



Operationalization of Ngos Activities: Proposing an E-Social Network Model for Ngos Activities in Edo State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

In recent years, especially in developed countries, various systems have been created to advance the management and organization of the potentials and resource base of NGOs towards maximizing their benefits to the society. Such systems use the latest communications technology and electronic and digital resources, and have developed huge networking systems like SIGLE (System for Information on Grey Literature) and NTIS (National Technical Information Service) to distribute and manage the efforts of civil societies. Because of the scarcity of a global standardized organization system for information management and often limited access to computer technology, efficient management of information and development cooperation/interrelationship among NGOs is still seriously lacking, particularly in developing countries. Based on the impact assessment of registered NGOs in Edo State, Nigeria, this study proposes an e-social network model. This paper explains the current state of interactive relations among NGO organizations within the State, and stakeholders and actors in development interventions, then assesses their needs for a networking system, and finally recommends a functional electronic network model for the operationalization of their development activities to meet today's global challenges.

Keywords: Networking, E-communication, Information management, Community Development

INTRODUCTION

Conceptualizing the relationship and interaction among NGOs in Edo state will help concretize the link between NGO sector, people of Edo State Community and donor agencies and other potential external actors. I feel strongly that those who spend intervention/project monies have a responsibility to state publicly their effort, assess its validity and to make information about these judgments available to those who were the intended beneficiaries and to others whose interests may have been affected.

NGOs in Edo State and in Nigeria are involved in social development and are continually affected, directly or indirectly, by the experiences of the world in the field of crises, disasters, and other related events. These NGOs are playing a vital role in managing, creating, and disseminating information, ideas, and solutions for rehabilitation and social development. They serve as active partners of the Government and International agencies.

Faced with new challenges, due to their increasing numbers, sizes, and interventions. NGOs community in Edo State, Nigeria, are in dire need of a coherent networking system that will

enhance efficient management of information and knowledge flow atmosphere, typical of what obtains in developed world.

The value of network perspective surpasses other abstract models that seemingly have been in used (especially, in other areas of development interventions). The most appropriate comparator is the logical framework for summarizing the intensions of development aid programme (Gasper, 1997; 2000). There are also other similar abstract stage models of what is called "The program Logic" used in other fields such as Bennett's hierarchy (Bennett 1975) which has seven stages, and the Kellogg foundation's logic model which has five stages (Kellogg, 2000).

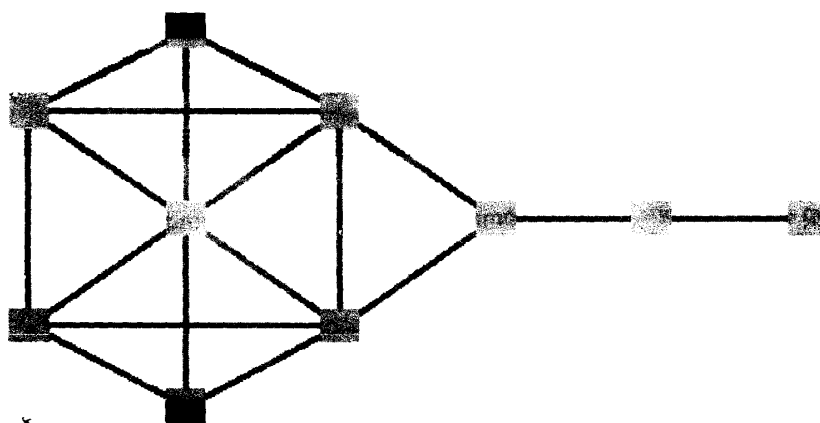
However, the above line of thought, do not advocate the total rejection of the use of the logical framework. It is useful in a situation involving a small number of actors and where outcomes within in those relationships are reasonably predictable. Not, surprisingly, it often features in contractual relationships. It may also be useful strictly as a summary device (Davies 2003).

For effective operationalization and internationalization of development activities, functional E- Network is the most suitable, efficient, and cost effective medium for both NGOs and Community Based Organization's (CBOs) in Edo State, Nigeria, to meet today's unfolding world challenges. The paper, thus, seeks to develop an e-social network model for the operationalization of NGOs development activities, in Edo state, to meet global challenges.

WHAT IS A NETWORK MODEL?

