Developing Country Studies
ISSN 2224-607X (Paper) ISSN 2225-0565 (Online)
Vol.4, No.25, 2014

Faith in Development: A Double-Edged Sword

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Abstract
Since the early 1990s, faith seems to have been staking a very strong return to policy, practice and scholarship. In this desk review therefore, the potential of faith as a tool for development and social provisioning is analysed from the international and Ghanaian perspectives. To overcome the negative tags associated with faith organisations and ensure their effectiveness and efficiency, the piece recommends inter and intra-faith collaboration, knowledge sharing and capacity building. The over-arching policy implication of the piece is that while faith has its own downside like any other development approach, it is still useful for promoting holistic development if stakeholders in development would engage with, encourage and positively promote faith-based organisations.
Keywords: faith, social service provisioning, welfare, Ghana, development, faith-based organisations, Islamic FBO

INTRODUCTION

The history of faith-based organisations pre-dates the medieval period. Even before international humanitarian law was formalised into treaty law, faith-based organisations provided services to the needy, orphaned, destitute and vulnerable in society based on the values and principles of generosity, charity and mercy typical of all religions (Ferris, 2005; and James, 2011). But with enlightenment, faith was relegated to the dustbin. The belief was that as societies become more rational and knowledgeable, religion would naturally wane and fade into the distance (Hoffstaedter, 2011).

Religion further suffered another battering with modernisation in the second half of the 20th Century. It was only after the end of the cold war and the deepening of globalisation that the important role of faith in pro-poor development began to be acknowledged (Belshaw, 2005; Hoffstaedter, 2011; Nwaiwu, 2011; and Haynes, 2013). Thus from the 1990s there was a shift from "estrangement to engagement" with faith organisations (James, 2011: 1). This engagement became necessary following the implementation of neo-liberal policies in most developing countries which left in their tracks unprecedented poverty, inequality and deprivation (Dixon-Fyle, 2002; and Ortiz, 2007). The legendary role of the extended family as the foremost provider of social protection had become weakened by the deepening globalisation and urbanisation ((Dixon-Fyle, 2002). Not even the plethora of international declarations such as the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which promise some minimum equality in terms of standard of living as it concerns food, clothing, housing, education, medical care and social security (Ortiz, 2007) were enough to stem the tide of declining welfare in most developing countries. In the face of the wanton deprivation and poverty that came to characterise the world, faith-based organisations had to be encouraged to step in to fill the vacuum, by providing the social services that the family, the state and the international community had failed to deliver to especially the vulnerable.

Today, faith organisations partner the United Nations and other international organisations to deliver social services around the world (Haynes, 2013). Faith organisations also partner states and other secular non-governmental organisations in social provisioning (Ferris, 2005; James, 2011; Belshaw, 2005; Hoffstaedter, 2011; and Nwaiwu, 2011). Thus at best, faith organisations have come to be recognised as partners in development.

Following 9/11 however, the divisive and flammable nature of faith seems to have also returned to the international development discourse. In this review article therefore, the role of faith in development and social provisioning is discussed and analysed. The central thesis of the piece is that, while faith has its own negatives like any other tool of development, it is important to appreciate the various strands of faith organisations and how their potential and repertoire could be tapped for developmental purposes. The entire piece is organised into (1) Introduction which includes definitional issues and history of faith-based organisations, (2) the Faith and Development debate, (3) FBOs in Ghana and (4) Recommendations and Conclusions.

Terminology and Classification

There is no agreed terminology for describing religious actors whether local, national or international engaged in development and other endeavours. Such actors have been referred to variously by different development experts; religious non-governmental organisations (RNGO), faith-based non-profit organisations (FNO) and faith-based organisations (FBO).

Like secular NGOs, religious non-governmental organisations (RNGOs) and faith-based non-profit

organisations (FNOs) are described essentially as non-state entities which possess significant religious characteristics (Haynes, 2013). This description is not comprehensive enough because it does not capture important religious actors such as the Vatican and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Those organisations are state actors albeit religious (Haynes, 2013). The concept 'faith-based organisation' is therefore adopted for this piece because it conceptualises religious actors to include both state and non-state entities. Organisations that are religious but whose activities are 'anti-development' such as Boko Haram are also captured under the umbrella of FBOs. The adoption of the FBO identity is necessary because it helps to delineate them from their secular counterparts in places like North Africa, the Middle-East and South-Asia where the distinction between secular and religious is often opaque (Nwaiwu, 2011).

