered during this study but failed to materialise due to frequent changes in government plans. Annual budgets provide alternative channel because they tend to occur more frequently and therefore could address issues of greater currency. This approach was eventually settled for in this research but there is no indication that this method will prove any more effective in terms of the prospects for adoption by government of the proposals contained in the Submission as part of final policy. This highlights the imperative of developing advocacy and lobbying skills among FBOs to increase the chances of breaking into the policy space in an effective and productive way. This issue potentially presents fruitful area for further research.

There is little assurance that the network model that has worked so well in the course of this collaboration would be sustained or perpetuated. The formidable obstacle on the way is the source of funds to run the set of activities a subsisting model would require. Two ways round this problem need strategizing: one is to make proposals for ensuring that the financial commitments associated with operating the network is kept as minimal as possible so it could survive on meagre resources. The other (and not necessarily mutually exclusive) is to explore possible sources or approaches to funding the network's more elaborate set of activities. Some deeper analysis is indicated here.

The states (Plateau and Oyo) that were covered for the purpose of this research are both *middle-of-the road* states in the sense that both have roughly equal Christian and Muslim populations. This attribute may have contributed to facilitating the interfaith cooperation achieved in this study and cooled extreme tendencies that would probably have occurred if we had focussed on Kano (predominantly Muslim) and Anambra (predominantly Christian). It would perhaps be more enriching or enlightening to ascertain the extent of cooperation that would obtain if this research is extended to states heavily populated by adherents of a particular religion.

This study has focussed on federal and state governments policies in Nigeria. Meanwhile, 70 per cent of Nigeria's population live in rural areas or grassroots communities which are under direct supervision of local governments. It does therefore seem useful for the future to gain some insights into local government poverty reduction activities including their partnership with FBOs at this level. This is a prospective extension space for this research.

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