



## ASSESSING THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF NGOs IN NIGERIA: A POVERTY REDUCTION AND SOCIAL PROTECTION PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aimed at assessing the relevance and effectiveness of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in fostering the Nigerian economy over the years. This is achievable through a critical evaluation of the distinctive effects of some of its components (i.e. poverty reduction, social protection, gender equality and income generation) on the Nigerian economy as a whole. The study adopt the Auto-Regressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) technique of analysis and employed a data range of (1992-2023). Moreover, the study interact poverty reduction and social protection to examine its joint effect on the Nigerian economy. Furthermore, the study computes the marginal effect of poverty reduction at different margins of social protection expenditure and services, respectively. Findings from the study indicates a significant positive change in the Nigerian economy attributed to improved social protection expenditure and services and gender equality. Conversely, poverty reduction (as measured by employment rate) negatively affects the economy as well as income generation. However, the interaction of poverty reduction and social protection have a positive significant effect on the Nigerian economy. On the other hand, the results indicates the marginal effect of poverty reduction to have a greater significant effect on the Nigerian economy at a maximum level of social protection expenditure than at a minimum levels. This study recommends for the Nigerian government intervention and support in executing the NGO projects, programs and policies across the nation for improved outcome. It also recommends for enlightenment and awareness campaigns in rural areas on the need for girls' child equal opportunities through school enrolment, employment rate, and economic empowerment and leadership positions.*

### Keywords:

NGOs, Social Protection, Gender Equality, ARDL, Marginal Effect, Economic Growth

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### 1.0 Introduction

Non-governmental organizations (NGO's) are critical change agents of positive transformations in the most vulnerable and less-privileged regions of the world in terms of poverty reduction, social protection, human rights protection, technological assistance, education and health and gender equality and other forms of humanitarian services (National Bureau for Non-

Governmental Organizations, NBNGO, 2024). The NGO's operates without regional borders globally and mostly source its funds from donor bodies and philanthropies across the world.

The third developing Nations mostly found in Africa continent of the world has consistently been ranked the most poor

nations globally with the least Human Development Index (HDI) in comparison to majority of their counterparts from advanced global regions such as America and the Europe etc. despite their abundant natural and human resources (Aduma, Onah and Asadu, 2023). In recent times the prevalence of poverty rate is quiet alarming in some global regions drawing the attention of the United Nations (UN) under the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) to conduct a global poverty survey and finds Africa to be the most poorest continents in the world with nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of less than \$10 billion followed by South America and Asia (UNSD, 2023). To tackle this intense socio-economic challenge of global poverty prevalence which hampers the quality of life, the NGOs took a leading role by active engagement in humanitarian, health, education and economic support to majority of vulnerable communities around the world.

Based on a global study conducted by the United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 2017, it has been revealed that most of global communities with prevalence of poverty are mostly found in Africa and characterized by; gender inequality and marginalization, domestic violence, high rate of income variation, armed robbery and sex trafficking (UNICEF, 2017). However, tackling such huge socio-economic problems on a global scale is a tremendous challenging task that requires a holistic approach. It is with regards to this that the NGO,s amplifies their horizon of humanitarian aids and services pervasively across the entire globe sampling the most vulnerable segments of global communities as their main target of effective change with the hope of making an overall impact. As such, all forms of NGO engagements with global communities are geared towards lowering the rate and prevalence of poverty, life quality improvement, social protection, employment generation, education, and gender equality from a global perspective (International Monetary Fund IMF, 2020). In

its pursuit to cater for the interest of the poor and vulnerable, the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) ensures that neither the government nor the private sector does not exploit the society and environment for their personal or political gain thereby leading more effective and sustainable local development services than those promoted by most governments ( Shimawua, 2020).

The poor communities of the world mostly found in Africa, South America and Asia as reported by the UN characterized by diverse cultural beliefs, high poverty rate, unemployment and marginalization of the female gender gives less attention to effective resource exploration, utilization and allocations, thereby tormenting the socio-economic lives and well-being of its citizens mostly at the grassroots which could be attributed to corruption, mismanagement of resources and poor governance among others (International Labor Organization ILO, 2023).

