



Non-Governmental Organizations in the Eyes of Newspapers in Nigeria: 2013 – 2016 in Focus

Oscar Odiboh, PhD, Oladokun Omojola, PhD,
Thelma Ekanem & Toluwalope Oresanya

Mass Communication Department,
Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria
oscarodiboh@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

Abstract: This study examines the activities of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Nigeria that attracted newspaper coverage. Nine NGO themes in 488 stories of four leading titles – *Daily Trust*, *The Guardian*, *The Punch* and *ThisDay* – published between 2013 and 2016, were studied. Findings show that 82 reports appeared, representing 17%. NGOs reports occupied the least prominent, inner pages of the newspapers. Whilst *Daily Trust* appeared as the best NGO-friendly newspaper, 95% of the overall reportage was found positive. Infant and maternal health attracted 28% attention ahead of eight other themes. Also discovered were 12 dailies of “zero report” of NGO activities by all the newspapers. Overall results confirm the assertions that NGOs are poorly reported in Nigeria. The study recommends the creation of newspaper columns for NGO stories and a forum that connects both journalists and NGO operators.

Keywords: Activities, coverage, non-governmental organizations, newspapers, advocacy.

Introduction

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) contrast in their pursuits, direction, location and aspiration but communication is their common

denominator. Individual experiences are known to have birthed socially-concerned agenda. Also, fractured governance combines with failed elected leadership to rewire

expectant but disappointed followers into seeking benevolent alternatives to underperforming administrations. In Nigeria, as confirmed by Farinde and Adisa (2005), NGOs play complementary, advisory and advocacy roles in several sectors of interests ranging from human rights advocacy, girl-child empowerment, small-scale industrialization, health, agriculture, ICT, sports, community development activities and women elevation, especially in the area of political participation (Aririguzoh, 2014, p.32; 2015). Global Forum on Agricultural Research–GFAR (2003) for instance, affirms that NGOs are gradually building networks around thematic or geographic interests to help increase their impact through the exchange of ideas and information as well as in mobilizing support from both government and the masses in the country. Whether motivated by a singular experiential action or multiple mass convictions, the existence of NGOs needs communication as an elixir of life. Communication analysts agree that NGOs are inadequately reported by newspapers.

In spite of the argument that NGOs rise and fall, there is no doubt, as admitted by Bibu, Lisetchia, and Brancua (2013, p.481) that they remain relevant in today's world because of the umbrella of assurance which they provide to the

mass of the people through subsidized or gratis services. Non-governmental organizations understand that achieving self-defined key performance indicators (KPI) boosts their existential objectives and donor-attraction. In contradistinction, a deficit of action is their death knell. Once an NGO is perceived, acknowledged and acclaimed to have substantially impacted the targeted receivers of its advocacy, it is considered to have contributed to the collective asset of the body of NGOs. Curiously, the perception, acknowledgment and acclaim in reference are not the preserve of those touched by a particular NGO but a shared value judgment of the general public. Thus, while it is expedient to touch the lives of a carefully defined set of people because human beings feel safe in a group with collective interests (Bromideh, 2011), it is imperative for NGOs to inform and educate the larger society on their achievements and challenges. Once again, they cannot but communicate in order to rise and not fall.

Lacuna as something in nothing clearly indicates that in all things, there is always gap; and it must be filled at one time or another. It may be contended that socio-economic and political gaps which are yawning for the government to fill are circumstances in which NGOs are born; however, governments are not necessarily the creators of all

vacuums. NGOs as explained by Cubukcu (2010, p.2481) are organizations with private origination and not solely dependent on any state organ. They are recognized by scholars around the world as major third sector players that fill gaps of development, human rights; humanitarian, environmental, and many other areas of public life (Lewis, 2009, p. 2). For instance, Ebola outbreak as a healthcare lacuna was not essentially the creation of governments but a broad-based healthcare gap for both existing governments and non-governmental organizations, new or renewed, to perform their roles in ending the dreaded disease. Ebola's occurrence in Nigeria confirmed, particularly by media reportage, that gaps are not necessarily generated by governments and that the two bodies are not conjoint but mutually-supportive entities in dealing with such a lacuna. But how would NGOs fill a gap if they are not aware of its existence?

Types and structures of NGOs vary. Lewis and Kanji (2009, p.1) state that NGOs could be large or small, formal or informal, bureaucratic with strong central authority or flexible with a loose structure. Many of them are externally-funded through grants, sponsorships and donations while others depend on locally-mobilized resources and membership subscriptions (Besler &

Sezerel, 2011, p. 1258). Though, there are many NGOs which receive funding from the United Nations for instance, there are others which choose to work outside the world of aid as far as possible. However, there are also numerous bogus NGOs, such as those established as fronts by government officials (government-arranged NGOs) or as Lewis (2007) calls them, "briefcase NGOs." These are usually set up by greedy government officials purely for personal gains. In spite of this, some NGOs are well-resourced and affluent, whilst others lead a fragile "hand to mouth" animation of existence, gasping for survival. There are NGOs with highly professionalized uniform staff and fleets of vehicles for easy crusade, whilst others lean heavily on volunteers' shoulders. No matter their circumstances, they all need to communicate, even though their structure could determine the reach, depth and spread of their messages.