In terms of definition, the concept FBO is as controversial as faith itself. Various scholars have defined the term variously. The UNFPA (2009: 4) for instance defines FBO as "religious, faith - based groups, and/or faith - inspired groups which operate as registered or unregistered non - profit institutions". According to Ferris (2005: 3) also FBOs may have one or more of the following characteristics; "affiliation with a religious body; a mission statement with explicit reference to religious values; financial support from religious sources; and/or governance structure where selection of board members or staff is based on religious beliefs or affiliation; and/or decision making processes based on religious values".

The definitions help to succinctly differentiate faith-inspired organisations from non-faith or secular organisations. Also, they capture under their ambit organisations whose ideologies are faith-inspired but which do not have any formal ties to any faith tradition (Nwaiwu, 2011). In most developing countries such as Ghana, while there are some registered faith-inspired organisations, majority of the organisations are unregistered and often do not posses any formal organisational structure. Both of these types of FBOs are captured by the definitions. In spite of the theoretical usefulness of the definitions however, they still face challenges. Firstly, there are too many varieties of FBOs that, any generalisation is virtually rendered impossible. Secondly, many times, the ideological differences that exist between and among different FBOs are far greater than the one that exists between FBOs on one hand and secular organisations on the other (Ferris, 2005: 3). Thus, whatever definition is provided could only go as far as capturing some and not all the essential characteristics of FBOs.

Another useful mechanism employed by some development experts to analyse the nature of FBOs and how they interface with development is the use of typologies. In this regard also, various typologies have been provided. One of the most impressive and often cited typologies is provided by Gerald Clarke who identifies five typologies of FBOs (Hoffstaedter, 2011: 6; and Nwaiwu, 2011: 2);

a. Faith-Based Representative Organisations or Apex Bodies; these rule on doctrinal matters and represent the faithful through engagement with the state and other actors.
b. Faith-Based Charitable or Development Organisations; these also mobilise their adherents in support of providing for the needy, vulnerable and other social groups.
c. Faith-Based Socio-Political Organisation;
d. Faith-Based Missionary Organisations; these essentially seek to proselytise.
e. Faith-Based Illegal or Terrorist Organisations: their activities may be deemed 'anti-development' and often resort to the use of violence to concretise their objectives.

Clark's typology helps to unmask the true identities of organisations such as Al-Qaeda and Dove World Outreach Centre that are faith-inspired but whose activities may rather hinder development. The classification is also useful because it recognises organisations that operate as legally distinct from the religious organisations that established them. It further helps to explain the various ways that faith is deployed for developmental or social purposes (Nwaiwu, 2011).

It is important to realise however that regardless of the classification or typology, FBOs and other secular organisations often share many similar features and also operate within the same political, economic and social milieus (Nwaiwu, 2011).

Historical Accounts

The involvement of faith in development and social service provisioning is as old as history itself. Notable documentations however trace such involvement to only 16th Century England when the church kept the register of the poor. The state depended on the register to provide for the needs of the poor in society. The Elizabethan Poor Laws of 1601 which consolidated all former welfare legislations empowered the church to provide welfare services to the destitute, vulnerable and the poor (Nwaiwu, 2011). By the 18th Century social welfare provisioning in North America and Europe had become dominated by faith organisations (Ferris, 2005; and Nwaiwu, 2011). The reason for the domination of FBOs in welfare provisioning in Europe was due to the ruling *laissez-faire* theory advocated by economists such as Herbert Spencer. According to Spencer and his cohorts, state involvement in social affairs including welfare provisioning largely hurts society (Midgley, 1995; and Gasu, 2011). From the Spencerian point of view therefore, the poor and destitute were expected to be directly responsible for providing for their wellbeing without any state involvement (Gasu, 2011).

The recent shift towards engagement with FBOs may be traced to various events in the USA (Hoffstaedter, 2011). The first of these events was the election of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. To counter the effects of communism and also to provide some impetus for his domestic and foreign policy, Reagan mobilised the "Christian right" for support. Subsequently in 1996, the influential "Charitable Choice Legislation" reformed the welfare sector to allow for active involvement of FBOs. Following the reform, FBOs were empowered to apply for federal funding to support their social provisioning while maintaining their religious identity (Nwaiwu, 2011).

In 2001, to fulfill his election promise to engage actively with FBOs, President Bush established the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (Nwaiwu, 2011; and Hoffstaedter, 2011). This positive momentum for FBOs was to be largely dented by the events of 9/11. The events of 9/11 brought into sharp focus the capacity of faith to be flammable and therefore to become anti-development. Since then, the activities of FBOs have been placed under strict scrutiny by development practitioners and state security agencies especially in the USA and Europe (Hoffstaedter, 2011). Even with this dark spot on their reputation, President Obama still established the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighbourhood Partnerships. This stresses the crucial role and importance of FBOs in social service delivery (Nwaiwu, 2011; and Hoffstaedter, 2011). Today in most countries, FBOs are treated as partners in development and are given various incentives including tax exemptions (Nwaiwu, 2011; and James, 2011).