With more emphasis on Nigerian communities as one of the vulnerable nations in Africa, this study aimed at examining the significant roles played by NGOs on the Nigerian economy through a critical assessment of programs and projects aimed at poverty reduction, social protection, gender equality and income generation. This study is timely as it's motivated by the increasing rate of poverty, poor living condition and high cost of living, gender marginalization, unimaginable gap between the rich and poor in most of Nigerian communities across its six geo-political zones (ILO, 2023). In light of the foregoing scenarios, quiet a number of studies were distinctively conducted on African regions and particularly, Nigeria to examine the significance of NGO programs towards poverty reduction, social protection, income stimulation and gender equality. For example, Walter et al (2024) investigated the effectiveness of Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's) programmes towards alleviating poverty in Enugu State, Nigeria. Also, Okechukwu et al

(2021) examine the effort and challenges facing David Umahi Foundation Initiatives on Poverty Reduction (DUFIPR) in Ebonyi State, Nigeria for the period of 2015-2019. Similarly, Gisaor (2021) access the impact of Non-Government organizations (NGOs) on poverty reduction in Makurdi local government area of Benue State, Nigeria. However, this study joins the queue of extant literature on Nigeria by making a unique contribution which aimed at examining the role of NGO,s on the Nigerian economy through poverty reduction, social protection, gender equality, and income generation. The study employed the ARDL estimation technique and interacted the major variables of interest (poverty reduction and social protection) in order to observe its significance on the overall economy. Moreover, the study computed the marginal effect of poverty reduction of the economy at different levels of social protection. Indeed, this is a unique addition to literature in this context. This study is arranged in five sections as follows: introduction, literature review, methodology, results and discussions and conclusions and recommendations.

## 2.0 Literature Review

For the benefit of this study and an in-depth elaboration of the subject matter, some theories and empirical findings were reviewed in 2.1 and 2.2, respectively.

### 2.1 Theoretical Literature

Under this subsection, some theories relating to poverty management, and income creation were critically reviewed.

#### Neo-conservative theory of poverty

This theory is predominantly influenced by the Malthusian paradigm developed by Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-18834) and later improved upon by Robert Brenner in 1976 (cited in Harvey & Reed, 1922:281). This theory attributes poverty to economic factors resulting from the tension between population pressures and subsistence. This

poverty therefore is based on material wealth where over- population of the poor coupled with poorly managed capitalistic systems result in poverty.

#### The social democratic theory of poverty

This theory was advanced based on experiences in Britain in the 1920s. The theory assumes that poverty is a class based concept and it comes about due to class struggles in the society and not on the basis of means of production. Piero Sraffa who advanced this theory argued that class struggles went beyond production spheres and therefore restricting poverty explanations to productions means as was the case in Marxian theory of poverty would be limiting the scope needed to understand poverty. The politics around the manner in which goods and services are produced and distributed has an effect on poverty just like the means of production used (Sraffa, 1926:550).

#### Programmatic theory of poverty

Programmatic poverty is a kind of poverty practiced by religious or political leaders wishing to benefit from the positive attributes associated with poverty despite the fact that such leaders are not poor. A missionary priest of the Roman Catholic Church and a Buddhist all take vows of poverty. Harvey and Reed (1992:2880) observe that this type of poverty is of marginal interest to social scientists investigating the structural roots of poverty unless the social scientist is interested in studying the sociology of culture.

#### Marxist theory of poverty

Marxists contend that capitalism and related social and political factors based on class division cause poverty. Adherents to this school of thought advocate that "the market is inherently dysfunctional" (Blank, 2010). According to this view, capitalist societies keep the cost of labour unnaturally lower than its value added through the threat of unemployment (the "reserve army of

unemployed”), and therefore poverty in a capitalist economy can only be alleviated via strict regulation of the market (e.g., in the form of minimum wages).<sup>50</sup> A wider range of authors in the political economy field suggest that poverty is predominantly the result of structural factors, including stratified labour markets as well as prejudice and corruption. In both cases, the policy message is that anti-discrimination laws and labour market reforms are essential to overcome structural barriers that impede employment and cause poverty. Links of environment problems to poverty can also be analysed from a radical point of view.