From Morris-Suzuki's (2000, p. 68) perspective, NGOs could be secular or "faith-based", informal or incorporated, charitable, radical or empowerment-based. Their focus may be on change, but they can equally work to conserve existing social and political systems in a country. Then again, their involvement in politics, if any, should never be pronounced as this could compromise the initial intention of their establishment.

Bibu et al (2013, p. 482) pointed out that NGOs are known for two basic types of activities which are often interrelated: the delivery of basic services to people in need, and organizing policy advocacy and public campaigns for change. At the same time, NGOs play a variety of specialized roles such as emergency response, democracy building, conflict resolution, issue marketing, human rights work, cultural preservation, environmental activism, youth mobilization, policy analysis, research and information provision (Biswas,

2007). Nonetheless, some NGOs aim to meet only immediate needs, while others have a big picture to develop alternative ideas and approaches to problems. A single NGO might combine several of these different functions at any time and operate successfully. In all these, public awareness of their posturing through the news media is critical (Coalition for the International Criminal Court, 2003).

Bad news as good news is time-tested and accepted in journalism. Both serve as locomotive for each other. Bad news challenge NGOs to hatch good news. It is arguable that the location of bad news is the potential birthplace of an NGO (Cohn & White, 2007). For instance, the bad news of insecurity in the North East Nigeria sprang up many security-focused NGOs; and the aftermath of terrorist

displacements in that part of the country influenced the sprouting of NGOs aiming at providing means of livelihood for internally evacuated and socially dislocated persons in solitary camps. The overall objective of NGOs in these two connected instances would definitely be the replacement of bad news with good news, a thing that the media, especially in Nigeria, often relish. But how do the media, especially the newspapers do it? How do they report NGOs good news whilst searching occupationally for bad news?

These questions are answered in this study by treating the distinctive offerings of NGOs as well as the relevant news clusters of leading national dailies. To exhaustively cover this topic, the paper carved out a statement of problem, clear objectives, research questions and thereafter, explored the evolution of NGOs. In this work, NGOs are classified as engines of social progress, concerted development and adhesive cohesion. The media bridge between the people and NGOs are examined with specific focus on thematic brackets of news tabloids. This study is anchored on the agenda-setting theory, and content-analyzed the inclusive reportage of NGOs by top four national newspapers over a period of four years to show in quantum expressions, the expediency or otherwise of the medium to the

delivery of NGOs messages in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Non-government organizations are analytically difficult to pin down (Lewis, 2009, p. 2) due to the specificity in their diversity. For instance, despite the fact that NGOs are neither fully run by a government, nor driven by the profit motive, some of them subliminally receive pocket-puffing government funding; whilst some others with unclear sources of burgeoning affluence are suspicious pipes for money laundering.

Integrity, openness, visible followership, social relevance and consistent volunteer support are hallmarks of responsible and respectable NGOs, especially from the perspectives of structural, formal and operational appurtenances (Salamon, 1992). Bibu et al (2013) and Willets (2002) are of a similar opinion that non-governmental organizations must stand on strong, enduring organizational and self-governing structures, be formed by institutionalized private promoters, pursue social needs rancor-free, independent of government control, not distributing largesse, not interested in political power and non-criminal. The problem is that all NGOs cannot boast of all these virtues if put to a deep-stick clinical test.

Consequently, the activities of NGOs in the world today drive them under the spotlight, earning them both an eloquence of applause and echoing alarms. None of this would have been heard or known without the mass media which are inherent circulators of information. For instance, without the media, only few people would have known that NGOs such as MTN Foundation, Dangote Foundation, All Youth against Cancer (AYAC), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, etc. have enjoyed tremendous commendations compared to others such as the Albino Foundation which have writhed in discrimination and stigmatization. Yet, an army of NGOs are either unknown or in lassitude, thereby requiring complimentary media voice for service delivery awareness and operational revitalization.

In summary, there is a general observation that NGOs are poorly reported by newspapers in Nigeria, in spite of their acclaimed importance in driving socioeconomic development in the country. Current gaps in reporting NGO activities, if not filled, would discourage the operators and further slowdown the country's development and benevolent activities. The country generally and the people specifically need greater awareness to be able to tap into the deliverables of NGOs' activities nationwide. How newspapers

currently face the responsibility of reporting these activities and fill the current gap is the major focus of this study.

Objectives of the study and Research Questions

This study examines the frequency of NGOs' coverage by leading national newspapers within the past four full years (2013 -2016) in Nigeria, and the degree of prominence given to NGOs' activities. Other objectives of this study include the identification of best NGO-friendly tabloid, based on the weight of reportage, as well as the negativity, positivity or neutrality of the reports.

