‘Corruption and Development NGOs in Northern Nigeria: 
Case studies from Plateau State’

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Abstract

The central theme and focus of this study is to uncover and analyse how actors in faith-based NGOs in Jos, a northern Nigerian society, perceive and describe their experience with corruption and to determine what this analysis may reveal as implications for faith-based development NGOs in that society. The study investigated and compared three NGOs in the development sector, which included two indigenous (Local) NGOs and a foreign (International) NGO. The dimensions, which the study explored, are: Institutional adaptations to corruption; sources and conditions for corruption; their attitudinal similarities and differences; and their resource control strategies.

This study entailed the use of multidimensional methodology for gathering data, which was mostly qualitative, but also included quantifiable descriptive statistics. The data collection required a pluralistic approach to identify and examine all relevant sources which included local written sources, oral sources and archival material. A special application of a narrative methodology in several focused interviews and participant observation in the field allowed data to be collected on a subject of study that is difficult to research. Also, a narrative methodology was adopted because it enabled the researcher to elicit the self-perceptions and self-constructions of the actors on the practice of corruption, unlike some studies employing methods which produce perceptions and definitions about the corrupt acts of actors by others and not perceptions by and of the actors about themselves.

The study’s unique contribution is the introduction of the voices of those at the grassroots of society into our definition of corruption. For the voices of the grassroots, much corruption is seen as due to prejudice based on ethnic and tribal loyalty, which leads to undeserved marginalization. Thus corruption goes beyond individual transactions to its effect on whole groups of people. The study concludes that corruption and attitudes towards it are culturally and socially constructed and this happens also at institutional levels, shaping the behaviour of the same actors in different ways. Specifically the same actors suppress corruption within kinship groups and promote it within formal state institutions. As institutions, the churches and its agencies can extend the religious resource available to them beyond the kinship of family and ethnicity to the bonds and moral ties of the Christian family. This is suggested as one way to reduce the power of ethnic and tribal loyalty, while at the same time retaining greater local accountability and providing the necessary institutional support for resisting corruption.