THE FAITH AND DEVELOPMENT DEBATE

The debate over the effectiveness and usefulness of FBOs in development and service delivery is age old. Prior to the end of the cold war, opponents dominated this debate. This led to the relegation of faith in development (Belshaw, 2005; UNFPA, 2009; Tadros, 2010; Hoffstaedter, 2011; and James, 2011). Opponents argued that engaging FBOs in development comes with many conundrums. One of the difficulties highlighted by antagonists is the conservative outlook of FBOs. They are fingered as maintaining and even sometimes promoting inequalities and injustices such as colonialism, apartheid, slavery and gender inequality (Tadros, 2010; Nwaiwu, 2011; and James, 2011). For instance, FBOs have been accused of depicting a stereotyped gender role for women and suppressing their agency (Nwaiwu, 2011; and Tadros, 2010). Recently, some of the passionate and bitterest opponents of women's' sexual and reproductive health rights promotion have come from the FBO fold (Haynes, 2013). In this regard, Crook (2005: 1) asserts that "many faith-based associations promote values which are hostile to democratic social and political change".

Working with FBOs also encourages conflicts which may lead to a violent disruption of the status quo (James, 2011; and Haynes, 203). FBOs have been accused of "promoting exclusivist identities, contributing to sectarian practices and being implicated in violent conflict" (Tadros, 2010: 7). Others have bemoaned the paternalistic and welfare-oriented approach to development that is typical of FBOs (James, 2011; and Nwaiwu, 2011). Some FBOs discriminate against people who do not share their faith. With their capacity to attract huge funding, there is the fear that they could use such funds for proselytisation or even terrorist and other anti-development activities (Hoffstaedter, 2011; James, 2011; and Nwaiwu, 2011).

After the cold war and the emergence of globalisation with its myriad of development challenges however, the faith-in-development debate seems to be tilting in favour of the protagonists. The UNFPA (2009: 1) for instance opines that "the case for working with faith-based organisations as one community among many critical agents of change, is no longer a matter of discussion, but rather, one of considered, systematic and deliberate engagement of the like-minded partners among others". Regardless of their controversial nature, the capacity of FBOs to play critical roles in human development and social service delivery has come to be accepted by even the most ardent of critics.

According to Crook (2005: 1) "the most important contribution of faith-based associations lies in their role as providers or organisers of collective action for public and social service". FBOs have been documented to provide majority of HIV/AIDS prevention and care services and provide about 50% of health care services in Sub-Saharan Africa (Olivier et al, 2012; and Nwaiwu, 2011). In the Arab world, collaborations between the UNDP and FBOs have crystallised into the CHAHAMA Initiative – a network of FBOs and faith leaders responding to human development issues such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (Haynes, 2013). Following the implementation of neo-liberal policies imposed on many African and developing countries by the IMF and World Bank, the state was forced to withdraw from social service delivery; many of which were hitherto provided for gratis (Atingdui, 1995; Gasu, 2011; Mkandawire, 2005; Ortiz, 2007; Hoffstaedter, 2011; and Haynes, 2013). This withdrawal and the vacuum that was created resulted in so much social maladies that by the early 1990s "several fiscally stressed governments in Africa were requesting churches to take back into their administration hospitals and schools which had been nationalised earlier" (Belshaw, 2005: 5).

In terms of international development, conflict resolution and the promotion of values such as human rights, the contributions of FBOs need not be overstated. FBOs through their lobbying and advocacy prowess played key roles in the formation of the UN, formulation of the MDGs, the liberation struggles in Mozambique

and Zimbabwe and the struggle against authoritarian rule through what has come to be termed "liberation theology" (Nwaiwu, 2011; and Haynes, 2013). Also, due to their ubiquitousness and the strong credibility they enjoy with local people, FBOs easily lend themselves as necessary vehicles for the permeation of development efforts at the grassroots level (Belshaw, 2005; Hoffstaedter, 2011; and Nwaiwu, 2011).

Besides, the belief now is that FBOs are more effective and efficient in identifying and providing social services to the deserved poor than the state and many other secular organisations (Dixon-Fyle, 2002; Mkandawire, 2005; Barrientos, 2010; James, 2011; Hoffstaedter, 2011; and Nwaiwu, 2011). FBOs act bi-focally addressing both spiritual and material needs of the individual and society (Hoffstaedter, 2011). In fact, there is a growing movement towards recognising FBOs as alternatives to secular development approaches (James, 2011; Hoffstaedter, 2011; and Nwaiwu, 2011). FBOs have been hailed as providing a more holistic approach to development compared to their secular counterparts.