### **The absolute impoverishment hypothesis**

This notable theory of income inequality suggests that the prolonged decline in income shares of lower income groups in the early stages of development has important welfare implications. There is clearly a very strong presumption that the poor benefit from development much less than the rich. More seriously, it has been argued by Adelman and Morris (1973) that developing countries face the prospect not just of increasing relative inequality, but also of prolonged absolute impoverishment for the lower income groups. This view needs to be examined in some detail.

## **2.2 Empirical Literature**

Evidently, judging from past engagements till date, NGOs interventions in the socio-economic lives of the less-privileged in different world regions including Nigeria significantly impacted on their overall well-being through poverty reduction, improved health facilitations, supporting quality education, ensuring equal opportunities for the female gender and facilitation of small scale businesses. It is in this regards that some scholars deem it necessary to acknowledge the efforts of humanitarian services as well as assessing the effectiveness of such impact on the targeted population over a given period of time with the aim of ascertaining the significance of their contributions to the Nigerian economy.

To acknowledge the significance of extant literature and for the purpose of timely contribution to literature, numerous studies on the relevance of NGOs in fostering socio-economic progress in Nigeria as a whole were critically reviewed. For example, Okechukwu et al (2021) examine the effort and challenges facing David Umahi Foundation Initiatives on Poverty Reduction (DUFIPR) in Ebonyi State, Nigeria for the period of 2015-2019. The study adopted a descriptive survey technique and a qualitative method for data collection which includes: journals, textbooks, David Umahi annual Report, Ebonyi State Ministry of Youths and Sports Yearly Report on NGOs Activities, newspaper/magazines and the internet. Findings from the study proves that David Umahi Foundation is less capable of reducing poverty than has been theorized and idiosyncratically propagated, because they come with pre-planned agendas with strings attached, under the camouflage of poverty reduction.

Similarly, Gisaor (2021) assess the impact of Non-Government organizations (NGOs) on poverty reduction in Makurdi local government area of Benue State, Nigeria using a descriptive statistical approach to analyze primary data obtained from the respondents through a well-structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview administered to the staff and officials of selected NGOs in the study area. Result from the study shows that the respondents confirm some benefits in terms of increased income, provision of good means of transportation, conducive accommodation, feeding and sleeping materials. Despite these benefits, the study identified some challenges confronting the operations of NGOs in the study area. One of the biggest challenges was inadequate finance to execute all their programmes as well as poor disbursement of loans and grants to beneficiaries. Another limitations from the findings of this study suggests that the activities of NGOs were limited to Makurdi (the state capital) while majority of

the less-privileged people were residing in rural communities outside the state capital.

Furthermore, Walter et al (2024) investigated the effectiveness of Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's) programmes towards alleviating poverty in Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, it sought to examine the poverty alleviation programmes embarked upon by the NGOs; to ascertain how these programmes impacted on poverty alleviation; and to determine the various challenges affecting the success of these programmes in Enugu State. Descriptive survey design was employed for the investigation and three notable NGOs were considered as case study. Population of the study was 527 persons comprising of staff of the three NGOs involved in the study and the beneficiaries of their programmes. The survey methods was employed and Questionnaire were used as instrument of data collection for the study. T-test analysis technique was used as method of analysis for the study. Findings from the study revealed that there are various programmes initiated by NGOs in Enugu State and these programmes positively impacted on the citizens.

Moreover, Yusuf et al (2017) assess the contributions of NGOs in poverty alleviation and community development in Gombe State, Nigeria. Questionnaire and interview methods/ Focus Group Discussion were used as means of data collection for the study. The results indicated that: NGOs activities spread across many fields of endeavor such as: education, empowerment, health care, environmental sustainability and HIV awareness campaign, seeking social transformation and improvement in the quality of life of the people in Gombe State.

