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Declaration

Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award

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DEDICATION

To Almighty God and my own “civil society”: Stephen Oluwatemilorun Olawoore, Deborah Enioluwa Olawoore, Janet Anuoluwapo Olawoore, and my beautiful and supportive wife Comfort Adejoke Olawoore
Abstract

This study focuses on the ways the rights-based approach (RBA) to the delivery of development aid and shapes the partnerships between INGOs (ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib in Nigeria) their intermediate NGO and CBO partners, and influences the decisions all sets of actors make on strategic, operational and financial matters. Extant literature suggests that NGOs that adopt RBA may secure more funds from rights-based donors; and if they did not do so, they would face funding cuts from such donors (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Kindrnay et al. 2012). They also claimed that rights-based NGOs would have an increasing focus on advocacy while not curtailing their service delivery work. This study used face-to-face interviews, focus group, participant observation, and document analysis to investigate the extent to which RBA has the potential to deliver on these claims.

Informants from the INGOs and their intermediate NGO partners claimed that they premised their choice of partners on RBA, which promote a productive partnership between them. However, they claimed that RBA limits their funding sources because many donors prefer to fund service delivery and they are also selective based on their commitment to the approach on whom they have a financial relationship with. Informants from the INGOs, intermediate NGOs, and CBOs claimed that RBA motivates them to locate alternative funding sources locally that can lead to more financial (and other forms of) autonomy from foreign donors. Having access to more locally available funds may enable a rights-based programming approach with fewer constraints than what would be likely with a foreign donor and could transformative social changes in the context.

Furthermore, key informants from the INGOs and their intermediate NGO partners claimed that they are having a greater focus on advocacy, but employ service provision to gain entry and trust of rights-holder organisations and to demonstrate
good practices to government. For CBO participants, RBA poses fewer problems regarding their funding decisions and choice of partners, but they collaborate with INGOs and intermediate NGOs on rights claiming capacity building programmes. Most of the informants from all organisations claimed that donor’s preference for project-based aid, gender discriminatory practices, and the potential security risks are some of the obstacles to RBA, which shaped their strategic, operational and financial decisions.
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Abbreviations

AA- ActionAid
ASG – Adolescent Support Group (partner of CCEEPE/ActionAid)
CCEEPE- Centre for Community Empowerment and Poverty Eradication (partner of ActionAid)
CBO – Community-Based Organisations
CDE – Community Development Committee (partners of JDPC/CCEEPE/ActionAid)
CISLAC – Civil Society on Legislative and Advocacy Commission (partner of Oxfam)
FCA – Farmers Community Association (partner of FADU)
FDA – Farmers Development Association
FADU- Farmers Development Union (partner of Oxfam)
IFA – International Foundation for the Aged (partner of Oxfam)
JDPC- Justice Development and Peace Commission (partner of ActionAid)
MCJF – Majestic Community for Justice Foundation (partner of CISLAC/Oxfam)
NANTS – National Association of Nigerian Traders (partner of Oxfam)
SA - Social Action (partner of Oxfam)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0. Introduction/Research Rationale

The publicly proclaimed intention of development aid is to benefit the poor, however, the failure of fifty years of aid intervention in sub-Saharan Africa particularly Nigeria (the focus of the study) suggests otherwise (UNDP, 1990; 1996; Porters et al. 2008; Lewis and Kanji, 2009; Moyo, 2009; Smith and Todaro, 2011; UNDP/AHDR, 2012). Aid is defined here as any flow of capital (mainly in the form of loans and grants) to developing countries that are based on non-commercial motives from donors and is characterised by concessional terms (Riddel 2007; Porter et al. 2008). It is also noteworthy that over $3 trillion in foreign aid has been given to developing countries from industrialised nations since the 1960s, but results do not reflect the enormous resources involved (Kharas et al. 2011). Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) happens to be the largest current aid recipient region in the world since 2001 and remains a region with “extremely high levels of inequality” and poverty (UNDP/AHDR, 2012; Dulani et al. 2013; Alvaredo et al. 2018:6). Specifically, Burleigh (2013) reported that Nigeria received more than $400 billion since 1960, which is six times what the US injected into the whole of Western Europe for the reconstruction of the region after the devastation of the 2nd World War (Burleigh, 2013). The World Bank Net Official Development Assistance and Official Aid Received (2017), reported that Nigeria got $2,431,600.00 in development assistance from OECD in 2015.

Banks et al. (2015) argue that aid has enabled development agencies based on technocratic approaches to increase the access of marginalised people to essential social services, but in ways that are weakly linked to broader processes of political, social and economic changes. Nevertheless, aid remains critical in the
development enterprise because it can enhance or constrain organisations from pursuing transformative changes in their area of operation (Bebbington et al. 2007; Moyo, 2009; Easterly, 2013).

The term “technocratic approach” encapsulates the idea that those who took themselves to be developed could act to determine the process of development for those who were seen as to be less-developed criticised by many as Eurocentricism (Porter et al. 2008; Easterley, 2013). Technocratic approaches to development including charity-based, needs-based, and pure empowerment approaches have been employed to address development problems especially since the 1970s mostly based on neo-liberal ideologies (UNDP, 2000; Bebbington et al. 2007; ActionAid, 2010, 2012; Easterly, 2013). The charity-based approach focuses on giving to the poor based on charity without the need to challenge the system of injustice and inequalities that exist in many contexts (Chapman and Mancini, 2005). The needs-based approach focuses mainly on meeting the basic needs of individuals, families, and communities such as providing health centres, and farming equipment (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005). The pure empowerment approach is premised on the notion that since many governments in developing countries cannot meet the needs of their people, communities should be supported to meet their own basic needs (ActionAid, 2010). These approaches will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

The search for new ways of tackling the underlying cause of development failure led to the emergence of the ‘rights-based approach’ (RBA). RBA does not explicitly regard the poor and marginalised people as objects of charity, but individuals with rights. It focuses on the process than the outcomes of development distinguishing itself from the technocratic/conventional development approaches (Eyben, 2003;
VeneKlasen et al. 2004; Pooge, 2007; Easterly, 2012; Chalabi, 2014; Crawford and Andreassen, 2015). To Uvin (2004:163), RBA is concerned about

“promoting human dignity through the development of claims that seek to empower excluded groups and that seek to create socially guaranteed improvements in policy (including but not limited to legal frameworks).”

RBA is defined here as the incorporation of the rules, standards, and principles of the international human rights laws into the plans, policies, and processes of development (Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall, 2004; Theis 2004; Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; OHCHR 2006; Gready 2008; Hunter 2012). It signifies “a shift away from service delivery towards capacity building and advocacy” for rights-holders and also duty-bearers (D’ Hollander et al. 2013:33; Uvin, 2004). RBA in the development enterprise mainly focuses on strengthening the voice and power of rights-holders organisations (intermediate NGOs and CBOs) and their communities in partnership with INGOs to demand accountability from their government (Chapman et al., 2005; Macpherson, 2009). RBA is born out of the notion that vulnerability of persons, organisations or communities require human rights to defend them from the potential or experienced violations resulting from the social contexts in which they find themselves (Eyben, 2003; Uvin, 2004; Pogge, 2007; Stenner, 2011; Hunter, 2012). Harris-Curtis et al. (2005) define advocacy as “a set of techniques for raising awareness, challenging the status quo, and calling on different actors to take up their responsibility to bring about change.” In this thesis, advocacy entails the coordinated efforts or actions of people and organisations to remedy policies, practices, ideas, and values that reinforce marginalisation and exclusion based on an underlying ethical foundation of rights (UNDP, 2000; Miller et al. 2004).
Human rights are legitimate claims that create corresponding obligations or duties and include civil and political rights as well as people’s rights to basic social services (Moser & Norton 2001; Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Mukhopadhyay, 2003). Rights-holders are individuals, groups, communities, movements, and organisations of the people that have inalienable rights to claim civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights from the duty-bearers (Eyben, 2003; Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Jordan, 2007; ActionAid, 2010). Everyone is equally a rights-holder (and can also be duty-bearers) irrespective of sex, nationality, race, colour, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion, economic or social class or any other distinctions (Oxfam, 2014). Also, everyone is obligated to defend and advance human rights (Dembour, 2006; Stenner, 2011).

In RBA, duty-bearers are governments (main), International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), local NGOs, families, communities, MNCs, and other private sector actors who have obligations to promote and facilitate human development including providing essential social services for rights-holders (Eyben, 2003, Gready and Ensor, 2005; Oxfam, 2008). This is because duty-bearers are those who have power, and the main human rights abusers (Stenner, 2011). Here power is an individual, collective and political force, which can undermine or empower people and their organisations to facilitate, hasten or halt the process of social transformation (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002, Chambers, 2006). Empowerment in this sense entails building the capacities of the poor and marginalised people to gain and maintain control over the development process and the broader economic and political issues that shape their lives (Chapman and Mancini, 2005; Miller et al. 2004).

NGOs are defined here as private voluntary and not-for-profit organisations whose members are individuals or associations that come together to achieve a common
purpose (Kaldor, 2003). International NGOs are organisations that originated from developed countries, they could also be global or local in their operation and are often both donors and recipients of development aid. This study focuses on two international NGOs (ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib) working in Nigeria. Both INGOs have a long presence in Nigeria and operate in many states in the country in partnership with several intermediate NGOs and CBOs. Critically, they claimed to have adopted RBA as the fundamental principle that determines their strategic, operational and financial decisions. Both organisations are cross-regional in scope though they now claim that they operate independently as registered NGOs in Nigeria. That is why they were not examined as part of ActionAid and Oxfam international in this study. They are important actors in same global governance arrangements that have been instrumental in promoting RBA to development, and they both receive funds from similar donors.

Intermediate NGOs are developing countries’ NGOs that are usually based in the capital cities and often serve as resources channel between INGOs and CBOs. They can be both donors and recipients of aid. This thesis will discuss in more detail intermediate NGOs that participated in this study and the legal environment in which NGOs operate in Nigeria in chapter three. CBOs are grass-roots based organisations that are often smaller in an operational capacity and are frequently owned by/or work closely with the people in the rural communities. While some are well organised with a defined source of financial resources and organisational structures, others may be rudimentary, lacking any structure which often reflects their stages of development (Agboola, 1994).

CBO includes local community associations and cooperatives comprising of peasant associations and trade unions and excludes other professional or business
associations (Clarke, 1998, Lampert, 2012). Development impacts of CBOs in Nigeria are enormous. Lampert (2012) argues that CBOs are often the leading agents of community development (Nduwke, 2015). They motivate and groom their members to invest in development projects such as the construction of the town hall, sponsoring of annual general meetings for the community members, construction of primary and secondary schools, health or maternity centres and providing scholarships for brilliant indigenous students. There is hardly any community in Nigeria without an active community-based organisation. They could be organised along ‘age-grade’ or along with clan or village lines (Agboola, 1994).

RBA hinges on the notion that realising human rights is primarily related to the issues of power and powerlessness (Stenner, 2011). A distinctive feature of RBA is that it is innately a political approach that takes account of the issues of power, struggle and a vision of a better society as a critical dimension of development (Eyben, 2003; Chapman et al. 2005; Crawford and Andreassen, 2015). The ‘politics’ here refers to the “radical and transformative changes” or “the discourse and struggle over the organisation of human possibilities” (Chhotray 2007: 13; Held, 1984:1). The extant literature argues that RBA aims to bring back politics into the development process in contrast to the understanding of poverty and inequality as purely technical issues, instead of seeing these problems as embedded in the differences in power, income, and assets (Chapman et al. 2005; Olawoore, 2017). Hence, the solution to poverty is to help shift those power relationships by empowering people living in poverty to gain the power to challenge oppressive practices, institutions, beliefs and those that exercise them (Chapman and Mancini, 2005; Chambers, 2006; Mukhopadhyay, 2012;
Yanacopulos, 2016). This thesis will discuss in more detail the place of politics in promoting human rights, the concept of RBA, and power.

Hence, human rights principles can be employed as political instruments to protect the poor and excluded people who lack power particularly women (Dembour, 2010; Stenner, 2011; Oxfam, 2014). For example, Oxfam Strategic Plan (2013-2019) claimed that its goal is to see significantly less poverty among women and other excluded groups and will put a high priority on supporting women at all levels to take leadership and valued roles in the society and economy. Women are demonstrating the power to provide leadership for communities and organisations and confront the violence and oppression that has kept them illiterate and exploited in many parts of the world (Oxfam Strategic Plan, 2013-2019). ActionAid Nigeria (2013), Country Strategic Paper for 2014-2018, stated that the organisation will continue to support the rights of women and girls, including promoting their safety and participation in public and private spaces based on rights.

Rights-based development can be seen to be about fitting development intentions (intentional) with the promotion of structural, political and economic transformative (immanent) process of development (Cernea, 1991; Kardam, 1993; Cowen and Shenton, 1996; Chhotray, 2007). Cowen and Shenton (1996) classified development ideas into immanent and intentional development or 'little d’/’big D’ by Hart, (2001). According to Cowen and Shenton (1996), immanent development describes a deep process of transformation in the society driven by many factors including progress in science, medicine, the arts, communication, governance and much more. It is the process of structural, political and economic change such as the “evolution of global capitalism” with the notion that there are
progressive forces that exist in nature devoid of any conscious planning (Cowen and Shenton, 1996; Henry et al. 2004:4; Mosse, 2014). Intentional development refers to practices and interventions in the developing countries. It is deliberate actions that are directed at promoting advancement by development agencies, especially to help develop the less developed countries such as the Structural Adjustment Programme and Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper promoted by the World Bank and IMF (Thomas, 1992; Bebbington et al., 2007; Mosse, 2014:513). To Henry et al. (2004), this idea of development expresses the intent to account for the deficiencies of global capitalism. Bebbington et al. (2007:9) argue that for NGOs to promote social transformations, it is crucial that they focus more on promoting immanent development as a “foundational, underlying and increasingly globalised form of social change” instead of doing intentional development differently. (Chapman and Mancini, 2005).

Importantly, controversies abound on what RBA means in practice (VeneKlasen et al. 2004; Kindornay et al. 2012). Harris-Curtis et al. (2005) argue that there are many unanswered questions about RBA, particularly how development actors can transform power relationships between donors and those that live in poverty? D’ Hollander et al. (2013) argues that while the majority of large Western donors and aid agencies currently have a human rights policy, many are still grappling with the implications of their commitments to RBA (see Uvin, 2004). Also, while many NGOs and official/private donors share common principles of RBA, there are many different interpretations of RBA in practice, and each organisation focuses on a particular component of RBA and targets different outcomes (Kindornay et al. 2012, Chalabi, 2014). There is a tendency that different people might have different things in mind when discussing human rights principles and apply them in practice (Stenner, 2011).
Advocates of RBA see it as a mechanism to address the problem of increasing poverty and underdevelopment in developing countries (UNDP, 2000; VeneKlasen et al. 2004; Uvin, 2007; Macpherson, 2009; Miller, 2010; Aberese Ako et al. 2013). RBA proponents argue that it is a paradigmatic shift in focus by development agencies (particularly NGOs) from service provision to needy communities and marginalised people into the empowerment of citizens as rights-holders to claim their rights (Eyben, 2003; Chapman et al. 2009).

Moreover, advocates of RBA argue that it seeks alternative ways to the needs-based approaches that focus mainly on providing essential social services to the poor and marginalised people based charity, but overlook the embedded power relations that cause poverty (Hickey and Mitlin, 2007; Easterly, 2013, Chalabi, 2014). Paul Gready (2008) argues that RBA aims to transform development from the traditional what-can-we-do approach to social and political actions to enable rights-holders to claim their rights. For civil society organisations, this can lead to a significant transformation of power relations between INGOs and their local intermediate NGOs and CBOs partners in developing countries (Crawford and Andreassen, 2015). However, critics argue that RBA may be another development fad or mere development rhetoric (Uvin, 2002). For RBA to promote transformative change will much depend on how it will influence the underlying relationships between International Non-Governmental Organisations(INGO) and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Macpherson, 2009; Betteraid, 2010a; Kindornay et al. 2012; Chalabi, 2014).

Pettit and Wheelers, (2005) argue that RBA needs to focus more on addressing the structural causes of marginalisation and the power relations that reinforce poverty. Rights-based NGOs are expected to work on the side of the poor and marginalised people (power with) to challenge oppressive practices and beliefs.
(power over) that reinforces poverty and marginalisation in their contexts and globally (ActionAid, 2005; Chalabi, 2014; Crawford and Andreassen, 2015). For the poor and excluded people to realise their rights will entail changes in the deeply entrenched attitudes, traditions, culture, and behaviours – changes in power relations - at all levels of society.

Furthermore, to enhance genuine partnership between NGOs, RBA posits that development activities should start by adequately assessing and removing constraints to a productive partnership by transforming the power and influence of INGO actors over local organisations to promote mutual benefits (Bradley, 2007; Gready, 2008). Fowler (2000c) defines effective partnership between organisations as a joint commitment to long-term engagement, shared responsibility to achieve desired outcomes, reciprocal obligations, equality, mutuality and balance of power between partners, primarily to the benefit of the targets of their work (Hoyer, 1994). Notwithstanding, the traditional partnership relationships between these sets of actors (INGOs, intermediate NGOs, and CBOs) has been tainted with the imbalance of power and influence in favour of INGOs. Hence the gap between the ideals and practice of partnership (Baaz et al. 2005; Elbers, 2012; Fowler, 2015). Crucially, in RBA, the notions and responsibilities of rights shift relationships between partners (e.g., between INGOs, intermediate NGOs, and CBOs) past charity to justice (Miller et al. 2004). RBA requires INGOs to be transparent in agenda setting, funding and accountability processes, that is using their power ‘over’ in such a way that can lead to a significant transformation of power relations with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners (Offenheiser and Holcombe, 2003; Crawford and Andreassen, 2015).
Critical to this study is the on-going debate on how the adoption of RBA can be implemented in practice to transform the imbalance of power and influence between INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Brehm et al. 2004; Chapman et al. 2009; Chalabi 2014). This thesis is aware of the inherent challenges in the implementation of RBA in practice: RBA is not a one-size-fits-all approach to development, there are many challenges to its implementation especially by NGOs (Chapman et al. 2005; Uvin, 2004). The major challenges facing NGOs in the implementation of RBA, in reality, will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3. VeneKlasen et al. (2004) claim that the actual process of rights claiming in itself is very messy, hence without a thorough analysis of forces and dynamics at decision making junctions and power, efforts may become ineffective, counterproductive or even dangerous for those concerned. Also, this thesis recognises the fact that people who are living in poverty have different problems and solutions to them will be different depending on the context. Therefore, there is no firm idea of how RBA would work in reality.

This research is an exploratory study that seeks to investigate the claims that RBA has the potential to transform the underlying relationships between INGOs (ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib) and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners. It is a starting point for filling the gap in the literature (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Hickey and Mitlin, 2009; Kindornay et al. 2012; Elbers and Schulpen, 2013). Kindornay et al. (2012) posit that the adoption of RBA would have implications on the strategic, operational and financial decisions of NGOs, but did not provide empirical evidence to support their claim. Therefore, this study investigates the implications of RBA in practice on the strategic, operational, and financial decisions of ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in Nigeria. It examines how principal NGO actors describe these decision-making
considerations at three different types of civil society organisations connected by a series of partnership arrangements and diverse funding sources.

The term ‘strategic decision’ is used in this study to describes decisions of organisations to determine which other organisations to partner with. It is noteworthy that partnership has been adopted by some NGOs including Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid as a strategy to implement RBA (ActionAid, 2010; Kindornay et al. 2012; Oxfam, 2012, 2013). The strategic partnership involves working together to achieve a common goal that partners cannot achieve on their own. It entails equal and reciprocal relations, flexibility, accountability and where they take risks together and with rooms for dialogue and dissent (Oxfam, 2012; ActionAid, 2012; Wessel et al. 2017). The term ‘financial decisions’ is used to describes which donors to target for funding applications, and what funds to accept/reject. The term ‘operational decision’ is used to describe decisions on the choice between a greater focus on advocacy or services delivery. This study focuses on a case study of ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib and their local intermediate NGOs and CBOs in Nigeria. The following section discusses the conception of development.

1.1. Understanding Development

The word ‘development’ is ‘an essentially contested concept’ and covers both theory and practice (Cornwall 2007:472; Porter, 2008:68; Lewis and Kanji 2009:48). Porter, (2008:66) argues that development theories are apparently logical propositions that intend to explain how development previously took place and how it should happen in the future. Development as a concept covers both theory and practice – the ideas on how it should or might take place and the “real-world efforts to put a various aspect of development to practice” (Porter 2008:66).
Leftwich and Wheeler (2011:3) from the predominant neo-liberal school described development as the processes which shape and reform locally appropriate and legitimate institutions. These institutions are claimed to promote sustainable economic growth, foster political stability, enhance progress on crucial issue areas (such as gender, service delivery or emissions reduction) as well as facilitate inclusive social development, at national and sub-national levels. This notion of development fails to consider the political and economic rights of the people in decision-making processes that concern their lives and instead supports the growth of market-oriented economic and social policies (Hickey and Mitlin, 2009; Easterly 2013).

The alternative understanding of development emphasises the fulfilment of people’s rights as a means and end of development (Wallace, 1997; Sen, 2001; UNDP 2000, Pogge, 2002, 2007; Khan, 2009; Lewis and Kanji, 2009). It was argued that economic progress (material and financial improvement) not be the only component of development, but also includes human freedom (UNDP, 2000; Sen, 2001). Hence, development is conceived here as “the process of improving the quality of all human lives and capabilities by raising people’s level of living, self-esteem, and freedom” (Smith and Todaro 2011: 1). Here, development is not a commodity that can be measured by GPD, but a process of change, which empowers people living in poverty to take control of their lives towards realising their full potential. That involves building people’s self-confidence, “skills, assets, and freedoms necessary to achieve this goal” (Clarke, 1991:36; Sen, 2001). Development in this sense emphasises home grown initiatives that may be relevant to the values, contexts, and aspirations of the people of different countries (Edwards, 1996; Sen, 2001; Lewis, 2007). Robert et al. (2005) claim that values are the expression of, or belief in the worth of a substance, qualities,
or behaviour. Values can inform feelings, define or determine our goals and can also frame our attitudes and provide standards to judge the behaviours of individuals and societies (Robert et al. 2005). Cowen and Shenton (1996) argue that the goals of development should be governed by values, which serves as a standard to assess the realisation of such objectives (Cowen and Shenton, 1996; Todaro, 1992). The definition and articulation of the values of development remain an issue of power and responsibility. Thus, these values are framed to address issues of power in relationships (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002; ActionAid, 2005). More will be discussed on values later in chapter two with the components of RBA. The next section will briefly examine previous conventional theories of development to put the theory of RBA into perspectives.

1.1.1. Conventional Theories of Development

Scholars and practitioners classify conventional theories of development into three broad paradigms: capitalist, socialist and alternative development based on ideological differences (Burkey, 1996; Thomas, 2000; Potter, 2008; Nyasulu 2009:21). As such development goals and objectives are shaped by political, economic, social, cultural, ethical, moral and religious influences. (Porter, 2008). Burkey (1996) argues that capitalism and socialism do not constitute a simple dichotomy either in history or the actual world economies because most countries and organisations including the World Bank and IMF adopt a mixture of both (mixed economy). However, both paradigms have some variation in their approach to development.

**Capitalist Development Theories**

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1 A paradigm is a broad set of ideas that reign among group of scholars and/or discipline (Kuhn, 1962)
There are three variations when considering capitalist development approaches (Burkey, 1996:4). The variations are the Free-market system, Malthusian theory (of limited relevance in the contemporary development discourses and therefore would not be part of this discussion) and the Interventionist perspective. Economic liberals such as Adam Smith think that human beings tend to act in rational ways to maximise his or her self-interest. Moreover, when they do that, it spurs the ‘market to produce, distribute and consume goods’ (Mingst 1999:198; Walter, 1996). The free market idea was premised on the “English development experience in the period of Industrial Revolution” (Porter et al. 2008:93). According to Walter, (1996:2), the theory of liberal capitalism posits

“a natural ‘harmony of interests’ between individuals in the market, whereby the ‘invisible hand’ of competition turns self-regulating behaviour into aggregate social benefits.”

Capitalism is a system where prices of commodity or services will freely rise or fall based on increase or decrease in demand or when suppliers decrease or increase supply. The theoretical analysis of the properties of an economic system that operates under the free market has the assumptions that an unregulated market performs better than one with government regulation. Therefore, proponents advocated for the ‘rolling’ back of the state with the emphasis that any government intervention is ‘distortionary and counterproductive’ (Bognetti and Obermann 2008; Simon 2008:86-91; Marobela, 2009;127; Bourgon, 2009; Hettich 2011; Smith and Todaro, 2011).

However, the previous and contemporary experience of market failure (for example the financial crisis of 2008) have shown that an experts-based solution to complex development challenges is insufficient to reduce poverty and growing
global inequalities. Notably, the increasing inequalities, exclusion, and extreme poverty in developing countries weakens the claims of neo-liberalists and spurred efforts to find other approaches to solve these complex development problems, since experts-based interventions rarely take into consideration the peculiarities of the structure and organisation of many developing countries. Hence an imported approach from industrialised countries often destroyed the economies of those countries.

A typical experience, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, is that the invisible hand of the market did not promote the general welfare but enriched a few elites while opportunities for upward mobility for most of the people failed. The evidence of economic inequality supports the notion that the promoting the fulfillment of the political and economic rights of the people must be the foundation of development activities to achieve positive changes in the lived experience of poverty and deprivations (Nussbaum 2003, 2004; Sen, 2005; Levy 2010; Easterly, 2013). It can also be argued that some countries have benefitted from market economics including Asian Tigers such as China, South Korea, and India. However, the government of these countries protect their economies from the harmful effects of globalisation by intervening in trade and putting up barriers to protect domestic industries by using instruments such as import subsitution (Smith and Todaro, 2011; Ravenhill, 2014).

The interventionist model under the capitalist paradigm counters the idea of the free market economy because it does not believe in the ‘invisible hand’ of the free market (Thomas 2008). The interventionists argue that there is a need for government intervention through regulation and technocratic frameworks that aid the re-distribution of income and pursue the creation of public goods (Burkey, 1996). Interventionists base their argument on the notion that market will always
create a distorted development that excludes the clear majority of the people from economic outputs. Hence the introduction of safety nets to cushion the negative impacts of neo-liberal ideologies on the world’s poor, which evidence shows has also failed to arrest growing wealth inequality (Slim, 1995; Bebbington et al. 2007; Thomas 2008; Campolina and Philips, 2015; BOND, 2015). This thesis argues that growing extreme poverty and underdevelopment in sub-Saharan Africa notwithstanding a long history of aid to the region based on liberal ideas necessitated new approaches to tackle these problems.

The failure of the dominant development approach by the international community attracts criticisms to anything under the word ‘development’ because ‘it has hardly led up to the sort of positive trend the word implies’ (Hunter 2012:11). Critics associate conventional development with inequalities between rich and poor regions, with the perpetuation of poverty, and with dependency and perpetuation of social, economic, political and cultural subservience (Porter et al. 2008:5). Other critics argued that neo-liberal development model hinges on ‘Eurocentricity’ -economic development theories that often equate development to capitalism that shaped and defined the objectives and strategies of the development model. To some scholars, the neo-liberal development model exhibits an “underlying tone of racial discrimination; lack of sensitivity to cultural variation; universalism; tendency towards male orientation; and stereotyping of other people and places” (Porter et al. 2008:13). Similarly, some scholars claim that the developed countries often manipulate international development institutions and the governments of some developing countries to assign themselves the role of articulating direction and strategies of global development activities – intentional development (Cowen and Shenton, 1998; Slim 1995; Kingsbury 2012). Furthermore, conventional development theories mainly focus on developing
countries (Sano 2000:741; Kingsbury 2012). Slim (1995:143) argue that development is a universal goal for every society and not only for the developing countries.

**Socialist Development Theories**

Socialist development theories consist of mainly two ideas: the dependency and the Marxian (Burkey 1996). Sunkel (1969:23) defines dependency as “an explanation of the economic development of a state regarding the external influences -political, economic, and cultural - on national development policies.” The dependency ideas focus on the unfair ‘relations of exchange’ with the notion that developed economies achieved industrial and economic development by the exploitation of their colonies and developing countries (Ravenhill, 2014). World system theory reinforces dependency ideas that reflect on the relationship between rich and developing countries (Wallerstein, 1974; 2000). This idea was drawn from Marxist writings by the anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist scholars and elicits a loud appeal from developing countries as well as in the Soviet model of central planning and rapid industrialisation (Mingst 1999:201).

Furthermore, dependency theorists argue that developing countries will always be in a permanent state of economic dependency of the developed states. The agents of exploitation are the multi-national corporations that exploit the resources of the developing countries to the advantage of the rich countries in a way that perpetuates the dependency of the poor, that is keeping African countries perpetually poor (Mingst 1999; Moyo, 2009). According to Martinez-Vela, (2004:4), the free trade policy championed by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) was designed to transfer the “surplus from semi-proletarian sectors in the periphery to the high-technology (central factor in the positioning of a region)
industrialised core.” Also, Mingst (1999) argues that these arguments informed the contemporary thinking and agenda of developing countries starting from the 1960s and 1970s to liberate themselves from the policies of exploitation of the West, which led to the emergence of the New International Economic Order (NIEO).

Another socialist theory is the Marxist ‘relations of production’, which argues that the state needs to control the means of production to ensure distribution of economic output to the benefit of all based on their needs (Nyasulu 2009:25). Marxist development theorists argued that available resources must be equitably distributed both within and between societies in the international system and therefore perceived neo-classical economic theories as biased towards the rich and powerful countries to the disadvantage of the less-developed countries (Mingst 1999). Marxist ideas support the international labour movement, and political party competition as well as strategies of union mobilisation, grass-roots movements, centralised planning and land redistribution that continue until today (Nyasulu 2009; Mingst 1999). Some social movements still advocate Marxist-influenced solutions to global poverty. Marxist ideas have failed to reduce the growing global poverty and inequality. Hence the quest for a new way of promoting development or concrete changes in the ways aid is delivered.

**Alternative Development Theories**

Several theoretical approaches emerged from the 1980s that came to be termed ‘alternative’ or people-centred development evolving from the idea that there are no size-fit-all answers and solutions to the contemporary global development challenges (Lewis and Kanji 2009). The theorists and practitioners claim that the contemporary condition of underdevelopment is the outcome of the
misconceptions of development by previous development approach particularly regarding seeing development as purely technical exercise while it often overlooks the political and economic rights of the people living in poverty (Easterly, 2013). They argued for a holistic approach to development that became dominant in the 1990s because of the evident failure of the economic growth model and the fall of the Eastern bloc (Slim 1995).