Perhaps, the forceful return of faith to the development discourse should not astonish us. Apart from the many services that they provide, FBOs possess many virtues that make ignoring them in development and social provisioning unwise;

a. Faith is an important facet of life for most people. In most developing countries for instance, FBOs are already important players within civil society (Crook, 2005; and Haynes, 2013). Due to their local embeddedness also, they have the capacity to identify and provide services to the most deserving in the community.
b. Faith leaders are usually community leaders. They thus have the capacity to provide the needed legitimacy to development agencies or thwart their efforts (Hoffstaedter, 2011). To ensure the success of development efforts at the grassroots level therefore, it is not only necessary to deal with faith leaders but also learn to avoid their wrath and hostility.
c. Often, development and social services are direly needed in communities and countries that are also religious. The success of development organisations in these countries therefore depends on how they are able to craftily navigate the complex maze of religion, religious customs and traditions as they interact with recipients of development (Hoffstaedter, 2011).
d. Faith is a potent motivator of voluntarism (James, 2011). Even in the remotest of communities, FBOs are able to maintain a network of volunteers that their secular counterparts may find impossible to maintain (Haynes, 2013).
e. Development requires resources both material and in other kind. Here, the capacity of FBOs to attract funding and other logistical support is incomparable.

FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS (FBOs) IN GHANA

More than 90% of Ghanaians claim to adhere to one religion or another, making faith a very important aspect of life in the country. Christians constitute about 68.8%, Muslims are about 16% and Traditional and other religions also constitute about 10% of the population. Within civil society, FBOs constitute one of the most vibrant and "probably the largest most socially rooted and widely distributed membership base of all civil society organisations" (Crook. 2005: 1). Apart from the period 1981 – 1992 when through PNDC Law 221 of 1981, the military regime under the Chairmanship of Jerry John Rawlings banned all religious organisations and required them to reapply for state recognition (Atingdui, 1995: 12), FBOs have enjoyed a neutral and sometimes cooperative relation with the state in Ghana (Atingdui, 1995: 1).

Christian Faith-Based Organisations

Like in many former European colonies around the world, Christianity and Christian-related organisations emerged from Ghana's colonial experience. Indeed, the first Christian mission was established by the Portuguese around 1482 (Atingdui, 1995). Since then, many Christian FBOs have been established who have played key roles in the socio-economic and political development of the country. One important attribute of Christian FBOs in Ghana is that they have strong formal relationships with their various mother Churches.

Crook, (2005) classifies Christian organisations in Ghana into four; Roman Catholic, Mainstream Protestant, African Independent and New Pentecostal/Charismatic. Catholicism constitutes the largest Christian denomination in the country with large following from elites, royals and some professionals in the Ashanti, Upper East, Upper West and Northern Regions of Ghana. The largest Catholic FBO is the popular Catholic Relief Services which operates throughout the country. The Mainstream Pentecostal churches are represented by the umbrella body called the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG). Some of the churches under this include the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. The Pentecostal/Charismatic denominations are gradually supplanting the more orthodox churches in terms of following. Most of these are either local branches of churches in the USA and Nigeria or locally established by Ghanaian pastors. The latter have come to be

described as "one man churches"[1]. The African Independent Churches on the other hand were established as "a reaction to the cultural imperialism of European Christianity" (Crook, 2005: 2). Lately, they have witnessed serious declines as they face serious competition from especially the Pentecostal/Charismatic ones. Apart from the so-called "one man churches" most Christian FBOs are run by professionals with largely professional administrative and management systems.

Islamic Faith-Based Organisations

Islam pre-dates Christianity in Ghana and initially enjoyed large following due to its absorption into the existing African culture and belief system (Crook, 2005). Today however, Islam is stereotyped as the religion of the poor with many of its adherents found in the under-developed northern regions (Atingdui, 1995) and migrant communities in the south collectively referred to as the "Zongo"[2]. Like Christianity, Islam is also organised into denominations in Ghana. The dominant Islamic denominations in the country are the Sufi Brotherhoods or the Tijjaniyya, the Ahmadiyya (Qadyaniyya) who are regarded by the orthodox Muslims as heretical, the Sunni and the Salafis who are derogatorily described as the Wahhabis (Crook, 2005). Apart from the Ahmadiyya Mission, most Islamic FBOs in Ghana do not have any formal relations with any congregation or mosque and do not have well established administrative systems. They are established through the private efforts of individuals and groups. Unfortunately, the contributions and activities of Islamic FBOs in Ghana have not attracted the deserved attention in the development literature in the country.