To drive the achievement of these objectives, the following research questions suffice:

1. What was the frequency of coverage given to NGOs' activities by the selected newspapers within the past four full years (2013 -2016)?
2. How much prominence was given to NGOs' activities on the pages of the newspapers?
3. How much attention was given to NGO-focused themes by the newspapers?
4. Which national tabloid was the best NGO-friendly in terms of coverage volume of NGOs' activities in the country?
5. Are newspapers' reports of NGOs' activities predominantly positive, negative or neutral?

The historicism, classification and activities of NGOs in Nigeria

Whilst tracing NGOs back to industrialized western countries in the mid-nineteenth century, Willets (2002) affirmed that the term "NGO" was made popular in the 1945 Charter of United Nations Organization (UNO) which differentiated between participation rights for intergovernmental specialized agencies and international private organizations.

Historically, most NGOs emerged from relatively small-scale origins and metamorphosed into larger organizations (Besler & Sezerel, 2011). Small scale as operationalized in this study refers to the micro level where an individual takes action or a group of people of like minds congregate to tackle a perennial socioeconomic and political problem. By inference, NGOs in Nigeria predated 1945 having existed in various forms of age groups, social clubs and descendant associations, which were established by various passionate or influential persons, private organizations, missionary institutions, etc. Since 1930 (NNNGO.org, 2014), the documented NGOs in Nigeria were mainly community-based and they drew membership from defined demographics, ethnic affinities and proximate geographical axis.

Nigeria, like other countries has names for NGOs such as non-profit organizations, voluntary organizations, charitable organizations and civil societies. To a large extent, these names have foreign influence. Lewis (2009) reveals that in the United States of America, 'non-profit organization' is frequently used because these organizations are believed to be non-commercial public good-doers. While in the United Kingdom, it is common to hear 'voluntary organization' or 'charity' due to the long tradition of volunteer 'non-political' works of Christian missionaries over the years.

Historical classifications of NGOs present them either as profit-seeking or non-profit, the former having given way for the later after several years of interchanging co-existence. Quite instructive is the classification of NGOs based on organizational goal by Bibua et al (2013, p.481), which states that profit-seeking NGOs are private commercial agents; whereas non-profit NGOs are associations, foundations, unions and even political parties.

NGOs, like other types of organizations, are continually in a state of flux; dynamic and driven by winds of interest. Without prejudice to their hardly-displayed and advertised foibles (Odiboh, 2002), NGOs play three key roles of

implementers, catalysts and partners, according to Lewis (2009, pp.1-2).

- The implementer role is concerned with the mobilization of resources to provide goods and services to the needy. Such services include healthcare, microfinance, agricultural extensions, emergency relief and human rights. This role has amplified as NGOs are increasingly responding to human emergencies and natural disasters with humanitarian assistance.
- Ability to inspire, facilitate or contribute to improved thinking and action to promote social transformation sum up the catalyst role of NGOs. This effort, Lewis explained, could be directed towards individuals or groups in local communities in the form of empowerment, advocacy and entrepreneurship at all social levels.
- The partnership role refers to the joint deliverables of an NGO through associations with donors, private and public contributors as well as other non-competing NGOs. This role includes undertaking socially responsible business initiatives and community-based capacity building.

Generally, NGOs in Nigeria are driven by a range of motivations

and values (Nwocha, 2011) built into a regulatory code of conduct which helps to increase their reliability (Iheme, n.d). TheNNNGO.org, (2014) portal lists the principles of ethical operation for NGOs in eight sections which include democratic governance, civic courage and care, sustainability and prudence in funds and resources management, responsibility and accountability among others.

In spite of their historical and vast contributions to human and socioeconomic development in Nigeria, NGOs are beset by several challenges, the most disturbing of which is the media exposure. Lewis (2001) and Bromideh (2011) outlined the other challenges as access to funding, inadequate resources, weak governance, insecure staff career development and public trust. This study focuses on the media exposure of NGOs' activities in Nigeria.

Components, Nature, Characteristics of the Media in Nigeria

Media components are similar in today's technology-driven world but their acceptability and usage differ from one country to another. Internet reproductions of traditional media content through iconoclastic online newspapering, telecast streaming and radio podcasting are gaining grounds in advanced

countries; but yet to be fully embraced by over a hundred million Nigerians ex-metropolis. This explains why the traditional media and their internet replications coexist functionally with the former leading holding sway in larger sections of the country.

Television possesses arresting, colorful, audio-motion properties which stimulate viewers' attention and calibrate vivid imagination at all times. News and program broadcast on this medium could be recorded and stored for future view. However, immobility, erratic power supply, high cost of possession, hostage of viewers and invasion of foreign content discount from its value as a local mass medium in Nigeria.

Radio is the cheapest medium and could be acquired gratis either as a vehicular item or a structural accompaniment of a compact disc player. As a portable, mobile, friendly and land-travel partner, the audio medium delivers listening pleasures without subjecting listeners to the discomfiture of divided attention at work, at home, on-the-road and outdoors. Nonetheless, the fleeting nature of news and broadcast, the distracting task of tuning in search for appealing programs, and most especially, poor referential capacity, reduce the value of the radio medium in the business of

organizational communication in Nigeria.