Typical features of alternative development include little or no reliance on government structure, grass-roots development, grounded in local culture instead of an imposed concept from the outside, indigenous oriented leadership, a focus on addressing disempowerment, and high-level participation by the local people (Slim, 1995; Bebbington et al. 2007). Participation in this sense involves interactive decision-making process that allows all actors including duty-bearers and people living in poverty to share power and jointly set agendas (Miller et al. 2004). Development requires the free, active and meaningful participation of the people in the process of development (sometimes termed as democratising development, UNDP, 2003, 2006). The social change could only be achieved by the people and not by the technocratic approaches that portray South-with-the-problem-North-with-the-solution as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Alternative approaches put more emphasis on processes and not on a ready-made solution to development problems. It connects theories of development to practice instead of top-down development policies and focuses on changing structural power relations that perpetuate poverty and inequalities, essential foundations of RBA (Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall, 2004; Chapman et al. 2007). The contemporary work of Amartya Sen on ‘entitlement’ and capability ‘functioning’ made an essential contribution to alternative development ideologies. Moreover,
it birthed a new understanding of poverty and development, which provided the theoretical underpinning of development policies since the 1980s, (Sen, 1981; 1999; 2001; Nussbaum, 2005; D’Hollander et al. 2013).

**Capability Approach**

The capability approach conceived poverty as the lack of capabilities to achieve some fundamental freedoms as the core part of human dignity. Hence development is seen as a process towards greater freedom to achieving capabilities (Sen, 1999, 2005). Sen (2001) argues that development should focus on enhancing the lives we value to live as well as the freedom we enjoy (Sen 2001; Kleine, 2010:674). Freedom can be conceived as the capacity of individuals to participate actively in shaping the social limits that define what is possible. Sen (2001) argues that a freedom-based approach to social understanding is not only peculiar to Western traditions. To Sen (2001) expanding our valued freedom will not only make our lives more vibrant and more creative but will also "allow us to be fuller social persons, exercising our own volitions and interacting with - and influencing - the world in which we live" (Sen 2001: 15). Freedom of individuals becomes the basic building block of development - the expansion of the 'capabilities' ('freedom of particular kind') (Sen 2005:152) of persons to lead the kind of life they value or have reason to value. Such capabilities include the freedom of movement, access to good food, the power to participate in the social life of the community, and the access to proper shelter (Sen 2004:78; Dreze and Sen 1989; Nussbaum, 2004, 2005).

This proposition informed the “grounding of development works in human rights” (HDR 2000:2-3; Uvin 2007: 598; Hunter, 2012:6, 15). UNDP (2002:52) argues that “Political freedom and participation are part of human development, both as
development goals in their own right and as means for advancing human development (see Sen, 2012). Sen (2005:153) stated:

“The idea of ‘capability’ (i.e. the opportunity to achieve valuable combinations of human functionings — what a person is able to do or be) can be very helpful in understanding the opportunity aspect of freedom and human rights”.

According to Sen (2001), capabilities are the freedoms that a person has regarding the choice of ‘functioning’, given his/her circumstances and his/her command over commodities, which provided the background for analysing contemporary development challenges (Fukuda-Parr, 2003; Nussbaum 2004:12).

The concept of ‘functionings’ means the various things that people may deem good for them to do or be. Such valued functionings may include basic needs, such as being adequately fed and being free from preventable diseases to very complex activities or personal conditions, such as being able to play a role in the life of the community and having self-respect (Sen, 2001). A person’s ‘capability’ is the combination of functionings that are feasible for her/him to achieve (Sen 2001:3; Kleine 2010:676). In the light of this, human development is the process of enlarging a person’s “functionings and capabilities to function, the range of things that a person could do and be in his/her life” (Smith and Todaro, 2011:16). Nussbaum (2004:13; 2003:36) claims that a focus on capabilities has a close link with RBA. Hence, development actors need to make efforts to tackle the unequal structural relations that disadvantage people, politically, socially and economically (see also Gaventa, 2006; Crawford and Andreassen, 2015; Fowler, 2015; Yanacopulos, 2016).
1.2. **Challenges of Development in Sub-Saharan Africa**

The challenges facing sub-Saharan Africa are multi-dimensional, most importantly, the prevalence of extreme poverty, violent conflict, and chronic diseases across the region (Handley et al. 2009:1; Havro and Santiso 2011:9). The region forms one-sixth of the world population, described by Paul Collier (2008) as the “bottom billion”. Sachs (2005:18) described them as “too ill, hungry, or destitute” to step up the ladder of development. Extreme poverty means that households are unable to meet their basic physiological or biological needs: food, shelter, clothing, and education are often unaffordable for the children in sub-Saharan Africa. Sachs (2005) reported that 93 percent of the world’s poor population lives in three regions: East Asia, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. While it has reduced substantially in Asia, the percentage of impoverished people has risen in sub-Saharan Africa (Collier, 2008; Handley et al., 2009; AHDR, 2012; Umukoro, 2014).

Moreover, Maathai (2009) citing the National Bureau of Economic Research reported that the economic growth of the world grew by 2 percent between 1960 and 2001, but the reverse was the case in Africa. She noted, “GDP growth was negative from 1974 to mid-1990s and by 2003, sub-Saharan Africa GDP lowered by 11 percent than thirty previous years” (p.48). In the early 1960s, only 10 percent of the world’s poor were African, but in the year 2000, the African population formed 50 percent of the world’s poor. Worst still, the growth rate of sub-Saharan Africa countries did not exceed 0.5 since 1960 when the population was 277 million. Also, UNDP (2006) reported that 28 out of the 31 countries with low human development are in sub-Saharan Africa and over 300 million people, which is about 50 per cent of the population in the region are poor based on...
income poverty. For instance, Nigeria was reported to be one of the four medium income countries that account for the highest numbers of the world’s extremely poor. The number of Nigerians living below the poverty line rose from 17.1 million to 112.5 million between 1980 and 2010 (from 27% of the population to 69%) (Umukoro, 2014). Also, about 92% of Nigerians survive in less than $2 a day, and 71% survive on less than $1 a day (Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, 2010; Umukoro, 2014). Although, recent global economic output revealed that African economic growth has improved, however, the prevalence of poverty remained massive in the region (Hofmeyr, 2013). The Chronic Poverty Report (2014-2015) argues that up to 1 billion people could still be poor by 2030, many of which would be from sub-Saharan Africa.

Similarly, Moyo (2009) argues that sub-Saharan Africa remains the most impoverished region in the world with per capita income of $1 a day, lower than what it was in the 1970s. The number of people from that region living in abject poverty doubled between 1981 and 2002, and up to one-third of the world’s poor were African compared to one fifth in 1990 (UNDP, 2007; Umukoro, 2014). She claimed that life expectancy stands at 50years, the lowest in the world. In the words of Dambisa Moyo (2009:6):

“And still, across important indicators, the trend in Africa is not just downwards: Africa is (negatively) decoupling from the progress being made across the rest of the world”.

For Collins (2012), poverty is one of the most significant challenges to human security and basic human needs. He argued that sub-Saharan Africa is now a theatre of terrorism because poverty and underdevelopment have a direct
correlation to a tendency for conflict within and between states (see also Collier, 2008; Kingsbury, 2012).

Again, Handley et al. (2009) argue that people that live persistent poverty tend to experience multiple ‘capability deprivations’ concurrently. They stated:

“That is, they are illiterate, have inadequate nutrition, poor human rights, and insufficient income and livelihood opportunities, which taken together drive and maintain their poverty and ensure it passes across generations” (citing Chronic Poverty Research Centre, 2004: 40).

The capability deprivation of the people in sub-Saharan Africa is multi-dimensional and includes displacement; lack of health facilities in camps; lack of income generated livelihood opportunities, natural disaster; inadequate water and sanitation facilities to mention a few (Handley et al. 2009).

Some of the factors adduced for these challenges in sub-Saharan Africa could be classified as geographical, historical, cultural, tribal and institutional. Collier (2008) claims that the geographical environment and topography of a country determine its wealth and success because some environments are more comfortable to manipulate than others are. He claims that such explanation could account for why some societies have the opportunity to tend plants and animal better than others do. Collier (2008) argues that climatic condition, location, topography, species of plants and animals influence the people’s ability of a country to provide food for consumption and export and have a positive impact on economic development (Collier, 2008). Sachs (2005) claims that the climate and geographical location of Britain propelled her economic and social development. He claims that Britain has a favourable climatic condition for agriculture and vast navigable riverways for internal and external trade. One can
argue that the reverse is the case in some landlocked countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Historical factors, particular colonialism, was given as one of the reasons for poverty and underdevelopment in Africa. Sachs (2005) opined that superior European powers coax weaker societies to act favourably to their advantage. They “commandeered natural resources including a natural wealth of Africa”, and private armies were raised to ensure compliance (p.41). Wangari (2009) also noted that the legacy of colonial masters - the territories they established - was meant to serve their interest. According to Wangari (2009), they have no genuine interest in the development of the local population, but rather in raw materials to their various countries. Also, colonial authorities elevated the outcasts of the society that cooperated with them to positions that they would never have held in traditional societal institutions.

Wangari (2009) argues that the lack of merit and competence in consideration of making appointments by colonial authorities promoted corruption that still endures today. She argues that the lack of merit and competency system perpetuates underdevelopment because merit and competence is often not a condition in filling official positions, which undermines sound governance and justice (Wangari, 2009). A project whose value is difficult to monitor becomes more attractive to those in power because of opportunities to misappropriate such funds. Collins (2012:338) argues that corruption is ‘regressive’ - affecting the poorest. A transparency International Report(TI) (2012) stated: “corruption perpetuates poverty and skews decisions and diverts scarce funds, denying poor people access to basic social services and resources to improve their livelihood” (p.1). The report stated that no region in the world is “more severely affected than
sub-Saharan Africa” (p.1). Fighting corruption is more crucial to development in sub-Saharan Africa (Collins, 2012:3, 6 Marquette, 2012; Vian et al., 2012; Gebel, 2012). Bowers-Krishnan (2013) claims that African new leaders make no effort to change the inherited colonial systems of governance (Bowers-Krishnan, 2013) even though it was clear that the established territories, political structures, and civil services were incompatible with the ways of lives of the people.

The tribal groupings and ethnolinguistic make-up complicate development challenges in the region. Sub-Saharan Africa has over 1000 tribes with distinct languages and customs. Collier (2008) claims that the more a country is ethnically divided, the more it is likely to experience a breakout of civil war. He argues that Africa has witnessed civil war more than any other region of the world in history. The tribal sentiment is one of the obstacles to development in the region – in a context where traditionally rival and warring ethnic groups co-habit together (Onakuse and Lenihan, 2007). Moyo (2009:33) noted: “once locked into an ethnic argument, there is no policy prescription: it is a dead end”. Proponents of RBA hope that INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners could help create a system that promotes good leadership, which is often about capacity and not just character (Chapman et al. 2005; Handley et al. 2009; Blair 2010).

Relatedly, neo-patrimonial states such as Nigeria tend to be pre- or quasi-capitalist, where the states are the primary source of wealth in a country and where the private sector is moribund and depend on the largesse of the government. Handley et al. (2009:7) stated that such countries are:

“Generally economically ‘poorly performing’ partly because the ‘logic’ of the elite tends to further their short-term interests (i.e., staying in power and ‘milking’ the state) rather than long-term national developmental goals.”
Furthermore, based on the lived experience of the researcher, this situation often imposes a political culture where elections and parties focus on personalities, not issues, and cross-carpeting from one party to another is the norm (Handley et al. 2009:7, citing Cammack et al. 2006). In Nigeria, for instance, political contest is usually based on religious issues; lies; ethnicity; and the ability of a candidate to plunder public resources; god-fatherism; and the wealth of the candidate to buy a vote. These factors have contributed to scrambling for power at all costs by the political class and the perpetuation of poverty, violent conflict, and instabilities in some of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa (see also Smith, 2010).

Not only that, the lack of robust, transparent and credible public institutions in most African countries is another challenge to development. Civil service, police, judiciary and other public institutions are weak and ineffective in formulating and implementing development friendly programmes (Blair, 2010). Sachs (2005) argues that strong institutions of political liberty, a platform for open debate and free speech and protection of private property rights (which nurtured individual initiative) helped achieved Britain’s development. Proponents claim that RBA has the potential to promote such a debate and general conditions for poor and marginalised people to influence their government for a long-term social change in solidarity with civil society organisations.

Havro and Santiso (2011:1-4) observed that one of the problems with Africa’s underdevelopment is the availability of abundant resources in the region. They argue that being naturally blessed with natural resources such as oil, diamond, copper, gold tends to make a country and her people poorer; the leaders more corrupt; increased the tendency of violent conflict and war; non-democratic tendencies; high social divisions and weak institutions; and low levels of research
and development. They claim in most cases, the consequences of resource-led development are often negative "inducing slower growth, barriers to economic diversification, poor social welfare performance, and high levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment". The majority of the poorest and conflict-prone countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, are paradoxically endowed with abundant natural resources (Ross, 2001). The absence of fiscal prudence and lack of transparency and accountability constitutes ineffective governance (Havro and Santiso, 2011). These features of the resource-curse typically describe some of the causes of underdevelopment in Nigeria.

The role of the robust civil society in the Western development and the centrality of human rights values in Europe and the US can arguably be advanced as success stories in democratising development (Collier, 2008; Todaro and Smith, 2011). The literature suggests that democracies distribute more wealth than non-democracies, but this is debatable (Przeworski et al. 2000; UNDP, 2000; Boix, 2001; Tasioulas, 2007; Cleaver, 2009; TI, 2012). Some scholars argued that African democracies still have serious problems regarding the realisation of what people want from democracy (O’Donnell, 1994; Lynch, and Crawford, 2011). However, it is widely acknowledged that democracy is a complex form of government (Zakaria, 1997)

1.3. **Gap in the Literature**

Many scholars and practitioners argue that RBA has the potential to promote a beneficial change in the structural, political and economic transformation as well as providing specific intervention to meet the pressing needs of the people (VeneKlasen et al. 2004; Gready, 2008; Aberese Ako et al. 2013). However, despite the popularity and promises of RBA, there is confusion around what it
means in practice (VeneKlasen et al. 2004; Uvin, 2004, 2007; Hickey and Mitlin, 2009). Since NGOs are critical actors in development (Lewis and Kanji, 2009), the literature argues that the adoption of RBA would have implications on the strategies, operations, partnerships and the funding of NGOs (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Kindornay et al. 2012).

Until now, a little empirical study has been carried out on the role of RBA in shaping the decision-making and relationship between and specifically on the work and engagements between development-based NGOs and other civil society organisations that claim to have adopted RBA (Kindornay et al. 2012). According to Chapman et al. (2005:5), despite the claims by some NGOs to have adopted RBA, the implications of the approach in practice ‘have not been fully appreciated’ in the literature. One attempt to fill this gap was the study by Harris-Curtis et al. (2005), which presented an overview of how RBA has been implemented by different INGOs who have different conceptions of the approach. Harris-Curtis et al. (2005) suggest that the adoption of RBA may require changes in the profile of NGOs’ staff and job descriptions and may bring NGOs into direct conflict with rights’ violators. Also, they argued that the implementation of RBA will promote dialogue on issues such as transparency, accountability and standard of behaviour between partners as well as opportunities for scrutinising organisational values, political engagement and negotiating ‘partnership’ (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005:38). To them INGOs would be “more open to partners refusing, disagreeing and analysing their operations” (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005:38). They claimed that rights-based NGOs would take a critical stand against the practice of states from Northern and Southern states, especially when rights are violated or unconducive to the fulfilment of rights. However, these claims were not subjected to empirical
testing. They suggest that if the claims of RBA’s advocate prove to be valid, it will represent a significant shift in development practice (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005).

Another contribution to understanding the implication of RBA was provided by Elbers (2012). He examined the claim that INGOs aspire to promote effective partnership in their relationship with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners. According to Elbers (2012), the intermediate NGOs and CBOs in his study sought ways to enhance their power and influence in agenda setting. He argues that the local organisations from the South sought ways to maintain their autonomy and independence by using ‘avoidance tactics’ by selecting and rejecting funding sources or conditions that would detrimental to their values (see also Brehm, 2004:58). Elbers (2012) suggests that the relationships between rights-based NGOs in his study demonstrated that Southern NGOs strive to claim more spaces for participation by asserting their influence and autonomy on crucial decisions in their partnership with INGOs. This thesis will examine in more detail the understanding of partnership between NGOs in section 5 of chapter two.

Furthermore, Kindornay et al. (2012) explored the implications of RBA on the structure, work and the types of NGOs and other civil society organisations that accept overseas funding. They suggest that if the rights-based paradigm would have real effects, it should reflect on the work, structure, and funding of development-related NGOs and CBOs. To them, if RBA is to be different from the previous development approaches will much depend on how the approach will influence the basic relationships (strategic, financial and operational decisions) between INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners. For example, they claim that donors, mainly, INGOs that are rights-based often set conditions for partnerships with Southern NGOs including community-based organisations (CBOs) by stipulating that any application for funds must include elements of
awareness-raising on entitlements and rights. Kindornay et al. (2012) posit that rights-based donors (including NGO donors) will seek like-minded organisations to work with and expect that organisations who do not transition to RBA will face funding cuts, but those that adopt the approach will secure more funds. They also expect that while new organisations will explore funding opportunities from rights-based donors, they suggest that funding cut would be more pronounced among Tiers 3-5 NGOs\(^2\), and among NGO funded by the European Union or UN agencies since these donors claimed to support RBA.

Kindornay et al. (2012) expect that development projects that fail to have a clear focus on advocacy or fail to mention or focus on rights, or that do not emphasise empowerment and capacity building will not be funded by rights-based donors (Kindornay et al. 2012: 490). For instance, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Accountability Fund (2017) stated as one of the criteria that service delivery activities are not eligible for funding and will not be taken into consideration.

Kindornay et al. (2012) expect that rights-based NGOs will increasingly focus on advocacy and will reduce their provision of essential services to the poor and marginalised people, especially in developing countries. Not only that but they posit that the increasing demand for accountability from government and other development actors would lead to multiple consultative frameworks and reports and little attention would be paid to upward accountability in practice. Finally, Kindornay et al. (2012) posit that RBA would bring no real change in the development sector but that it is just a new development rhetoric that is destined to be consigned to the bin because of the likely resistance to change from both

\(^2\) According to Kindornay et al. (2012), Tier 3 NGOs are Southern, rights-based NGOs headquartered in national capitals and major cities, Tier 4 NGOs are Southern NGOs based in larger towns; rights-based organisation engaged in Rights related work; while Tier 5 are Southern NGOs based in smaller towns, rural communities, or smaller city neighbourhoods. Not explicitly Rights-based, but accepting Rights funding.
local and international aid professionals. Kindornay et al. (2012) did not conduct an empirical study to verify these hypotheses but called for an empirical investigation into these claims. Also, Stenner (2011) studied how experts that are made of Psychology students from a UK university and lay people understood human rights. However, those the scholar called lay people are educated and professionals such as lawyers, lecturers, journalists, environmentalists and teachers. He did not study the understanding of human rights among uneducated and local people in developing countries. Nonetheless, Stenner (2011) argues that how people actually understand human rights is critical to how it might influence their lives. He concluded that the understanding of human rights principles would be unavoidably “adapted, transformed and vernacularized within diverse local sites and practices” (Merry, 2005; Stenner, 2011:1229). In sum, the literature is lacking a comprehensive, in-depth study of how RBA influences the strategic, operational and financial decisions of INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners, and how RBA is understood by these different partners – a gap that this study seeks to address.

This study aims to investigate the claims that RBA has the potential to transform the essential relationships between INGOs and their intermediate NGOs and CBOs, by using the case study of ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib and their partners in Nigeria. This research is an exploratory study that seeks to investigate the implications of RBA in practice on the strategic, operational, and financial decisions of ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in Nigeria. The strategic decisions focus on the organisations’ choice of partners, while their operational decisions focus on how they blend advocacy with service delivery. The financial decisions examine how RBA shapes the organisations choice of funds or funder. It is a starting point for filling the gap in the literature and will
add to the body of knowledge on the understanding of RBA by different types of organisations, how they adapt their work to its values and its implications on their work and relationships in practice. It uses interviews, focus groups, participant observation and document analysis to examine how key actors describe these decision-making considerations at three different types of civil society organisations connected by a series of partnership arrangements and diverse funding sources. Note that the research does not focus on the actual impact of RBA on the lives of the beneficiaries of development aid but the strategic, operational and financial decision of NGOs. The research has the following question and objectives.

1.4. Research Question and Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the role of RBA in shaping the decision-making and the relationships between INGOs and their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners, using a case study approach. This study aims to answer the following central research question:

In what ways does the rights-based approach to development aid shape the partnerships between INGOs (ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib) and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in Nigeria, and influence the decisions each set of actors make on strategic, financial and operational matters?

The following specific objectives focus on answering the research question:

1. Regarding the strategic decisions, to investigate the understandings of the meanings of RBA among INGOs (ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib) and their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners, and how these different understandings of RBA shape the decisions that each set of actors make regarding their choice of partner.
2. Regarding the financial decisions, to investigate the extent to which the differently understood notion of RBA affects decisions made by INGOs (ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib) and local intermediate NGO and CBO partners on accepting specific sources and conditions of funding and to which donor they apply to.

3. Regarding the operational decisions, to examine the extent to which the differently understood notion of RBA determines the decisions made by Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid and their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners on having an increasing focus on advocacy work and curtailing their service delivery as a result of adopting rights-based thinking.

4. To study how the challenges experienced in the implementation of RBA also informed the strategic, operational and financial decisions of each set of NGO actors.

1.5. **Summary of the Findings**

1. **Participants’ Conception of RBA:** Whereas the literature argues that there is no one RBA and that it means different things to different organisations, the interview data suggest that the research respondents have a shared understanding of the fundamental values and principles of RBA. Whereas key informants from Oxfam-Novib demonstrated a good understanding of the principles of RBA, some of the participants from their intermediate NGO and CBO partners were not well versed in the fundamental principles and demands of RBA. One possible implication of an understanding of the key principles of RBA is that a common conception of the demands of RBA can create the ideational foundations of a partnership that is conducive to a productive implementation of the approach in
practice. That is, each partner would operate from the same foundations and understanding of what RBA demands in practice.

2. **RBA and the Strategic Decisions of NGOs**: Document analysis, participant observation of partnership forum and meetings and interview/focus groups with key informants show that notwithstanding the nuances in their different understanding of RBA each type of actor sought partnership with rights-based organisations as a strategy to implement RBA in their work. The majority of the respondents claimed that partnership decisions were determined by their commitment to the principles of RBA such as accountability, empowerment, participation, transparency, honesty and integrity, and solidarity. These values are stated in the partnership principles and agreements that were drawn up between each partner organisation. The values are couched as rights that both partners can claim from each other or on which actors could be held accountable, unlike in the previous approaches to development.

However, RBA is understood and articulated in slightly different ways between organisations. All the respondents from ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib demonstrate common and ‘professionalised’ understandings and interpretation of the core principles/values of RBA. The empirical data shows that ActionAid’s intermediate NGOs and CBOs have a common understanding and sound knowledge of the key demands of RBA and what it means in practice. However, while some Oxfam-Novib’s intermediate NGO and CBO partners demonstrated a good grasp of the approach, a few of the informants were lacking in the understanding of and commitments to RBA.
Interviews/Focus groups were supplemented with participant observation of the partnership meetings to evaluate how actors demonstrate RBA in practice. The empirical data suggests that ActionAid strives to partner only with organisations that are strictly committed to the philosophy of RBA as reflected in their understandings of the framework.

The ActionAid respondents claim that they reflect on these values in their interpersonal relationship with intermediate NGO and CBO partners as they try to live out the values in their activities. For instance, the INGO emphasise a close link with the people at the grass-roots as one of the core demands of RBA and all their intermediate NGO partners are actively working with grass-roots organisations, that the researcher interacted with in the course of this study. The Deputy Country Director of Oxfam-Novib claimed that the values of RBA influence their decisions on the choice of whom they partner with or whom to end a partnership with, especially those that are unwilling to translate to the rights-based approach. In practice, some Oxfam-Novib intermediate NGO participants claimed they are not strictly rights-based organisations but integrate rights values into their programmes. The findings suggest that the understandings or claims by Oxfam-Novib that they work with likeminded organisations are not accurate in all cases.

In addition, the findings suggest that the values of RBA are poorly demonstrated in practice by some Oxfam-Novib intermediate NGOs partners since some of them are city-based organisations that may not have close connections with the people in rural areas, where the majority of the people living in poverty reside in Nigeria. The finding is significant because these organisations overlook an aspect of the demands of RBA. The findings
suggest that Oxfam-Novib seems to value operational collaboration in their partnership practices instead of a long-term engagement with rights-holder organisations. However, the findings also show that Oxfam-Novib demands that these partners integrate rights into the work they do together. This could promote a positive outcome in the sense that rights issues or framework can be integrated into the activities of non-rights-based organisations, expanding the understandings and applications of rights in development activities.

While ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners seemed to be actively guided by RBA in seeking like-minded organisations to partner with, it is not so clear the extent to which RBA shapes the decisions of Oxfam-Novib and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners about partnering arrangements. The result is mixed in the case of Oxfam-Novib.

3. RBA and Financial Decisions of NGOs: Regarding financial decisions, the majority of the participants from ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib and their intermediate NGO partners claimed that their commitment to the philosophy of RBA has a determining influence on their funding-related decisions. In response to that, they seek to partner with donors (official/private) who believe in similar values or have sympathy for RBA. However, most of the respondents from ActionAid claimed that their selectivity about funding sources constrained or reduced their access to financial resources from some official/INGO donors. The interview data confirm the expectations of the literature that RBA limits the funding options available to rights-based NGOs from donors that do not subscribe to the approach (see Kindornay et al. 2012, Elbers and Schulpen, 2013). The majority of the interviewees claimed that their commitment to RBA and the
consequent reduction of financial resources (especially from ActionAid and their intermediate NGO partners) encouraged them to locate alternative funding sources to compensate for the shortfall. Nevertheless, some Oxfam-Novib intermediate NGO partners complained that Nigerian government is not ready to fund their work. Although receiving funds from government may not be counter to RBA, it is difficult to appeal for funds from the government while at the same encourage people to act in making such institutions accountable.

Another significant finding of this study is that the intermediate NGOs and CBOs claimed that they experienced a more significant shortage of funds from official/INGO donors than their INGO partners, which aligns with the expectations of the literature (Kindornay et al. 2012:14). However, the majority of the respondents from intermediate NGOs and INGOs claimed that they supplemented their income by locating alternative funding sources from their local constituencies to support their work. The findings align with Elbers and Art (2011:91), which argue that NGOs from developing countries may employ funding selectivity to enhance their power and influence in their partnership with their INGO partners and coined such behaviour as ‘avoiding tactics’. These include ‘selecting’ and ‘rejecting’ funds from some donors who do not share their values. According to the interview extracts, the opportunity to locate alternative funding sources from the intermediate NGOs’ local constituencies especially the local intermediate NGOs can promote their autonomy and independence from their INGO partners. It may also boost the power and influence of local organisations in their work with INGO donors. Although access to alternative sources of funds is not the only factor that determines the autonomy and independence of
organisations, the power and influence of INGOs over local organisations have mainly been conventionally based on their control over funds. Moreover, CBO participants that work with ActionAid ideacitly use the terminology of RBA. However, a majority of them claimed that their understanding of RBA shaped their financial decisions about which INGO or intermediate NGO to partner with. Interesting divergence between different levels of organisations is that the majority of CBO participants accused INGOs and their intermediate NGOs partners of committing less of their funds on service provision despite also claiming that they are committed to the values of RBA, which emphasises more significant attention to empowerment and advocacy. Furthermore, whereas informants from Oxfam-Novib claimed that RBA has a determining influence on whom they have a financial relationship with, it is not clear that the financial decisions of their intermediate NGOs and CBOs were less accurate on how their financial decisions conformed with the demands of RBA. For instance, some NGO and CBO participants complained that Nigerian government is unwilling to fund their work, which constrained their activities. This contrast with the respondents from the intermediate NGO that partner with ActionAid, none of whom sees government funding as compatible with RBA.

4. RBA and Operational Decisions of NGOs: The interview data and participant observation show two important results. First, according to participants from ActionAid and their local intermediate NGOs, their commitment to the values of RBA shaped their decisions to adopt an

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3 CBO participants are not versed in experts’ language of rights but they understand human rights in their local Yoruba language as ‘eto omo eniyan’ meaning the rights of every human being, while rights-based are interpreted as ‘iwa omoluabi’ meaning the behaviours or conducts of a decent man and organisations that reflects rights values
increasing focus on advocacy. They also claimed that they only provide minimal essential services to needy communities to gain the trust and the commitment of their local partners and communities to promote rights-based development. They also claimed that they have decided to use minimal service provision to demonstrate a model of good practice to governments on innovative ways to promote people’s development. The finding confirmed the expectation of Kindornay et al. (2012) because service delivery has been curtailed. However, service delivery is now employed by these organisations as a transformative political tool to enhance the power and influence of local organisations and community for rights claiming.

Second, while the participants from Oxfam-Novib claimed that they are increasingly prioritising advocacy, the majority of Oxfam-Novib intermediate NGO partners are focusing more on service provision but integrating rights values into their work. Some intermediate NGOs and partners of Oxfam-Novib that are advocacy-based NGOs such CISLAC and Social Action are centrally concerned with advocacy. They seek to encourage people’s participation in budgeting processes and provide a critical interpretation of government policies to their constituencies. They rarely deliver essential services to the people. CBO participants from both Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid partnerships expressed different opinions on service provision. Their understanding of RBA is informed by the extent to which it can promote their access to essential social services, although some of them claimed that their advocacy trips to government offices have led to the provision of infrastructural facilities by their governments. The finding signifies a divergence of opinions on what RBA entails in practice depending
on the type of organisations involved. However, demanding the provision of essential services reflects a political act of realising rights particularly when local organisations are involved in articulating the needs and participating in the process to ensure quality social services.

5. **Obstacles to the implementation of RBA and the Decisions of NGOs:**

This study suggests that the obstacles to implementing the rights-based approach influence the decisions that participant NGOs make on strategic, operational and financial matters. The research participants claimed that they face three major obstacles based on their adoption of RBA. First, participants from both ActionAid and Oxfam and their intermediate NGO partners claimed that donors’ preferences for project-based and short funding arrangements limits or reduces their access to funds. In addition, grass-roots organisations share similar preferences with the donors in regards to service provision. For CBOs, service provision is key to their organisational objectives. However, the INGOs and their local intermediate NGOs claimed that RBA shaped their decisions to have a greater focus on building the capacity of members-of-staff to have adequate knowledge of what rights-based development entails and how to relate with local organisations who have rights to make claims. Staff now must demonstrate the values of RBA in their talk, actions, and relationship with the people and their organisations. All these require a change in orientation, profile, job descriptions and work of NGOs’ staff. In addition, translating RBA from policy to implementation entails a new form of relationship with partners, where partners should have the rights to scrutinise organisational values, negotiate on issues such as accountability, political engagement and more openness to partners (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005).
Operationally, the INGOs and intermediate NGOs claimed that they conduct a training programme on rights and RBA for their members-of-staff and their CBO partners and they have decided to allocate adequate funds to support their operational and strategic approaches. They require continuous and adequate training to learn and inculcate the values of RBA such as mutual respect, humility, the courage of conviction, equity and social justice, independence, and transparency and demonstrate them in their daily activities as they work with the people. This is because they can be challenged by the people that are now empowered to demand accountability from their INGO donors on any of these values. Hence, RBA can promote empowerment by building accountable relationships between organisations, ultimately between the empowered people and governments.