A Network is a simple concept. It consists of two things: nodes and links. In social network analysis the nodes of concern are people, groups, and organization. In other areas of Network analysis the nodes of concern may be pages in the World Wide Web, different species in the ecosystem or different compounds in a cell (Davies 2003). A social network model will, thus, contain as links, social contact, changes of information, political influences, money, joint membership in an organization, joint participation in specific events or many other aspects of human relationships.

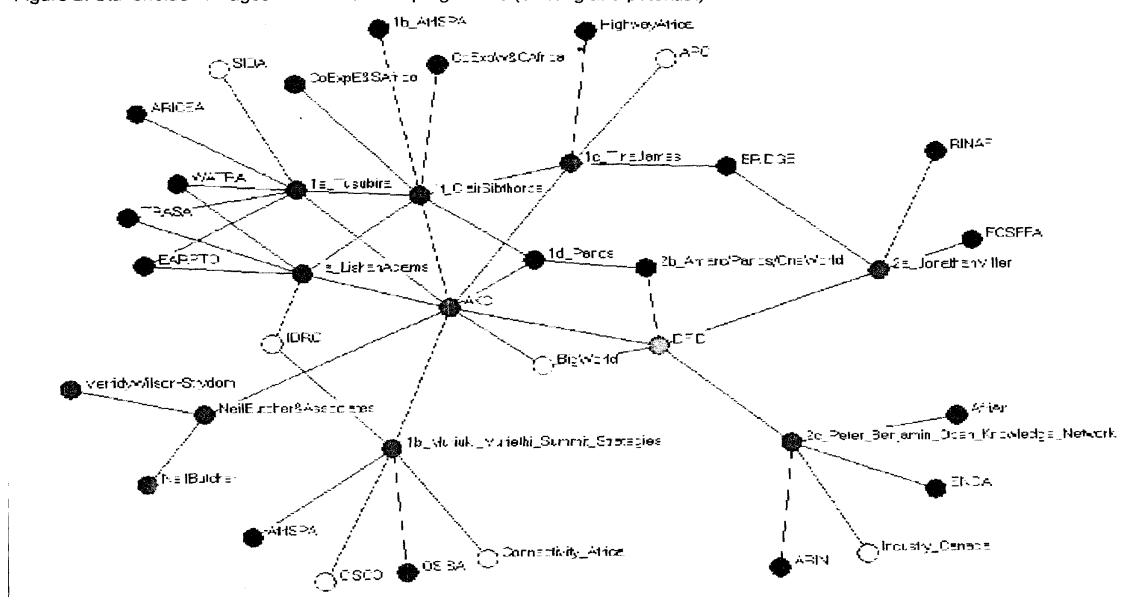
Figure 1: Krackhardt's kite – used to illustrate different types of network relationships



The defining feature of social network analysis is the focus on the structure relationship between people (or whatever entity is of concern). This is contrasted with other areas of the social sciences where it is claimed the focus has been on attributes of actors, the characteristic of people, groups and organization, rather that the relations between them (Scott, 2002, Monge and Contractor, 2003).

It should be noted here that this conception of networks is very broad; it encompasses formal hierarchical organizations, heterachies (Matrix Structure) teams, named and unnamed network and crowds.

Figure 2: Stakeholder linkages in an Africa ICT programme (existing and potential)



Source: adapted from Davies' Network Perspective (2003)

Justification For Social Network Perspective

Development activities are enmeshed in social networks, formal and informal, involving individuals and organizations which principal aim is to affect the lives of people within those networks, and those marginal to those networks. In contrast other abstract networks are about stages described as outputs purpose and goal, whose specific meaning is not always easy to communicate across cultures or even within culture (Or organization).