FBOs and Development in Ghana

As in many other Sub-Saharan African countries, the contributions of FBOs to the socio-economic and political development of Ghana are enormous. Politically, the contributions of the Catholic Bishops Conference and the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) to the current democratic dispensation in the country could only be written in gold. Even today, these organisations continue to play strong advocacy roles on human rights, anti-corruption, women's empowerment, conflict resolution and other human development issues (Crook, 2005). Unfortunately, Islamic FBOs largely avoid political issues.

The involvement of FBOs in health-care and educational provisioning in Ghana pre-dates the country's independence. FBOs especially European Christian missions are credited with introducing formal education in the country. Today, mission-managed institutions are regarded as more discipline, result-oriented and professionally run than their other counterparts that are managed by the various local authorities and the state. In this regard, most of the renowned schools in Ghana come from the Catholic, Methodist, Anglican and Presbyterian traditions. It is only recently that the contribution of Islamic FBOs to educational provisioning is beginning to be felt. The Ahmadiyya Mission has however over the years been regarded as "a model of citizen action in the educational standards field" (Crook, 2005: 4) in the country.

In the area of health-care provisioning also, Christian FBOs are miles ahead of their Islamic and secular counterparts. To coordinate the activities of Christian health institutions, an umbrella body; Christian Health Association of Ghana (CHAG); was established in 1967. CHAG was established with the assistance of the World Council of Churches, the Catholic Bishops Conference and the Christian Council of Zambia. The member-institutions and facilities of CHAG have grown from 25 in 1967 to 182 by 2011. Today, CHAG is recognised by the Ministry of Health as an agency with its own personnel providing health-care to about 30% - 40% of the population and is second only to the Ghana Health Service (GHS) (Schmid et al, 2008; and Olivier et al, 2012). Among Islamic FBOs, the Ahmadiyya Mission operates about six hospitals and other many clinics and carries out various health-related programmes (Olivier et al, 2012). In terms of percentages, while Christian FBOs provide about 40% of health-care related services, their Islamic counterparts account for between 1 to 2% (Schmid et al, 2008: 54).

In the area of charity and social provisioning, FBOs in Ghana have played remarkable roles. In the wake of the collapse of the welfare state following the implementation of neo-liberal policies in Ghana, FBOs have assumed additional responsibilities by providing poverty reduction assistance and other social services that contribute to alleviating the sufferings of the marginalised and poor (Crook, 2005; and Gasu, 2011). FBOs run orphanages, homes for the homeless, leprosarium and also provide water and sanitation services in rural and peri-urban communities.

In spite of their notable contributions to the socio-economic and political development in the country, some FBOs have been accused of encouraging values that undermine socio-economic and political change (Crook, 2005). For instance, Salafi and Pentecostal/Charismatic FBOs have been accused of authoritarian tendencies and maintaining a largely intolerant social and political outlooks. They have also been accused of being too radical in their attempt to proselytise.

[1] They are described as "One-man churches" because they are run just like sole-proprietorships by their founders.
[2] Slam communities found in the south of Ghana largely inhabited by migrants from mostly West African countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To engage meaningfully with FBOs and help them harness their invaluable repertoire for developmental purposes, it is important that the following are seriously considered;

Capacity Building

FBOs are known to have the capacity to attract huge funding and motivate voluntarism. It is important then to build their capacity through training and workshops to ensure that they are able to maintain systems for accountability, planning, evaluation and monitoring. Deliberate policies must also be pursued to ensure that the activities of FBOs are integrated into local, national and international development plans and assistance programmes. Without this, money launderers and terrorists may take advantage of their huge assets for anti-development activities.

Advocacy and Knowledge Sharing

The generalised mistrust for FBOs must give way to a comprehensive engagement and collaboration. The recent trend towards the scrutiny and examination of FBOs in development scholarship must be encouraged and deepened. It is only through strong advocacy and knowledge sharing that the development potentials of faith could be harnessed.

Inter-FBO Collaboration

FBOs must move towards collaborating with one another. The collaboration must be both inter and intra-faith and also local, national and international. This would help nip the bad ones in the bud and encourage synergy among the positive ones. Collaboration would also promote knowledge sharing which ensures efficiency and effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

From the write-up so far, two important admissions have been made; the flammable nature of faith and its potential for development and social provisioning. Even though faith was shelved and its development potentials largely refuted in the past, following the collapse of the welfare state in especially developing countries, the prospect of faith to promote holistic development has returned to development discourse. It is therefore important to engage with faith organisations and understand their nature and modus operandi so that their development potentials could be harnessed.

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