Second, the culture of discrimination and violent practices against women is another obstacle to the implementation of RBA that shapes the participants strategic, operational and financial decisions. In response, the informants from the INGOs and their intermediate NGOs claimed that they have decided to strategically focus more on the empowerment of women and girls on rights values to challenge discriminatory practices against them. In addition, they claimed gender discrimination shaped their decisions to promote gender equality in their various organisations.

Regarding operational decisions, the participants from the INGOs and their intermediate NGO partners claimed that they support women and girls on vocational training and skills acquisition as well as give small-scale loans to women to take advantage of the economic opportunities in their locality. Consequently, while they focus more on women and girls, they strive to design programmes that benefit both genders.
Third, security risks are another major obstacle to RBA implementation according to the participants from all the organisations. In terms of strategic decisions, they claimed they seek to work with the traditional and government institutions to provide a secure environment for members of staff and people to work. Operationally, they claimed that they work with security agencies in the communities as well as financing security informants to assess the security situation before they embark on an advocacy trip or work. Providing minimal social services in the communities boost their relationships with the people and reduce the activities of those who may be used by rights violators to discourage their participation in rights claiming. Although, it involves substantial financial commitments. Overall, unanticipated findings from this study suggest that it is possible that RBA can promote the autonomy and independence as well as boost the power and influence of local intermediate NGOs and CBOs from international/INGO donors. Nevertheless, these findings are unique to the local context, and future research will need to be sensitive to the complex realities in different areas that may influence the strategic, operational and financial decisions and the relationship between a different set of civil society organisations.

1.6. The Limitations of the Study and the Thesis Outline

This is an exploratory study into the influence of RBA on the partnership between NGOs and how it shaped their strategic, operational and financial decisions based on a small number of organisations in Nigeria. Hence, it is a starting point to address the gap in the literature. The positionality of the researcher may have influenced the opinions of the informant or the ways they have presented their
perspectives. As a researcher from a UK university, they may have wanted to present their organisations in the best light and to impress the interviewer rather than be candid. Another critical limitation of this study is that it is a qualitative inquiry. Hence the views of the participants are context, time and place specific. Put simply, the perspectives of the respondents from the interviews and the focus group discussions are valid for the respondents at the time of the interviews and in their various constituencies. Therefore, this limits the generalisability of the findings.

1.7. **Thesis Outline**

Chapter Two focuses on the review of previous studies on the birth of RBA, its theoretical groundings, conception and interpretation by NGO actors. This is followed by a discussion on the concept of power, and how it is connected with the implementation of RBA. Chapter Three focuses on the NGOs, partnership as a concept and the implications of RBA on the relationship between organisations. In Chapter Four, the thesis focuses on the discussion of the methodology employed in the study, including a discussion on the validity and the ethical implications of this research. Chapter Five forms the first empirical chapters and focuses on the understandings and the implications of RBA on the partnership between INGOs (ActionAid and Oxfam) and their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners in Nigeria, particularly on the choice of whom they partner with and how it shapes their work and relationships. In Chapter Six this thesis presents findings on how RBA shapes the funding decisions of these sets of organisations and its implications for the financial well-being of this organisation and on how it can promote the autonomy and independence of local intermediate NGOs and CBO in that context. Chapter Seven examines the implications of RBA on the decisions
of these sets of organisations on having a greater focus on advocacy while providing essential services to needy communities. In Chapter Eight, this thesis presents findings on how the obstacles to implementing RBA influence the strategic, operational and financial decisions of NGOs, while Chapter Nine forms the conclusion. The next chapter examines the emergence, concept, and practice of RBA and what it means for the development sector and actors.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. General Introduction
The failure of neoliberal development approaches to secure social justice for the world’s poor coupled with civil society activism (Reichert 2007:26), informed the emergence of RBA since the 1990s (UNDP 2000; Slim 2002:5; Eyben 2003:2; Uvin 2007:601). Neoliberalism is an economic ideology that promotes rational self-interest and advocate economic liberalisation policies such as privatisation, deregulation, free trade, globalisation, and reductions in public sector expenditure to boost private sector ideas in the economy and society (Easterly, 2013; Smith and Todaro, 2011; Lewis and Kanji, 2009; Porter et al. 2008). Proponents of RBA argue that rights-based thinking stands out from previous development approaches because it is premised on the foundation that the fulfillment of the rights of the people are the means and ends of development (UNDP 2000; Uvin 2007:601-602). They argue that inequitable distribution of power in favour of the few powerful actors reinforces poverty. Hence the critical contribution to development in developing countries is to help shift those power relationships in favour of the people living in poverty (Offenheiser and Holcombe, 2003; Oxfam, 2014; Campolina and Philips, 2015). Therefore, development actors, especially NGOs are expected to create local understandings and applications of human rights principles among the people and governments to address development constraints in developing countries instead of their traditional focus on service provision (Eyben, 2003; Uvin 2007; Easterly, 2013; Crawford and Andreassen, 2015).

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines the understanding of human rights and the philosophy behind the emergence of RBA. It is argued that human rights and human development aim to promote the
political and economic rights of the people to live the kind of lives they value (Sen 2001). The second section examines the concept of RBA and its implications for development and civil society organisations/NGOs as well as its potential to promote beneficial changes in the lives of the world’s poor. The section also examines the relevance of advocacy and service delivery in rights-based development as well as various criticisms of RBA. This section argues that the state has a negative duty to prevent violations of the rights of the people to have access to those things necessary for their lives (Harris-Curtis et al., 2005; Chauvier, 2007; Pogge, 2007).

Advocates of RBA argue that the rights-based framework demands a shift in focus by INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners from service delivery into the empowerment of the people to challenge structural relations of power that reinforces poverty or simply advocacy (Eyben, 2003; Chapman et al. 2009; Banks and Hulme, 2012; Oxfam, 2014). The third section discusses the concept of power, and it is relevance to RBA and argues that change to promote just and equitable society can only happen when there is a transformation of the unequal balance of power between development actors. Moreover, that changing power structures requires strategies that address formal and informal decision-making processes that shape the lives of the people living in poverty (Eyben, 2006; Chambers, 2006; Oxfam, 2014). This chapter argues that RBA could be a viable tool that NGOs could employ to boost the achievement of their organisational goals of a ‘just world’ as agents of positive social change in the South (Bebbington et al. 2007; Hickey and Mitlin, 2009, Oxfam 2012:1).
2.1. **Human Rights and RBA**

2.1.0. **Concept of Human Rights**

Human rights are universal, inalienable and indivisible and shared equally by every human person notwithstanding their gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation and economic background (UDHR, 1948; D'Hollander et al. 2013). Rights are universal because they contain no name reference to a particular place, culture or time (Chalabi, 2014:993). There is a long history of the discourse of human rights dating back to European Enlightenment in the 18th century. However, everything that encompassed the notion of ‘human rights’ has been historically the subject of controversies (Brown, 1997:41; VeneKlasen et al. 2004; Ife, 2009; Stenner, 2011). The notion of human rights posits that there are certain necessities that every individual needs to live in dignity as a human being, which is valid everywhere (Brown et al. 2002; Pogge, 2007).

According to Jackson-Preece (2011), human rights are inherent to every human being based on their humanity and not conditional upon political membership within any particular community or country. Thus precede the rights of citizenship and have supremacy over any domestic legislation that is contrary to human rights ideas; neither time nor place can reduce the validity of human rights (Jackson-Preece, 2011). Therefore, every persons or resident in any countries have human rights including rights to social, economic and cultural rights. According to Strauss (1991), governments need to recognise individuals as rights-holders, including residents and citizens, and separate from their membership of a tribe or nationality.
Human rights have a historical connection with the idea of natural law and universal entitlement, which emanated from the Judeo-Christian faith (Brown et al. 2002). Grotius in Brown et al. (2002:326-328) argues that the natural law is not mystery, but a set of realistically valid moral rules by which all human beings can obey. Historically, many actors including individuals and civil society organisations have achieved successes in their struggles by invoking the instrument of human rights (Kaldor, 2003; Karns and Mingst, 2010). These include anti-slavery movement, the struggle for independence of many colonised countries, and the struggle for workers’ and women’s rights (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Karns and Mingst, 2010). In addition, more prominently since the 1940s rights have been articulated, defined and legalised by the collective efforts and struggles of people for many years and will continue to evolve (UN Declaration on Human Rights, 1948; UNDP/HDR, 2000; ActionAid, 2005; OHCHR, 2006; Pogge, 2007). Contemporarily, the language of rights and RBA have been a powerful instrument in many developing countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia. The language of rights has been employed to defeat discrimination based on class, race or caste, to fight patriarchy and gender discrimination, and to gain access to resources to improve lives (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002; VeneKlasen et al. 2004; Chapman and Mancini, 2005; Chapman et al. 2009).

An individual’s ability to claim rights depend on the institutional channels such as the courts or village council they can access (VeneKlasen et al. 2004). Thus, effective rights claiming demands a comprehensive analysis of the forces and dynamics at all levels of decision-making and power, otherwise, it may be injurious to those involved (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002). Thus development organisations need to understand how power operates in the society they work to determine the
combination of approaches that are most suitable, and the type of support they can access to prevent backlash and transform conflicts (VeneKlasen et al. 2004). Furthermore, Miller et al. (2004) point out that there is danger in viewing rights as a legalistic approach, because such perception can divert attention from the ever-changing political processes that determine the extent to which rights can be made real in the lives of the people. They argue that such a perspective of rights may fail to expand its scope or strengthen accountability and capacity to deliver a fair distribution of resources. A legalistic approach to rights may be inappropriate to develop people’s sense of themselves as rights-holders to boost their capacity to engage with duty-bearers to transform power (Miller et al. 2004). A more appropriate approach to rights claiming starts with an analysis of the people’s needs and challenges about how they experience the world to build an active movement for a sustained transformative change.

In other words, rights need to be understood as a political process where the poor and excluded people through social struggles can articulate their needs as demands and enforceable obligations by governments in response to changing power relations (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002). Stenner (2011) argues that human rights perspective tasked development agencies with the responsibility of linking ordinary people with law and politics, improving public services, promoting respect for the basic human dignity and common basic values that unite people in a country as coherent collectives. Hence, it becomes essential for organisations that work with the people to identify many entry points to promote rights and develop holistic approaches that take account of the complexities of power and politics to promote human development (Chambers, 2006; Eyben, 2006).
Conceptually, human development is the process of enhancing the capabilities of individuals to lead a life of respect and value and attain their full potential based on equality, self-determination, peace, and security (Sen, 2001; UNICEF 2003:24; UNDP/HDR 2000; 2010:4; Alkire, 2010). In this sense, development describes the process of achieving human rights including civil, political, cultural, economic and social rights (Sen, 2001; Piron, 2005; Alkire, 2007). Also, human rights and development enterprise have been separated institutionally at the international level since 1945 (D’Hollander et al. 2013). Human rights work conventionally concerned with the protection of persons, groups and communities from abuse by governments, mainly dominated by legal experts (D’Hollander et al. 2013). They commonly employ advocacy, activism and ‘naming and shaming’ to conduct their work with a particular focus on the political and civil rights (Sano, 2000; Hickey and Mitlin, 2009; D’Hollander et al. 2013).

The increasing recognition of economic, social, cultural rights and the rights to development since the 1980s by international institutions, governments and organisations connected the field of human rights and development enterprise (Uvin, 2004; Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi, 2004; Gready and Ensor, 2005; D’Hollander et al. 2013). Consequently, human rights NGOs increasingly recognise economic and social issues in their work, while development agencies started to employ the language of rights, hence the emergence of rights-based NGOs (Miller, 2010; D’Hollander et al. 2013). The integration of the two sectors birthed a new understanding of poverty and development beyond economic and institutional matters. Thus development began to be framed as rights (UNDP, 1996, 2000; Sano, 2000; Sen, 2001; D’Hollander et al. 2013).

Hence, RBA emphasises the promotion of the collective struggles of the poor and excluded people and their organisations to win and protect their rights. In this
sense, rights are not meant only for the educated, the influential and development experts to implement on behalf of others. Instead, rights can become a reality when the poor, uneducated and excluded people whose rights have been deprived are empowered to participate in the struggle to win and protect new and existing rights. Of course, lack of education does not remove the humanness from the poor and marginalised people. However, this thesis acknowledges that the language of rights may be challenging for ordinary people to understand and use. The next section examines the understandings of RBA, and it is implications for development activities in more detail.

2.2. The Rights-Based Approach

The complete convergence of the human rights and development policies strategies is RBA, which has been embraced by many bilateral, intergovernmental organisations and NGOs that dominate the rights-based sector (Gready, 2008; Kindornay et al. 2012; D’Hollander et al. 2013). Since the 1990s, RBA has gained currency in the development studies literature. With the idea that concrete improvements can be achieved in the lives of the people living in poverty when there is a change in the interpersonal power relations and the processes that reinforce them (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Eyben et al. 2006; Chambers, 2006; Crawford and Andressen, 2015). As such, under RBA rights are promoted as ways of securing structural changes, addressing power inequalities and protecting the poor, and so seen as the means to address all development problems (Nussbaum 2003, 2004; Hickey and Mitlin, 2009; Hunter 2012:12-13).

Furthermore, RBA centralises the fulfilment of human rights as one of its primary principles. It holds that a person having unfulfilled rights – for example, right to food, health, education, information, participation - is a poor person (Sen, 2000;
UNDP, 2000; Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Uvin, 2007). Poverty is viewed as more than mere lack of resources, but the manifestation of exclusion and powerlessness termed capability deprivation (Mahbub ul Haq, 1995; Sen 2001:1-2; Uvin 2007:603; Eyben 2003:3). In practice, RBA centres on identifying the root cause of poverty, and empowering people living in poverty to challenge the unequal power relations that disadvantage them socially (Gready, 2008: 745). It also focuses on enhancing the capacity of duty-bearers to perform their obligations (UNDP, 2000:12, 2003:3; Theis, 2004:11 Boesen and Martin, 2007; Hunter 2012: 12). RBA hinges on the notion that development could only happen if individuals and their rights are considered in development processes and outcomes (UNDP 2003:1). Importantly, RBA advocates argue that rights cannot be made real in the lives of the poor and marginalised people unless there are changes in the ‘structure and relationships of power in all its forms’ (Chapman et al.2005). Rights-based development promotes the idea that meeting basic needs of people living in poverty begins with the analysis of development problems and power relationships to inform collective actions and civil engagement (Miller et al. 2004; Theis, 2004). That is why power analysis and the understanding of how change can be realised and sustained in different environments is central to RBA (ActionAid, 2010). The exercise of power influences how people participate in society, whose voices and interests count most in the development processes and whose rights are advanced (Chapman and Mancini, 2005; Gaventa, 2006; Chambers, 2006).

The fundamental goal of RBA in practice is to help create a local understanding of human rights to address development problems including corruption, discriminatory attitudes, and beliefs or public opinion and building the capacity of individuals and organisations to claim and fulfill rights (VeneKlasen et al. 2004;
The adoption of RBA requires development agencies to have a systematic change in the way they conceptualise development goals and in the development and management of strategies and engagement with partners (Piron and O’Neil, 2005; Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Hickey and Mitlin, 2009; Chalabi, 2014; Schmitz, 2016). In other words, proponents of RBA expect that it would enhance the power and influence of the poor and marginalised people to redress the structural relations of power that promote inequality in access to opportunities as well as improve the accountability of governments and official and private donors to the people (Kindornay et al. 2012).

According to the literature, RBA in practice implies a paradigmatic shift in focus by development agencies from service provision to needy people and communities into the empowerment of people living in poverty to claim their rights (Eyben, 2003; Chapman et al. 2009). NGOs are required to focus less on being implementers of technical assistance projects to creating democratic spaces for the people to challenge duty-bearers that exercise power over them for inclusive development – a bottom-up approach to social transformation (Lewis and Kanji, 2009; Campolina and Philips, 2015).

Therefore, RBA is widely seen by its proponents as a mechanism to address the problem of increasing poverty and underdevelopment in developing countries (UNDP, 2000; Cornwall, 2004; Piron, 2005; Uvin, 2007; Macpherson, 2009; Miller, 2010). According to this line of argument, poverty is not natural and not unavoidable but as result of some actors failing in their obligations to the people (Gready and Ensor, 2005). This argument is relevant to Nigeria that reflects a paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty or ‘resource curse’ (Ushie, 2013). Hence, the essence of service delivery in RBA is how it is done, by whom, and how it will
enhance concrete social changes in the lives of the people and their communities. Rights-based perspective sees standard service delivery as disempowering if duty-bearers are shielded from their obligations (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005). Therefore, RBA programming seeks a ‘more nuanced balance’ between advocacy, capacity-building and service provision in a new synthesised approach to solving the immediate and structural causes of poverty and exclusion (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Kindornay et al. 2012; D’Hollander et al. 2013).

Scholars and development practitioners have identified added-values of RBA to the development sector. According to Gready (2008), RBA sharpened the productive edges of the development and human rights sectors by bringing a legal perspective to development problems, while the human rights sector have embraced economic, social and cultural rights beyond the legal arena. He argues that RBA has led to the conceptions of new rights such as the right to collective ownership of land and access to natural resources, right to an identity, right to be heard, rights to solidarity with communities, rights to the promotion of social justice, and rights to participatory and deliberative democracy. Also, proponents of RBA point out that it aims to promote and secure premise for accountability (Darrow and Tomas, 2005; Gready 2008). They argue that RBA also changes the nature of human rights ownership among NGOs, redefining individuals and groups as rights-holders and their organisations as duty-bearers (Oxfam, 2012).

Also, OECD/WB, (2013) claim that RBA has the potential to improve project effectiveness by consolidating the use of sound development practices. Not only that, but RBA advocates argue that it can add rigor and clarity in development planning, and promotes productive partnerships by providing links between ‘natural allies’ (Hickey and Mitlin, 2009:211). RBA also provides a connection
between local and global actions based on shared human rights values and standards (Sano, 2000; D'Hollander et al. 2013).

However, there are challenges to the implementation of RBA on the ground, hence it is worth noting that RBA is not a one-size-fits-all approach (Miller, 2010; D'Hollander et al. 2013). For instance, while rights-based's conception of development may be useful in a ‘resources curse’ country such as Nigeria, some countries have few resources of their own to deliver essential services to the people. In such a context, it could be difficult for local people to have an increasing focus on advocacy instead of delivering essential social services, where governments are unable but not unwilling to provide such services. In addition, it could also be challenging for the less educated people to have a grasp of how to claim their rights and could arguably be tricky for NGOs to promote RBA in such a context. The challenges of implementing RBA particularly by NGOs will be discussed in greater detail later in chapter three section 3.5

2.2.0. Key Components of RBA

Proponents of RBA argue that it is flexible and covers a wide range of practices involving various development agencies (Hamm, 2001; Piron, 2005; Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Piron and O’Neil, 2005; OHCHR, 2006; Boesen and Martin 2007:15; Nyasulu, 2009; D’ Hollander et al. 2013). They argue that it can be adapted to different policy contexts, employed as a comprehensive institution-wide framework, and can be applied selectively to a specific intervention or context (Hamm, 2001; D’Hollander et al. 2013). These are peculiar characteristics of RBA among development agencies that are meant to guide development activities (UNDP, 2003; Harris-Curtis et al.2005; Gready 2008:738; Gabrielle, 2008:13; Nyasulu, 2009). Some of these principles have been part of the development
policies long before the evolution of RBA, however, they were not framed in human rights terms (Kindornay et al. 2012). Also, organisations sometimes use the word ‘values’, ‘principles’ and ‘component’ of RBA interchangeably (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Nyasulu, 2009; ActionAid, 2010; Oxfam, 2013). NGOs employ these values or principle as the standards that guide their relationship and work in practice (ActionAid, 2010; Oxfam, 2012). The principles are:

**Universality and Inalienability:** The principle of universality of rights is fundamental because Human Rights Conventions establish the fundamental civil, political, social, economic, and cultural entitlements and freedoms of every human being at all time and in every place (Theis, 2004, Harris-Curtis et al. 2005). These rights are also inalienable, which means that all people have same human rights from birth that they cannot give up or be taken away.

**Indivisibility and Interdependence:** A fundamental principle of RBA is that they are indivisible and interdependence, which means we cannot be selective, upholding some rights while denying others (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Nyasulu, 2009). According to Nyasulu (2009), violation of one right amount to a violation of all, and one right cannot be fulfilled at the expense of others.

**Participation:** According to Lewis and Kanji (2009), participation is the need to centralise the role of the people living in poverty in the decision-making processes or active involvement in “political choices that govern one’s life.” (Nussbaum, 2003:42) This is based on the idea that people themselves are experts on their own development needs and should be active subjects in the creation of strategies and solutions to their problems (Lewis and Kanji, 2009). Sen (2005) argues that the right to participation is the entry point to realise other rights. Participation in
RBA implies switching from technical to a political understanding of development (Eyben 2003:2-3, Gready 2008).

According to UNDP (2003:12), the free, active and meaningful participation of rights-holders in the affairs that concern their lives is a significant development outcome (Sen, 2001; UNDP 2003:12; D’Hollander et al. 2013:39). For Ljungman (2004:11 citing Human Rights Council of Australia, 2001), ‘Free’ means unimposed participation. ‘Active’ means that the participation needs to focus on a goal, and ‘meaningful’ means that “it is consequential for goals achieved” (OHCHR 2006b:26; Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi 2004:1424). For participation to be free, active and meaningful, there must be sufficient information on the development process for all actors. Resources and time need be created to promote channels of participation and capacity development, most especially for the weak and vulnerable people (Danchurchaid, 2007:8; UNDP 2003:12). In RBA, participation is not consultation, but active involvement of the poor and excluded people and their organisations in development policies and decisions (Eyben 2003:1-3; Nussbaum, 2004; Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi, 2004; Sen 2005; Uvin 2007:603; ActionAid, 2008: 7; Thomas 2009). Yanacopulos (2016) argues that beneficial changes could be witnessed by the poor and marginalised people when there is an enabling institutional for the participation of empowered individuals, organisations, and social movements.

**Accountability**: The concept of accountability is key to the diverse understandings of RBA because it is a relationship of power between development actors, and can be defined if the actors concerned are also specified (Fox and Brown, 1998; Bradley, 2007). Accountability means that rights imply duties and duties demand answerability or responsibility (Ljungman 2004). Accountability of
NGOs is the process where an organisation holds itself openly answerable for what it believes, what it does and does not do in such a way that demonstrates it embraces all stakeholders (Crack, 2013). Here (I)NGO accountability is being responsible to stakeholders including the poor and their organisations often referred to as downward accountability, rather than vertical accountability to donors (Bank and Hulme, 2012). For Brown and Fox (1998:440), accountability is frequently imposed by vertical power relations, particularly when actors are not subject to the same hierarchical authority. They argue that much of the theory and practice to enforce accountability is designed for application in bureaucratic settings and could be challenging between autonomous organisations such as in the partnership between INGOs and organisations from the South, where there is a lack of a shared hierarchical authority (Fox and Brown, 1998). They argue that “accountability may depend on their capacity to “exit” to alternative sources of support or mobilise political “voice” that shape the behavior of others”. The opportunity to “exit” could be alternative partners or source of funds, which may enforce accountability (Fox and Brown, 1998).

Notwithstanding the challenge of enforcing accountability between horizontal relationships, RBA requires development actors to be accountable for defined outcomes and accept responsibility for their impacts on people’s lives (Ljungman 2004; OHCHR, 2006:24). Proponents of RBA claim it provides standards for marginalised people to demand accountability from those that hold power over resources and opportunities, thus promoting downward accountability (Darrow and Tomas, 2005; Uvin, 2007; Bradley, 2007; William and Taylor, 2009; Szporluk, 2009; ActionAid, 2010; D’Hollander et al. 2013). According to Fox and Brown, (1998), accountability between organisations in partnership requires a balanced of power relations and mutual influence between partners, which they argue
evolve as partners work together over a long-term. This could be challenging for INGOs who are traditionally accustomed to enjoying influence and power over their intermediate NGO and CBO partners because of their control of financial and other resources (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005).

To ensure accountability, RBA stipulates that NGOs should begin development activities by adequately assessing all forms of power that perpetuate exclusion and poverty, which could help in unlocking the power within the people to make duty-bearers fulfill their obligations. As such, organisations are required to create a non-patronage relationship with the people living in poverty by creating allies and coalition building (Fox and Brown, 1998; UNDP 2003:13; OHCHR, 2006:24; Uvin, 2007:603; Gready, 2008:742). In practice, NGOs are required to collaborate with the poor but not speak for them; not substitute for their voices, but create channels that bring local activism and rights to shape the process of decision-making that often reinforces poverty. This thesis also suggests that RBA can improve downward accountability of NGOs to the people and their organisations and promote more negotiation space to deliver concrete changes in the delivery of aid.

**Non-Discrimination, equality, and attention to vulnerable groups:** Human rights principles specify that all human beings are equal, and there must not be discrimination in any way that might be tantamount to rights violation (Nussbaum 2003:38; Brown et al. 2002; UNDP 2000; the International Bill of Human Rights, 1948). The principles of non-discrimination and equality require particular focus on those segments of society that are experiencing discriminations in access to resources and opportunities (UNDP 2003:13; Rae cited in Mullard and Spicker, 1998:214; Rawls, 2001:10; Spicker 2010; Smith 2005). Although individuals are
the primary unit of human rights, RBA does not overlook collective rights or rights of communities, and that there should be no infringement on one person’s rights to fulfill those of others.

Crucially, attention should be on most vulnerable in the society – people in the position of social and economic disadvantage based on the notion of rights (Nussbaum 2004:13). Examples of such people are children, women, internally-displaced people, the elderly, people living with HIV/AIDS, and the disabled. Structural and indirect forms of vulnerabilities and discrimination need to be given particular focus in the process of development (Sen 2001, 2005). The focus is crucial to enhance the inclusion of those people that are experiencing exclusion in the scheme of things (Boesen and Martin 2007:17; UNDP 2003:13; Spicker 2006; Rawl 2001)

**Empowerment:** This is the process of growing the capacities of the marginalised people to participate in the decision-making process, influence, negotiate with other development actors, control and demand accountability from governments, and institutions that manage the resources and opportunities that affect their lives. Alkire (2007:348) sees empowerment as the “ability to advance goals one value and have reason to value” or the expansion of individual agency. Agency is “what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important” (Alkire 2007:353 citing Sen, 1985b:206). In other words, an agent is “someone who acts and brings about change” (Alkire 2007:353 citing Sen, 1999:19). Kleine (2010:677) noted that a person’s agency reflects an individual’s asset endowment, including “psychological, informational, organisational, material, social, financial or human” assets (Alsop and Heinsohn, 2005: 8). Empowerment focuses on building the capacities of individuals or groups
to make a choice and translate the choices into desired actions and outcomes for the poor and excluded people to gain and keep control over development plans, policies, and processes (Alsop and Heinsohn, 2005: Gready and Ensor, 2005).

Moreover, empowerment is vital for participation to be free, active and meaningful towards the development of the people by the people and for the people (UNDP 2003:13; Hickey and Mohan 2005:256). Development actors in RBA are expected to enhance the agency of the people through advocacy and by boosting their human rights knowledge. Hence, promoting transformative changes begins with the analysis of the capacities of the people to claim and exercise their rights and designing of appropriate measures to develop them (Ife, 2009). The empowerment of local organisations and communities could be useful in popularising public opinion against elite domination, which has been a big clog in the wheel of development in many sub-Saharan countries including Nigeria (Sen, 2005; Smith, 2010; Ushie, 2013).

**Human Rights Principles and Laws:** Human rights principles are the RBA’s ‘legal foundation’ at the international, regional and national levels, thus distinguishes it from previous development approaches (Hamm 2001:1008). Many countries have ratified human rights treaties and thereby voluntarily obliged themselves to human rights standards as members of the UN (UNDP 2003:13; ODI 1999:1; Hamm 2001:1008, 1013; World Conference on Women 1995; Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights, 1993). Hamm (2001:1013) stated: “the moral commitment to development and international solidarity is already expressed in the Charter of the UN and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. These standards present a fundamental ‘roadmap’ or legal obligations for development goals that poor and marginalised
people can invoke. States are not only under obligations to prevent violations of human rights but must design political and socio-economic mechanisms that will respect, protect, promote and fulfill human rights at national and international levels (Hamm 2001:1014; UNDP 2003:14). In sum, the RBA framework is designed to attack the underlying causes of poverty and exclusion and evaluates the capacities of actors to tackle social problems for people to realise tangible improvements in their lives.

![Diagram of RBA components]

**Fig 1: Components of RBA**

It is critical to note that ActionAid (2012) and some other organisations express other values of RBA including *mutual respect*, which is recognising the inherent worth of all persons and essence of diversity. *Honesty and transparency*, which emphasise being accountable to stakeholders and open in their communications with their others. *Equity and Justice*, which means ensuring equal opportunity to all individuals notwithstanding their race, sexual orientation, gender, age, HIV
status, colour, location or religion. Other values include independence from any religion or political party affiliation and ensuring the autonomy of partner organisations. Humility of NGO actors in their presentation and behaviour as part of the broad alliance against poverty; solidarity with the poor, powerless or excluded people; and courage of conviction, which means being creative and radical, bold and innovative in their approach to fighting poverty and discriminations.

2.3. Advocacy and the Essence of Service Delivery in RBA

The concept of advocacy is controversial, while many individuals and organisations in history have advocated for distance others with success, there is a question of the legitimacy and sustainability of such effort (Kaldor, 2003; Yanacopulos and Smith, 2007:311; Karns and Mingst, 2010). The emphasis in RBA is on the capacity of the people experiencing poverty themselves to be aware of the causes of their problem in order to build power within themselves and with others to create forces to actualise desired changes in their lives. Thus advocacy in RBA goes beyond lobbying but entails influencing public policies, societal attitudes, and unjust social relations (Chapman et al. 2005). Rights-based advocacy is different from the traditional approaches to advocacy by professionals and organisations based in capital cities who may be far away from those they claim to lobby or speak for (ActionAid, 2010). Often traditional advocacy does not focus on building political awareness and social movements of the people themselves as a foundation for a sustained policy change (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002; ActionAid, 2010).

Advocacy is premised on the legality of economic, social and cultural rights prescribed in the UN Conventions and aims to build and expand these rights to
respond to a new form of discrimination and exclusion (VeneKlasen et al. 2004; Chambers, 2006). These can empower the poor communities and their organisations to speak for themselves and resist unequal power relations and structures such as patriarchy at every level (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002; Chapman et al. 2005; ActionAid, 2005; Kindornay et al. 2012). Rights-based advocacy focuses on attacking existing governance and authority structures including traditional authorities that systematically perpetuate discrimination and exclusion of the people, groups, and communities from resources and decisions that concern their lives (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002; Eyben et al. 2006; Chambers, 2006, Schmitz, 2016). Advocacy is imperative for development-based NGOs as agents of social and political transformations through aid (Crawford and Andreassen, 2015; Yanacopulos, 2016).