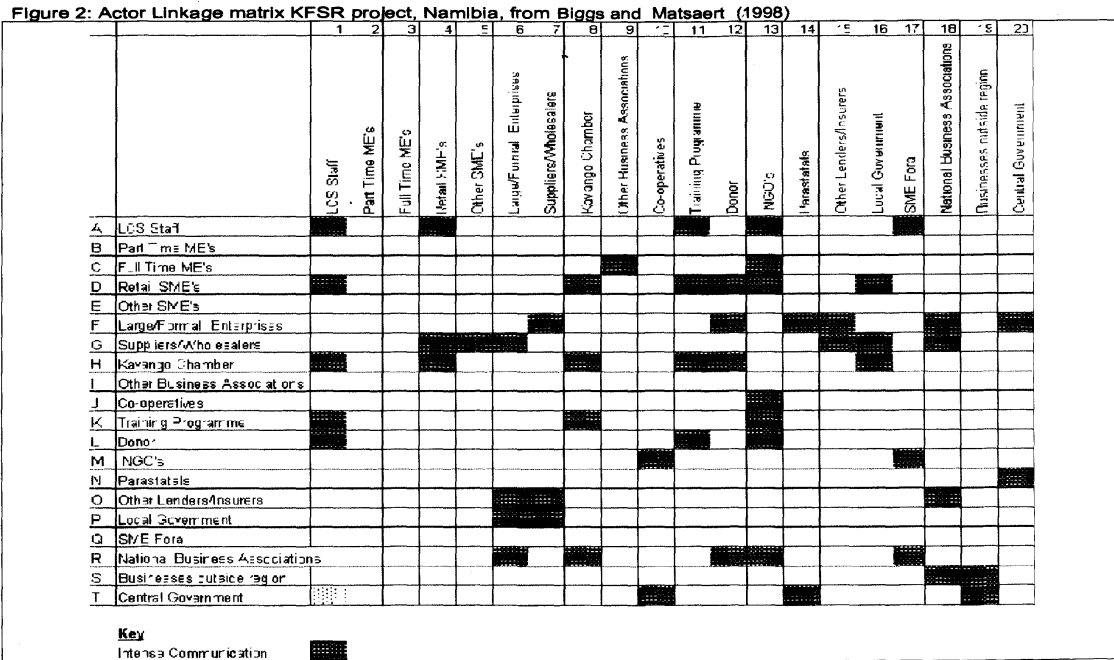
Describing development activities within the confines of social network, systematically, brings in a multi-stakeholder perspective. This is not present in the structure of logical framework model or other abstract models. The essence of capturing multi-stakeholders in social network perspective it to highlight stakeholders' interest and their relationship with project, which help to highlight potential impact in development projects.

For instance, a social network representation of an aid programme enables attention to be quickly focused on whose is influencing whom, directly and indirectly, up to whatever level of complexity is required. Figure 2 shows a provisional mapping of stakeholder relationships in a multi- country information and communication technologies (ICTS) project in Africa. Though oversight noted in this social network representation that are to be resolved include and how many Africa organization still need to be brought into the network, how the Africa Organization will link further out to poor communities and their institutions, and how the donors can link up.

Nature Of Network Modeling

There is a wide range of methods for describing the structure of network, and people's places within those networks. This provides theory builders with a corresponding large number of opportunities to specify the type of changes they think will take place in the network structures (as the dependant variable) or the types of network structures that will be

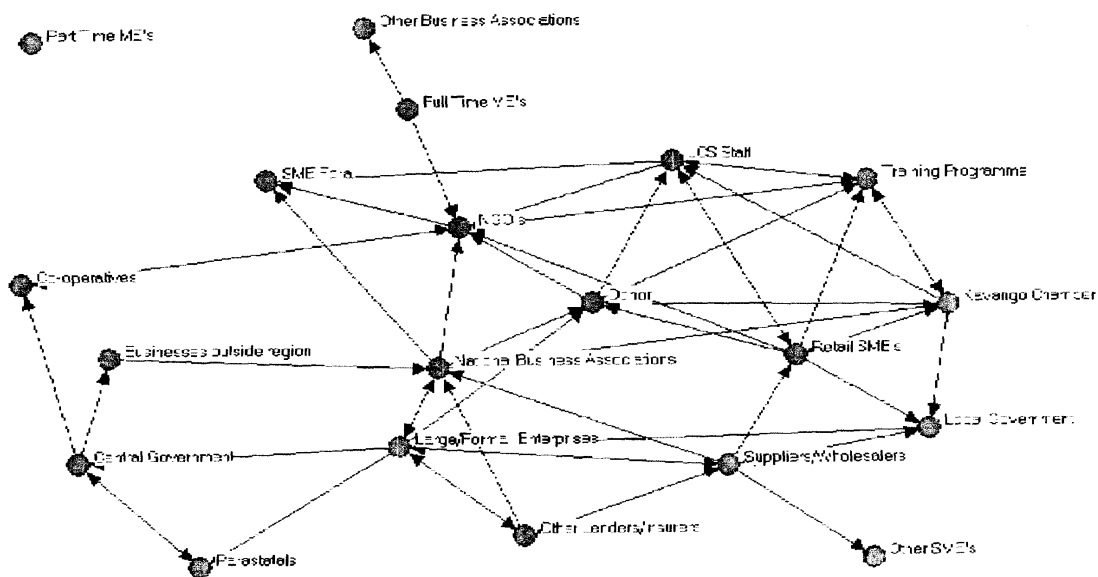
associated with particular changes (network structure as the dependant variable). The same methods can be used simply to describe the current set of relationship relating to development intervention