Newspapers and magazines represent the print genre of the mass media as veritable reference materials. Whilst magazines hold sway with the gloss finishing of periodic analysis of immediate past occurrences, personality interviews and archival materials; newspapers lead the print industry by meeting the human need for daily updates of news, opinions, events, special organizational supplements, as well as providing the widest media menu of unflinching sectorial reports. As tear-sheets, newspaper publications are the most incontrovertible and best accepted referential business documents in advertising, public relations, marketing, corporate communication and research in all establishments, including non-governmental organizations, not only in Nigeria, but all over the world.

An Overview of Newspapers in Nigeria

Newspapers in Nigeria are generally characterized by ownership, regional bent, ethnic sentimentality, demographic courtesies, professionals' appeal, industrial specialty and print-plummeting online cloning. Circulation figures hitherto applied to rank newspapers have been as controversial as the claim of many to national reach (Aliagan, 2015). But many of them

struggle to project themselves as national tabloids. Community newspapers are rendered in indigenous languages but generally, English has remained the phonology of newsheets in the country.

Seventy-five newspapers qualify as dailies but another seventy fluctuate between daily production and erratic weekly presence on newsstands in all the states and federal capital territory of Nigeria, (Nigeria Press Council, 2015). Unflinching newspapering in Nigeria depends on owner-funding, advertising patronage and high sales vending which is notably influenced by trailing publication of newsworthy stories. Since these conditions are not always guaranteed, the continuous survival of the average Nigerian tabloid is suspect. For them, high readership does not equal high sales as millions of the people are free readers or at best, pay-read-and-drop bibliophiles, who shortchange the publications of income, continuity and potential to be national newspapers. Consequently, only a few newspapers are truly national despite the regional foothold of most of them; and leading the pack is *The Guardian*.

As one of the longest surviving newspapers in Nigeria with 25,222 circulation figure (*AllAfrica.com*, 2010), *The Guardian* is nationally acknowledged as elite in style,

language and reader-targeting; and it is by the Newspaper Distributors of Nigeria (NDAN) as the first for captains of industries, top chief executive officers, corporate decision-makers and professionals of national standing. Though its lack of regional foothold reduces its spread, *The Guardian* is also confirmed as the second pick by top government officials whose loyalty to their regional newspapers (such as *The Punch*, *ThisDay* and *Daily Trust*) is unassailable.

Acclaimed with 34,264 daily print run (*AllAfrica.com*, 2010), *The Punch* consistently won national media awards as the most widely read newspaper in Nigeria in the past ten years; and its regional foothold in the South West of the country is often forwarded to either controvert its national readership billing or substantiate its mass niche and simplicity of style.

Appeal to politicians, political parties and partisan appointees all over the country puts *ThisDay* newspaper in the national media firmament, albeit with a circulation of 21,703 copies nationwide. Its tendency to predict election results at all levels of administration and predetermine the decision of the federal government on sensitive national issues attracts to it, the patronage of government officials at the centre and most especially in the

combined eastern and middle belt regions of the country.

One newspaper that flaunts its complete regional coverage of the North, as well as the presence of its (Hausa) readers in every nook and cranny of the country, is *Daily Trust*. Printing simultaneously in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt is often added as a technical reason to tag it a national newspaper as no other newspaper has a triple-location printing press in the country. In the vast North, which is three regions combined (and half of the country's geographical expression), no newspaper has successfully challenged *Daily Trust* as the leading tabloid.

Leadership newspaper is one of the many regional papers in the North but which has remained in the grey shadow of *Daily Trust* since it covers only the North East and North Central, albeit inconsistently. Other regional newspapers are *Vanguard* (South-South), *Sun* (East), *Tribune* (South West), *Nation* (South West) and others. *The Nation's* claim to national appeal stems from being the mouthpiece of the ruling political party whose members nationwide patronize the publication for updates on core party issues which may not be published elsewhere.

Many other metropolitan, non-national, non-regional newspapers that may be found on the newsstand

comprise: *ThisDay*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Pilot*, *Authority* and *National Mirror*. Whilst many are struggling to print, some others have gone online, where all the newspapers narrated above are also active.

Theoretical Framework

For this study, the agenda-setting theory forms the foundational framework. Initiated on the notion that the media is imbued with the capacity to stimulate certain issues in the mind of the receivers of concerned messages, the theory builds prediction on the continuity of repetition. In other words, the more an issue is repeatedly reported, the more the receivers would deem it imperative. Walter Lippmann is credited with the foundation of this theory in 1922; followed by Bernard Cohen in 1963 who said that what readers are given to read would mold their view about the world. Cohen's follower, Max McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1968, developed the theory and built it further on the correlation between what people thought was important and what was vital in news reports over a certain period of time. The summary of the theory is that media influence public outlook. In relation to this work, the agenda-setting theory basically explains the relationship that exists between the NGOs and the media. Whatever the media report again and again about

NGOs is what the public would opine about the organizations.