For Ife (2009), rights-based advocacy instruments can be deployed to address problems of exclusion and poverty. In rights-based advocacy, lobbying by professionals for policy change can draw on the collective power of the people to enhance changes in discriminatory beliefs, attitudes, policies, and institutions in diverse contexts (VeneKlasen et al. 2004). Based on this notion, Yanacopulos (2016) argues that INGOs as prominent development actors should re-engage themselves into public spaces to promote political change away from project-based interventions.

Furthermore, this means NGOs and people they claim to work with are required to be political in their approach to promoting development. The literature argues that rights-based advocacy requires organisations to engage in politics by taking side with the poor and marginalised to claim their rights (see also Chapman et al. 2005; Chambers, 2006). However, conventionally development is seen as apolitical – which is often a survival strategy for some NGOs that operates under
a repressive regime (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002). Development actors often associate with those who govern, but the governed are not assumed to be engaging in politics (Chhotray, 2007). VeneKlasen et al. (2002) argue such conception of politics reinforcing people’s sense of powerlessness, poverty, and marginalisation. That is the dynamic and unequal process of negotiations and decision-making that take place not only in formal institutions but in informal settings that shape access to resources and opportunities (Gaventa, 2005; Chapman et al. 2005; VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002).

As espoused in RBA, when the poor and marginalised people engage in politics and advocacy, they can articulate their needs and seek public recognition to solve their problem through an equitable distribution of resources and opportunities (Chapman et al. 2009). Morago (2004) argues that realising rights by the people entails everyday struggles and reactions or conflicts and it is a continuous process of definition, contestation, and negotiation of values, standards and rules and their applications in practice. It is building active citizenship and taking political actions (Morago, 2004). Hence, (I)NGOs are meant to create spaces for marginalised people to demand legitimisation and protection of their rights in both private and public spheres (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002).

Chapman et al. (2009) argue that engaging in the direct provision of services to the people by the INGOs and their intermediate NGO partners lets the government off the hook and undermines people’s effort to make their government accountable. According to Campolina and Philips (2015:1), the role of INGOs and their intermediate NGOs and CBOs should be more than:

“projects for development ‘delivery’: their largest scale impact, and their longest-term contribution, is not in the number of items of assistance that they provide, but in how
they facilitate and catalyse development, and how they empower people living in poverty to claim their rights.” (see also Kharas et al. 2011; Crawford and Andreassen, 2015).

One can argue that NGOs that would be effective in promoting transformative changes in their relationships with local organisations and communities are those that will concentrate on empowering and organising grass-roots organisations to challenge unequal power relations in their contexts (Campolina and Philips, 2015; Crawford and Andreassen, 2015; Yanacopulos, 2016).

Nevertheless, NGOs are limited in how they carry out their advocacy or how they conduct public actions against structural relations of power that perpetuate poverty and inequalities (Fowler, 2015; BOND, 2015). Yanacopulos (2016:19) argues that NGOs have limitations as agents of social change that they claim to be because of their “form of engagement, their business model, and their self-sustaining ambitions.” Advocates of rights-based thinking enjoin NGOs to return to their roots as locally-embedded, inclusive, promoters of grass-roots generated alternatives (Gready, 2008; Hickey and Mitlin, 2009). Instead of the one-size-fits-all approaches to be relevant as agents of positive social changes in developing countries (Bebbington et al. 2007; Gready, 2008; Hickey and Mitlin, 2009, Edwards, 2014). NGOs are required to focus on a thorough analysis of the causes and the symptoms of poverty in communities they work since they cannot solve the problem of poverty by themselves alone.

Scholars and practitioners argue that NGO should focus on creating rights awareness and empowering their partners to claim rights because the non-realisation of human rights are the causes of poverty and suffering (Campolina and Phillips, 2015:2; Easterly, 2013; Gready, 2008; UN Secretary General, 1998; Easterly, 2013). It is difficult to realise rights without changes in the social
structure and relationship of power in all their forms (Petit and Wheeler, 2005; Chapman et al. 2005; 2007). Proponents of RBA argue that INGOs need to scale up their roles of creating spaces for public awareness on development issues and public action for sustainable transformation in the South based on solidarity with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners.

However, some proponents of RBA argue that the delivery of services by INGOs and local intermediate NGOs partners can help rights-based organisations to gain the trust and commitment of the CBOs and their communities (Chalabi, 2014). As Kindornay et al. (2012) argue, when NGOs have no real service to offer, it can be challenging to persuade CBOs and their communities to devote their energy, time, and resources to rights-based activities. They concluded that rights-based NGOs should combine the direct provision of services with advocacy to help in building grass-roots constituencies and social movements. Hence, service provision offers concrete foundation on which rights-based claims can be grounded as a means of securing the commitment of attention of the communities of the poor people (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005). Since a survival strategy often governs most of the communities at the grass-roots level, and because of the absence of existing social services, they are bound to prioritise service provision for their immediate needs over the notions of rights (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Macpherson, 2009). Macpherson (2009:274) suggests that the “bedrock of social service infrastructure, social cohesion and organisation, and political awareness are essential for a successful implementation of RBA in practice.”

The reality of RBA on the operational decisions of INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in the South “have not been fully appreciated” in the literature (Chapman et al., 2005:6). Notwithstanding, Yanacopulos, (2016:9)
argues that INGOs have been “reassessing their roles and trying to strike a balance between advocacy and service provisions, an exploration that is still in process.” More importantly, despite the claim by some NGOs to have adopted RBA, the literature has not fully explored the implications of the approach for how NGOs balance advocacy work with service delivery (Chapman et al., 2005; Kindornay et al. 2012). Therefore, this study aims to cover the gap in the literature by studying the implications of RBA on the ways ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib address the demand for a greater focus on advocacy instead of providing services to the beneficiaries of aid.

2.4. **Critical Perspectives on RBA**

It essential to state that RBA takes from much of the criticism of human rights laws. Brown (1997) argues that human rights are always the subject of controversies because of the idea that individuals have or should have ‘rights’. One major criticism of RBA is that the obligation of the states and other actors are non-binding and there is no mechanism for the poor to bring complaints to the UN organisation for redress (Thomas 2009). The redress mechanism virtually rests with the state judicial institutions (Ljungman 2004:16). Many developing countries judicial systems cannot adjudicate effectively on the violation of human rights. The lack of an independent internationally recognised judicial system with the power to enforce compliance makes redress for violation of human rights more difficult to achieve, which limits the potential of rights-based thinking to achieving transformative social changes for the poor and marginalised people (Ljungman 2004:17; Sengupta, 2007). Specifically, critics argue that RBA fails to acknowledge the non-binding nature of duty-bearers’ obligations and the absence of redress mechanisms by which poor people can demand accountability from their
governments (Eyben, 2003). Other critics argue that RBA is just an approach to appease enemies of neoliberalism (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005).

Also, economic, social and cultural rights (ESC) are particularly more controversial. Despite the recognition of ESC in 1966, some states including the US are still resisting the idea of economic and social rights based on the idea of individualism and the “rolling back” of the state that limits the scope of rights. The primary limitation of ESC is that it is not binding on governments and organisations (Uvin, 2004). VeneKlasen et al. (2004) contend that economic, social and cultural rights are difficult to realise and require a broad mobilisation to fulfill them. They claim promoting ESC may require a profound change in the structures and budget priorities of governments charged with addressing them. Hence, the advocates of RBA argue that it is crucial to enhance the capacities of people living in poverty to demand accountability from their government.

Similarly, critics view RBA as too legalistic for the poor and disadvantaged to appropriate the law to their advantage. They argue that the people’s understanding of their entitlement is imperative to profit from RBA (Eyben 2003:4). According to UNICEF(2003:16), it may be difficult for the poor and marginalised people to understand how to invoke human rights to make demands of the existing governance and authority structures (see also Aberese Ako et al. 2013). Certain traditions in some countries can also be a challenge for the universalism of RBA (Aberese Ako et al. 2013).

For cultural relativists, some cultural variations should be permitted and exempted from criticisms by outsiders (Hunter, 2012; Chalabi, 2014). They argued that human rights reflected Western tradition, too individualistic and based on Judeo-Christian ideas, which may not be relevant to other culture and environments
(Donnelly, 1984; Stammer, 1995; Brown et al. 2002; Good, 2010). In answer to the criticisms of cultural relativists, Midgley (1999:160) argues that "whatever respect each culture may owe its neighbours," some somethings should not be done to anybody anywhere. Likewise, Sen (1999) contends that value of freedom is not restricted to one country or continent only and that values that human rights are based are rooted in every culture. This thesis also subscribes to the notion that every human shares a common humanity, and that every person should partake in his/her right to human rights (see also Good, 2010; Hart and Kvittingen, 2015). However, the literature argues that rights that target on individual claims may be difficult to address in cultures where underlying values are family and community responsibility (Lansdown, 2005; Kindornay et al. 2012).

Furthermore, human rights laws are especially controversial among authoritarian, weak, failed or quasi-states and leaders that benefit from human rights violations (Brown, 1997; Jackson-Preece, 2011). Authoritarian leaders often see human rights as a tool in the hands of powerful states to undermine the sovereign authority of less powerful states. They perceive RBA as t top-down and imposed by Northern actors. Jackson-Preece (2011) argues that opposition to human rights law based on cultural specificity is opportunistic because such states/political leaders are self-motivated in their emphasis on sovereignty and cultural rights. Also, critics of human rights laws often forget that the idea of sovereignty and the advantages it is meant to guarantee for the poor, and marginalised people cannot be dismissed (Jackson-Preece, 2011). ICISS (2001) claim that state sovereignty excludes the unlimited power of states to abuse its people because sovereignty entails a dual responsibility: externally to respect the territorial integrity of other states and internally state authorities are responsible for ensuring the safety of lives of their people and the promotion of their welfare. Hence state authorities
are responsible for their actions because they are accountable to the international community through the United Nations based on the international human rights norms and conventions which they have signed to (ICISS, 2001).

Many countries are a signatory to human rights laws, while UN Charter 7 and Article 51 endorse human rights as fundamental objectives of the United Nations as well as the African Charter on Human Rights (Jackson-Preece, 2011). The international human rights standards and conventions have re-defined sovereignty from that of control to sovereignty of responsibility (ICSS, 2001). It is not uncommon to see political leaders and governments worldwide opposing the implementation of RBA including the USA. They often oppose rights-based perspectives because it potentially limits their power and renders them accountable to the people and the international community (VeneKlasen et al. 2004; Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Aberese Ako et al. 2013; D’Hollander et al. 2013). Harris-Curtis et al. (2005) argue that adopting RBA compels NGOs to be critical of governments against any violation of the rights of the people within their jurisdiction or that are creating environments that are not conducive to the protection of the rights. Governments in the South may be less friendly to rights-based NGOs that are working to make them fulfill their traditional role of ensuring the basic welfare of their people, and it is often difficult with a repressive regime where there are abusive practices against their people (Harri-Curtis et al. 2015).

Nonetheless, resource constraints and the limited capacity of some state in developing countries could partly account for the lack of responsiveness from the government to fulfill the rights of the people particularly their economic rights (Collier 2008). Some states may be willing to address the development needs (economic and social rights) of the people but are incapable of doing so because
of a lack of resources to carry out their obligations. Coupled with the three decades of neo-liberal development approaches that are limiting the role and capacity of the states to provide goods and services for their people (Hughes 2012:10). Also, the activities of some corrupt and co-opted local elites and their continued adherence to neo-liberal ideas often obstruct the fulfillment of political and economic rights of the people. This thesis argues that building the capacities of civil society and the state to enhance democratisation of the development process is essential to reducing mismanagement of resources and corruption by state authorities (Blair, 2010; Oxfam, 2013). The principles of accountability, transparency, participation, and empowerment espoused by RBA is essential to enhancing democratic governance in the management of state resources (Oxfam, 2013).

Furthermore, Uvin (2002:4; 2007) argues that RBA may be a ‘rhetorical fluff’, that is designed to to appease critics of neo-liberalism and reinforce the “legitimisation of inequalities and injustices in the world” - of Western Powers. He claims that the paradigm of rights is yet to invoke comprehensive scrutiny of the causes of poverty and a viable approach for their transformation (see Slim 2002:4). Uvin (2002:2) argues that RBA may just be a repackaging of the condition of interactions with developing countries to continue their exploitation – “old wine in a new bottle.” Perhaps these criticisms stemmed from the failure or unwillingness of many development actors and organisations mostly from the global North to demonstrate political will for the effective implementation of the principle in practice. However, recent studies suggest some NGOs are striving to translate the values of RBA from policy into practice (Aberese Ako et al. 2013). This thesis argues RBA could have the potential to achieve concrete changes in developing
countries through development aid, even though this has not yet been fully realised.

Finally, feminists criticise RBA for being male-centered, because it fails to emphasise the abilities and opportunities that are necessary to promote women’s struggle for gender equality as basic entitlements (Nussbaum, 2004). They argue that the incorporation of rights such as the "right to bodily integrity, the right to be free from violence in the home, and from sexual harassment in the workplace" should be incorporated into the international rights framework and as central themes of RBA (Nussbaum 2004:38). The literature argues that women are principal actors in the fight against household poverty and impoverishment, but they are often excluded from the decision-making processes, aggravated by their disadvantaged position in the ownership of resources (Miller et al. 2004; Kabeer, 2005; ActionAid, 2012; UN/SDG, 2015; UN Women, 2017). This thesis argues that RBA needs to continue to evolve to incorporate perspectives and rights that accommodate and seek to redress the particular disadvantages of women and other marginalised groups.

2.5. UNDERSTANDING POWER

Development efforts often fail to create positive and sustained changes in the lives of the poor and marginalised people because development agencies and organisations frequently pay inadequate attention to issues of power and how change happens (Chapman et al. 2005). Power interacts to enhance or exclude less powerful people from being the active subject in the management of the common resources and opportunities (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002; VeneKlasen et al. 2004; Chapman et al. 2005; Gaventa, 2006). Therefore, the issues of power and the people’s empowerment to challenge unequal power relations are central
to RBA (Chapman et al. 2005; Gaventa, 2006). Many development actors and particularly those that are working on promoting and fulfilling rights are increasingly focusing on the need to engage with and understand the concept of power as well as how to analyse it (Gaventa 2006). This section examines the concept of power and its connections to the implementation of RBA to promote concrete changes in the lives of the people living in poverty.

2.5.0. Defining Power

There are different understandings of power (Chambers, 2006). It is also controversial and dynamic since there is always a process of resistance by the less powerful (Gaventa, 2006). Power also operates both negatively and positively at many levels and established through human interactions (VeneKlasen et al. 2004; Pereira et al. 2005). Chambers (2006) conceived power as the ability to achieve desired goals in a social context, with or without the consent of another. For VeneKlasen and Miller (2002), power is an individual, collective and political force, which can undermine or empower people and their organisations to facilitate, hasten or halt the process of social transformation. Power can also be viewed as the degree of control over resources (material, human, intellectual, and financial) employed by different people and institutions in the society, the control of which becomes a source of individual and social power (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002:41). Also, VeneKlasen and Miller (2002:39) argue that power changes according to context, circumstances, and interests and its expressions and forms vary from ‘dominations and resistance to collaboration and transformation’. VeneKlasen et al. (2004) contend that power is perpetuated and sustained through social division including gender, age, caste, class, ethnicity, race, north-south divide and with the help of traditional and state institutions such as family, educational system,
religion, media, and law. Everyone possesses power including the powerful and the relatively powerless actors, and it affects everyone (Gaventa, 2006; Pereira et al. 2005). Also power can be used, shared, and created by actors and their networks in different ways (Chamber, 2006; Chapman et al. 2005). Hence, some “actors see power as a zero-sum game, while others see it as more fluid and accumulative” with the possibility of achieving win-win solutions to social problems (Gaventa, 2006:24; Chambers, 2006).

2.5.1. Power and Power Analysis in RBA

RBA advocates an understanding of the underlying power relations in different contexts in order to promote a real power shift and the creation of spaces to popularise people’s voices (Chapman et al. 2005). Development efforts may promote a just and equitable society if they can redress the unequal power relations between development actors and promote equity in access to rights and resources for disadvantaged people (VeneKlasen et al.2004). This can be achieved by opening up access to resources, rights and decision-making processes that have been dominated by the few in history, and have led to human rights violation, poverty and marginalisation worldwide (Sen, 2001; Pogge, 2007; Khan, 2007). Therefore, transforming unequal power relations becomes a critical end of development under RBA (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Chapman and Mancini, 2005, Hickey and Mitlin, 2009).

Furthermore, vibrant development efforts should embrace a thorough awareness or analysis of power dynamics and how it operates at many levels and contexts (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002). Power analysis concerns with knowing who has power over others, whom to build power with, who can exercise their power to act, and who can feel powerful within or not, which is specific to each context and
relationships (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002; Chapman and Mancini, 2005; Gaventa, 2006). Gaventa (2006) argues that creating new institutional arrangements may not result in any improvement in the lives of the poor, without a full understanding of the nature and complexity of power that surrounds and permeate development environments (see also Chambers, 2006).

Traditionally, many actors believe that to have power is to have control over others (power over), other actors see power to be about capacity and agency that can be wielded for beneficial actions (Chapman et al. 2005). ‘Power over’ other people means using force or coercion to control resources and decision-making processes that shape development plans, policies and processes (Chapman et al. 2005; ActionAid, 2010). It is the ability of the powerful to influence “the actions and thoughts of the powerless” - a negative way of using power (Chapman et al. 2005; Gaventa, 2006:24). Gaventa (1984) argues that ‘power over’ varies from those unhidden to those that operate behind the scenes that are more difficult to address because it is often concealed and diffused as well as embedded in social norms and practices. However, Chambers (2006) points out that power ‘over’ has the potential - through a top-down transformation - to achieve win-win ends between the powerless and powerful. Top down transformation can be realised when those who have power use it positively through transparency, accountability, and by transferring skills and other resources to others (Action, 2012).

Other descriptions of power include power ‘to act’, which implies the unique ability of individuals and communities to influence their lives and promote balanced relationships and power structure (Chapman et al. 2005). Power ‘within’ focuses on an individual’s sense of self-worth, values, rights, and responsibilities essential to unlocking people’s potential to transform their relationships and lives (ActionAid, 2010). The collective power of the people can come through when
NGOs promote self-awareness and self-confidence among the poor and marginalised people, essential focus of RBA (ActionAid, 2010). Power ‘with’ others means building common ground (through synergy and collaboration) among people with diverse interests toward promoting collective actions to redress injustices (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002; Chapman et al. 2005). In this sense, power can be exercised through collaboration with empowered people for positive social transformations (VeneKlasen et al. 2004; Pereira et al. 2005). NGOs activities such as group meetings and discussions, protests, advocacy trips, solidarity and collective resistance, and lobbying can enhance collective actions for transformative change (Chambers, 2006; Chhotray, 2007). This thesis suggests that a viable approach to promoting social changes by NGOs is by empowering marginalised and powerless people to gain power ‘within’ themselves and ‘with’ others to challenge and wrestle power from those that exercise power ‘over’ them.

For NGOs, Edward, (2007) argues that their ability to challenge power relations is critical to their success. Hence, Guijt, (2007) argues that NGOs should focus explicitly on challenging power relations in order to promote popular participation and empowerment of the poor and excluded people. He claimed that such effort is a crucial way of enhancing the underlying/immanent process of development. NGO are enjoined to engage in promoting the generation of popular struggle for alternative development ideas (Bebbington et al. 2007). Also, Chambers (2006) argues that promoting beneficial social transformation entails changing interpersonal power relations and the processes that reinforce them.

people’s action and participation as opportunities, moments and channels where the poor and marginalised people can act potentially to influence policies, discourses, decisions, and relationships that affect their lives and interests. He describes political spaces as those institutional mediums, political discourses and social-political processes by which the poor and their organisations fight poverty. Policy ‘space’ refers to the moments and opportunities in which the people and policy-makers engage (Gaventa, 2006). Cornwall (2002) claim that these spaces for participation (including the rights to define and to shape agenda) are not neutral and they are embedded in power relations and determines what is possible within them, and who may enter and with which identity, discourses, and interests.

Therefore, the space for participation must be examined based on who created them, whose interests are prioritised, and terms of the engagement. Gaventa (2006) discussed a continuum of spaces for participation to include closed spaces. There is a closed space when a specific set of actors – elites, bureaucrats, experts or politicians - are involved in decision-making that shapes people’s lives behind closed doors. It is often done without the willingness to expand the boundaries of the process for inclusion of others, especially the less powerful people. Closed spaces characterised the common governance arrangements in Nigeria at all levels of government. Government activities are usually conducted in secrecy by politicians and bureaucrats. Hence, opening up closed spaces should be the focus of attention of many civil society organisations by promoting transparency, greater public engagement, and accountability in governance (see also Chapman and Mancini, 2005; Gaventa, 2006; Lewis and Kanji, 2009).

Invited spaces are newly created because of efforts to widen participation to include those (e.g. individual, organisations, churches, communities) that are
directly affected by the decisions. They may be invited to participate by the more powerful such as experts, government officials, NGOs and other actors (Cornwall, 2002; Chapman et al. 2005; Gaventa, 2006). Such spaces may become institutionalised or one-off forms of consultation at the local, national and international decision-making arenas. Claimed or created spaces are spaces gained by previously excluded people from influential actors, for example by being conscious of the power within themselves, by building power with others and creating resistance. Peace and Vela (2005) identified a continuum of spaces that include formal by invitation, where officials offer opportunities for participation; and formal by right, in this invitation is mandated legally.

Furthermore, one of the critical concerns about spaces is who created the space because of the possibility of being more potent than others within it (Gaventa, 2006). Gaventa (2006) points out that spaces are continuously and dynamically opening and closing where less powerful actors struggle for legitimacy and resistance, co-optation and transformation. This is why it is crucial for NGOs to focus on boosting self-worth and the capacity of the people to promote collective actions of rights-holders. Also, power gained through new skills, capacity, and experience in one space may be employed to influence other spaces (Gaventa, 2006). According to Gaventa (2006), this suggests that there must be a constant assessment of the transformative potential of spaces for participation in connection with other spaces that surround them to avoid being captured by the already empowered elite. The ability to distinguish between closed, invite and claimed political spaces and their implications for peoples’ ability to actively participate in the development processes is crucial to promoting beneficial changes in the lives of the people living in poverty.
Other dimensions of power cube are the ‘places’ and ‘levels’ of participation (Gaventa, 2006). The places and levels of participation are where essential social, political, and economic power are embedded, and intersect with the how and to whom the spaces for participation are influenced (VeneKlasen et al. 2004; Gaventa, 2006). Gaventa (2006) claimed that scholars and practitioners alike have different opinions on the appropriate arena of power. Some people argue that the struggle for participatory places should be in the local spaces where people can struggle against power and form their voices. Others contend that the struggle for ‘places’ to contend with power has moved to international spaces where global actors are active and shaping the world (Eyben, 2006). Chambers (2006) argues that both the global and local arenas can present opportunities for change, hence, there is no need to focus too much on the local or international arena of power. Also, globalisation has also blurred the distinction between what is ‘local’ and ‘global’ enabling international actors to shape the forms and manifestation of power at local levels, while local actions can influence global power (Gaventa, 2006; Ravenhill, 2014). Again, Batliwala (2002) points out that it is crucial to build participatory actions at different levels, primarily to enhance democratic and accountable connections between different actors (Batliwala, 2002).

The last dimension of ‘power cube’ is the ‘form.’ and visibility across spaces and places (Gaventa, 2006). Importantly, power can take different forms. Forms of power mainly focus on the degree to which conflict over issues and the voices of key actors are visible in major spaces and places. The first form of power is visible powers. These entail decision-making structures, institutions, laws, and policies that can discriminate against and prevent the fulfillment of the rights of the poor and marginalised people (Gaventa, 2006; Chapman and Mancini, 2005;
VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002; VeneKlasen et al. 2004). Biased laws and policies that look harmless but are tailored to reinforce the interest of certain people over others are some of the examples of power forms (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002). Another example is a closed, corrupt, and unrepresentative decision-making structures that exclude the voices of certain people that they are meant to protect, common to many developing countries including Nigeria (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002; VeneKlasen et al. 2004). Efforts to change this form of power focus on "who, how and what" of policy-making to make the process of decision-making accountable, democratic and inclusive of all people (Gaventa, 2006:29).

Hidden power is behind-the-scenes power structures that often operate undetected and determines who takes part in formal decision-making processes and set the political agenda that exclude less influential people in the society (Chapman et al.2005; VeneKlasen et al. 2004). Third, the invisible power refers to the socio-cultural structures and ideas such as the process of socialisation, culture, and ideology that defines what is reasonable and safe, which define people’s conception of themselves, their environment and their capacities to shape the decision-making processes over their lives (VeneKlasen et al. 2004). Important issues are often removed from the decision-making process and the mind and consciousness of the people by influencing people’s beliefs and the acceptance of their condition and experience as natural without any hope of change (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002; Chapman et al. 2005; Gaventa, 2005). Empowering the people to gain a sense of power within themselves and with others can create new institutional changes to promote beneficial transformation in the place (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002). Therefore, RBA in practice should be about challenging and transforming oppressive structural relations of power and create new relationships grounded on the values of "solidarity, equity, dignity and
the common good” as well as by changing people’s belief and acceptance of their condition as natural (Chapman et al., 2005; VeneKlasen et al. 2004).

2.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the integration of human rights into development discourses and how it could promote social, economic and political transformation in developing countries. Not only through development aid but including other resources available to states and other institutions that have obligations to promote the fulfillment of the rights of the poor and the marginalised. RBA advocates argue that it has the potential to promote beneficial changes in development practice, especially when it embedded in a thorough power analysis. Hence the chapter examined the understanding of power and its implication for promoting social changes for the poor and excluded people. It argues that the empowerment of the people to gain a sense of power within themselves and with others can create new institutional changes to promote beneficial transformation in the place. The next chapter focuses on the role of NGOs in the development sector and especially what the implications of RBA are for their work and relationships.

CHAPTER THREE: NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOs) IN DEVELOPMENT

3.0. Introduction
Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are prominent actors in the international development sector. The public perceives NGOs as performing various roles including the provision of goods and services to the poor and vulnerable communities. They also claim to promote policy advocacy and publicly campaign for social change. Hence NGOs have attracted enormous attention in academic literature since the 1990s, yet have witnessed fierce criticisms. This chapter examines the conceptual understanding of NGOs, their proliferation, and roles in the development sector as well as how they could contribute to social, political and economic transformation in developing countries.

This chapter has four parts. The first part discusses the historical relevance and definition of civil society and NGOs in development, while the second part provides a brief discussion on the growing influence and role of NGOs. The third part focuses on the criticisms and limitations of NGOs in the development sector. Part four example the understanding and challenges of promoting a productive partnership between NGOs. INGOs can become more active agents of social change if they can focus more on mobilising the public around lasting social, economic and political transformation in developing countries, a key demand of RBA.

3.1. Understanding Civil Society and NGOs

The literature argues that NGOs are both a subset and a means of strengthening civil society (Eade 2006; Karns and Mingst, 2010). Civil society is highly complex and contested concept and have been misused by different actors to suit their interests (Heinrich, 2005: 212; Edwards, 2014). Edwards (2014) argues that history presents civil society as instrumental to understanding issues of concern for people of different generations on various areas. These include the rights and responsibilities of the people, the practice of politics and government, and and
how to balance individual liberty with collective aspirations for a better society. According to him, the central theme of civil society by many Enlightenment thinkers of 18th and 19th centuries was the value of voluntary associations in limiting the power of centralising organisations, protecting pluralism, and fostering positive social norms (Edwards, 2014:7). He argues that a highly organised coherent civil society with varied and extended memberships was the foundations of a stable democratic polity, a form of security against control by any group, and a blockade to anti-democratic powers.

What is civil society?. Aristotle while reflecting on civil society wrote about *politike koinonia* (Greek) or *Societas Civilis* (in Latin) or political community or society (English). Kaldor (2003) understands civil society as a rule-governed society based on the consent of the individuals and how their consent is negotiated and reproduced, especially where the ruler prioritises public good at the expense of his/her private interest. These include those organisations, groups, and movements that proclaim to follow progressive goals and are engaged in the processes of negotiation and debate on the character of the rules. Also, civil society symbolises a common notion of “collective voluntary actions” characterised by “civility, good public orientation and internal democracy” (Heinrich, 2005:213). Banks et al. (2015:708) defines civil society as “the space in which people mobilise to bargain, negotiate, or coerce other actors” to promote their interest (Banks et al. 2015:708). It is a form of joint actions by the rights-holders in search of the better society (Heinrich, 2005; Edwards, 2009; Steffek et al. 2008). Scholte (2011:8) conceives civil society as a political sphere where the association of rights-holders seeks, from outside political parties, to shape societal norms and institutions. This is the understanding of civil society in this thesis.
Historically, the impacts of civil society on the development of Western democracies were enormous. Alexis de Tocqueville while reflecting on democracy in the USA attributed the “general equality of condition” for all Americans to the presence of strong civil society (De Tocqueville, 2002-2013:13). He argued that the achievement of equality for all is far beyond “the political character and the laws of the land” (De Tocqueville, 2002-2013:12), but for the presence of strong civil society. According to him, as a wealth of the nation increases, active civil society is necessary to check the power of the state and is a condition for freedom and equality (Alec de Tocqueville, 1835; Kaldor 2003; Whaites 2006). He described civil society as a “defensive counterbalance to the increased capability of the state” (Whaites 2006:127).

In the same vein, Gramsci (1971:238) argued that Western democracy and development success were attributed to the presence of active civil society: “When the state trembled, a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed.” Gramsci conceived civil society as a sphere where hegemonic notions of the organisation of economic and social life are contested and established; where state and civil society are mutually reinforcing and constitutive (Bebbington et al. 2007). The perspectives above are quite insightful for any serious development thinker because a viable civil society is a sphere of public debate where poor and marginalised people can create social movements that can “both resist and cooperate with the state in their interests” (Yanacopulos, 2016:29). Vibrant civil society organisations have potentials to promote positive social changes to benefit the world’s poor and Nigeria in particular (Sen, 2001; Kaldor, 2003; Karns and Mingst, 2010).

Moreover, the role of social movements in the contemporary emancipation of the people from colonial rule, dictatorship in Latin America, and post-apartheid South
Africa lent credence to de Tocqueville’s understanding of civil society and earned them legitimacy (Lewis and Kanji 2009). Amartya Sen (2001) argues that the lack of opportunity for many people to express their voice and the denial of essential capability and substantive freedom can act as a barrier to social change. These can be significant in empowering those people whose rights have been violated and overlooked mainly by government and other development actors in developing countries (Sen, 2003; Fukuda-Parr, 2003; Harris-Curtis et al. 2005).

There are multiple terms used in describing the actors of civil society in the development enterprise. These include Non-Governmental Organisations; Non-Profit Organisations; Community-Based Organisations; Advocacy Networks; Civil society organisations; Faith-Based Organisations, Religious Communities, Cooperative Societies, “individual citizen participation, demonstration, and other unorganised forms of civic engagement” (Heinrich 2005: 217). It also includes informal groups, academic or educational institutions, media, recreational and cultural organisations. However, in the development sector, it is not uncommon to use NGOs interchangeably with ‘civil society’ (Kaldor 2003; Ibrahim and Hulme, 2010). The next section examines the role of NGOs in the development enterprise and the reasons for the increasing focus on NGOs in academic literature and development practitioners.