Source: adapted from Davies' Network Perspective (2003)

One means of representing network structures is through the use of matrices showing actors links with actors. These allow compact and detailed descriptions of network relationships but they are not easy to comprehend at a glance. This type has been applied to actors' linkages by Biggs & Mtsaert (1998) and Temel (2001).

Figure 4: Network diagram showing linkages in Figure 3 matrix (from Biggs and Mtsaert (1998))



Source: adapted from Davies' Network Perspective (2003)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There is a wide range of theories available to inform thinking about changes in networks, and this is very multidisciplinary. At the same time social network analysis is free from dominance by any particular theoretical view as to how networks. Monge and Contractor (2003) have noted “the field does not have a coherent, overarching framework for integrating conceptual, theoretical and empirical work” while some may see this as limitation, it is also an opportunity.

Further still in network conceptualization Monge and Contractor in their theory of Communication Networks review, identify and analyzed five major families of theories about networks. Outside of the field of social network analysis there are other important theoretical perspectives on networks, most notably that of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS), and the mathematics of networks (Barabasi, 2002) which have prompted new forms of investigation into social networks. For instant the Department For International Development (DFID) have funded examination of networks and social capital, this seems to have limited its references largely to the literature within the development field (Fraser et al, 2003).

Network theories have practical value. Through network structure a network of NGO networks in Bangladesh could monitor and evaluate its achievements. The method, which was pre-tested in a workshop with network members, made use of Burt’s (2000) analysis of the “network structure of social capital”. This distinguished two aspects of social capital, as it exists in network form. One is in the form of a dense set of interconnections between network members, which is seen as the basis of trust. The other is in form of individual members’ own particular linkage beyond the network. This means of brokering access to influence and resources between the network and wider world. All members had their own specific links to external resources (in the form of donors) but fewer had external links that could be used for influencing purposes in their field, more importantly, mutual knowledge about the existence of these links seemed more limited.

Network analysis has been carried out at many different scales (Barabasi, 2002). At the smallest scale, the network structure of the human genome has been subject of research, as have metabolic networks within human cells. On a larger scale, studies have been made of inter-locking directorates and global alliances in corporations, international trade networks and terrorist networks. The network structure of the World Wide Web is a subject of continuing interest.

There are a number of developments that make scalability an important attribute of network representations. As is now well known, in many countries DFID has been scaling up the size of its aid investments and moving from single donor to multi-donor support. The justification here is that there are a multitude of actors whose interactions need to be taken into account. A network perspective is increasingly relevant at this level.

There are also scale related developments within the third (NGO) sector that increase the relevance of a network perspective. Alliances between major NGOs and international donors, such as the Oxfams, the SCF’s the CAREs and World Visions, all have varying degrees of semi autonomous network structures, with less centralization of authority than their individual country components have had up to now. More visible are the special purpose international advocacy networks involving large numbers of very diverse groups of NGOs, around issues relating to debt, trade, HIV/AIDs and more.

Insight Into Ngos Activities In Edo State

Traditionally, philanthropic social institutions such as hospitals, schools, orphanage home, etc were operated mostly by religious organizations in the past in then Western region where the defunct Bendel State emerged and subsequently Edo and Delta State. Though these philanthropic organizations were not recognized as NGOs, the terminology NGOs gained popularity in the seventies as an adequate nomenclature distinct from government owned establishments.

The activities of NGOs which began in the region when it was part of the defunct Bendel State gained strength in the 80's during the period of the Nigerian economic crises and the pre structural adjustment era. The numbers of NGOs and the nature of their work have changed remarkably over the years.