Also, Philip (2015) examined the intersection of how women NGOs conceptualize and deliver action towards gender equality and why gender inequality is still a major global social problem. The survey method was actively used by issuing questionnaires to obtain relevant data. The survey results

reveals tension between the wide range of feminist agendas of the NGOs and the limitations of the current empowerment paradigm.

In light of the foregoing literature review, this study identified gaps which includes; the simultaneous assessment of NGO roles in Nigeria considering their multiple roles of gender equality, poverty reduction, income generation and social protection, respectively. Moreover, most studies of NGOs on Nigeria did not consider the role of social protection and its joint effect with poverty reduction to national growth and development. In that regards, the study addressed the aforementioned gaps by investigating their distinctive and joint effect on economic growth. More so, it employed the marginal effect technique to quantify the periodic changes in economic growth due to poverty reduction in the economy given different margins of social protection expenses by both NGOs and the national government.

### 3.0 Methodology

The methodology discusses the theoretical framework, modelling, data sourcing and methods of analysis.

#### 3.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the Keynesian theory of income, output and employment of (1937) which holds that government expenditure have an effect on the total income of a given nation and stated as:

$$Y = C + I + G \quad (1)$$

Where:

Y= total production, output, income and economic growth

C = total consumption

G = aggregate government expenditure

I = investment

The theory is linked to this study by relating government expenditure (which include social protection), aggregate income, and consumer expenditure of a given nation which to some extent measures the living standard of its citizens.

### 3.2 Modelling

Following the modelling structure of Keynes (1937) as earlier reviewed, theoretically, this study based on it, and state its functional form in (2) as follows:

$$GDP.PC_t = (PV.R_t, SOPR.G.EQ, I.GNR) \quad (2)$$

Hence, the econometric model for this study is specified in (3) after taking the logged values of the model as follows:

$$LGDP.PC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LPV.R_t + \beta_2 LSOPR_t + \beta_3 LG.EQ_t + \beta_4 LI.GNR_t + \mu_t \quad (3)$$

Furthermore, model (4) which includes poverty reduction (PV.R) and social protection (SOPR) interaction is specified as follows:

$$LGDP.PC = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LPV.R_t + \beta_2 LSOPR_t + \beta_3 (LPV.R * LSOPR)_t + \beta_4 LG.EQ_t + \beta_5 LI.GNR_t + \mu_t \quad (4)$$

$\beta_{(0)}$  is the constant term,  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$  and  $\beta_5$  are the parameters to be estimated.

$\mu_t \sim (0, \sigma^2)$  is the random error term with zero mean and constant variance.

Furthermore, through the interaction term, i.e.  $LPV.R * LSOPR$  the marginal effect of poverty reduction on the Nigerian economy at a margin of social protection can be captured by taking the partial derivatives of equation (4) with its respect as follows:

$$\frac{\partial (LGDP.PC)_t}{\partial (LPV.R)_t} = \beta_1 + \beta_3 (LSOPR)_t \quad (5)$$

### 3.3 Data Measurement and Sourcing

Nigerian Economy (GDP.PC)	Measured by real GDP per capita at constant prices (₦) Sourced from World Development Indicators (WDI, 2023)
Poverty Reduction (PV,R)	Measured by employment participation rate Sourced from International Labor Organization (ILO, 2023)
Social Protection (SOPR)	Measured by social protection expenditure and services Sourced from UNICEF data base (UNICEF, 2023)
Gender Equality (G.EQ)	Measured by girl child enrolment in schools and colleges Sourced from UNDP data base, (UNDP, 2023)
Income Generation (I.GNR)	Measured by per capita income of Nigerian masses Sourced from World Development Indicators (WDI,2023)
Interaction Term (PV.R *SOPR)	Interaction of the two variables (i.e. Poverty reduction and Social Protection)