3.2. **Influence and Role of NGOs in Development**

NGOs are one of the critical actors in aid delivery, and they have attracted a significant focus of the development literature in recent decades (Kaldor, 2003; Edwards 2014; Bank and Hulme, 2012, 2014). Extant literature covers widely on the increasing role of NGOs as significant actors in aid delivery and their influences in global politics (Martens, 2006: 19; Eade, 2006:10; Lewis and Opoku-Mensah,
Several factors led to the proliferation of NGOs and civil society organisations generally, which include the end of Cold War, the spread of democracy, and the communication revolution (Karns and Mingst, 2010; Edwards, 2014). Other factors are the ascendency and disenchantment with neoliberal ideologies, and the spirit of cosmopolitanism (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Yanacopulos and Smith, 2007; Karen and Mingst, 2010; Marten, 2012; Brass, 2012).

Since the 1990s development-based INGOs have mushroomed notably as implementers of neoliberal safety nets in developing countries as well as donors to intermediate NGOs and CBOs (Baaz, 2005; Wallace et al. 2006; Bebbington et al. 2007; BOND, 2015). In the same way, Southern-based NGOs (intermediate NGOs and CBOs) have also proliferated as an intermediary between INGOs and the beneficiaries of development aid (Smith, 2010; Leur, 2012; Lampert, 2012). Whereas the professionalisation of NGOs escalated their rise in global politics and the depoliticisation of NGOs as inimical to their proclaimed goals as agents of social change (Vakil, 1997; Eade, 2006; Martens, 2006; Lewis and Opoku-Mensah, 2006; Brass, 2012; Yanacopulos, 2016).

The literature argues that NGOs provide several services including healthcare, emergency relief, education, technical, human rights and financial services in the form of microfinance to the poor (Lewis and Kanji, 2009; Banks and Hulme 2012:12). They grew because of the need to mitigate the adverse effect of structural adjustment programmes in the developing countries where NGOs act as a contractor to government and inter-governmental institutions (Dessai 2008). Then NGOs primarily acted as the implementers of neoliberal safety net to those people that the market forces cannot reach (Lewis and Kanji, 2009; Ibrahim and Hulme, 2010).
Proponents of rights-based thinking argue that these efforts of NGOs were based on purely technical processes without consideration for the political and economic rights of the people and is the reason why development aid has failed changes in the unequal relations of power that perpetuates poverty and exclusion (Eyben, 2003; Easterly, 2013). Even the World Bank declared: “State dominated development has failed, but so has stateless development” (World Bank 1997:25, cited by Lewis and Opoku-Mensah 2006). Banks et al. (2015) argue that serious questions persist about the ability of NGOs to promote long-term social transformation and social justice, which they claim to promote (see also Oxfam, 2012, 2014). This is because of their narrow focus on short-term results and value for money. NGOs should go beyond service provision to focus on “transformative missions of empowerment and social justice” (Banks et al. 2015:708). NGOs need to lay more emphasis on the political and economic rights of the people in their work to promote positive changes in the lives of the poor and excluded people (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002). They are required to build the capacity of the people living in poverty to claim their rights and governments to fulfil their obligations for development to happen (Sen, 2012; World Economic Forum 2014:23b; Yanacopulos, 2016). Banks et al. (2015) suggest that NGOs should focus on strengthening the capacities of grass-roots organisations and intermediate NGOs to promote empowerment and social transformation. Many scholars and practitioners consider NGOs to have the potential to be “promising agents of progressive social change” if they would go back to their roots (Karns and Mingst, 2010:249).

The growing influence of NGOs in the development enterprise globally reflects the same trend in Nigeria because the state has performed poorly in the delivery of goods and services to the people. NGOs were promoted and used by neo-liberal
institutions as tools for legitimatising and implementing their agendas and programmes, as a “delivery agency to the global soup kitchen” (Pearce 2006:20; Ottaway, 2011; Green, 2012; Banks et al. 2015). Also, the preferences of official and private donors to fund NGOs because of the perception that NGOs are efficient, honest, and participatory while the state was incompetent, unaccountable and corrupt (Eade 2006:12; Lewis and Kanji 2009; Leur, 2012).

3.3. Criticisms of NGOs

Notwithstanding the prominent role of NGOs in development, they are no longer “flavour of the month” or “magic bullet” either in mainstream or alternative development senses (Lewis and Kanji 2009). NGOs time as the “favoured child” has passed. Hence, they now attract fierce criticisms from all angles (Lewis 2006 and Opoku-Mensah 2006:666 citing Hulme and Edwards 1997). Many people see NGOs as part of neo-liberal institutions and prominent actors who promote their policy agendas (Lewis and Opoku-Mensah 2006; Wapner 2007). These scholars and others also observe that the mainstream development donors themselves are now uncomfortable with NGOs “poor performance and lack of transparency” (Zanoti, 2010; Crack 2013: 296). For example, Zanoti (2010) observed that the international strategies that substituted NGOs for the state reinforced the fragility of Haitian state institutions.

Furthermore, there are sharp criticisms based on the accountability deficit among NGOs. Critics see NGOs as being motivated by self-interest, they are self-appointed to advance their agenda. For instance, Smith (2010:1) claims that some Southern NGOs that are owned and managed by few people and “serves as a cover for some of the most venal graft.” Others criticise NGOs as often non-democratic and hierarchical organisations; and with no clear lines of accountability
to the people, they claim to represent (Crack 2013; Lewis and Kanji 2009, Brown et al. 2007). There is an argument that the independence of international NGOs, stemming from answerability only to their boards of directors, can lead to poor accountability. The increasing politicisation of aid has also raised questions about just how independent these NGOs are from institutional donors and their policies (Jayawickrama and McCullough, 2009)

In the same way, critics observed that large international NGOs often dominate issue areas in global political arenas. Most NGOs based in the north dominate humanitarian relief funds, marginalising the NGOs from the south. This brewing discord occurs between large INGOs based in the North and Southern NGOs “who strive to articulate their concerns rather than rely on an intermediary from a developed country” (Crack, 2013: 296). Karns and Mingst (2010) reported that this issue had been addressed by the UN to revise the criteria for accreditation of local indigenous NGOs. About that, some critics see NGOs as helping to sustain and extend neo-colonial relations in Africa as ‘new compradors’ – an indigenous agent representing international capitalist interests at the expense of the interests of the local people (Lewis and Kanji 2009:19 citing Hearn 2007).

There are also fierce critiques of NGOs around humanitarian assistance. Critics argue that NGOs are performing below expectations in assistance provision in emergency situations (Lewis and Kanji, 2009). This is because of their institutional self-interest, lack of coordination and duplication of effort in the face of scarce resources, as well as the inadequate knowledge of local context and a simple approach to causes of conflicts and instability (Lewis and Kanji 2009). Hein, (2008:41) argues that NGOs are sometimes accused of bureaucratic tendencies or playing by the rules; that is a formalisation of activities that often obstruct swift
response in time of crisis and sometimes to demonstrate accountability to donors, which may lead to an “unintended result or worse outcome”.

The issue of transparency is another challenge facing civil society organisations (Ackerman, 2003). Karns and Mingst (2010) opined that openness of communication and information are essential aspect of democratic institutions. According to Kovach et al. (2003), few NGOs make public information about their personnel, operations, funding source, and expenditure. They claimed that only the Red Cross, Oxfam International and World Wildlife Fund for Nature published their annual report online and in 2007, few others responded. Bruckner (2010) reported on a survey he conducted on the transparency of UN organisations and some NGOs:

“Perhaps surprisingly, the United Nations showed the highest consistent to transparency. The budgets of the two UN agencies funded by USAID are both reproduced in full... In contrast, Save the Children apparently asked USAID to withhold all information related to salaries” (Aid Watch Publication 18/08/2010)

However, there are current attempts by NGOs in regulating themselves to become more transparent to boost their credibility as actors in global governance (Brown et al. 2007). For example, a global accountability self-regulatory initiative called “Accountability Now” (previously the INGO Accountability Charter) was launched in 2016 to promote transparency and effectiveness across the sector.

Similar factors discussed above supported the proliferation of NGOs in Nigeria in the last few decades but did little to promote social change for the benefits of the poor (Brehm et al. 2004; Smith, 2010; Lampert, 2012). Finding NGOs in every community in Nigeria is usual. People’s perceptions of NGO sectors nowadays in Nigeria are not different from the way they see their government who have failed
to deliver essential services to the people because of elite capture (Lindberg, 2003; Smith, 2010; Lampert, 2012). The NGO sector in Nigeria suffers from the same menace of corruption and lack of capacity to deliver dividends of democracy to the people (Igbuzor, 2008; Smith, 2010). Critics argue that that the majority of the NGOs are being established and run by a corrupt elite turned local development activists/workers, primarily in response to the awareness that donor money was/are available to be exploited (Smith, 2010; Lampert, 2012).

The pervasive problems of corruption in the NGO sector in Nigeria led people giving different names to them, which also reflects diverse ways of conceiving these types of organisations in the country. According to Smith, 2010), some NGOs were named GONGO (government-organised NGOs). The NGOs in this category are organisations set up by the ruling elites and managed by their cronies. Another category of NGO in the eyes of the people is IONGO, which means individual-Organised NGOs (Smith, 2010; Lampert, 2012). BONGO refers to as bank-organised NGOs. Smith (2010) claims that a single individual own NGOs. Such individuals often live in cities such as Lagos and Abuja and claim to be involved in development work at the grass-roots; these are called LABONGOS (Lagos-based NGOs). Also, there are some NGOs that are non-existent but apply for funding without even having an office, staff or any projects under execution termed PONGO (Project-oriented NGOs), or even Email-NGOs (ENGOs), which are NGOs that conduct their activities only through emails (Smith, 2010).

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5 Many Nigerian Banks are often the tools in the hands of corrupt politicians and pastors of mega churches for money launderings and other financial vices.
However, NGOs are limited on other fronts too, not just in Nigeria, but elsewhere: The size and diversity of NGOs constitute a limitation to their activities. It makes it difficult for them to have a common agenda; even those NGOs that are working on the same issue may have divergent agendas (Ottaway, 2011). Coordination of their activities becomes difficult, and they may lack skills to capture and share promising practices and arguably hardly learn from setbacks and failure (Ottaway, 2011). Nevertheless, recent studies revealed some NGOs are working to reverse the trend (Brown et al. 2007).

Another problem is that the funding of NGOs is often not aligned with their vision and goals. Their effectiveness and neutrality often depend on their source of funds (Fowlers, 2015). NGOs depend on different sources of funds that include individual donors, foundations, corporations, and governments. Individual donations give NGOs independence from government and allow for flexibility in the use of funds. NGOs are better able to attempt to set donors agenda instead of being influence by it. However, individual donations are more volatile than institutional donors because they can be easily affected by an economic downturn (Karns and Mingst, 2010; Global Policy Forum, 2011).

Moreover, some NGOs are experiencing an inhospitable and restrictive political and legal climate in which to operate (CIVICUS, 2017). Governments often perceived their actions in advocating for the poor and the marginalised as an intrusion. ICNL (2016) reported that NGOs had such experience in the most of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia including Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka and Sudan of late.

Nevertheless, advocates of NGO argues that they seem to have the advantage of being “on the ground”, neutral, and able to provide essential services in poor
communities, which increased their prominence in international development discourses (Karns and Mingst, 2010; David and Hulme 2012; Kabeer et al. 2012). NGOs can promote positive social changes by boosting people’s power (power ‘within’ and power ‘with’) through mobilisation around political and economic issues to create negotiation or participation spaces for development (UNDP, 2003; VeneKlasen et al. 2004; Gaventa; Campbell, 2007; Chauvier, 2007). According to Banks et al. (2015), to protect, safeguard, and promote the position of marginalised or excluded people, NGO must enhance the capacity of civil society to advance collective actions to redress the unequal underlying power relations that denies them access to resources and opportunities.

A lot could be achieved by the empowered people through organised actions to claimed negotiating space and demand accountability from undemocratic institutions (visible power) and to challenge through self-assertiveness to confront ingrained attitudes and beliefs (hidden power) that reinforce poverty (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002; Chapman et al. 2005). Therefore, remedies to poverty could come from the cooperative effort of the people (building power with one another) to promote equitable distribution of resources and opportunities (Chapman and Mancini, 2005; Sengupta 2007; Green, 2012). The drive is to make the state more accountable and responsive to the needs of the rights-holders and improves the agency of the people to participate in development decisions (Macpherson, 2009). NGOs’ efforts through RBA should be directed to promoting local organisations by building the capacities of the poor to “assert their claims to public resources” and hold their governments accountable (Collier, 2006:122; Eade, 2006). Such efforts could either be through the resistance of the forces of marginalisation to claim political spaces for participation by the people or collaboration with reformed
institutions that embrace diverse opinions to growing solutions to development (Bebbigton, 2005; Edward, 2009; Ibrahim and Hulme, 2010).

Also, INGOs are expected to support locally grown initiatives from the South in their partnership relationships, or they risk losing their added-value in the aid architecture (Edwards and Fowler, 2002; Fernando, 2007; Chapman et al. 2009; Andrew, 2013). Edwards (2007) claims that perspectives developed from the grass-roots once nurtured can be viable in addressing local problems. Chapman et al., (2009) argue that the rights-based work explicitly reflects NGOs’ aspirations to promote participation that put the people at the centre of development interventions (see also Alsop and Heinsohns, 2005; Macpherson, 2009). INGOs can fulfill one of the critical demands of RBA by promoting productive partnership with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners (Macpherson, 2009). This is the focus of the following section.

3.4. The Partnership Between NGOs

Although defining partnership is not straightforward (Elbers, 2012). Conventionally, the partnership is any relationship that involves the state, the market and civil society organisations with a focus on promoting comparative advantage (Fowler, 1998; Glasbergen, 2007). Conceptually, a partnership between organisations entails cooperation for a specific purpose and the sharing of resources and responsibilities to achieve a common goal or benefit (Baaz, 2005; OECD, 2011; Fowler, 2015). Brehm et al. (2004) described ideal partnership as a relationship that prioritises mutual respect and benefits, trust, clearly defined goals, rights and responsibilities, accountability and transparency, integrity, and long-term commitment to working together between partners (Brown and Fox,
1998; Campbell, 1998; Baaz, 2005). However, it is often empty in practice (Offenheiser and Holcombe, 2003; Baaz, 2005).

It is now a slogan employed by different organisations to describe a wide range of relationships between development-based NGOs (Wallace et al. 2006; BOND, 2015). Scholars argue partnership often masks hidden motives or being a subtle way of imposing the views, interpretation, and agenda of INGOs on their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in the South (Fowler, 2000; Abrahamsen, 2004; Baaz, 2005; Wallace et al. 2006; BOND, 2015). Today in the development sector everybody wants to partner with everyone else on everything because the partnership between INGO and local organisations in the South has become an essential feature of development aid (Fowler, 2000; Brehm et al. 2004; OECD, 2008; Paris Declaration, 2005). Baaz (2005:6) argues that “development aid is now conducted between partners”, frequently as a norm or condition for receiving funds from many official donors. The partnership becomes a core identity of development-based NGOs as well as an approach that can help to deliver beneficial transformation in the South successfully (Harrison, 2007; Lewis and Kanji, 2009; Elbers, 2012; Green, 2015b; Campolina and Philips, 2015). According to BOND, (2015:17), the traditional approaches of “the South with the problems, the North with the answer” is no longer fashionable, since contemporary development problems such as global poverty and inequality demand different perspectives from diverse actors to address.

Brown and Fox (1998) argue that there are advantages from partnerships between organisations when actors demonstrate its ideals in practice. First, they claim that partnership can pull together diverse resources to solve common problems. They argue that effective partnership between organisations can also reduce the risk of programme failure of a single partner. In addition, they suggest that partnership
between INGOs, intermediate NGOs and CBOs can create social capital through iterative cycles of negotiations and conflict between development actors over time (see also Fox, 1996). Social capital is defined as relationships, organisations, norms, and social trust that promote public cooperation and horizontal instead of vertical social problem-solving among actors (Putnam et al. 1993; Brown and Fox, 1998; Brown, 1998). They argue that networks of relationships between organisations from grass-roots, national and international levels can bring together detailed information, local knowledge of the problem, and the political access of local organisations are critical to the success of any intervention. The literature suggests that the growth of social capital can promote accountable government, and consequently social-economic development (Brown and Fox, 1998).

Also, Brown and Fox (1998) argue that partnership between INGOs, NGOs, and CBOs can be powerful instruments for solving transnational problems including poverty and exclusion because it conferred national and international legitimacy on such effort. They claim that relationship between INGOs, NGOs and CBOs evolve in stages and so is accountability between them unfold over time and through continuous interaction. They suggest four evolutionary stages of a partnership between INGOs and local organisations: First, problem defining state – where partners agree on issues of concerns on which their relationships will be constructed. Second is the direction setting phase – where they agree on strategies and tactics. The third is the implementing phase – here partners execute problem-solving activities. Fourth is the revising phase where partners deal with new challenges and evaluate their progress. For Brown and Fox (1998), these phases are not linear but may be fragmented and cyclical. However, they acknowledge that the creation of a balanced partnership between organisations is
frequently complicated to establish and sustained because of the differences in partners’ ideologies, culture, financial resources and inequalities in power (Brown and Fox, 1998).

For Fowler (2015:1), the notion of partnership as mutuality and solidarity “has simply not happened on a meaningful scale.” According to Crewe and Harrison (1995:188), a wide gap remains between the intended goals of partnership and its practices and outcomes especially between INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners; this is because the stated ambitions of partnership “often appear disappointingly empty” (see also Lister, 2000). Also, previous literature suggests that many NGOs are sound on the theoretical ideas and principles of effective partnership, but these can be poorly demonstrated in practice (Brehm et al. 2004; Macpherson, 2009; Fowler, 2015). For instance, Gaventa (2006) argues that powerful actors are tangled with the language of partnership and ownership while there are rooted inequalities of resources and power between organisations working together. Other studies too have criticised the power asymmetries between INGO donors and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in the South based on the funding system (Lister, 2000; Macpherson, 2009; Elbers and Schulpen, 2011). Macpherson (2009) stated that the issue of power asymmetries in partnership engagements between INGOs and the local NGOs in the South is crucial to RBA.

One of the key reasons behind the gap between the theory and practice of partnership is the INGOs’ control over funding (Biekart, 1999; Baaz, 2005; Nelson, 2006; Elbers, 2012; Banks and Hulme, 2014; Fowler, 2015; BOND, 2015). Partnership based on funding transfer often means that INGOs will have more influence and power over agenda setting or the project to be executed. Accountability of intermediate NGOs and CBOs in this condition is mainly to their
INGO donors instead of “reciprocal or downwards” accountability to local communities (Fowler, 2002:2; Elbers and Schulpen, 2011; Banks et al. 2015).

According to Elbers (2012:18), INGOs’ power over funding is “in fact exerted directly by means of the rules governing partnership”, which means “Southern NGOs usually wield the shorter end of the power stick” (Elbers and Schulpen, 2013:49). The partnership between INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in developing countries often take donor-recipient form (Elbers, 2012). The relationship is often tainted with control rather than trust, lack of local ownership, and dependence instead of autonomy prevails, which limits effective or genuine partnership between these sets of organisations (Fowler, 1998; Wallace et al. 2006; Biekart, 1999; Nelson, 2006; BOND, 2015). INGOs’ ideas are often shaped by the shifting conditionality of conventional funders, which tilts answerability upward to these funders instead of mutual or downward accountability of INGOs to their intermediate NGO and CBO partners (Ashman, 2001; Michael, 2004; Wallace et al., 2006; Banks et al. 2015). Furthermore, the prevailing private sector management approaches common in large NGOs stifles participatory, collaborative, and mutually benefiting relationships that are crucial to achieving beneficial changes in the South through aid (Ashman, 2001; Michael, 2004; Wallace et al. 2006).

In practice, a partnership between NGOs needs to demonstrate equality, trust and reciprocity in ways that enhance the autonomy and capacity of all partners if it is to achieve its stated goal (Baaz, 2005; Macpherson, 2009; Elbers and Schulpen, 2013; BOND, 2015). For Banks et al. (2015:709), NGOs can best promote social changes when they do less and stepping back to allow the people and their organisations “themselves to dictate the agenda and evolve structures that suit their concerns and context.” Promoting the autonomy and financial independence
of intermediate NGOs and CBOs by INGOs can engender useful improvements in the delivery of aid (Macpherson, 2009; Fowler, 2015; Olawoore, 2017).

RBA advocates claim that it could transform the theory of partnership into practice to engender positive social, political and economic transformations through INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in developing countries (Elbers and Art, 2011; Elbers and Schulpen, 2013; BOND, 2015; Campolina and Philips, 2015, Green, 2015a). The process of RBA challenges the existing power relations but also the structure of the relationships by creating opportunities for dialogue/negotiation between partner organisations. Few studies, however, have been conducted on how RBA play out in practice in NGO partnerships. Elbers study is an exception (2012). He argues that intermediate NGOs and CBOs are devising tactics to boost their power and influence in their engagement with their INGO donors. He finds evidence that local organisations can choose to be selective in sourcing for funds from their INGO funders to reduce the inherently unequal power relations that are fostered by funding conditions. Elbers (2012) in one of his studies on partnerships between INGOs and local organisations found that there was a reduced power disparity between rights-based NGOs. However, he did not explicitly make claims about how RBA will shape the decisions made by NGOs about where they apply for funds, and what funding conditions they will accept. More research is necessary for this area because the normal funding relationship between INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners often fails to enhance genuine engagement between them and stifles innovative ideas from the South (Olawoore, 2017).

The literature contends that many INGOs seek to promote effective partnership with local organisations in the South since locally-led initiatives are seen to enhance their “legitimacy, effectiveness and value-for-money” (Pieterse, 2001;
Brehm and Padrao, 2004; Thrandardottir, 2015; BOND, 2015:12). Elbers and Art (2011) argue that INGOs aspire to promote effective partnership in their relationship with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners, especially those that are committed to the values of RBA (see also Brehm et al. 2004:58; Elbers and Schulpen, 2011). In RBA, effective partnerships require INGOs to be answerable to their intermediate NGOs and CBO partners as a right, and vice versa. According to Baaz (2005), partnership discourse should not be “understood as empty rhetoric or as a conscious tactic masking other motives”, because “outcomes do not necessarily reflect intentions” (Baaz, 2005:168, 169).

In the same vein, Brehm et al. (2004:58) stated that many NGOs aspire to have a higher focus “on advocacy as they move away from service delivery towards a rights-based approach.” According to them, the partnership is moving towards a notion of solidarity, where it is perceived as being between allies in times of trouble, fighting together against social, economic and political injustices that reinforce poverty and marginalisation (see also Lap, 2007; Pogge, 2007; Oxfam 2012). Solidarity with the poor is a fundamental value of RBA (ActionAid, 2010). Importantly, RBA demands effective partnership between INGOs and their intermediate NGO to create social movements and networks with like-minded organisations at the grass-roots to better defend and advance their rights (Eyben, 2003; Chapman et al., 2009; Harris-Curtis et al. 2005). For Macpherson (2009) effective partnerships between INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners are an essential aspect of RBA primarily when it is built around communication, transparency, clarity of purpose, and defined roles and responsibilities. The extant literature argues that RBA will have implications on the funding relationships of NGOs: NGOs that adopt RBA may have access to more funds while those that cannot translate to the rights-based framework may
experience reduced access to financial resources from rights-based donors (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Kindornay et al. 2012).

The implementation of RBA in practice should entail a transformation in the unequal power relationships between INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners based on funding systems (Fowler, 2000; 2015; Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Elbers and Schulpen, 2013; Chalabi, 2014). The literature suggests that INGOs are increasingly seeking to invest in relationship and alliance-building with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners to promote home-grown initiatives (Baaz, 2005:6; Bond, 2015:12). Proponents of RBA argue that it focuses on redressing the unequal structural relations of power and the political dimension of development (Hickey and Mitlin, 2009). Hence, the role of NGOs needs to change from being implementers of neoliberal trickle-down policies to being allies with their partners in the South (Bebbington et al. 2007; Lewis and Kanji, 2009; Campolina and Philips, 2015). Therefore, Brehm et al. (2004) argue that partnership can only work effectively when intermediate NGOs and CBOs are empowered to become stronger in articulating their needs and what they can bring to the table in their relationship with INGOs, beyond funding relationships. Also, partnerships between NGOs based on rights are expected to support the financial autonomy and independence of intermediate NGO and CBO partners, which is "synonymous to achieving a significant demand of RBA" (Macpherson, 2009:265; Olawoore, 2017).

For example, Chapman et al. (2009) stated that ActionAid India places a strong emphasis on redressing the denial of rights of the most marginalised people and begin their work by building the capacity and strengthening their local partner organisations, enabling people’s access to resources and providing essential services for their immediate needs. In addition, ActionAid India and other country
offices provide networking opportunities that link their empowered intermediate NGO and CBO partners to focus the analysis of power relations in their domains and away from primarily service provisions (Chapman et al. 2009). In the same manner, Brehm et al. (2004:164) observed that RBA could contribute to making the partnership between NGOs account for these shortcomings based on her study of INGO-SNGO partnership in Cambodia. She stated:

“What the partners see as distinctive about SC-N’s (INGO) partnership in Cambodia as a whole is that the INGO takes a rights-based approach, specifically tied to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This approach is seen to provide a balanced framework to their relationship.”

It is argued that RBA can promote the effort to construct balance relations of power between INGOs, intermediate NGOs and CBOs by promoting accountability between these actors (Chapman and Mancini, 2005; Bradley, 2007; Oxfam, 2014). A balanced relationship can be empowering for intermediate NGO and CBO actors in the South to employ locally driven initiatives to drive aid delivery and social transformation in the South (Edwards, 2007; Elbers and Art, 2011; BOND, 2015; Campolina and Philips, 2015, Green, 2015a). Hence, Andrew, (2013) argues that INGOs should assist their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners to identify, research, and agree on the nature of development problems with the aim of empowering them to proffer solutions through learning and adaptation of various initiatives.

In addition, Elbers and Schulpen (2013) contend that INGOs need to focus on fostering effective partnerships with local intermediate NGOs and CBO. Otherwise, they risk losing their added-value in the aid architecture (Edwards and Fowler, 2002; Fernando, 2007; Chapman et al., 2009). Chapman et al. (2009) argue that the rights-based work explicitly reflects NGOs’ aspirations to promote
participation, which put the people at the centre of development interventions (see also Alsop and Heinsohns, 2005; Macpherson, 2009). By promoting productive partnership with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners, INGOs are fulfilling crucial demands of RBA (Macpherson, 2009). Consequently, many INGOs have proclaimed a commitment to RBA and have adopted partnership as a strategy to implement the approach.

Proponents of RBA argue that a commitment to its values in practice could promote policy dialogue between NGO partners in such a manner that enhances the closer relationship (Gready and Ensor, 2005; Chapman et al. 2009; ActionAid, 2012). For Fox and Brown (1998), having a voice in partnership/coalition between organisations is vital to hold other members accountable, which can also promote balanced relationships between partners. Similarly, Brehm et al. 2004:58) argue that “some NGOs will deliberately look for new partners who already have expertise in advocacy and the rights-based approach to development.” In addition, Kindornay et al. (2012) posit that rights-based INGOs will only work with likeminded intermediate NGOs and CBOs in the South. With the hope that RBA will strengthen the agency of the poor and their organisations to redress social and economic inequality, and enhances accountability of duty-bearers including INGOs (see also Slim, 2002; Eyben, 2003). According to Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall, (2004), successful implementation of RBA will much depend on its interpretation in practice by development actors especially by development-based NGOs, since RBA means different things to the different organisations (see also Samuel 2004; Pettit and Wheeler, 2005).
3.5. **Challenges of Implementing RBA for NGOs**

In addition to the fact that it takes a very long time to change deeply ingrained ideologies, attitudes, and other forces that perpetuate poverty and exclusion, many challenges confront rights-based organisations often specific to different contexts (Chapman et al. 2005; Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Uvin, 2007). However, positive results have been recorded where the people have organised to define and realise their rights by gaining access to resources and quality social services as well as participate in the decision-making processes that shape their lives (Chapman et al. 2005; Abere Ako et al. 2013; Olawoore, 2017).

One of the significant challenges of adopting RBA by development-based NGOs is a change in focus from service delivery towards advocacy work and lobbying, transforming them to be agents of political and social transformation (Gready, 2008; Elbers, 2012; D’ Hollander, 2013). The simple reason for this is that most development-based NGOs have been used to the needs-based approach to development instead of rights. All these changes may come with resistance both from within and outside the NGO establishments (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005). Resistance within NGOs may occur because most development-based NGOs are accustomed to providing essential services to the people (Gready, 2008; Elbers, 2012; D’ Hollander, 2013). The implementation of RBA by NGOs may imply a need for new skills or methodological approach for the proper analysis of the rights conditions, public advocacy, consciousness-raising, and knowledge of international human rights law, treaties, conventions to implement rights framework (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Kindornay et al. 2012). These could be challenging for these set of organisations, especially for those organisations from the South who are limited by funding to engage professionals (Brehm et al. 2004).
Harris-Curtis et al. (2005) claimed that the challenges could also include staff fatigue, temporary overstretching of budgets for training and advocacy, and over-concentration of resources on technical development. They may also face budget constraints because many donors prefer project-based funding (see Campolina, and Philips, 2015). The literature claims that NGOs can overcome these challenges by providing more training for their members of staff on RBA in practice, improving communication with the people at the grass-roots, non-legal perception of laws, and avoiding rights languages that may be problematic for non-educated people and partners (Miller et al. 2004; Harris-Curtis et al., 2005:35; Gready 2008; Braunholtz-Speight et al., 2008; Kindornay and Ron, 2012). Rights-based NGOs also need to appeal to new donors to fund rights-based work, and convincing old partners on the advantages of promoting the rights of the people (Gready 2008; Braunholtz-Speight et al., 2008; Kindornay et al., 2012).

Also, the adoption of RBA could mean the need for specialised skills in advocacy, which may implies a change in the NGOs staff profiles and their job descriptions and the drive to transform policy into practice. Specifically, the frontline staffs involved in the delivery of services might have their post removed or reviewed (Jonsson, 2005; Kindornay et al., 2012). This situation implies that development-based NGOs will require enormous training input for their staff particularly regarding their attitude and relationship with the beneficiaries of their work as required for a necessary change in the relationship between NGOs and their stakeholders. Nevertheless, this could attract resistance from their staff (Harris-Curtis, 2005; Jones, 2005). The required change could challenge the value of their work and their previous investment in knowledge acquisition (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005). Not only that, it could be challenging to interpret abstract principles into practice. It is also argued that the focus on individual rights could be difficult in
societies where the underlying values are the family and community responsibility (O’Brien, 2003; Lansdown, 2005; Ensor, 2005; Hickey and Mitlin, 2009).