Table 1: Registered NGOs in Edo State

S/N	NAME	ADDRESS
1	Women Health and Action Research Centre (WHARC)	4 Aloje ST. off Uwasota rd. Benin City. (B/C)
2	Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigerian (PPFN)	156 2 nd East Circular RD. B/C
3	Scripture Union (SU)	56 Urubi ST. B/C
4	IRRRAG Nig.	43 Ehaekpen ST. B/C
5	Department of Health Service, Catholic Arch Diocese	30 Airport ST., B/C
6	African Women Empowerment Guild (AWEG)	29 Airport rd, B/C
7	Red Cross Society	Red Cross rd, off Ikpokpan rd
8	Voice of Niger Delta Women	27 Oza ST. Abraka RD.
9	Christian Women Fellowship International (CWFII)	4 Faith Way
10	The Balm Initiative	3B Usama ST. GRA B/C
11	SAVAN	UBTH Benin
12	Centre For Population and Environmental Development	2 BDPA housing Estate Ugbowo
13	Edo Under Privileged Trust Fund	2 Ihama ST. B/C
14	Koyanum Immalah Foundation KIF	30 1 st East Circular RD B/C
15	Stay Alive Organization	6 2 nd Aburime St. New Benin B/C
16	Help & Encourage Persons with HIV/AIDS (HEPA)	3 Iheya ST. New Benin B/C
17	Child Survival Campaigns	224 East Circular RD B/C
18	Idia Renaissance	2 Ihama RD. GRA B/C
19	FONWIP	45 Owina ST. B/C

20	Imade Foundation	103 New Lagos RD B/C
21	JDPC Benin	30 Airport rd B/C
22	Life Above Poverty Organization (LAPO)	Plot 6, S&T rd, opposite Uselu market B/C
23	JDPC Auchi	Auchi- Jettu Road
24	Owan Women Empowerment Project (OWEP)	Afuze
25	Oraifo Medical center Union	1 oriafo Close off Uromi-Ilushi rd., Uromi
26	Girls Power Initiative (GPI)	1 Egua close st. B/C
27	Suru Medical Centre, Ubiaja	Sun Lane off Askpa st. Eguname Ubiaja
28	SEPTRAD Ewohimi	10 Ofuri market rd. Okaigben Ewohimi
29	Women Action Initiative	30 Airport (catholic Estate B/C)
30	Society For Women and AIDS In African (SWAN)	UBTH, Edo State Chapter
31	Teens and Youths Information and Empowerment Centre (Teens Youths)	43, Eheekpen st. B/C
32	National Council for Women Societies	Edo State Chapter
33	Foundation Builders	45, Owina st., off sokpenba rd, B/C
34	Universal Welfare Association	7b Eghadase ST. B/C

Source: Ministry of Information Edo State, Nigeria (2012).

Statistics about the numbers of NGOs are notoriously incomplete, however, currently it is estimated that there is somewhat between 60 — 65 NGOs, while only 34 are formally registered in Edo State.

The NGOs exhibited in Table 1 are mostly local, individual operational NGOs, as they can best be described; they operate according to their purpose, philosophy, sectoral expertise and scope of activities. A run down of the registered NGOs shows that they exist in different NGOs typologies as exemplified by World Bank, they can be classified according to whether they are more relief or development-oriented, whether they are religious or secular, whether they stress services delivery or participation and whether they are more public or private oriented (World Bank 2002).

Table 1 shows the registered NGOs in Edo State. Though the exact numbers of NGOs cannot be said to be exhaustive by the list, since systematic documentation of NGOs work in the Nigeria is weak. A look at the partial distribution of NGOs in Edo state shows that the NGOs are concentrated in one region of the state, mostly within the Capital territory of the State. It is observed from the distribution in the State that 29 out of 34 of the registered NGOs are located in Edo South, precisely in Benin City, the State Capital.

Roughly over three decades have been the activities of NGOs in the region, with some emerging actively into the scene and leaving almost immediately as they had come. What seen to be

factors that may have informed the manner and ways NGOs have operated in the region over time remains a crucial question to be answered.

Table 11: Geographical distribution of NGOs by region

EDO STATE		
Region	No	%
Edo South	29	85
Edo Central	3	9
Edo West	2	6

Source: Author's survey (2012)

The emergency of NGOs have been attributed to certain factors, key among them is the era of structural reforms, most especially the IMF/ World Bank sponsored adjustment programme which ushered in an economics of deregulation and the active participation of private sector as well as the NGOs in development activities. For the data expressed in table III, the SAP, high rate of poverty and low level of education are dominant factors influencing the establishment of NGOs in the region. Of these three, poverty rate was ascribed to be most influential factor.