However, it takes an understanding of the source of an issue, the relevance or otherwise of the matter to its founder and its operationalization. It may be argued that since NGOs are intricate unlike governments, it may not be easy for journalists to set agenda on behalf of charities. In other words, NGOs should be allowed to determine the agenda, ensure that the media get it before exposing it to the public. On the other hand, the media could be positioned to observe public reaction to NGOs and present the solution to identified problem as an agenda for reportage. It would be helpful to the media if the NGOs concerned get the intended agenda. What the NGOs think is important needs the getting of the media and on the other hand, what the media think is important for exposure about charities needs the getting of NGOs. This is what may be referred to as Agenda getting.

Agenda-getting combines with agenda setting to ground this work properly. Media sets it, NGO gets it; NGO sets it, media gets it. Thereafter, it is repeated as a news item consistently to ensure that the public see it as important. Agenda-setting and agenda-getting would create mutual understanding between the media and NGOs which would translate to massive public

awareness of NGOs activities and media support for the charitable organizations.

Method and Materials

Based on the narrative above, four national newspapers (*The Guardian, Punch, ThisDay* and *Daily Trust*) purposively selected were content analyzed. One of the reasons for selecting these four newspapers is that many readers think that their reporters subscribe to *global ethical practices* (Omojola, 2008, 2014) though this claim is debatable. The

period of study included the last two years of the immediate past federal administration and the first two years of the current regime spanning four years (2013 to 2016). This period was further broken down into quarters for extraction of publications from the selected tabloids each year as shown in the table below. The data generated from each of the selected months were processed to provide answers to the research questions and meet the study objectives.

A breakdown of content selection in The Guardian, Punch, ThisDay and Daily Trust

Table 1: 488 daily publications of four national newspapers over 16 weeks of four quarters in four years were content analyzed.

Year	Quarter	Month (Last month of each quarter)	Days
2013	Q1	March	31 days
2014	Q2	June	30 days
2015	Q3	September	30 days
2016	Q4	December	31 days
4 years	Four quarters	Four months (16 weeks x the 4 selected newspapers)	122 daily editions for each newspaper (122 x 4 = 488 daily editions)

Specifically, the placement of stories about NGOs, story categories, origin of stories, themes of the stories, NGO ownership as well as the slant of each reportage were key areas of focus. Story placement refers to the sectional prominence which the newspapers deem fitting for NGO reports: front

or back page, inside or center spread positions. Story types or content categories covered are: straight news, news analysis, features, editorial comments, public service announcement, letters-to-the-editor, special interviews, photo-stories, and a host of other NGO report classifications. Originators of

exhumed reports also considered are: NGOs, Government, citizens, and journalists. Additionally indicated is the positivity, negativity or neutrality of each story against the backdrop of the ownership of the NGO (private, corporate, exclusive group or publicly open agglomeration).

Thematic slants of the published stories which were coded are:

entrepreneurship, activism and research reports, donations and humanitarian services, sports and youth development; other themes include education awareness and sensitization, child and maternal health, domestic violence, anti-corruption and celebrations. These themes were coded as below for processing the reports retrieved from the newspapers:

Table 2: Nine themes and codes of NGO reportage by the four newspapers

Themes	Codes
Entrepreneurship	1
Activism & Research Reports	2
Donations and Humanitarian services	3
Sports & Youth Development	4
Education, Awareness and Sensitization	5
Child & Maternal Health	6
Domestic Violence	7
Anti-corruption	8
Others(Awards, Celebrations and Anniversaries)	9

Results

The first observation of this study is that the following twenty (20) NGOs received at least a newspaper mention, each month of the period covered:

1. Albino Foundation
2. All Youth Against Cancer (AYAC)
3. MTN Foundation
4. Tony Elumelu Foundation
5. TY Danjuma Foundation
6. Rochas Foundation
7. Oando Foundation
8. Action Aid International Nigeria
9. PZ Foundation
10. Ford Foundation
11. Cleen Foundation
12. Ovie Brume Foundation
13. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
14. African Network for Environmental and Economic Justice (ANE EJ)

- 15. Leadership Effectiveness
Accountability
Professionalism Africa
(LEAP Africa)
- 16. Dangote Foundation
- 17. Kanu Heart Foundation
- 18. Nigerian Labor Congress
- 19. Shuga Limp Foundation and
- 20. Irede Foundation

The result of this study shows 82 NGO-related reports in 488 daily outputs of four newspapers over four months in four years. It translates to one NGO report in six (6) dailies calculable as 82:488 =ratio 1:6; representable in

percentage as $(82 \times 100) / 488 = 17\%$. This means that only 17% of the 488 surveyed dailies produced 82 reports on NGO activities within the period in focus.

Whilst 15 days recorded multiple stories, all other dates had at least one NGO-related story (from all the newspapers combined) except dates 14th, 27th and 29th, which recorded zero reports in the calendar months covered. The table below shows 12 days that NGO-related stories were not published (zero reports) by all the four newspapers:

Table 3: Twelve (12) days of zero report of NGO-related stories by all the newspapers content analyzed

	14 th	27th	29 th
March 2013	Thursday	Wednesday	Friday
June 2014	Saturday	Friday	Sunday
September 2015	Monday	Sunday	Tuesday
December 2016	Wednesday	Tuesday	Thursday

Further to this revelation is that whilst all the seven days of a week recorded single digit contribution of

zero report, Monday and Saturday had one day each and all other days had two days of no report.