Furthermore, the adoption of RBA also calls for the respect and fulfillment of the rights and freedom of development NGOs members of staff and not only to the external stakeholders (Gready and Ensor, 2005). It could be possible to promote transformation in NGOs relationships and practices if there is consistency between internal practices and discourse on rights (Eyben, 2003; Hickey and Mitlin, 2009). Not only that, the increasing call for evidence by Northern constituencies on how their funds will benefit the poor directly could be challenging for the implementation of RBA by NGOs (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Kindornay et al., 2012; Olawoore, 2017). According to Easterly (2013:6-9), some governmental agencies are not supporting the issue of rights informed by neo-liberal ideas, while some philanthropic foundations such as A.G. Leventis Foundation in Nigeria still give aid based on the notion of ‘charity’ (A.G. Leventis Foundation, 2017; Olawoore, 2017).

Moreover, the adoption of RBA by development-based NGOs, particularly INGOs, could also affect their partnership relationship with their Southern partners, the state, and donors. For their partners, the adoption of RBA could cause disagreement between development-based NGOs and their partners depending on where the inspirations for the approach emanated. This implies that development NGOs could change their partners especially those that fail to fit into their new strategies and goals. It could also involve building the capacity of existing partners to fit into their new work. However, working on RBA by INGOs with local organisations could involve evaluating their organisational values, their political engagement, and how they negotiate with their partners (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005). In simple terms, RBA will imply that INGOs should promote genuine
partnership, be more transparent and open to criticism, disagreement, and evaluation of their strategies by their intermediate NGO and CBO partners. For Chapman et al. (2005), RBA has encouraged a more holistic perspective within some NGOs and have led to the creation of a wide range of innovative ideas and work in partnership with others.

Crucially, RBA demands NGOs to be critical of their everyday practices, where it is “flagrant violation of rights or not conducive to the promotion and protection of rights” (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005:36). Emanating from that, NGOs would be useful in having a critical look at the unethical practices of states, intergovernmental organisations, and actors of the private sector in both the North and South (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Karns and Mingst, 2010). Many NGOs have demonstrated the willingness to translate to RBA in their policy and mission statements, which aligned with the prescriptions of many bilateral and multilateral donors such as DFID, SIDA, but there are still controversies on how it is implemented in practice (Kindornay et al. 2012). Also, some bilateral donors are skeptical about RBA because of the fear of what the approach portends for their internal economies, and such donors continue to use development aid as a tool to promote their economies and security (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Kindornay et al.2012).

Taking a critical stand against the everyday practices of states could be most difficult when development-based NGOs are not of local origin, which might put the lives of their staff in danger or outright banning of NGOs from operating in repressive states. It often demands that NGOs re-evaluate their mode of engagement with such states. Also, the adoption of RBA poses a potential conflict with some Northern donors who may be indisposed to the language of rights such as the US that refused to be a signatory to the Economic, Social and Cultural
Rights Convention. As such, NGOs may face the dilemma of speaking out against human rights violations or receiving state funding (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Chapman et al. 2009).

Finally, the implication of adopting RBA on development-based NGOs’ relationship with their donors could also constitute a challenge to their partnerships. Some donors do not understand or believe in the link between development and rights, who are often critical of NGOs’ adoption of RBA particularly neo-liberal donors (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Gready and Ensor, 2005; Hunter, 2012).

3.6. **NGOs and the Legal/Political Environment in Nigeria**

This section examines the legal/political environment in which NGOs operate in Nigeria. Examining the political environment is essential because national and international political environment in a country can enable or constrained NGOs activities (Banks et al. 2015). Nigeria is home to a variety of civil society organisations including NGOs even before independence from the colonial rule in 1960 (ICNL, 2017). The organisations vary widely and are diverse, ranging from local 'elites’ clubs, traditional age grade 6 associations and community development or town unions in villages and small towns, to national organisations and international organisations with thousands of members (ICNL, 2017). These include companies limited by guarantee, associations with incorporated trustees, unincorporated associations, co-operatives, and traditional organisations including town unions and other mutual beneficial organisations (ICNL, 2017).

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6 Age grade is an association of people of equal or about the same age operating within a given territory or area with the aim of individual, collective and societal transformation/development (Ndukwe, 2015).
Additionally, Nigeria is a signatory to many international human rights laws including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1993. In addition, Nigerian constitution guarantees fundamental human rights including freedom of association and assembly without any restrictions to the people to come together for any purpose so far that the group is founded and operate within the ambit of the law (Constitution of Nigeria, 1999). Section 39 ensures the right to receive and impart information. Although there are challenges to civil and political freedom in the past, there are improvements in these areas now. For instance, Freedom in the World (2015:23)\(^7\) ranked Nigeria 4 on political rights and 5 on civil liberties, showing the country made improvements in 2017 where it was ranked 3 on political rights (ICNL, 2017). The ranking is based on a scale of 1-7 from free/partly free/unfree. The lower the ranking, the more the freedom enjoyed by civil society organisations.

As a federal state, the principal laws that regulate civil society are based on the Companies and Allied Matters Acts (CAMA), 1990 and by the Corporate Affairs Commission. A company limited by guarantee established for the promotion of commerce, art, science, religion, sports, culture, education, research, charity, or other similar purposes and their income and property is applied solely towards the promotion of its purposes (CAMA, 1990). Civil society organisations that are willing to have a legal identity are required to register with the Companies and Allied Matters Act, Cap. C20, Laws of the federal republic of Nigeria (CAMA 1990). Foreign civil society organisations may be incorporated in like manner as their local counterparts, but they need to comply with the same rules as local

\(^7\) Freedom in the World assesses the real-world rights and freedoms enjoyed by individuals, rather than governments or government performance per se. It is a publication of Freedom House, a non-profit, nonpartisan organisation that supports democratic change, monitors freedom, advocates for democracy and human rights.
organisations (ICNL, 2017). The laws that regulate the activities of civil society organisations are enshrined in the federal legislation.

There are limited barriers or restrictive laws against civil society activities in Nigeria (Human Rights Watch, 2015; ICNL, 2017). However, the President has the power to prohibit any civil society organisations that are deemed to be dangerous to the good governance of Nigeria or any part thereof, but anyone can challenge it in the court of law (ICNL, 2017). A significant barrier is the prohibition of LGBT+ societies, clubs or organisations from operating in Nigeria (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Recently, some organisations have decried government’s inability to provide protection for and excessive use of force on protests that oppose government policies and the existing laws that regulate the route and time of protests (ICNL, 2017). Such laws of protest have been challenged in the court of law, which led to the repeal of the need to seek police permission before any protest by civil society organisations (ICNL, 2017). Because the constitution of Nigeria in Section 40 protects freedom of assembly, the Public Order Act was quashed by the Nigerian Court of Appeal in 2007 when some civil society organisations challenged it (ICNL, 2017). The Public Order Act was previously in operation to regulate freedom of assemblies that defined the need to seek police permission before any protest.

Similarly, section 38 article 2 of CAMA also forbid any organisation making donations or gifts to a political party, or from making gifts or donation for political purposes (CAMA, 1990). However, there is no barrier to speech and advocacy (ICNL, 2017). The law has shielded human rights and pro-democracy civil society organisations from these provisions, which have been interpreted as applying to partisan politics, registered political parties, and candidates for elective offices (US Department of State, 2016). Human Rights Watch (2015)
claimed that Nigeria media is independent, healthy and free, although there occasional harassment for going against the government. There is also no known barrier that restricts Nigerians from contacting or cooperating with other civil society organisations. Although the National Planning Commission is now registering international and local civil society organisations so that they operate within the ambit of the law regarding multilateral and bilateral economic cooperation, development aid and technical assistance (ICNL, 2017). Also, civil society organisations with legal identity can apply for government funding if it tallies with their purpose of the establishment.

International NGOs that work in Nigeria include International Rescue Committee; International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC); Save the Children; and Amnesty International. Others include Plan International; Search for Common Ground; Transparency International; Action Against Hunger; ACTED; Human Rights Watch; and Heinrich Boll Foundation. There are also Danish Red Cross; Danish Refugee Council; Norwegian Refugee Council; Medecins Sans Frontieres; GIZ; Africare Nigeria; Famine Early Warning System Network; Cooperazione Internationale; Oxfam-Novib; and ActionAid Nigeria. Some of the intermediate or national NGOs are Kinjir Foundation; T. Y. Danjuma Foundation; Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC); Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC); Social Action; PACT Nigeria; Revenue Watch Institute; State Accountability and Voice Initiative in Nigeria; and Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD).

These organisations are bifurcated into two: the ‘classic’ human rights organisations that focus on researching human rights abuses and advocacy such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch; CISLAC; Social Action. Others are those that are traditionally service-oriented organisations like Oxfam-Novib;
ActionAid; CCEPE (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; D’Hollander et al. 2013). However, the emergence of RBA has blurred the dichotomy between these organisations: while human rights organisations now implement development work to promote their conventional work, the traditional development-based NGOs now employ human rights laws and conventions to aid their work (Uvin, 2004; Gready and Ensor, 2005; Harris-Curtis et al. 2005).

The majority of the international and local organisations in Nigeria claim to have adopted or promoting the rights of the people in Nigeria, which reflect in their policy and action statements. For instance, Amnesty International claims to support people to claim their rights through education and training and mobilises millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change, and to stand in defense of activists on the frontline (Amnesty International, 2017). Action Against Hunger focuses on empowering the vulnerable individual, groups, and communities to improve their access to food, income, and markets by addressing the inherent causes of hunger as well as tackling a range of social, organisational, technical, and resources concerns essential to people (Action Against Hunger, 2017).

Also, Save the Children (2017) claim to be working to make children’s rights a reality through education, protection, poverty and health programmes and supporting organisations that promote and protect children’s rights. The organisation claimed that many governments globally promised to protect, respect, promote, and fulfill these rights. From the International Rescue Committee (2017), they help Nigerians struggling with the problems of poverty, corruption, natural disaster and terror to understand and advocate for their rights, and make informed choices for their futures. Plan International (2017) claims to
help adolescent girls build their life skills and acquire knowledge to claim their rights. Heinrich Boll Foundation (2017) claim to see democracy promotion as one of their core themes, and to strengthen civil society, bolster women’s political and social rights as well as campaign against discrimination and criminalisation of people whose sexual orientation or gender identity does not conform to the norm. Finally, the Norwegian Refugee Council (2017) claims to promote and defend displaced people’s rights and dignity in local communities with governments and other international organisations. Importantly, this study focuses on ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib, and their intermediate NGOs and CBO partners in Nigeria and their stands on RBA are discussed in the next section.

3.7. Conclusion

Despite the challenges facing NGOs, as agents of social change, they remain essential development actors in the fight against poverty and exclusion in developing countries. The increasing public exposure and scrutiny of NGOs activities; their expanding financial flows; their strengths in innovating alternative development ideas; and their implementation of RBA supported these claims. This chapter highlighted the gap in knowledge about to what extent the adoption of RBA shapes the behaviour of NGO actors. This chapter also examined the types of NGOs and the legal/political environment in which they conduct their work in Nigeria and argued that the political environment in Nigeria is less restrictive to constrain NGOs activities (ICNL, 2017; Freedom in the World Report, 2015). Also, this chapter submitted that instead of attempting to replace the state, it would be rewarding for NGOs to focus on changing the relations between the state and society by creating active citizenship. NGOs should focus on building the capacity of both the rights-holders to claim their rights and the duty-bearers (mainly the
state) to fulfill their obligations for joined-up development. The following chapter presents the research methodology or how the research was conducted including a discussion on the participant organisations, ethical considerations and focus group dynamics.
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.0. Introduction to Qualitative Research

This is a qualitative research that often treats theory (grounded) as something that emanates from the analysis of the data collected, but it can also be used to test theories as employed in this study (Bryman, 2001). Grounded theory is a theory that derives from data, having been systematically collected and analysed through the research process (Silverman, 2011). There are different ways to carry out qualitative research. Depending on the ways individuals view the nature of the world (ontology) and how knowledge can be acquired (epistemology). From an ontological point of view ‘our ability to know social reality is imperfect at best’ (Elbers, 2012:36). Hence, whatever assertion we hold must be subjected to the serious scrutiny of our approaches to capture the best knowledge of the phenomenon we investigate. On the other hand, our conceptions of social reality are arguably closely related to the way we understand ourselves and our environment from an epistemological point of view (Elbers, 2012; Silverman, 2011).

The literature suggests qualitative research interprete the social world from the viewpoint of the people under investigation. Epistemologically, face-to-face interaction described the fullest condition of participating in the mind of another human being (Bryman, 2001). Researchers need to put himself in their shoes or “take the role of another human being” to gain social knowledge – “seeking to probe beneath the surface appearance” (Lofland and Lofland, 1995:16; Bryman, 2001: 277). Bryman (2001) argued that face-to-face interaction is closely related with interpretivism and fits squarely with an epistemological link with

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8 Interpretivism means a way of dealing with the subjective sense of social action
phenomenology – the theory of how a person makes sense of the world around him/her and bracket out his/her preconceptions in his/her grasp of the world. Qualitative research is more appropriate for research questions that aim to acquire a rich understanding of peoples lived experiences or an explanatory account of what goes on in the context under study (David et al., 2000).

Qualitative method is appropriate for this type of study, not least because of the high quality of the findings that it could generate. Therefore, the findings of this study are relevant to the context of the participant’s organisations and their work to promote effective partnership for aid delivery in Nigeria. It is also relevant to the culture and context of the people they work with, mainly how they can be empowered to challenge unequal power relations that often stymies their agency in development plans, processes and outcomes (Long and Godfrey, 2004; Easterly, 2013).

Crucially, there is an increasing demand for process of qualitative data collection and analysis to be transparent as a means of ensuring its quality (Wolcott, 1994). The transparency and openness of the researcher’s account of the investigation are crucial to the ways that studies are carried out. In other words, the degree to which researchers present a vivid account of the ways a study is carried out may convince others of the thoroughness and appropriateness of the approach to the study and the context of the study (Lofland and Lofland, 1971; David 2000). Hence this research will present a step-by-step process of data collection.

This study intends to draw out respondents’ perspectives of what RBA means to them in practice as INGOs work together with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in Nigeria as well as exploring the features of social settings and culture (Long and Godfrey, 2004). This study will focus more on the understanding of the
implications of RBA in theory and practice from different perspectives based on the context of the study including the connections between the process and outcome (Stake, 1995). This type of inquiry also necessitates flexibility during the investigation as the situation demands because many of the participants have different levels of education, which requires different ways of drawing data. For instance, face-to-face was adopted to draw data from participants from the INGOs and intermediate NGOs except for JDPC that preferred focus group interviews, while the study employed focus group discussion to collect data from CBO all informants.

However, the drawbacks of qualitative research often mentioned are its subjectivity; qualitative findings depend more on unsystematic views of the essential and significant things (Long and Godfrey, 2004). LeCompte (2010) argues that qualitative research is difficult to replicate because it is rare to have any standard process to follow. There is also the problem of generalisation – or how the result of qualitative research can be generalised to other contexts, and it can be difficult to ascertain how the researcher arrives at their findings (Bryman, 2001).

This research aims at conducting an evidenced-based study on the influence of RBA to the strategic, operational, and financial decisions of ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in Nigeria. It will draw out recommendations on ways to improve development practice by NGOs to promote beneficial changes in the delivery of development aid. This research is as robust as possible subject to the extent to which the constraints outlined above provides a way of verifying its validity by other people. Notwithstanding, the qualitative methods employed are not without their limitations especially in the context of this research. Brehm et al., (2004) argued that the study of partnership
relationship between NGOs has inherent methodological problems since the data were mainly from the perceptions of the key informants from NGOs that participated in the research and individual perceptions and behaviour are difficult to separate from that of their organisations. The following section will look at the research design where it highlights the mission statements of ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib in Nigeria and why this study focused on them, a method of data gathering, data analysis and the validity of this exercise.

4.1. **Research Design**

Regarding activities of ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib in Nigeria, ActionAid’s vision as an organisation is to ensure a world without poverty and injustice where every person enjoys their rights to a life of dignity (ActionAid, 2008; 2012). The organisation’s mission is to work with poor and marginalised people to eliminate poverty and injustice in the context they work (ActionAid, 2012). ActionAid (2012) claims that they believe a purposeful individual and collective action of people living in poverty can promote a fairer distribution of resources and opportunities. The INGO claim to support rights claiming struggle of the people especially women rights through solidarity and the rights-based alternatives to challenge the structural causes and symptoms of poverty and exclusions (ActionAid, 2010). ActionAid claimed that they started to apply RBA in their work since 1998 (ActionAid, 2012), with the intention of transforming power relations in different contexts instead of focusing solely on service delivery, which only attacks symptoms of poverty. The INGO claimed that a crucial feature of RBA is the attention given to promoting the agency of the people to fight poverty (ActionAid, 2008). According to ActionAid, the organisation provide support by creating awareness on rights, assist the people to organise themselves for actions to claim
their rights by making governments accountable to meet their needs. ActionAid (2012) claims that in their partnership with local organisations they use their power in ways that promote participation; women rights; transparent and accountable, and passes their skills on to others.

Oxfam-Novib claims that their work in Nigeria centres on ensuring economic justice for poor and marginalised people, gender justice and female leadership, good governance, and disaster risk reduction. In Oxfam’s policy statement, it was stated that the organisation employs a rights-based approach to development, humanitarian, and campaign work (Oxfam, 2017). The organisation implements RBA to demonstrate the belief that development activities are beyond the narrow issues of material resources to a focus on addressing the capacity, choices and power that people that live in poverty needed to enjoy all human rights (Oxfam, 2014). The organisation’s vision for Nigeria embraces transparent and accountable government, active rights-holders, and a private sector that ensures shared growth to meet the needs of the people, particularly the vulnerable (Oxfam, 2017). To this ends, Oxfam-Novib works with diverse partners and allies including community organisations, and regional groups at all levels of government (Oxfam, 2017).

According to Green (2015b), Oxfam-Novib strives to promote active citizenships by enhancing the power of the people to develop the power within them, which is an end in itself, enabling them to claim rights. The organisation aims to build power with the poor and excluded people to develop a strong collective to challenge those that have been exercising power over them (Green, 2015b). For Oxfam-Novib, when people have the power to claim their fundamental human rights, they will be enabled to escape poverty and create sustainable livelihoods (Oxfam, 2017). According to Oxfam International, the organisation started to
focus on social and economic justice through the implementation of RBA on the field since the 1990s (Oxfam, 2000). This thesis presents more discussion on the policy statements and profiles of Oxfam-Novib, ActionAid and their Intermediate NGO, and CBO partners in the appendix.

This study focuses on Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in Nigeria because both INGOs have a long presence in Nigeria and operate in many states in the country in partnership with several intermediate NGOs and CBOs. Importantly, they claimed to have adopted the RBA as the fundamental principle that determines their strategic, operational and financial decisions. The INGOs are high profile organisations working as development actors in many countries globally on different thematic areas. Both organisations are cross-regional in scope (though they now claim that they operate as independently as registered NGOs in Nigeria), they perhaps have a similar annual turnover and patronise similar donors. They also participate in the same global governance frameworks that have been instrumental in promoting the rights-based approach to development.

In addition, ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib believe that sustainable development can only be achieved by the collective effort of many like-minded organisations (Oxfam 2012). They both claim that they only work with rights-based intermediate NGOs and CBOs in Nigeria. Most of Oxfam Novib’s intermediate NGOs that participated in this study conduct their activities in the capital cities, but ActionAid mainly partners with intermediate NGOs and CBOs that are either based in the rural areas or working directly with people in the rural areas who have adopted RBA. Some intermediate NGOs and CBOs that work with Oxfam-Novib claimed during the data collection process that they are not strictly rights-based organisations. However, they integrate rights issues into their work.
In all, two INGOs, nine intermediate NGOs and 9 CBOs participated in this study and a total of 99 informants participated in this study including those attending the ten focus group discussions. A total of 23 interviews and 10 focus group discussion were conducted. Table 4.1 below shows the configuration of organisations/respondents, numbers and duration of interviews, and focus group discussion. Figure 4.1 that shows the pictorial representation of different organisations.

Table 4.1. Showing the configuration of organisations, interviews and focus group discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>Number of Interviews</th>
<th>Focus Group Discussions</th>
<th>Duration (Minute)</th>
<th>Configurations/ Number of NGOs officials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ActionAid</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>45-90</td>
<td>5 INGO officials Including Deputy Country Director, Coordinator of Local Rights Programme, Head of Partnership and Local Right Team, Head of Advocacy and Campaign, Adviser on Local Rights Programme/Conflicts Support Unit, and Head of Monitoring and Evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oxfam-Novib</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>45-90</td>
<td>2 – (Associate Country Director; Programme Officer, and Head of Media and Publicity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CCEPE (Partner of ActionAid)</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>45-60</td>
<td>2 - (CEO, and Senior Programme Officer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JDPC (Partner of ActionAid)</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>90-120</td>
<td>7 SNGO staffs including, the Assistant Director of Programme, Legal/Programme Officer, Driver/Field Assistant, Financial/Accounting Officer, M&amp;E Officer, Admin. Manager, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Roles and Responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASG (partner of CCEPE)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45-60</td>
<td>2- (Executive Director, and Programme Coordinator)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FADU (partner of Oxfam)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45-60</td>
<td>2- (Controller of Programme, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NANTS (partner of Oxfam)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45-60</td>
<td>2- (President of the Secretariat, Head of Agricultural Programme Officer)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CISLAC (partner of Oxfam)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45-60</td>
<td>2- (Programme Officer, Legislative and Policy Advocacy Officer)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFA (partner of Oxfam)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60-90</td>
<td>2 SNGO Officials including the Director of Programme, and Evaluation and Monitoring officers,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCRDF (partner of Oxfam/CISLAC)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45-60</td>
<td>2- (Director of Programme, and Field Officer)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA (partner of Oxfam)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45-60</td>
<td>2- (Director/Legal Adviser, Programme Officer)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sholu CDC (partner of CCEPE)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60-120</td>
<td>4 CDC Executive members including the Chairman, the Secretary, Facilitator, the Women Leader, and six other community members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gbago CDC (partner of CCEPE)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60-120</td>
<td>3 CDC Executive members, including the Chairman and his two wives, Facilitator, the Secretary, and the Treasurer, and five other community members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okeso CDC (partner of CCEPE)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60-120</td>
<td>4 CDC Executive members, 2 High School community employed teachers, 3 Cattle Farmers representative, and six other community members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilado CDC (partner of JDPC)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60-120</td>
<td>10 – (Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Facilitator, the Head)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community CDC (partner of JDPC)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60-120</td>
<td>8 – (Chairman, the Headteacher of the community Primary School/ Facilitator, Treasurer, Community women leader, the Head of the Community and three other community members)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasinmi-Odunwo CDC (partner of JDPC)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60-120</td>
<td>8 – (Chairman, the Headteacher of the community Primary School/ Facilitator, Treasurer, Community women leader, the Head of the Community and three other community members)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alayere CDC (partner of JDPC)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60-120</td>
<td>12 including the wife of the Community Head, Chairman of the Farmer’s Union, Facilitator, Secretary to the Community, Facilitator, Women leader, Youth leader and six other community members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oke-Agbede FCA (partner of FADU)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60 – 120</td>
<td>12 - FADU Controller of Programme, Chairman of the FCA and his wife, Secretary, Head of Women Cocoa Traders, and six other community members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilosi FCA (partner of FADU)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60 – 120</td>
<td>7 – (Chairman of the Farmers Union, Secretary, Head of Women Cocoa Trader, FADU’s Controller of Programme, and three other community members)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igangan FCA (partner of FADU)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60 – 120</td>
<td>8 – Facilitator, the Secretary, Treasurer, FADU’s Controller of Programmes, and five other farmers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.1: Pictorial Representation of Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid and Partners Organisations (presented in landscape in the appendix)
However, this research population or sample is not claimed to be representative of development-based NGOs in Nigeria, but the researcher ensured that selected organisations (INGOs, Intermediary NGOs, and CBOs) varied in characteristics such as organisational structure and the focus issues, and covered different contexts and cultures in the country. Not only that, the selected organisations varied in organisational size, level of operations (some work with CBOs in rural areas only while others work with both CBOs and other NGOs of similar structures but different focus areas) and the length of the partnership of between 2-10 years.

The selection will enhance the quality of the data generated from the use of a case study research design (Lewis 2003). The inclusion criteria are: First, the NGOs must have adopted the rights-based approach or applying the rights’ principles in their programmes. Second, it must be stated clearly in their mission statement, development policies, strategies, and programmes that one of their goals or working methods is to respect, protect and fulfil human rights as whole or in part as prescribed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Third, they must frame their campaign, advocacy, and other programmes in human rights terms. Finally, they should address the promotion and protection of human rights as obligations for duty-bearers and rights claiming by the people. All the participant organisations in this research met these criteria.

Also, Nigeria was selected as a research location because the researcher is a Nigerian with the local knowledge of the terrain. Nigeria is also the most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa and a major political and economic player in the region and Africa. Nigeria has been a paradox of plenty or an example of ‘resource cursed’ nation: it contains a vast reserve of natural resources with increasing poverty, unemployment, and inequality (Ushie, 2012:1). United Nations Human Development Report, (2011) stated that the country was ranked 157th out of 187
countries, while 68% of Nigerians earn less than $1.25 per day. Oxfam International in Nigeria stated on their websites that Nigeria has over 160 million people with high level poverty, but contribute about 78% of ECOWAS budget. The country manifest an array of contradictions: Nigeria is a wealthy nation of poor people and deteriorated infrastructure. The organisation also stated the country is the 6th largest crude oil producer in OPEC, but import fuel and experiences frequent fuel scarcity. Also, Nigeria has over 79 million hectares of arable land with over 3 million of irrigatable land (Oxfam, website 2017). ActionAid (2014) claims that Nigeria is one of the unequal countries in the world, hence the significance of RBA championed by NGO actors.

The fieldwork was carried out in four selected states in Nigeria: Kwara, Osun, Ondo and the Federal Capital Territory. The four states are where ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib have their intermediate NGO and CBO partners and projects. The selected states were from two regions (North-Central and South-Western) of Nigeria and presented different contexts. Most of the intermediate NGOs and CBOs are operating in the local communities or rural areas, while some are in the capital city with claims that they are dealing directly with the people at the grass-roots. These regions were also selected to counter language barriers since the researcher speaks the local language of the people at the community levels in these two regions of Nigeria. The English language is the standard means of communicating in the Federal Capital Territory where most of the intermediate NGOs that work with Oxfam-Novib based.

The ability to speak the local language helped to gain access and interact with key informants at the grass-roots. Therefore, the conducted the interviews in the local language with CBO informants. There was no need to hire an interpreter; the researcher gathered the information first-hand without the distortions that may
occur when a third party is used as an interpreter. The researcher gained access to all intermediate NGOs through ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib. The researcher contacted all participants through their various organisations, and they gave their support to the study. The fieldwork was carried out between September and November 2014 and the second field trip in September 2016. The relatively short time for gathering data could be a limitation of this study. It is mainly because the research is self-funded.

4.2. Research Method

This research adopted various methods of data gathering relevant in collecting qualitative data, appropriate to the context in both rural and urban areas. These methods reflect a combination of approaches to engage with the people at the grass-roots – both at the rural community level and the cities - to enhance their ability to analytically express and share with the researcher their lived experiences (Chambers, 1994). The researcher before moving to the field started with the extensive review of the English-language literature on the rights-based approach to development, the role of NGOs and development aid in developing countries; and partnerships between INGOs and local organisations from the South. For ActionAid’s intermediate NGO and CBO partners, the researcher conducted the study in two states: Ondo and Kwara state. In Ondo, the intermediate NGO that works with ActionAid is the Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) – a faith-based NGO9 with a culture of solidarity with the poor – that works with 3 participants CBOs. JDPC has criteria for the selection of CBOs they work with; they must be based in the rural areas and working with local people. Their CBO

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9 A faith-based organisation is “any organisation that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within the faith” (Clarke and Jennings, 2008:6)
partners are Ilado Community Development Committee (CDC); Alayeere Community Development Committee; Wasinmi Community Development Committee. The researcher also attended a JDPC partnership meeting with some of their CBO partners that were recorded and notes taken.

In Kwara State, the intermediary NGO partnering with ActionAid is Centre for Community Development and Poverty Eradication (CCEPE), which provided links with three CBOs that participated in the research. CCEPE also linked the researcher to another organisation (Adolescents Support Group) working with the people in the capital city that also participated in the study. CCEPE’s partners at the community levels that participated in this study are Okeeso Community Development Committee, Gbago Community Development Committee, and Shoolu Community Development Committee. Focus group interviews were used to draw data from the CBOs. The thesis presents brief notes on these organisations in the appendix.

Oxfam-Novib works with intermediate NGOs in Osun state and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and they mainly operate in the capital city, working on different issues with other organisations and directly with the people. These organisations in the Federal Capital Territory include Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC); National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS), Social Action (SA), International Foundation for the Aged (IFA), Majesty Community and Rural Development Foundation (MCRDF).

Moreover, the study interviewed five members of staff of ActionAid at management positions, most of the officials of the INGO were willing to participate in the research. Two members of staff of Oxfam-Novib made themselves available for the interviews, despite several efforts to interview many more. 2-5 key
informants of the intermediary NGOs participated in the study. For CBOs, the focus group interview participants range from 5-10. The researcher presents a brief detail of the number of the organisations that participated in the research in table four in the appendix. While interviewing each of these partners, the researcher explored in-depth participants’ perspectives on major themes of the study.

The research employed semi-structured interviews; focus group discussions, participant observation, and analysis of primary written data or documents in the field. The documents include the organisations’ Partnership MOU between the INGOs and the intermediary NGOs (memorandum of understanding), policy papers, partnership principles, organisations’ profiles and toolkits or working manuals. The researcher assessed each method, their strength and ensured their assumptions and consequences were accounted for (Mittelstaed, 2002). The researcher employed interview method based on the notion that it could produce rich, detailed data and meaningful scope on the lived experiences of people (Behringer, 2006). Semi-structured interviews have the merit of bringing together a structure with flexibility as the situation demands during interviews. In addition, semi-structured interviews enhanced a systematic collection of data, and the participants were able to share their perspectives according to their knowledge of RBA and its implication in practice (Knox and Burkard, 2009). The interview guide allows research informants to introduce issues that are not pre-planned (Bryman, 2001; Ritchie, 2003; Silverman, 2011). The interview guide was informed by the research questions (Kindornay et al. 2011). Although note-taking during interviews and focus group meetings can be difficult or inconvenient at times (Lambs, 2013), in addition to the recording of the discussion, the researcher tried to take notes during each interview and focus group discussions. One of the
drawbacks of the focus group is that participant may decide to give socially accepted responses based on group thinking (Crawford et al. 2017).

The participants interviewed in the INGOs, and intermediary NGOs were mainly at management cadre and Programme officers. The reason is there is the likelihood that they had in-depth knowledge of policies, missions, and practices of their organisations and had experience of matters directly relating to partners. The participants of CBOs included Programme Facilitators, Chairmen, Secretaries, community youth and women leaders and some of the wives of the CBO officials. They are responsible for managing the relationships between their community organisations and intermediate NGOs. The focus group membership was open to other community members that showed interest in the discussion to allow the voice of the marginalised people to be heard in such forum. The researcher ensured that they were present in the focus group discussions.