Table III: Factors enhancing the establishment of NGOs

Factor	Strongly Agreed (%)	Strongly Disagreed (%)	Indifference (%)
SAP	60	35	05
Democracy	20	64	16
Low Per Capital	49	31	20
High Rate of Poverty	72	26	02
Low level of Education	69	18	13

Source: Author's survey (2012)

Almost four decades have gone by since the operation of NGOs in the region and their strategic roles to development could be said to be at the minimum. Strategies often are relevant to the NGOs reality in the development of communities, since these strategies look beyond the individual communities and reinforce changes in specific policies and institutions at local, national and global areas. The strategies applied to community development by the range of NGOs under consideration are expressed in table IV. Though there seems to exist bewildering varieties of development strategies, which tend to make the rounds among the NGOs, but these are not meaningfully significant in the process of development within the study region. For instant, numerous forms of seminar and workshop were frequent activities carried out by the NGOs, but their efficiency or development impact on the communities are relatively difficult to assess.

Table IV: Strategies of development oriented NGOs

Strategies	Edo State	
	No. of NGOs	Percentage
Structural Adjustment Programme	16	43%
Relief & Welfare	15	41%
Enlightenment Campaign	04	11%
Capacity Building and Empowerment	16	43%

Source: Author's survey (2012)

Table V: Problems of project implementation by NGOs

Problem	Edo State		
	High	Moderate	Little
Lack of Government Support	53	35	12
Financial Constraint	65	30	05
Religious & Cultural Barriers/Community tribal strive	62	25	13
Lack of Professional Skill	17	28	55
Lack of Co-operation from target group hostility & harsh environmental terrain	20	11	69

Source: Author's survey (2012)

Development Impact Of Edo State Ngos

Even though there exists an increasing registration of NGOs in Edo state, findings reveal that a few are, however, active in operation leaving a majority of them inactive and even in most cases not existing. Unfortunately this seems to be the case with a majority of the NGOs. This is rather disturbing, but like it has been reasoned in some quarters, the non-operation and/or non-existence of some registered NGOs have been associated with the notion of “global Soup Kitchen” for NGOs (Edwards 2002). The message here is that the unwritten core mission of these NGOs is to part-take in the share of enormous international aid from foreign donor bodies. For instant the U.K. Department for Development earmarked 34million pound sterling for development assistance to Nigeria in 2003 purported to be channeled through union provided fund to one hundred NGOs belonging to the umbrella organization, Transition monitoring Group from 1999 to 2003 for the essence to follow up on the Federal and States election within this period.

The few NGOs that proved active exacted significant impact on the social and economic life of communities in their zones of operation. For instant the WHARC created values in the life of the communities in Edo state as revealed by the findings of the study. WHARC health delivery services has extended well beyond Edo State to other states like Akwa-Ibom, Cross Rivers, Imo, Anambra, Taraba, Adamawa and Bauchi, It has impacted education greatly through its libraiy and internet services. The library has access to more than 200 online journals. It also maintains a list of useful reproductive health websites that are retrieval of vital information.

The WHARC has also impacted in the area of employment generation by parading staff strength of forty employees including doctors, nurses and programmers.

The Idia Renaissance, through its various programmes and enlightenment campaign has ameliorated the rate of decadence in social values and orders in Edo state. Its activities have forestalled incessant human trafficking in the state and beyond. It has helped to rehabilitate victims of social disorders and human trafficking. A total of 357 cases of trafficked victims have been handled by the organization. Others notable impacts of the organization's programme on the lives of communities in Edo State include the following:

- a. A total of 210 children have benefited from its 12 year scholarship programme
- b. A total of 29 beneficiaries have completed their secondary education (each was given a total sum of 10,000naira per person. This sum covers uniform, school fess, cost of books and pocket money.
- c. The organization's Trust Fund has touched the lives of so many amongst who are

- I. 175 indigent children currently under scholarship.
 - II. Brain tumour operation of 2 babies (Naomi & Fumi)
 - III. Donation of equipment & facilities to handicap children.
 - IV. Provision of materials and succor to orphanage homes (Oronsaye and Edo orphanage centers)
 - V. Grants to University of Benin Teaching Hospital, David Osunde Foundation and Ede Maternity.
 - VI. Offsetting of Hospital bills for so many patients who could not afford to pay.
- d. The Organization Skill Acquisition Centre have benefited a total of 922 girls who have acquired several skills through free training sessions in vocations of their choice such as catering & Hotel management, computer & secretarial studies, Fashion Design & Tailoring and Hair dressing & Cosmetology.