Table 4: A breakdown of zero report according to days of the week

Day	Contribution of Zero report
Monday	1
Tuesday	2
Wednesday	2
Thursday	2
Friday	2
Saturday	1
Sunday	2
TOTAL	12

Zero reports days/dates across four different months and years may be a coincidence, but it is a noteworthy revelation of this study. Though zero report findings cut across all newspapers, *Daily Trust* produced 44% of NGO-related reports

followed by *The Guardian* with 27%. Both newspapers dominated others but *Daily Trust* should be accorded the best NGO-friendly newspaper among the pack going by this result.

Figure 1: Newspapers reportage of NGOs showing the leadership of Daily Trust

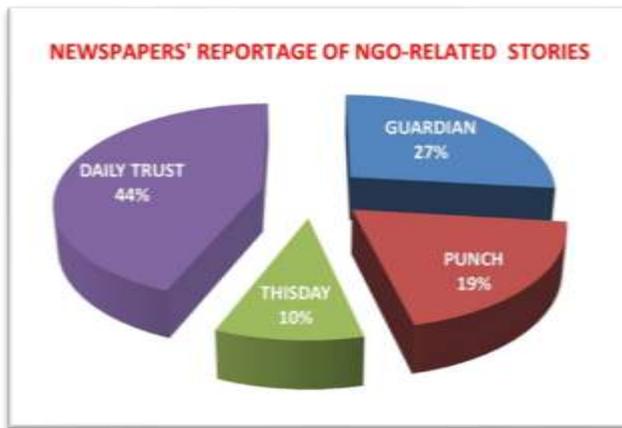


Figure 2: Newspapers’ placement of NGO-related stories showing the preponderant allocation of inner page spaces



The placement of NGO stories were 99% inside pages. Except a single instance in which *The Guardian* gave a prominent cover page space, all newspapers consigned NGO-related reports to the least conspicuous inner recess of their

publications. This shows that the newspapers did not see the newsworthiness of NGOs’ activities to attracting readership or sales, thereby questioning the commercial value of charity reportage.

Figure 3: 15 months interval movement of newspapers’ reportage of NGO-related reports; it shows the highest contribution during September 2015.



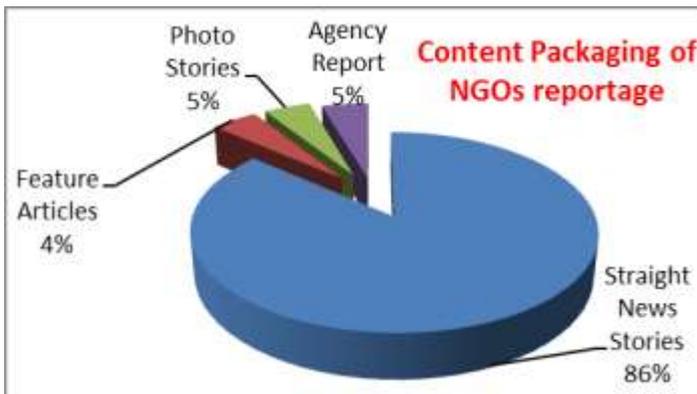
A steady rise in newspapers' reports of NGOs was recorded between 2013 and 2015 with a slight drop in 2016. However, quarter three

(September, 2015) recorded the highest units (32%) reportage of NGO activities which could be seen clearly in Fig 4 below.

Figure 1: Periodic contributions of newspapers' reportage of NGO-related stories showing the percentage advantage of September 2015



Figure 5: Choices for packaging NGO reports showing the vast use of straight news option



The chart above shows that across all newspapers, “straight news stories” about NGOs featured most prominently scoring 85%. Other journalistic methods of packaging

reportorial content such as feature articles, photo stories, and agency reports were poorly deployed.

The straight news coverage further suggests that NGO activities were

either reported as covered by newspaper correspondents or through NGO-generated press releases. Concerning this, the report

shows that journalists initiated 55% and NGOs originated 45% of newspaper reportage during this study as shown in the chart below:

Figure 6: Sources of newspapers' reports of NGO activities, showing higher contribution by journalists