### 3.4 Methods of Analysis

This research work employed pre-estimation tests of stationarity (i.e. ADF & PP tests, respectively) and descriptive statistics. Also, the study employed series of diagnostic tests to check the reliability of the model and validity of its results which includes; the serial correlation test, homoscedastic test, normality and RESET. Furthermore, for empirical estimations, the study employed the Auto regressive distributed lag (ARDL) bounds test to cointegration method of data analysis. ARDL model for the study is specified in (3.4) as follows:

$$\Delta(LGDP.PC)_t = \theta_0 + \sum_{i=1}^p \theta_1 \Delta(LGDP.PC)_{t-i} + \sum_{i=0}^{n_1} \theta_2 \Delta(LPV.R)_{t-i} + \sum_{i=0}^{n_2} \theta_3 \Delta(LSOPR)_{t-i} + \sum_{i=0}^{n_3} \theta_4 \Delta(LPV.R * SOPR)_{t-i} + \sum_{i=0}^{n_4} \theta_5 \Delta(LG.EQ)_{t-i} + \sum_{i=0}^{n_5} \theta_5 \Delta(L.GNR)_{t-i} + \beta_1 ECM_{t-1} + \mu_t$$

The bounds test is conducted by testing the null hypothesis (H0) against the alternative hypothesis (H1) using the following equations:

$$H_0 = \theta_1 = \theta_2 = \theta_3 = 0$$

$$H_1 \neq \theta_1 \neq \theta_2 \neq \theta_3 \neq 0$$

#### 4.0 Results and Discussions

This section presents and discusses the empirical results obtained from the analysis conducted.

Table 4.1 describes the model of the study statistically where it shows gender equality (G.EQ) to have less deviations of (0.2) and gross domestic product per capita(GDP.PC) with the highest deviation of (383.5) from their respective means. Other statistical descriptions with regards to the model such as mean, minimum and maximum appeared normal.

#### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Stationarity Tests

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	<i>LGDP.PC</i>	<i>LPV.R</i>	<i>LSOPR</i>	<i>LG.EQ</i>	<i>LI.GNR</i>
Mean	1575.1	97.4	25.1	0.6	64.2
Max	2412.9	156.7	48.7	0.9	78.6
Min	1151.1	50.9	4.9	0.3	16.7
Std. Dev.	383.5	25.5	12.3	0.2	2.6
Obs.	32	32	32	32	32

Before the analysis of data, the variables were tested for stationarity using the Augmented Dickey Fuller (ADF) and Philips Perron (PP) unit root tests, respectively. The results of the unit root tests reported in Table 4.2 indicate that gross domestic product per capita GDP.PC (i.e. -5.018682) at first differential equation from the ADF test has no unit root at the 1% level of significance (see Appendices for test critical values). The values also show that poverty reduction

PV.R is stationary at level and integrated to order zero [I(0)] for the ADF tests (i.e. -2.390777) , and failed in the PP test. Furthermore, social protection SOPR is stationary and integrated to order one under the PP test (i.e. -4.054308) and is unstable under the ADF test. Gender equality G.EQ (-3.846028) and income generation IGNR (-1.017297) were stationary at first difference and level under the PP and ADF tests, respectively.

Table 4.2: Results of Unit root Test

Variables	ADF		PP		Stationarity Status
	Level	First Difference	Level	First Difference	

<i>LGDP.PC</i>	-----	-5.018682***	-----	-----	I (1)
<i>LPV.R</i>	-2.390777**	-----	-----	-----	I (0)
<i>LSOPR</i>	-----	-----	-----	-4.054308*	I (1)
<i>LG.EQ</i>	-----	-----	-----	-3.846028***	I (1)
<i>LI.GNR</i>	-1.017297*	-----	-----	-----	I (1)

**Source:** Authors' computations in 2024. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* indicates significant level at 1%, 5% and 10%.

Results depicted in table 4.3 suggests a long-run relationship (cointegration) among the estimated variables. This is concluded due to higher values of F (5.32) which is above the upper bound critical values at 1% level of significance.