Unfortunately, Survey revealed that most registered NGOs were only existing in paper. These NGOs were not operative in the addresses purported for their official residences. In the few cases where operative residence is located, the NGOs internal structure resembles that of a small private business where the people who set up NGOs are the directors, administrators, accountants with one or two clerical support staff. They appoint themselves all and all and never face election.

This revelation is most unfortunate, because it suggests that NGOs in the state have replaced their precious model of class struggle and potent service provider with a strategy of docility and ineffectiveness. In other words NGOs have given up their attempts of organizing the communities as collective actors and impacting positively on the lives of the poor, but have chosen the path of "the classical entrepreneurial Big man" a term used by Chabal (1999). It refers to cases where NGOs are used purely for commercial purpose. It is as well as to recognize that there is today an international aid market, which Africans knows how to play with great skill. Indeed there is very little doubt that NGOs spend an excessive proportion of their budget on furnishing their members with sophisticated expensive equipment - computers, four wheel drive vehicles, assorted kinds of jeep and limousines - leaving too little for much needed development projects.

The study also reveals: a case of distributional inequality of NGOs operation in the state. The consequence of this will be the tendency of creating territorial imbalances between the regions well served by NGOs and those where NGOs actions were ineffective, especially now that the growing importance of NGOs as service provider has allowed state to assume even less responsibility for the welfare of their populace.

DEVELOPING AN E-SOCIAL NETWORK MODEL

From the above impact assessment of NGOs in Edo State, Nigeria, there are apparently loose ends with respect to registration procedure, spatial distribution, feedback mechanism, national and international connectivity and impact reflective mechanism. All these lapses, a network perspective, if developed, could arrest.

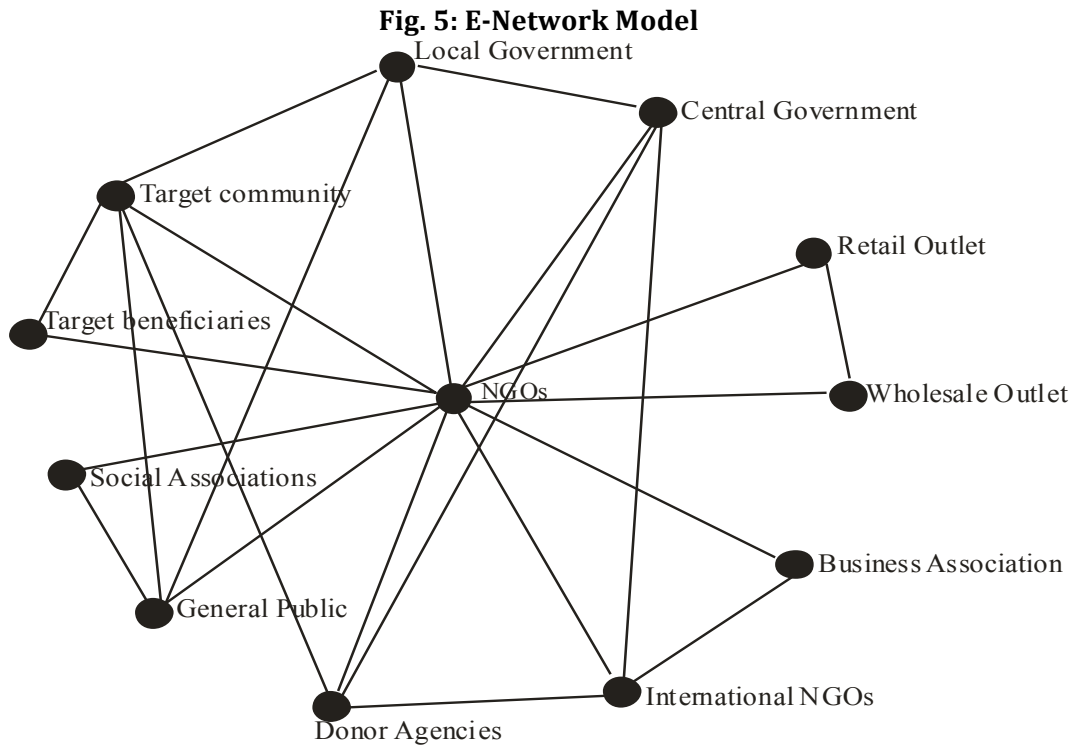
Temel (2001) has pointed that social network analysis can help "bridge the gap between conceptual descriptions of systems and their quantitative descriptions". One of the problems of attempts to use a systems perspective in the past has been the intangibility of the systems, and the boundaries, that are under discussion. When a network diagram is built up out of knowledge about a set of links between actors, each of which has one directional or bi-directional processes of influence we end up with a diagram showing something that could