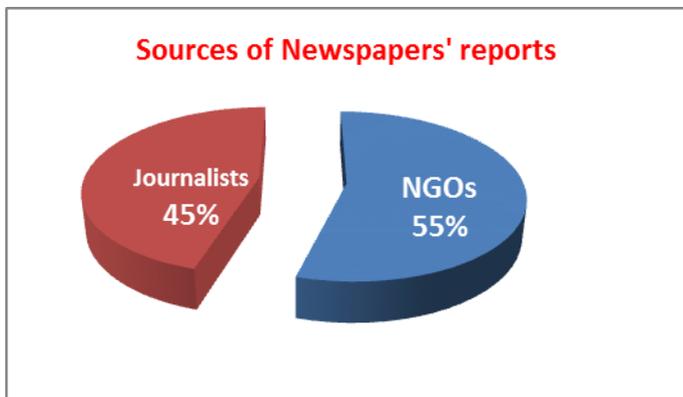
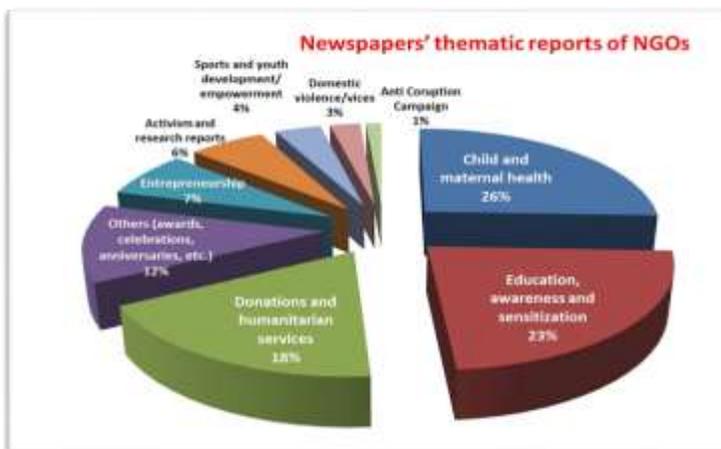


Figure 7: Nine NGO themes as reported by newspapers showing the dominance of “child and maternal survival.”



From the above chart, among the nine themes of reportage examined, “child and maternal survival” scored highest with 26%. Education awareness and sensitization followed closely with 23%. But

interestingly, “donations and humanitarian services” which is what most Nigerians know NGOs to do most as pointed out in literature that bad news usually births NGOs good news, had only 18%.

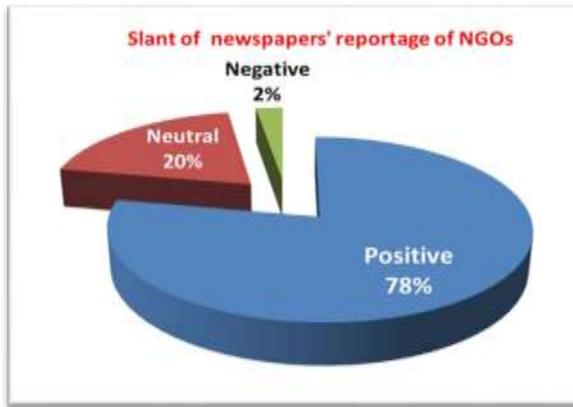
Figure 8: Share of newspapers reportage by NGO ownership showing the dominance of publicly owned ones with little margins among the rest.



Among the four ownership types of NGOs identified in Nigeria, the general public group caught newspapers’ attention more than others with 33%. About 24% activities of the privately-owned NGOs such as Dangote, TY Danjuma, Tony Elumelu, Bill Gates

caught the newspapers’ attention while 23% concerned specially-focused charities on Albinos, cancer, heart and corporate. NGOs such as Ford, MTN, Oando, amongst others, occupied the remaining 20% of tabloid space.

Figure 9: Slant of newspapers reports of NGO activities showing that most of the narratives were positive.



The slant of newspapers reportage of NGO-related stories returned largely positive with 78%; which aligns with findings in literature that NGOs exist to fill gaps of development, human rights, humanitarian, environmental, and many other areas of public life. The 20% neutral stories were on structural reforms while the 2% negative report was for postponed events by a few privately owned NGOs.

Discussion of Results

Placement of stories in newspapers provides the basis for visibility and access to such stories by readers. The decision on placement of stories is often premised on the perceived importance of the story to the issue in print. NGO stories were given more “inside page treatment” within the study period when compared with the incidents of front page

placement. There are two basic implications of this reality, the first links effectively with the second. First, NGO stories featured in the inside pages would hardly get seen or noticed by newspaper readers. This, in turn, reduces the perception the average reader has about activities carried out by Non-Governmental Organizations. It becomes easy to accord NGO activities with little attention on the part of the average news observer who feels that since the journalist do not deem it fit to give good coverage to NGOs there might be no need, after all, to consider their activities important.

In the cases where NGO stories occupied the front page, there were either sponsored campaigns spearheaded by the Awolowo Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the MTN Foundation,

the Tony Elumelu Entrepreneurial Foundation and the Dangote Foundation. This goes on to imply that good coverage would be accorded to an NGO, only if the personalities behind such Organizations are well known and perceived to draw readership to that newspaper issue.

The approach to reportage was different within the study period. So little was communicated through photo stories and feature articles which are capable of giving elaborate explanations to the event reported or the issue highlighted. The Newspapers chose to give coverage to NGO stories primarily through the straight news. Agency reports are sponsored by the NGO and very little was featured in the editions studied. The reason for the low occurrence of Agency reports could be due to the high cost of having such published in well-read newspapers like the ones studied.