The interviews’ duration was between 30min- 1 hour 30 minutes depending on the time agreed with the participant, and their depth of knowledge on the critical areas of the research and emerging issues covered. The interviews were face-to-face, recorded and written by the researcher and were transcribed for analysis. The study explored several themes during the interviews including the participant's understandings and interpretations of the rights-based approach and the operational approach to issues of partnership and influence. It also explored the strategies of implementing the approach in practice, and the funding relationship between organisations and management of the partners between organisations with a focus on its significance to achieving their partnership objectives. The interviews also asked participants about the influence of RBA on their work mainly on the strength of their advocacy work and service delivery and potential added-value of the rights perspective for the beneficiaries of their work.
The main approach of each interview was to encourage the interviewee to discuss their experience as they see it, in their terms and the implications of that to them and their work. The researcher presents a copy of the interview questions in the appendix. All participants were given a copy of the interview guide a few days or just before the interview began. After each interview, the researcher reflected on how the interviews went and the challenges encountered to improve future interview practice. For example, at the community level, focus group discussions were conducted with community organisations’ members and the approach was helpful in generating data from the people at the grass-roots who were not well versed in the technical terms.

The researcher experienced little difficulty in gaining the confidence and trust of research participants. The INGOs designated senior member of staff to introduce the researcher to prospective participants that reflects a snowball technique. Some participants had attended one meeting or the other with the researcher, where there was a formal introduction to the researcher. Consequently, their trust and willingness to participate in this study were acquired, which was a crucial factor in motivating people to give up their time to take part in the research study. Some interviews were shorter than expected, especially while interviewing community organisations’ members, because of their limited knowledge of RBA. Also, there were occasions where a staff-member of one INGO or intermediary organisation could not spare much time to grant the interviews because many of them were too busy to give time to granting an interview. Appointments were cancelled on many occasions because many of them had to cancel pre-arranged appointments and the researcher had to revise research plans. Not only that, the realisation that many of these managers realised that they had other priorities
that came up at the time of contact and the scheduled date and time of the interview. On the other hand, some interviews were longer than the time scheduled. Overall, the researcher had envisaged this, and some contingencies were put in place to accommodate extra time for the interviews.

Many of the interviews took place at the workplace of INGOs and intermediary NGOs. The research conducted focus group discussions in the house or farm of chairpersons of community development committee or house of community heads for CBOs. They claimed that they were more comfortable with these arrangements or to comply with the demand of traditions. On some occasions, interviews were just like a conversation between two close people and interviewees spoke openly on most of the interview questions (Lamb, 2013).

In addition to that, arranging focus group interviews was arduous and took some time and effort to start on most occasions. With little persuasion, reminders, and encouragement from their partner organisations, the majority of the participants attended the focus group interviews. The use of focus group interviews in addition to detailed interviews of staffs of development NGOs promoted a more in-depth understanding of the issues under discussion. Focus groups are argued to be insightful and suitable for use in a multi-method research design such as this to ‘clarify, extend or qualify’ data obtained using other methods (Silverman, 2011:208, 210). In this research, it was the most suitable based on the researcher’s experience to collect data from the local people or community people on the rights-based approach and partnership relationships with intermediary organisations and INGOs. The reason is that some of the participants at the local level felt unsettled being interviewed alone, while in the company of other members of the communities they were open and excited to discuss their activities about the subject of the research.
JDPC suggested using focus group interviews for themselves and which yielded the desired results, perhaps because of a feeling of 'safety in numbers'. Alternatively, because it presents the most efficient use of their time, as well as the ease of assembling relevant officials who may have commitments in difficult to reach communities (Farnsworth and Boon, 2010:606). The participants helped one another in reconstructing an experience or argument under discussion. The researcher deemed focus group interviews appropriate for CBO participants because it is useful when researching powerless and marginalised people and people that are not literate, with the chance of generating consensus or diverse experiences (Farnsworth and Boon, 2010). Most of the CBO participants also live in remote areas. Hence it was difficult to meet them individually. The researcher met with each focus group a week before the actual interviews to discuss the critical areas of the study. However, a major drawback of focus group discussion is the possibility that the participant may adopt the same pattern of thinking and similar opinions.

The researcher also attended some partnership meetings and events organised by participating organisations. One of such events is the partnership forum organised by ActionAid with their partner organisations on the incoming year’s annual plan that will inform their work in the coming years tagged ActionAid Partnership Forum, 2014 in October. The forum seems to create an opportunity for ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners to have a discussion and negotiation on the activities of the organisations. The researcher was also privileged to attend partnership meetings with CCEPE and JDPC with their CBOs in the rural communities. Participant observation is ‘an employing one’s eyes and ears to understand what is going on in any settings’ (Silverman, 2011:113). Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) argued that for a
researcher to have a firsthand understanding of a phenomenon, participating as an individual in events is better than just observing the phenomenon from a distance. In the same vein, it is hard to study social world unless we are part of it, hence participant observation is not just a method in qualitative research but described as ‘a mode of a being-in-the-world characteristic of the researcher’ (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994; 249).

Legal documents such as the Partnership Principles of organisations (Oxfam, 2012) or their Memorandums of Understanding, organisations profiles (ActionAid, 2008) that laid the rules guiding partnership provided an opportunity and searchlight to assess the working of partnership relationships between organisations in practice. Furthermore, the documents were studied to understand their key prescriptions about how they carry out their work. The document proved to be helpful in gaining more insight into their organisations, their values, visions, belief and shared goals that often inform their strategies and actions. It also shed more light on their goals, their significance in development work, the implications of RBA in their work, and how they perceive partnership with intermediate NGOs and CBOs in achieving their goals. It also revealed how they are living out the values in the relationships with their partners in practice. Also, it informed the interview questions and the direction of the semi-structured interview conversations.

Similarly, most of these organisations have toolkits or training manuals on the implementation of the rights-based approach in practice except at the community level. These documents are ordinarily meant for internal use, but the organisations gave the researcher access to the resources. Silverman (2011) argues that text documents could also be an excellent avenue to know what people are doing in the world without being interviewed as they are often readily available and
accessible to begin early data analysis. Of course, in this research, these
documents shed light on how to go about the in-depth interviews because it gave
the researcher clues on the nature of these organisations. The documentary
analysis provided additional robust data mainly on the values and strategic
approach of participant organisations in the research.

Another advantage of documentary analysis over other sources of data is that the
documents were prepared without the premonition that they might be used as
data in a study (Ritchie, 2003). In such documents, there is no provoked
behaviour, unlike an interview where the participants respond to questions from
the researcher and the possibility of the presence of the researcher to influence
interviewees’ responses (Agee, 2009). All these methods used in gathering data
were complementary to each other as a sort of research triangulation that could
improve the validity of the research.

4.3. **Focus Group Dynamics and Processes**

Snowballing method was used to identify the focus group members. Most group
members were well-known to each other. They work together and share common
lived experiences and conditions, which limits the conflicts or tension that are
likely in such groups. Initially, the group members thought the researcher was as
an agent of ActionAid, which provoked feelings of mistrust and anxiety among the
CBOs’ members and perceptions of power advantage. The researcher found it
helpful in every meeting to demonstrate a ‘belongingness’ to the groups, which
helped to reduce the tension, enhance confidentiality and thus produce useful
data. The researcher’s similar cultural background with the participants reduced
the anxiety and mistrust amongst the groups, who were eventually willing to speak
candidly after developing a rapport with the researcher. The research agreed with
respondents that were all of them must contribute to the discussion in order not to socially constrain any members of the groups from participating.

The groups were characterised by different understandings and exercise of power could be reflected by the difference in the roles (as stated in table 4.1. on page 124-126) they play in their organisations and community, unequal access to resources and opportunities, and the levels of rights awareness. For example, in the focus group discussion with the Wasinmi-Odunwo Community Development Union, the discussants include the Chairman of the Community Development Committee, the Headteacher of the community Primary School (who happens to be the Facilitator of the programme with JDPC and ActionAid), the Treasurer of the Community Development Committee, Wasinmi-Odunwo Community Women Leader, the Village Head, and three other Community members. Some of the focus group discussions were held in the palace of the community leaders, while community leaders or their wives participated in the discussion. These dynamics continually shaped the group interactions and processes. Moreover, it was sometimes unavoidable to change the scheduled time of focus group meetings with CBOs’ participants because in some instances we have to wait for people to start the discussion. One of the main reasons is the remoteness of their various locations and the lack of motorable roads in the localities. Furthermore, women in some groups tend to be passive or reserved especially when their spouses or a community leader participated in the discussion. Gendered power is fundamental to their experience and tends to shape group processes. In some instances, the focus group was shifted from the time planned or included participants that were not invited to the group initially. Therefore, the group dynamics cannot be entirely separated from the social context or culture of the people (Olawoore, 2017).
4.4. **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the act of transforming data into research results in succinct statements, which ‘describe, explain or predict something’ on what the research has investigated (LeCompte, 2010: 146). The data analysis in a qualitative study is often iterative or recursive that is the researcher navigates back and forth through the data to make sense of it (Spencer et al., 2003). The researcher in this study started reflecting on the data from the field about the focus of the study and current arguments in academic literature and among practitioners of development work. The initial sense-making on the data helped in modifying subsequent interviews to capture emerging trends or questions in the research and helped on how to plan the structure of the thesis and draw conclusions. As common in qualitative research, the data analysis is flexible, but coding systems are also widely used. This coding may be derived from the research subject’s common terms but they may also be drawn from the concepts deemed suitable by the researcher or could be derived from the literature (LeCompte, 2010). The researcher started by searching for and retrieving interesting quotes from the data, and a coding system was developed by hand used to compare submissions of respondents on each subject, establish a pattern in the data and also to identify if any data is different from the common opinions or arguments.

4.5. **Validity**

Validity defines the ‘integrity of the conclusions generated from a piece of research’ (Bryman, 2001: 30). LeCompte (2010: 152) refers “to whether or not results obtained in one study can be applied to other studies with similar or identical people or situations.” There are criteria used to prove the validity of research, but they are different across research methodologies and disciplines.
From positivist and interpretive point of views, there are standard features of a quality qualitative research. One of the most common is the employment of one or two methodological strategies as used in this research to enhance its validity (Silverman, 2011). Besides that, the case study research design adopted in this study, as well as the collection of data in four states including Federal Capital Territory with different organisations that are not similar in structure, approaches and cultural context, also enhanced the validity of this research. The researcher also employed extensive data analysis and coding systems that are relevant in this context.

Moreover, other steps taken to ensured validity included the following: First, the researcher ensured that the research participants had a good grasp of the questions in the interviews. The researcher gave information sheet, consent form and the interview guide few days before the interview sections. They were able to read the questions through and asked any question from the researcher in any area not clear to them before the interviews began. The researcher provided further clarifications before the start of the interview sections. The participant information sheet detailed the focus of the study, aims and objectives, data storage and other relevant information on the ethical implications of the research. It was also imperative for the research to use terms that the participants could understand especially when dealing with CBOs and community members.

In the second instance, as provided for in the ethical section of the participant information sheet and having secured ethical approval from the University of Portsmouth Ethics Committee; participants were granted confidentiality, and that helped in creating a pleasant atmosphere for them not to withhold sensitive information during the interviews. As argued by Ashman (2001), the partnership
relationship between organisations is a sensitive issue and as such partners might be reluctant to criticise each other in order not to wound the partnership relationship. It is particularly important when there are power issues between them (Silverman, 2011; Elbers, 2012). The researcher assured the participants that there would not be direct attribution of comments to individual names and organisations to avoid the aftermath of releasing sensitive information to the researcher. However, participants expressed their minds without a reservation during the focus group especially the INGOs and intermediary NGOs’ staff. They were open because of the issues of rights under discussion. That reduced the fear or concerns for any backlash on their submissions. In some instances, particularly in the partnership forums and meetings where the researcher participated as an observer, the research participants could openly talk about their weaknesses and frustrations while doing their jobs. On a few occasions, the researcher was asked to switch-off his recording gadgets but took note instead.

Furthermore, the used of four methods used for gathering data – a sort of triangulation – added to the quality of the data. Triangulation using different methodology can contribute to the validity of research and could be complementary regarding the ways of looking at different experience or events (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003). In this case, the researcher used a method of triangulation involving the conduct of in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide, participant observation method, focus group interviews and analysis of documents, policy papers and working material or toolkits of participant organisations. The analysed data include the perceptions of the research participants from both the interview extracts and the focus group discussions as well as the internal working documents of participant organisations. The next chapter focuses on the presentation and analysis of the interview data and the
general discussion on the respondent’s perspectives on the conception of RBA and its implications for their choice of partners.
CHAPTER FIVE: DEVELOPMENT NGOS, PARTNERSHIP, AND THE RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

5.0. Introduction

Critics of RBA claim that it means different thing to different organisations when it comes to its interpretation in practice (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005). This chapter aims to investigate the understandings of the meanings of RBA between INGOs (Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid) and their intermediate NGOs and CBOs partners in Nigeria. It aims to establish whether understandings vary depending on the type of organisation. The chapter will then investigate how RBA shapes the decisions that these sets of actors make about whom they partner with. In addition, the finding may shed more light on how partnership as a strategy in implementing RBA works in practice. Moreover, the findings will reveal whether RBA in practice can promote a balanced, effective, and empowering engagement between Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid and their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners in Nigeria to match their theoretical propositions on partnerships and the rights framework. If RBA can enhance the power and influence of local organisations in the decision-making processes of their engagements to promote mutual benefits could be crucial for realising beneficial social transformation through their work with INGOs.

The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrate that there is a common understanding of the core theoretical propositions of RBA by the staffs of ActionAid and Oxfam Novib and their intermediate NGO partners: They understood poverty is human rights violation, and approach the abuse by supporting people living in poverty to become conscious of their rights, analyse and organise to confront power imbalance for the realisation of their rights as well as make duty-bearers accountable. This is borne out of the belief that the rich and powerful frequently deny the rights of individuals and marginalised groups by maintain control over
resources and opportunities for their economic, social and political gain. However, there are broader understandings and confidence in RBA as an approach that can improve their work and relationships among intermediate NGOs that work with ActionAid than those that partner with Oxfam-Novib. For instance, ActionAid and their intermediate NGO partners demonstrated a clear understanding of what RBA and power relationships between different actors entail as well as how these key components of the framework can be implemented in practice. ActionAid and their intermediate NGOs broaden out the principles of RBA termed ‘ActionAid values’ and include mutual respect between partners, humility, independence, the courage of conviction on the viability of RBA to promote positive development outcomes, solidarity with the poor, equity and justice and honesty and transparency. The INGO claimed that their staffs are under obligation to reflect on or live out these principles or values as they relate with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners as well as with the local people they target to improve their lives (see also ActionAid, 2010; 2012). In contrast, while the participants from Oxfam-Novib demonstrated a thorough knowledge of RBA and its core demands, some of their intermediate NGO partners do not have a full understanding of the meaning of RBA.

CBO participants that work with ActionAid and their intermediate NGO partners were not versed in the technical jargon of rights. However, they demonstrated a grasp of the principles of RBA. The majority of CBOs informants claimed that RBA aims to empower and boost their capacities to articulate their needs into rights that they can claim from governments, INGOs, intermediate NGOs and private sector actors. CBOs that work with FADU (a partner of Oxfam-Novib) have a similar experience.
Based on their articulation of their understandings of RBA, the data suggests ActionAid and their intermediate NGOs select partners that abide by RBA philosophies. ActionAid and their intermediate NGOs also seem to be devising ways of using their power over their partners to create spaces for active participation in the decision-making processes. ActionAid in their choice of local partners emphasises close connection with the people living in the rural area where most of the people and marginalised people lives, which is a crucial demand of RBA. Participant observation at a meeting called the ‘partnership forum’ between ActionAid and their intermediate NGO partners supplemented the interview findings. This meeting included an incident whereby the local organisation challenged ActionAid over practices that they thought embodied top-down influence and coercion. The vignette, described later in this chapter, is an illustration of how RBA principles can empower local people to demand accountability from power-holders, even including organisations that they are in partnership with. Again, it is possible that ActionAid’s intermediate NGO partners are deeply knowledgeable on RBA because they seem to experience a very close and long-term partnership with the INGO based on RBA. ActionAid participants claimed they value the strategic partnership with local organisations.

In contrast, most of the intermediate NGO partners of Oxfam-Novib seem not to have a link with grass-roots organisations, except for FADU, an organisation that provided a link with their CBO partners in rural areas. The data suggest that the level commitment to RBA by Oxfam-Novib and their partners in practice is weaker than ActionAid. The data did not demonstrate that RBA determines their choice of partners. Oxfam-Novib’s engagement is loosely organised with relatively autonomous local organisations, each having separate focus and operation. The findings suggest that Oxfam-Novib seems to value operational collaborations on
the specific programme with intermediate NGOs they work with as long as such organisations agree to integrate rights values into projects they do together and as the situation demands. They do not sustain a close and long-term partnership with intermediate NGOs and CBOs in distinction from ActionAid’s approaches. The researcher was not privileged to observe any partnership meeting between Oxfam-Novib and their intermediate NGOs.

Nevertheless, the INGOs’ interpretations of the meaning of RBA may depend on how much policy awareness given to staffs of these organisations. It is possible that RBA’s implementation in practice can promote a change in the behaviour of INGO actors by transforming their power and influence over their intermediate NGOs and CBOs, which can promote mutual benefits and downward accountability to local organisations. Evidence from participant observation revealed that informants from the organisations that work with ActionAid feel empowered to challenge negative behaviours and attitudes of the INGO at their 2014 Partnership Forum. The researcher witnessed a similar dynamic in the meeting between JDPC and the Ilado CDC. The approaches to partnership discussed in this chapter have their advantages: ActionAid’s partnership arrangement reveals a close and long-term engagement between the INGO and local organisations, which demonstrated a deep commitment to the prescriptions of RBA because it recognises that profoundly ingrained attitude and institutional setup take time to change. On the other hand, Oxfam-Novib’s approach to partnership can promote rights values in traditionally non-rights-based organisations by encouraging intermediate NGOs and CBOs they work with to embrace rights perspectives in their joint programme.

The first section presents empirical evidence of the different understandings and interpretations of RBA among research participants from the three levels of NGOs. The second section presents how these understandings of RBA shape the decisions
of these organisations on their choice of partners. The next section is a presentation of what the researcher observed in ActionAid Partnership Forum 2014 reflecting partnership in practice. The last section reflects on how ActionAid are promoting downward accountability as they work with their partners.

5.1. **NGOs’ Understandings of RBA**

This section examines understandings of RBA based on the opinions of the key informants from Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners. It investigates informants’ understanding and interpretation of RBA and their stated commitment to its values in practice. According to the data, while the informants from the INGOs expressed their understandings in various ways, they are fully informed of the core principles of RBA in theory and practice. The intermediate NGOs that work with ActionAid are also fully informed of the main principles of RBA, but some of the intermediate organisations that partners with Oxfam-Novib are weaker in their articulation of the meaning of RBA. While the key informants from CBOs partners of both INGOs are not well versed in the technical jargon of RBA; they explained in their own vernacular or local languages how they thought a rights approach translated into practice, especially concerning the identification of who is responsible for providing for their basic needs and how to demand accountability from them. This aligned with the suggestion of Kindornay et al. (2012) that grass-root organisations rely less on the universal language of international human rights, and may be free from rights rhetoric. In general, CBOs participants are concerned more with the benefits of RBA to improve their social, political and economic conditions. Specifically, the CBO partners of ActionAid display a particular awareness of the influence of the inequitable distribution of
resources and opportunities as a result of the power difference between individuals, organisations, and communities.

Overall, the majority of the informants that participated in this study are well aware of the core demands and values of RBA. The interview findings reveal that there are subtle differences in the understandings of RBA and how participants expressed their understandings. However, there is a convergence of basic understandings around the core principles of RBA, which enables organisations to recognise one another as partners with similar goals. These principles include an understanding of unequal relations of power as the cause of poverty, accountability, participation, empowerment, humility and social justice, solidarity, universality and indivisibility of rights. The following discussion is not just based on interview data but also on the analysis of internal documents of ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib. Also, the researcher observed partnership meetings between some of the participant organisations. This chapter will discuss the participants’ understanding of RBA by each of these sets of NGOs in turn:

From the perspectives of INGO actors, the Oxfam-Novib Associate Country Director claimed that RBA entails more emphasis on the empowerment of marginalised people, organisations, communities, and the duty-bearers, as well as solidarity with likeminded organisations from different contexts to address complex development challenges. In the words of the informant:

“Simply, RBA is a process of getting the rights of the poor and the marginalised people actualised by working with intermediate NGOs and CBOs to identify which rights they have been denied, rather than what need is on the ground and to identify appropriate duty-bearers on different issues.”
Relatedly, the Programme Officer of Oxfam-Novib claimed that the INGO believes that every human being has rights that must be respected for a stable, progressive and prosperous society. According to the informant, Oxfam-Novib previously provided essential services directly to the people living in poverty. The informant claimed that based on their commitment to RBA they had decided now to work with local intermediate NGOs and CBOs as a strategy to implement RBA to promote tangible and sustainable changes in their lives. According to the informant, local organisations understand the local issues and contexts better and are intimately connected with the people at the grass-roots, hence can generate locally grown initiatives to address development challenges sustainably. This claim could be viewed somewhat sceptically given that the researcher noticed that most of the intermediate NGOs partners of Oxfam-Novib except FADU and NANTS are city-based aid professionals that may not have any connection with the people at the grass-roots.

Moreover, the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer of ActionAid claimed that based on their commitment to RBA they have stopped replacing government by providing services, thus releasing them from their obligations to fulfil the development rights of rights-holders. The informant claimed that they have decided to focus on the conscientisation and empowerment of rights-holders on rights for a critical voice in the ways they want to be developed, based on solidarity. To the informant, solidarity means networking with likeminded local intermediate NGOs and CBOs to build social movements with a particular focus on specific issues. In interpreting this data, it should be borne in mind often what individuals and organisations claim may not reflect on what they do in reality. The ineffectiveness of the previous approaches to development is not the dearth of understandings of tools,
methodologies, and frameworks in theories, but that the rhetoric is often empty in practice.

Turning to key informants from the intermediate NGOs of Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid, the interviewees demonstrated a grasp of the critical elements and demands of RBA. For instance, the Director of the International Foundation for the Aged, a partner of Oxfam-Novib stated:

“RBA is a framework for instilling the knowledge of rights in the common people that should own development and in the government. It informed our decision as an organisation to focus more on advocacy away from service delivery directly to the people except in extreme situations or if service provision is inevitable as a model for government to replicate.”

Similarly, the Controller of Programmes of FADU, a partner of Oxfam-Novib stated:

“RBA incorporates the need for the people to realise their rights to basic social services from their government and other duty-bearers. In our RBA work with Oxfam-Novib, we create rights awareness in the people on the causes of development failure. We also consider initiatives for development combined with community-led advocacy to the duty-bearers.”

Furthermore, the Legal Adviser of JDPC (a partner of ActionAid) claimed that RBA centralises the fulfilment of the rights of people and their organisations. The informant claimed that it is based on the notion that every human person has inalienable rights conferred on him/her as a human being, while some rights are conferred on individuals because they are citizens or residents of a country. According to the informant, these rights must be respected, protected, promoted and fulfilled by those who bear the obligations. In like manner, the Executive Director of CCEPE, a partner of ActionAid claimed that RBA is a framework that
enables the realisation of positive development outcomes by promoting and fulfilling people’s rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the constitutions of many countries. From the discussion, it is evident that there is a consensus between the INGOs’ informants and their intermediate NGOs on the essential prescriptions of RBA. However, some of the intermediate NGO partners of Oxfam-Novib failed to demonstrate sufficient understanding of RBA. For instance, the Director of MCRDJ, a partner of Oxfam-Novib claimed that his organisation does not “get contracts from the Nigerian government to fund rights-based work.” The researcher views this claim as not consistent with the philosophies of RBA.

Turning to the perspectives of the CBO informants, the Facilitator of Gbago CDC, a partner of CCEPE and ActionAid expressed his understanding of RBA thus:

“We had training from CCEPE and ActionAid on what our rights are and how to demand the fulfilment of our rights from government. We were trained on the duties of government to us and our responsibilities as citizens, especially that we are government and not the elected officials in government offices”.

It is important to notice here that this quote suggests that these organisations embrace the analysis of power relationship between government and their people. This understanding of RBA illustrates that the CBO partners are working for a change in people’s consciousness that is crucial to rights claiming and to unlocking their potentials to participate actively in their development. However, this does not mean that there are no other factors in the contexts that can account for political awareness by the people, which may include the sustenance of democratic institutions after an extended period of military rule in Nigeria and globalisation that connects people and place within a short period. The Facilitator of Wasinmi-Odunwo CDC, a partner of JDPC and ActionAid also spoke about power analysis:
“In our work with JDPC and ActionAid, we were taught that our rights are those things a person should have, but that is inaccessible to him/her because of the failure of the system or context he/she lives. We jointly analyse our needs and why we were denied those needs through Reflect Action or Needs Map. They enlightened us and mobilised us for advocacy to the concerned authorities which afford us provision of a Health Centre and Water pump from the government”

Moreover, the Chairman of Ilosi FCA, a partner of FADU and Oxfam-Novib claimed that the rights awareness programme of FADU made them more aware of obligations of government to the people as well as their responsibility as rights-holders such as regular payment of their taxes and tenement rates. The informant assumes that if rights-holders do the latter, then the government should be compelled to fulfil their obligations in the provision of social amenities in their communities. It is important to point out that the CBO informants did not explicitly speak the technical rights languages unlike INGO and intermediate NGO participants who are aid professionals, instead they discussed relevant normative issues in the vernacular. All the CBO participants expressed their opinions in Yoruba language, which is one of the three major languages in Nigeria. As such they coined human rights as ‘eto omo ni’yan’ (meaning human rights), and RBA as ‘ona ti afi lee gba etoo wa gege bii eeyan’ (approaches that can be employed to realise our rights as human being). Table 5.1 below shows that while technical or professional terms dominate the communications between INGOs and their intermediate NGO partners by development professionals (since development experts populate these organisations); those CBOs are using their local languages to express the same essential ideas.

Nevertheless, the perspectives of most of the informants reflect a consistent understanding of the essence of RBA principles and the implications of RBA in
practice. Similarly, the interview extracts show that the INGO and intermediate NGO key informants demonstrated a good knowledge of the institutional funding environments and the issues surrounding the issues of rights, unlike CBO informants. The Table 5.1 below shows levels of the relationship of participant organisations and their familiarity with the technical jargon common among aid professionals and their knowledge of the funding environment. It is worthwhile to note that funding plays a crucial role in the conventional partnership arrangements. A common understanding of RBA principles and values is crucial to realising its potential to promote a productive partnership between these sets of NGOs. Their different understandings seem to be sufficiently convergent on the core principles of RBA to enable productive partnership, as shall be seen later in this chapter.

**Table 5.1.** Types of NGOs and their knowledge of funding environment and the familiarity with technical terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Relationships</th>
<th>Communication style</th>
<th>Knowledge of the Funding conditions</th>
<th>Actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INGO-Intermediate NGO</td>
<td>Elite/human rights professionals Discourse/Jargon Used</td>
<td>Knowledge of the Institutional Donors</td>
<td>Populated by the experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate NGO-CBO</td>
<td>Non-elite discourse/Vernacular used</td>
<td>CBOs are often unaware of donors</td>
<td>Experts (Intermediate NGO) and the local people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO-CBO</td>
<td>Vernacular</td>
<td></td>
<td>Experts and the local people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2. **Influence of the Understandings of RBA on Choice of NGOs’ Partner**

The section focuses on how the adoption and the understandings of RBA by ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners influence the choice of whom they partner with. Key informants from the INGOs, intermediate NGOs, and CBOs claimed they have decided to employ partnership with organisations of similar values and vision. The interview extracts suggest that their commitment to RBA principles required them to boost their empowerment activities with local organisations, which shaped their strategic decisions about the partnership. The empowerment of the people and local organisations could enhance their power to act and in collaboration with others to change all forms of forces that constrained their development. This opinion supports the proposition of Kindornay et al. (2012) that rights-based INGOs will seek to work with likeminded or intermediate NGOs and CBOs in partnership to implement RBA (see Brehm et al. 2004; Hickey and Mitlin, 2009; Kindornay et al. 2012). The section will examine the perspectives of the INGOs, intermediate NGOs, and CBOs respectively.

From the perspectives of INGOs (ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib), the data have shown that all the key informants claimed that partnership with organisations of similar values and goals could enhance the effectiveness of their work informed by RBA. According to Oxfam, *Working Together*, (2012), which specifies their partnership principles and values stated that their approach is designed to bring like-minded organisations to work together on a common problem. The document stated that the right partners are indispensable to successful work based on RBA because having good partners who understand the local context and culture and
may have connections with the people that hold power locally is essential to creating negotiating spaces to promote sustain change (see Green, 2015b).

The opinions of the key informants from ActionAid reflect a similar commitment to the values of RBA in their choice of which local intermediate NGO and CBOs to work with. ActionAid’s *Action on Rights* (2010) argues the implementation of RBA informed a shift in their approach to the partnership from the direct management of local programmes and into close partnership with local intermediate NGOs and CBOs to unlock their power and potential to act and proffer home-grown solutions to the problems of poverty and exclusions. ActionAid (2010) claimed that their strategies are embedded in creating awareness on power relationships, promoting democratic spaces to popularise the voice of the people living in poverty and their organisations against local cultures and power relationship that promote inequalities. The organisation claimed that they reflect on the power they have over their local partners and employs it in a way to achieve mutual goals. ActionAid, (2010 :42) stated:

“Our rights programmes are usually undertaken directly with rights holders, their communities, organisations, and movements. These are our preferred partners. We believe that we can best support sustainable change in power relations through a close long-term relationship with poor people - the rights holders. Such a relationship enables the development of a set of solutions with rights holders, enables policy change on a larger scale, and ensures that rights holders and their organisations are in the driving seat.”

Also, the Deputy Country Director of ActionAid claimed that the adoption of, RBA is the major condition that a prospective partner must conform with. The informant claimed that effective partnership could only be realised when partners share similar belief that they are committed to and that they demonstrate in
practice. Therefore all their intermediate NGOs and CBO partners are rights-based organisations both in theory and reality, and otherwise, the relationship cannot stand. In the words of the informant:

“We work with intermediate NGOs that believe that people have rights, believe in equity, transparency, accountability and do not subscribe to neo-liberalism. Sometimes the problem with transparency and accountability have led to ending a partnership with some NGOs.”

Moreover, ActionAid’s Advisor on Partnership and Local Rights Programme claimed that they have a mechanism for assessing prospective local intermediate NGO partners termed Partnership Assessment and Monitoring (PAM) tool. The assessment focuses on organisations with a shared vision of a world without poverty and a close connection with the people at the grass-roots. He stated that this means they only partner with intermediate NGOs and CBOs that can translate to RBA. From the opinions of the informants, it seems that the philosophy of RBA influences the strategic decisions of INGOs on whom to partner with.