legitimately be called a system. Furthermore, there are techniques within social network analysis for the identification of clusters, showing more internal linkages than external linkages, which is one way of defining system boundaries.

In their analysis of the agricultural innovation system in Azerbaijan Temel et al developed a matrix and a graph showing how different actors varied in the extent to which they influenced others, versus were the subject of others influencing. Similar analysis could be developed for many multi-actor development activity settings, using information about each actors' reported linkages with others. What is possibly interesting in network structure themselves is that such diagrams can also generate implications for evaluations of these systems.

Proposed Network Model

Adopting the core nature of network structure, a social network perspective of NGOs in Edo state with impact focuses on identifiable actors and the structure of relationship between them could take the following representation.



Source: Researcher' Estimation

Fig. 6: Actor Linkage matrix for Edo State NGOs (reflecting connectivity in fig 5.)

		NGOs	Local Gov.	Central Gov.	Retail outlet	Wholsal outlit	Bus. Assoc.	Inter. NGOs	Donor Agen.	Gen. public	Soc. Organ.	Target Ben.	Target comm.
1	NGOs (national centre)												
2	Local government												
3	Central government												
4	Retail outlet												
5	Wholesale outlet												
6	Bus. Associations												
7	International NGOs												
8	Donor agencies												
9	General public												
10	Social associations												
11	Target beneficiaries												
12	Target communities												

Source: Researcher' Estimation

Electronic-Networking

With fewer resources, a simple networking system will be more suitable for Edo state NGOs, especially those with computer base unit. The proposed e-social network system will be software-based through NGO websites (Internet Server). The website will collect and disseminate the data. Through this website and appropriate software, an option will be created which will give access to members to feed and retrieve (search) information, obtaining membership, request/suggestion, expression effect or interest e.t.c.

Edo State has about 34 registered NGO that are neither automated nor computerized except for the six active ones whose activities and impacts were assessed in this paper. Majority of others are run manually due to the scarcity of finance, difficult in availability of good library software, and computer skills.

This proposed electronic networking system can solve the problem of all Edo State NGO information management system. They may computerize their operation within a few days without extra financial burden and computer expertise. Their operations have very small data which can be uploaded within few days. For this purpose it will not be necessary for a member

NGO to be computerized before acquiring the membership within the network structure in the State. To join the network, one PC and Internet connection will be required. The member NGO will be able to download the software with a simple tutorial. They may feed their data in the software offline (without connecting to the main database), and whenever they want they could upload their data into the main database by connecting to network via internet. They can also download their own data and the data or relevant activities of other NGOs.

In this system there will be an option to upload and download the data of all End user clients. There will be a facility available that the data from a member NGO can be feed without connecting the Internet and main server. If an NGO is not able to purchase more internet hours for data feeding and retrieving, the member NGO will be able to download all the data available on server by connecting the net, and they can search and feed the data offline. After a certain period they can download and upload to update their database.

Already Computerized NGOs will have no problem to be a part of the network: The NGOs that are already computerized and have compatible software for their operations will be able to be a member. They can merge their data and download the network's data by the software, or they can run both software parallel in one computer.

CONCLUSION

Through the proposed network system, the NGOs in Edo State will be encouraged to share, to create, use and maintain an information system at the least possible cost, while the existing information resources and data base of NGOs will come within the range of users, that same can be circulated as National NGOs Data. This network can be extended and easily assessed by external actors.

An end user may become a server and may extend connections to other users inside or outside the network. There could be enhanced development to sub-networks within the system. This simply means that NGOs of same field and same nature, for example NGOs working on health may evolve sub-net work for sharing their resources and expanding their operations.

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