## 4.2 Results of Bounds Testing to Cointegration

**Table 4.3:** Results of Bounds Test to Cointegration

Dependent Variable		Function		F-statistic	
<i>LGDP.PC</i>		f(PV.R., SOPR, G.EQ, I.GNR)		5.32***	
Critical Value Bounds					
10%		5%		1%	
I(0)	I(1)	I(0)	I(1)	I(0)	I(1)
2.37	3.2	3.15	4.08	3.65	4.31

**Source:** Author's calculation. \*\*\* denotes a rejection of the null hypothesis of no cointegration at 1% level.

The results of the estimated ARDL model is presented in Table 4.4. It indicates that poverty reduction (PV.R) which is measured by the employment participation rate is negative and statistically significant at 1%. This portrays the high rate of unemployed members of the labor force, despite its abundance. Also, social protection (SOPR) as measured by social protection expenditure and services attributed to NGO programs, policies and projects is positive and significant at 1% level. This shows the

relevance of the NGO programs to the progress of the Nigerian economy during the period under review. Furthermore, the interaction of the two earlier highlighted variables (LPV.R\*SOPR) shows a positive association with economic growth. This suggests that activities of NGOs contributes immensely in stimulating the Nigerian economy through the provision of employment opportunities for the redundant labor force.

**Table 4.4:** Long run estimated results ARDL (Interaction Effect)

Panel A: Long-run Coefficients & ECT (Dependent Variable is <i>LGDP.PC</i> )				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	T. ratio	Prob.
<i>LPV.R</i>	-21.7	5.12	4.83	0.0006
<i>LSOPR</i>	10.53	12.6	-3.13	0.0007
<i>LPV.R * SOPR</i>	3.29	3.17	1.21	0.0012
<i>LG.EQ</i>	7.06	1.28	2.45	0.0051
<i>LI.GNR</i>	-6.04	3.5	1.87	0.0263
<i>C</i>	5.3	1.45	9.7	0.0003
<i>ECT<sub>t-1</sub></i>	-0.47	0.0479	-5.2696	0.0000

In addition, estimated results of gender equality (G.EQ) as measured by girl child school enrolment through the support of NGOs depicts a positive and significant effect on the Nigerian economy. This is connected to the fact that, the contribution of learned women is no doubt a contributory

factor to our national development. Lastly, income generation (I.GNR) as measured by the per capita income of the Nigerian populace shows a negative and significant statistical value at 10% level. This portrays poor income distribution among the Nigerian populace.

### 4.3 Diagnostic Test Results

**Table 4.5:** ARDL-ECM Model Diagnostic Tests

Test Statistic	Results
Serial Correlation:	2.27[0.145]
Heteroskedasticity:	1.23[0.350]
Functional Form: Reset F-stat.	0.12[0.905]
Normality: Jarque-Bera	4.41[0.110]

Source: Author's calculation. Values in parenthesis are probability values.

A series of diagnostic test were conducted to validate the variable estimates earlier reported in Table 4.4. Results obtained shows the model for the study is free from problems of serial correlation,

heteroskedasticity, RESET and normality distribution tests, respectively.

### 4.4 Marginal Effect Results

**Table 4.6:** Marginal Effect of

Variable	Coefficient	p. Value	Mean	Min	Max
LGDP.PC	24.7	0.0003	97.4	50.9	156.7
LPV.R	-19.53	0.0027	25.1	4.9	48.7
LPV.R*SOPR	6.39	0.0082	(64.2)	(16.7)	(78.6)

Source: Author's calculation

Furthermore, with regards to marginal effect of poverty reduction on the Nigerian economy at varying levels of social protection. The study finds that at the minimum level of SOPR (i.e. 16.67) (as the

mediator), poverty reduction have a positive (131.413) effect on the Nigerian economy. Also, at a maximum level of SOPR (i.e. 78.6), Poverty reduction have a positive (526.95) effect on the living standards

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## 5.0 Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the study's findings the following conclusions can be drawn: government poverty reduction policies has an increasing effect on the Nigerian economy as a whole. Girl child's education significantly contributes to the economy and social protection expenditure influences the nexus between poverty reduction and the Nigerian economy. This study recommends for the Nigerian government intervention and support in executing the NGO projects, programs and policies across the nation for improved outcome. It also recommends for enlightenment and awareness campaigns in rural areas on the need for girls' child equal opportunities through school enrolment, employment rate, and economic empowerment and leadership positions..

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