There was a fair balance of news source from both ends; however, a larger percentage of the news stories seemed to originate from the Non-Governmental Organization. These stories upon a closer view were seen to be reports on event, maternity health and child care campaigns and most frequently, educational sponsorship, funds and donations to orphanages and other noble activities carried out by the NGOs. This clearly reveals that journalists

do not have NGOs as a primary focus if the actions undertaken are not directly related with the state of the nation or directly influence the good the greater number of Nigerians. The NGOs have been forced to blow their own whistle and let the world know what they are doing within their own corners to advance the course of humanity and increase the quality of life.

The possibility of arousing human interest and giving emotional appeals to news stories could be the rationale for the increased publicity given to NGO activities in the area of child and maternal health. More so, it becomes only morally acceptable to give good publicity to matters bordering around the health much more than other issues. Very little attention was given to activism which more often is a plea or agitation for the government to take steps in line with an area where attention is currently perceived to be low or nonexistent.

Next to the coverage of child and maternal health was the coverage given to donations and other humanitarian services. A larger percentage of stories in this category were NGO sponsored and not generated by the Journalist. Stories in this category included donations to IDP camps, Donations to orphanages yuletide season as well as fundraising for other developmental initiatives.

Against expectation, entrepreneurship, being a major solution to employment deficit in the country did not register strongly in the eyes of newspapers as an agenda to set for NGOs. It is not clear if all NGO activities caught the attention of newspapers; neither is it indubitable that NGOs brought all their activations to the front burners of newspapers. However, the study's result that 91% of newspaper reportage were positive apparently indicates the medium's sympathy towards the charities, irrespective of their thematic preferences.

Conclusion

The findings of this study substantiate the reality that NGOs are not given adequate coverage by many Nigerian media organizations. The thin coverage recorded over the period studied reflects the lack of media attention that the activities of NGOs have received. Equally, this study reported 95% of the reportage as being positive and favorable to the activities of the NGOs. Regarding the origin of the news stories, the NGOs accounted for a larger percentage of the stories reported (more than the journalists). Child and maternal health was discovered to attract a larger percentage of media attention, far ahead of every other theme of the study.

The strong statement of this study is that newspaper organizations have unsuspectingly deprived NGOs noticeable readership owing to the placement and frequency of reportage accorded to NGO stories over the study period.

Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusion of this study, the following are recommended to remove the gap in the reporting of NGOs' activities in Nigeria.

1. Sections of newspaper editions should be created (weekly) to specially focus on developmental initiatives of non-governmental organizations (whether prominent news item or not). Such columns would positively motivate otherwise unknown NGOs which are bogged down by miniscule media voice or zero budgets for mass communicating their actions and activations.
2. Regulations that support discounted newspaper (and indeed all media) advertising rate for NGOs should be instituted. Whilst solving the problem of inadequate funding perennially faced by NGOs, the regulations would opportune charities to announce their programs for public attention and attendance which newspapers hardly focus on. In newsworthiness, tabloids

are easily attracted by occurrences more than expectations. Therefore, discounted advertorial costs would assist in the publication of upcoming NGO events and stories which normal newspapering would thrash for lacking newsworthiness. When such are published in newspapers they are seemingly deemed credible when compared to content published in social media which display personal manifestoes devoid of public interest in many cases (Abubakar, 2011, p. 446).

3. Blurred lines currently exist on the pages of newspapers between “groups,” “coalitions,” “centers,” and “summits” claiming advocacy practice on one side and NGOs with similar social concerns on another side. If tabloid reporters cannot indubitably sift pressure groups, concerned professionals, ethnic agitators, social negotiators, labor unions, one-off protesters and religious vituperators from charitable advocators, then the general public may not be in a better position to decipher their essential differences, epistemologically speaking. Therefore, non-governmental organizations should be properly registered by appropriate agencies for easy

media identification, message classification and apposite reportage. Every NGO in Nigeria should have a number or identity tag recognizable by journalists and even the public. Correspondingly, newspapers should rise above mere mention of any news-providing collection of people by specifically applying a tag of nomenclature. For instance, in reporting a free eye test of MTN, a newspaper should write “Nigerians with ocular challenges have been invited to a one-day free eye test by MTN-Health, a non-governmental organization registered in Kaduna...” The emphasized words in that sentence are critical to identifying and placing the organization in the mind of the reader as well as easing research endeavors in that connection. Additionally, all NGOs should visibly display their registration numbers during press conferences, seminars and trainings whilst ensuring that the pages of their press releases bear their numerical identities.

4. Paucity of journalistic reportage and scanty news releases by NGOs mirror a bland relationship between charity operators and newspaper correspondents in

Nigeria. This situation calls for disruption of current trends to produce a greater and more compelling synergy between the two, moving forward. Therefore, interactive workshops and seminars are recommended to be organized periodically for training the two stakeholders on modern techniques for reporting NGO activities. Apart from improving the relationship between the two groups of organizations (NGOs and newspapers), the sessions would provide greater insight

into NGO news-reporting, train newbies on the beat, retrain veterans, and ultimately assist in raising the reportage levels of charity activations throughout the country.

The application of these recommendations would go a long way in increasing public awareness of the activities of NGOs, raise the bar of collaboration between journalists and charity operators and most importantly, stimulate increased benevolent contributions to the socioeconomic development of the country.

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