Turning to Oxfam-Novib, Oxfam (2014) claimed that RBA requires them to show respect for their intermediate NGOs, CBOs, and the people living in poverty in ways that enhance their capacity as agents of their development, and as one of the critical aspect of promoting active partnership with local organisations in the South. The document claimed that this entails prioritising values of equality, and freedom and the integration of the principles of participation, accountability, and non-discrimination in every area of their relationships, which guides their choice of partners and other decisions as they work with local organisations (Oxfam, 2014). However, these values are not alien to the previous approaches to development, but the distinction in RBA is that local organisations can invoke these
values in their relationship as rights and on which they can hold INGO accountable. Oxfam (2012:3) stated:

“We believe that programs implemented in partnership increase the collective knowledge, skills, reach and experience applied to an issue or challenge. Programs implemented in the partnership are likely to be better at encouraging and enabling the real participation and investment of people living in poverty.”

Similarly, The Programme Officer of Oxfam-Novib stated:

“We believe we cannot carry out our work without our partners. Working with partners is the key approach to achieving our aims based on the values of the rights-based approach, which informed our partnership principles.”

In the same way, the Associate Country Director of Oxfam-Novib claimed that they only work with local intermediate NGOs and CBOs that have a firm belief in rights-based values. In the words of the informant:

“Organisations that share our values are the one that can partner with us as defined by our partnership principles. ... We work with partners with freedom and provide resources that suit their agenda. While our local partners understand the local issues and contexts better and have a close link with the people at the grass-roots, we bring local issues to a global audience. We are equal partners working together to achieve a just world. In short, the rights-based approach informed all our partnership strategies and decisions. We do not even relate to organisations that do not believe in the rights-based approach”.

The informant also claimed that according to RBA it is imperative for Oxfam-Novib to be conscious of the apparent imbalance of power relations between the INGO and their local intermediate NGO and CBOs to devise ways to eliminate them. The informant claimed that is why they start with power analysis to identify potential partners and allies with the belief in RBA. She claimed that they work with local
organisations in ways that will build the self-confidence and assertiveness of the people and with other social movements to promote a healthy and collective voice of excluded people to influence power. Also, the informant claimed that Oxfam-Novib works with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners with a focus on rights-based empowerment that is important to promote social changes in their organisations and communities. In her words:

“Empower rights-holder and their organisations with skills and they will work out of poverty, empower them with access to market and they will be able to demand and negotiate with the powerful market player and do well. Empowered people and organisations can work with their government to demand accountability and transparency to move their society forward.”

Notwithstanding the firm belief in RBA in these quotes, it is possible that local organisations can be co-opted to adopt the language of rights to access financial and other resources from their INGO funders without an actual intention to demonstrating its values in practice in the work. The adoption of RBA without reflecting on its dictates portend nothing to creating social changes in the lives of the poor. Not only that some of the intermediate partners of Oxfam-Novib claimed that they are not strictly rights-based organisations, which could mean that they cannot be pinned down to demonstrates its values in practice. For instance, Oxfam-Novib works with FADU to improve productivity of local cocoa farmers to and to have access to international market through CONTINAF (international Cocoa buyer). Both organisations focus on breaking the power of local cocoa buyers and marketers from the undue exploitation of farmers by creating spaces that enable rural farmers to have power over local middlemen. The interviewees suggest that the influence of Oxfam-Novib in the relationship also aims to promote women rights in the organisations in order to address the gender imbalance in
access to land and other agricultural resources. Traditionally, FADU is a male dominated organisation where women were traditionally perceived as working for their husbands. FADU’s respondents claimed that now women are taking up a central role in the organisation and they are breaking the barriers that limit their access to agricultural resources.

Furthermore, the empirical observations have shown that there are differences in the strength of the commitment to RBA values between Oxfam-Novib’s intermediate NGO partners and those of ActionAid. Whereas all the informants from ActionAid’s intermediate NGO partners expressed a strong commitment to RBA values in their choice of which INGOs and CBOs to work with in partnership, those that work with Oxfam are less coherent on how their commitment to RBA shapes their decisions on who to partner with. For example, for NANTS and FADU, partners of Oxfam-Novib, who are membership-based organisations and have local branches in all cities and towns, expressed that they believed that there were no constraints on the conditions that determine their choice of partners. Key informants from FADU claimed that they do not discriminate against any organisation as long as they contribute to the development of farmers and agricultural practices. Similarly, the Secretariat President of NANTS stated:

“We partner with organisations who buy into our programmes. ... Not all organisations will want to associate with you, but we spread our tentacles to those who believe in us.”

The Director of MCRDJ, another intermediate NGO that works with Oxfam-Novib stated:
“We do not have any yardstick to define our partnerships. We just look at organisations and see if we can work together. We are a not strictly RBA organisation. However, in most of our activities, we apply RBA”.

However, there is a nuanced opinion expressed by the Legislative and Advocacy Adviser of CISLAC that reflects the central values of RBA:

“We look at organisations and see what they stand for before we partner with them to know how we can relate to them. We cannot take money from organisations that are corrupt because we are an anti-corruption organisation. We do not take money from British American Tobacco or a political party.”

Given that Oxfam-Novib’s partner has varying levels of commitment to RBA, it would appear that they are prepared to be flexible in their choices of partners. However, this is contrary to the strong opinions expressed by the key informants from Oxfam-Novib and the analysis of their partnership principles, both of which insist that partners should be strictly committed to RBA.

On the other hand, all the key informants from the intermediate NGOs that work with ActionAid expressed a strong commitment to RBA values in their choice of CBOs and INGO to partner with. For example, the Executive Director of CCEPE, a partner of ActionAid stated:

“We only partner with CBOs and INGOs that share our vision of a world without poverty based on the rights-based approach. ... With ActionAid, we share values such as mutual respect, accountability, and solidarity with the poor and these are the driving forces of our relationship with our CBO partners.”

The informant claimed that irrespective of who is the funder or the recipient, they see their relationship in rights-based work as that of trust, equality, political sympathy and an agreement to promote their common objectives. Similarly, the
Project, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer of JDPC, a partner of ActionAid claimed that rights values determine their choice of partners. According to the informant:

“What informs our working with an organisation as a partner is our shared values and belief in the rights of the human person. We do not work with CBOs or INGOs that do not subscribe to the fulfilment of the rights of the people as a goal of development.”

Furthermore, the focus group discussion with the CBO partners of Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid yielded no tangible results on what determines their choice of partners. To most of the informants from CBOs, there is no discrimination on whom to work with, as long as such partners can contribute to the development of their communities. It, therefore, appears as if RBA is not a paramount consideration for CBOs in making strategic decisions about whom to partner with.

5.3. **RBA and the Power Asymmetry Between NGOs: Analysis of ActionAid Partnership Forum, 2014.**

In the previous section, this chapter examined the participants’ understanding of RBA and its influence on their choice of partners. This section will look at how their understanding of RBA and choice of partners influence their partnership practices. Empirical observations have shown that there is a diverse interpretation of RBA in the partnership between these sets of NGOs in practice. While it could be argued that ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners experience a close engagement based on the philosophy of RBA irrespective of their positions and resources, the relationship between Oxfam-Novib and their partners seems to be ad hoc.

From the perspectives of ActionAid informants, the notion of solidarity and a focus on the social transformation that guides their work shapes their partnership
practice, which is a core principle of RBA. All the informants from ActionAid expressed the opinion that partnership is an expression of solidarity with rights-holder organisations, which can enhance productive relationships with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners. The Country Director of ActionAid claimed that sustainable social transformation could only be possible when they engage in a long-term relationship with rights-holder organisations. The informants argued that partnership between INGOs and the local intermediate NGOs and CBOs can transcend a mere funding relationship, which strengthens their aspiration to promote effective relationships. The informants claimed that the notion of solidarity and social transformation in the South create a desire to stand together with rights-holder organisations as prescribed by RBA. The data suggests that RBA sets the standard of behaviour in their partnership, which can reinforce negotiation and promote collaborative actions to achieve mutual goals.

One informant in his presentation at their Partnership Forum, 2014 10 stated:

“Poverty will end in Nigeria only through the purposeful action of collective individuals and agencies especially of the poor built through solidarity. We are organisations that have alternatives. Those alternatives are generated from our partners, and social transformation requires these partnerships.”

This informant claimed that they could know the actual changes desired by the people at the grass-roots when they can spend more time with them, their organisations and communities. For the informant, they can then collaborate and

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10 ActionAid Partnership Forum is the gathering of the ActionAid Board of Directors, members of staff and the members of staff all SNGOs that work with the INGO, and it is normally held annually. The focus of the forum is to jointly evaluate their relationship and work for the current year, and to also discuss their strategic plan for the incoming year including budget planning. At the forum, there was a discussion on the values and principles of partnership and how to translate these into practice. The forum also focused on a discussion on the relevance of the rights-based approach to transforming the ideals of partnership into practice and a discussion on the challenges experienced in their partnership for their joint learning.
monitor the process to ensure it delivers the change desired, since promoting
transformative social changes require a long-term engagement with people’s
organisations. The opinion corroborated the claims expressed in ActionAid (2010)
that the focus of partnership with local intermediate NGOs and CBOs is mainly to
build social movements for change with local organisations. The partnership forum
is one means by which ActionAid attempts to foster such relationships. ActionAid
claimed that the partnership forum provides a platform for redefining goals and
strategies, managing conflicts as well as guaranteeing face-to-face dialogue and
negotiating strategies and plans. Such a forum for negotiation and dialogue can
contribute to the creation of trust and promote a balance of power and influence
between INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBOs partners, particularly by
providing continuous face-to-face engagement between these organisations (see
also Brown and Fox, 1998). This engagement and negotiation skills are vital to
the development of social capital and the lasting social transformations in the lives
of the people living in poverty, and can possibly enhance their negotiation with
the state. As stated by ActionAid’s own internal documents:

... If change is not supported and led by rights holders, it will not be sustained
over time, as forces opposed to change will very quickly turn things around”
(ActionAid, 2010:68)

Similarly, the Deputy Country Director of ActionAid shed more light on their
conception of partnership in practice:

“We believe the partnership is between similar entities, collaboration, and long-
term engagement with organisations that share similar values and vision, some
of you have been with us for over ten years. That is why we consult and discuss
issues with you. The partnership is a dynamic process, it evolves, and some of
you started with us as Local Rights Programmes members, now you are working
with us on donor funded projects that may or not involve the transfer of resources. It is for us a long-term thing that involves a transfer of resources, not just money, but include ideas and skills that could be employed for our joint learning and to achieve what we have dialogued and agreed on. Moreover, we always document it, not just a verbal thing and we are very clear about the obligations that guide the relationship including all the issues around financial management, deliverables, processes, detailed programme documents, what the project is about and where it is situated, and the expected outcomes. If we are outside of all that I have stated earlier, we do not regard that as a partnership.”

Moreover, the Adviser on Partnership and Local Rights Programme of ActionAid claimed that ActionAid staff members are challenged to demonstrate the values of RBA in their lives, at home, in their communities and their relationship with the officials of their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners. According to the informant:

“Our relationship with our partners is not a donor-recipient one. We believe each partner contributes to the overall goal of our relationship, which is the promotion of a development approach with a human face. However, each carrying out their role. We draft, and we share and take in feedback through Participatory Review and Reflection Process (PRRP) and based on the assessment of how we live out the values of the rights-based approach by our partners on a yearly basis. Our partners tell us where we are not living up to expectations. They score us in our relationships. It will show if any staff does not perform his/her role. We improve our relationship with our partners. We respect each organisation, and we engage in our shared values.”

The informant likened effective partnership to a fruit salad made with watermelon, papaya, and banana to demonstrate that partnership between likeminded organisations is complex and difficult to separate based on agreed values and
direction. For one exercise during the partnership forum, this metaphor was explained to the participants via a song with the following lyrics to generate a shared understanding of what partnership is all about and promote the demonstration of partnership in practice:

*Watermelon* - watermelon

*Papaya* - papaya

*Banana* - banana

*Fruit Salad* - fruit salad

The informant claimed that RBA shapes ActionAid’s decision to be committed to building open, transparent and honest relationships with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners based on dialogue, to form a stable bond that can challenge the structural relations of power that reinforce poverty.

Turning to Oxfam-Novib’s, their approaches to the partnership is encapsulated by the Partnership Principle (2012:2), which states:

“Oxfam is privileged to be able to partner with thousands of local civil society organisations – organisations that we believe are crucial in supporting the actions of poor and marginalised people and communities in the development of lasting, locally-owned solutions; and in raising their diverse and locally-grounded voices for equitable developments at home and worldwide.”

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11 In the Partnership Forum (2014), all the intermediate NGOs’ representatives were divided into Watermelon, Papaya, and Banana group. They were later told to mixed together to show how close a partnership relationship should be between equal partners. The informant claimed that learning the song will help them to always remember their discussion on the essence of a balance or effective partnership. All the participants sang the song. The video record of the song is provided in the appendix. It is important to note that the researcher was not privileged to observe a similar event organised by Oxfam or he was not aware of such event during the short period when the study was carried out. It could also be that Oxfam does not have a similar programme with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners.
The document claimed Oxfam-Novib sees each of their intermediate NGO and CBO partners as bringing different expertise and resources to an interdependent relationship, which will create synergies and collaborative advantage that is crucial to achieving common objectives. Also, the document claimed that the INGO emphasises the rights of their partners in all areas of their relationship:

“Oxfam must not impose our views on partners. We take responsibility for clearly communicating our positions to partners. We are open to being challenged and will create opportunities for dialogue and debate around goals, values, results, and impact. While there must be some commonality in vision and values for the partnership to be viable, we accept that partners may not share our views. The rights of each partner to determine their own institutional identity, directions and priorities should be respected.” (Oxfam, 2012:3)

In the same vein, the Associate Country Director of Oxfam-Novib claimed that a just world without poverty which is the fundamental objective of the INGO requires a close association with the disempowered people and their organisations to escape poverty sustainably. The informant claimed that Oxfam-Novib increasingly works with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners to build local organisations that can champion grass-roots advocacy and other activities. A just world can be achieved by building the power of the people and in collaboration with their organisations and communities to challenge traditions, discriminatory institutions and laws that promote poverty and exclusion. The informant claimed that they focus on enhancing the power of their intermediate NGO and CBO partners by providing training on project management skills and vocational training for women to boost their economic power. The informant claimed such activities have provided opportunities for women to operate within claimed and invited spaces in their communities, and with the government to make rights real in their lives. As
such, women and grass-roots organisations are able to challenge forces of marginalisation to gain access to land resources, confront traditional practices that limit girl child education, and to occupy a leadership role in their organisations and communities. The participant claimed that such an approach could promote social transformations in the lives of the people living in poverty when they can have access to participate in the political and economic spaces to contribute to the governance of resources and opportunities in their contexts. According to the participant, such activities help to build grass-roots self-awareness and to mobilise them around common problems. One can argue that this can be problematic for Oxfam-Novib based on their approach to partnership with intermediate NGO and CBO partners in practice. This is because building the power on the side of the people living in poverty to act and change invisible and visible power relations can arguably take a very long time.

However, the informant claimed that a change in all forms of power that perpetuate poverty could be broken when there is a close, transparent, and long-term relationship with rights-holders and their intermediate NGOs and CBOs. For the informant, RBA shaped the decision of the INGO to promote a genuine, empowering, and accountable partnership based on solidarity with those organisations that represent the people, the absence of these will stymie the development of locally grown ideas that can promote policy change. The Oxfam-Novib informant claimed that they work with likeminded intermediate NGOs and CBOs based on solidarity to build social movements because a long-term and sustainable change requires such partnership. However, in practice, these claims are not demonstrated in the way Oxfam-Novib conduct their partnership in Nigeria. The other interview data seems to suggest that the partnership between Oxfam-Novib and its intermediate NGO and CBO partners appeared to be
operational collaboration to implement specific projects instead of a long-term engagement with the people that is germane to rights-based thinking.

Empirical evidence based on the opinion of key informants suggest that RBA informed both INGOs’ strategic partnership decisions, which can rebalance the unequal relation of power between INGOs and their local intermediate NGO and CBO partner, primarily if they can demonstrate these claims in practice. A balanced relationship is possible if it would create a change of values and attitudes of INGOs if they imbibed the rights values in their daily lives and works. There is effectively no difference at the level of rhetoric when comparing Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid in term of how they conceived their relationship with local intermediate NGOs and CBOs.

About the intermediate NGOs, the research found that the intermediate NGOs that work with ActionAid demonstrate a strong understanding of rights-based partnership and are committed to demonstrating the values in practice. The intermediate NGOs that work with Oxfam-Novib did not articulate a similarly strong conviction about RBA. For example, all the informants from the intermediate NGO partners of ActionAid claimed that RBA informed their partnership decisions and that they are committed to abiding by the prescriptions of RBA in their relationship with INGOs and CBOs. In the words of the Programme Officer of CCEPE, partner of ActionAid:

“Although ActionAid is our major funder, we also come with many things into the partnership such as the reach within the state and rural communities, our close links with the people, our expertise, and organisational capability. Our relationship with ActionAid is that of partnership. In partnership, there should not be, ideally, a partner with greater influence or power than the other; we go there with equal power.”
The informant claimed that as they strive to promote equality and accountability in their relationship with ActionAid, they are also under obligations to promote the same values with their local CBO partners as prescribed by RBA. To the informant, CCEPE emphasises core values of mutual respect, accountability, transparency and probity, solidarity, and a commitment to open and honest relationship as they negotiate with prospective partners.

In the same way, the Deputy Director of JDPC, a partner of ActionAid claimed that they are only interested in working with organisations that are firmly committed to RBA and willing to demonstrate its values in their day-to-day activities. He stated:

“Our relationship with ActionAid is based on equal rights in partnership. With ActionAid, we share a mutual respect and a commitment to mutual accountability, solidarity with the poor and these are the driving forces of our relationship.”

The informant claimed that they had been a long-term partner of ActionAid because they found common ground in RBA. He emphasised that is not to say everything in their relationship with ActionAid is perfect, they do have some areas of disagreement which they frequently resolve through dialogue, in ways that do not destroy the trust between them. Disagreement and dialogue are crucial to promoting a balance of power and mutual influence between organisations in partnership. This is because dialogue and conflict management reinforces trust among partners and can promote a genuine and long-term partnership between organisations. The participant claimed that ActionAid often acknowledges that they may have more power than their local intermediate NGO partners based on their skills, money, and the power to influence decisions. However, in the opinion of the informant, they often strive
to use their power positively through skill transfer to partners and taking a participatory approach to solving problems to create win-win ends (see Chambers, 2006). The Deputy Director of JDPC claimed that there are occasions where they have challenged ActionAid Officials openly on issues of transparency and mutual respect, especially for their staff members and local people. He claimed that such situations often led to self-criticisms or self-reflection on ActionAid’s part in their interactions with CBO partners, as they appeared to be genuinely committed to ensuring that they are living out the values of RBA in their activities and relationships.

In case of the intermediate NGO partners of Oxfam-Novib, the Secretariat President of NANTS as a partner of Oxfam-Novib claimed that demarcation characterised their relationship. In his words:

“We list what we can accept and cannot from them, and that defines the boundaries for both of us. Our autonomy is spelt out in our constitution. Moreover, to our local branches, they communicate their needs, and we assess what their needs are. We then seek dialogue with them to decide the necessary cause of actions.”

From the perspective of the Programme, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer of FADU\(^\text{12}\), a partner of Oxfam-Novib, Oxfam-Novib do not have unlimited power or influence over them. In his words:

“They make suggestions and hard-lined enactment that we must abide by. We are partners based on mutuality and not a master-servant relationship. We look at areas where we have limitation and theirs, especially regarding capacity, and

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\(^\text{12}\) FADU (Farmers Development Union) is an umbrella association for all farmers group in all cities and communities in Nigeria, they have been existing since the colonial era as nationalist movements. They also have Cooperative and Thrift Society that keep the savings of members and extend soft-loans to them. Their relationship with Farmer Community Association may not be a strict partnership arrangement.
they often help. On the other hand, our relationship with our FCA is different. We conduct a lot of capacity development training and settle the dispute within our local units. They come with their agenda and planning during their AGM, and we advise them on how they manage their resources. I can say FADU have a tremendous influence on them.”

However, the findings seem to indicate that ActionAid has a strong commitment to a meaningful engagement with their intermediate NGOs, who in turn demonstrate the same with their CBO partners. Some of the intermediate NGO partners of ActionAid (for example, CCEPE) developed from their local rights programmes (LRP) 13 and had gained autonomy from the INGO. Hence, there is an extensive and robust relationship between CCEPE and ActionAid with more emphasis on intense or close connection with the local people. It aligns with the literature that suggests that when there is a stronger connection between organisations that are closer socially, politically, culturally, economically, they tend to experience stronger and effective relationships (see Fox and Brown, 1998; Bebbington et al. 2007).

On the other hand, as shown in table 5.2 below, the findings revealed that most of the intermediate NGOs that work with Oxfam-Novib are city-based NGOs such as FADU and NANTS that rely on pre-existing relationships with local units of their organisations, but they are encouraged to integrate rights issues into their work. Oxfam-Novib seems to be less restrictive than ActionAid in their selection criteria for local partners, and their partnerships can be described as ad-hoc or episodic relationships in that they are mostly project-based. This type of relationship does

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13 Local Rights Programme is a special project implemented in a particular local area. According to ActionAid, (2010:42), “the geographical scale of a local rights programme is determined by a number of factors including: the rights holders and the issues they are taking up; the change objectives and strategy; Child Sponsorship (CS)/donor requirements and/or feasibility; what will make for cost effective operations; and possibly even government imposed restrictions”.
not differ widely from the conventional approaches by which NGOs conduct their work with intermediate NGOs and CBOs. In another word, it is a specific project-based partnership or operational collaboration[^14] that is often short-lived instead of the RBA ideal of a close and long-term engagement that confront deeply embedded attitudes, beliefs and inequitable institutions and other forces of power that create poverty and exclusion in the first place. Nonetheless, project-based partnerships may be beneficial in some ways such as promoting rights values among non-rights-based organisations that will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

### Table 5.2: Differences between ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib on Partnership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>Characteristics of Partnership</th>
<th>Conditions of Partnership</th>
<th>Types of Partners</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ActionAid</td>
<td>Intense/close relationship with the grass-roots organisations and with opportunity for dialogue</td>
<td>Strong conditions based on RBA demands</td>
<td>Partner only with organisations with strong commitment to RBA/Rights-based organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^14]: Operational collaboration focuses on participation as partners in a specifics project execution without a deep involvement on project design between politically moderate organisations than those involved in more public and confrontational partnership advocacy (Fox and Brown, 1998:1). To Fowler (2015), claim that NGOs have not move away from the traditional approaches to partnership because the notion of partnership as mutuality and solidarity is yet to happen at a meaningful scale.
| Oxfam-Novib | Mostly project-based relationship with city-based NGOs | Flexible/less strict in their conditions. Their partnership is not often strictly based on RBA | Often partner with non-strictly rights-based organisations |

Turning to discuss CBOs, the Women Leader of Alayere CDC, a partner of JDPC and ActionAid, when asked of the influence of the intermediate NGO on setting the agenda for their partners stated:

“JDPC is our boss because they give us whatever we want. They have provided us with schools and a maternity centre.”

Similarly, the Facilitator of Okeso CDC, a partner of CCEPE and ActionAid stated her opinion on the influence of intermediate NGOs:

“CCEPE officials are our boss because they enlighten us. Sometimes we initiate the agenda and negotiate with the NGO and come to an agreement on issues we discuss. We jointly use need assessment tools to identify our needs, and we make joint decisions on the action to take. We analyse our role as a community and what the NGOs and the government need to do to meet those needs.”

The chairman of Igangan FCA, a partner of FADU and Oxfam-Novib, claimed that they see themselves as equal members with the officials of the intermediate NGOs because they represent the associations. However, the informant claimed that since FADU have a supervisory role over local FCA, they have an influence on most of the decisions on their work, but their relationship is not a donor-recipient one.

How CBOs portrayed their relationships were impressive considering the dynamics witnessed during a critical incident in participant observation. The researcher witnessed a meeting between JDPC and Ilado CDC, in which there was a
disagreement with the intermediate NGO. The CBO participants in the meeting were bold in challenging the intermediate NGO official, and they even threatened to quit their partnership and programmes. However, it was later resolved by a delegation of JDPC officials and a Reverend Father from the Diocese. The CBO participants openly accused the Legal Adviser of JDPC of lack of respect and negative attitudes towards them, upon which the delegation apologised on behalf of the entire JDPC nationwide. The CBO participant at the meeting accepted the apology and agreed to continue to work with the intermediate NGO. The vignette suggests that the CBO informants feel empowered to challenge negative attitudes from their intermediate NGO and INGO partners and make them answerable to them. Because they have a voice in their relationship, the intermediate NGO can promote mutual influence and downward accountability between them. The researcher interpreted this incident that CBO above shows that they are exercising their power to challenge their INGO and intermediate NGO partners. The opportunity to exercise their power signifies that rights-based partnership can enhance the power and influence of the CBOs in their partnership with their intermediate NGOs and INGOs.

This research also found that a balanced relationship between intermediate NGOs, INGOs, and CBOs can promote social transformation in the way aid they deliver aid in Nigeria. For instance, the Facilitator of Gbago CDC stated:

“Our knowledge of rights has empowered us on how as a community we can contribute to our development. Through our advocacy trips to the government, the Commissioner of Rural Development Energy in Kwara State collaborated with us on the electrification of our community, after we have built the extension of electricity lines to our community from the neighbouring village. Also, they trained us on the rights of our children to quality education. We then got involved in the
running of our schools to the extent of reporting teachers that fail to report to work or fail to discharge his or her duties as required. Our example of success spurred other neighbouring communities to follow suit.”

The findings suggest this is arguably one of the essential ways of promoting genuine partnership between NGOs with the potential to increasing the collective knowledge of partner organisations, skills, reach and experience in promoting social transformations in a different context. However, the improvements can take some time to come. The important thing is that there are signs of active engagement between these sets of NGOs based on their commitment to rights-based values.

5.4. **Downward Accountability in Practice: A Vignette from ActionAid Partnership Forum**

In the partnership forum, ActionAid Country Director reiterated the values of equality, mutual trust and respect between members of staffs of the INGOs and the local organisations, mutual respect for the independence and autonomy of their organisations, solidarity and a greater focus on the social transformation in their work. The participant then explained what partnership means for ActionAid and their intermediate NGO partners.

Moreover, the Coordinator of the forum highlighted the over-arching principles guiding their partnerships with their partner organisations, setting the tone for further discussions and evaluation of their relationship, and the effect of that on their work with the people at the grass-roots. The participants were encouraged to take note of any area of concerns in their engagement with the INGO in the previous year for clarification at the end of the evaluation. The Coordinator of the forum described ActionAid’s partnership as a relationship that does not occur once
in a life time but is a long-term engagement with other stakeholders such as the rights-holders and their organisations to promote social changes in their contexts. ActionAid (2010:79) illustrated a balanced relationship between the INGO, intermediate NGOs and CBOs as presented in Figure 5.1 below. These stages of the partnership are similar to Brown and Fox (1998) evolutionary phases of inter-organisational collaboration.

![Figure 5.1. Stages of Long-term Partnership relationship](image)

**Phase 1:** This is a problem defining phase of the partnership between organisations. This phase involves INGOs exploring a new environment for a better understanding of the context or the problem, locating potential likeminded partners (intermediate NGO or CBO), and the resources needed for a possible long-term local rights programme and engagement to tackling the problem. It could be the entry point into a local community. The informants claimed that they intensify efforts at this stage to gain the trust of the people and their
organisations. They claimed that they build the trust by investing in limited work to meet some of the immediate needs of the people as a starting point for building the consciousness, capacity and the organisations of the people living poverty around particular issues as a result of the unequal structural relations of power in the environment. According to ActionAid (2010), this could take between 1-2 years. They claimed to develop mutual accountability and influence at this stage by having a collective agreement and jointly taking decisions on the nature of the problem and how they can solve it.

**Phase 2:** This is the negotiation and implementation stage with a focus on establishing the relationship with partners (CBO/intermediate NGO) depending on the complexities of the context or the risk involved as well as the strategies or methods to be employed to meet their mutual goals. These may be subject to change as the relationship evolves on the same problem. The stage will focus on developing a more profound knowledge of the environment, gaining the trust of partners and their interests, exploring funding opportunities and the possibilities for social transformation in the power relations that limits development (ActionAid, 2010). This stage prioritises the capacity of the people living in poverty to better organise themselves and the context as well as causes of their exclusion. It also focuses on developing strategies for long-term empowerment by building power within the people, promoting solidarity (power with rights-holders and other social movements), and campaigns to claim spaces and places for the participation of the people in their development. May take 3-5 years.

**Phase 3:** This is the stage where a long-term struggle to act for rights commences. Partners here have already defined plans, responsibilities, and actions. The INGO works with well-organised and better informed rights-holders organisations with a strong awareness of their rights and consciousness on the
structural relations of power that reinforces marginalisation. At this stage, the staff of INGOs and their local partners can manage risks and threats through sound strategy, continuous analysis, while they develop new capacities and understanding between them. The priority here is the empowerment of local partners to demand accountability from duty bearers such as monitoring public budgets and policy implementation while advocating together to change discriminatory laws, beliefs, institutions, and practices to promote improvement in the lives of the people. The INGO aims to build solidarity with local organisations and social movement to campaign for change.

**Stage 4:** This involves supporting long-term change based on solidarity. They now work as allies to support the independence and the sustenance of their struggles through leadership support and mutual accountability for agenda setting, processes, and outcomes. They work together to enhance the capacity of both partners with a focus on strategic thinking capabilities. The INGO focuses on helping organisations build their ability to locate income without compromising their values (ActionAid, 2010). There could be a need to demand a change in activities or problem definitions and direction setting subject to the evolving circumstances. There is an opportunity at this stage for redistributing influence and power as well as redefining accountability among partners (see also Brown and Fox, (1998). These phases of partnership evolution can be a viable phase for greater negotiations and agreements on goals and strategies of their relationships and their interactive activities and goals that can promote mutual influence and increased accountability between partners. The values (solidarity, mutual respect, integrity, honesty) of RBA when demonstrated in practice can potentially promote greater negotiation space between INGOs, intermediate NGOs, and CBOs. RBA serves as organising device or idea to support their relationship and creates spaces
for mutual influence and accountability. This is because RBA defines their strategies, plans, expectations, and resources, and thus remain the basis on which their actions will be judged (see also Brown and Fox, 1998). In the partnership forum between ActionAid and their intermediate NGO partners, the INGO provided the opportunity for local organisations to scrutinise the activities of the former based on the values of RBA that are jointly employed to inform their activities as discussed below.

Concerning women’s rights, the coordinator emphasised the importance of gender equality in their work and relationship. The Coordinator of the forum challenged the intermediate NGO participants by saying that any of them who hold “deep-seated belief in patriarchy can opt out of their partnership because that shows we do not share similar ideals.” The Coordinator emphasised mutual commitment to transparency and accountability to promote effective engagement and social changes in their relationship so they can be held accountable for their actions. In the informants’ words:

“Because of the nature of what we do, working on policies, engaging powers, and the government, we cannot afford to have systems and processes that are not transparent and accountable. We must leave our programmes open to everybody to challenge us, and we must be able to understand this and keep it reflects in our work.”

Each of the three groups (watermelon, papaya, and banana) were to evaluate the activities, behaviour, and attitude of ActionAid staff members for the previous year. The INGO provided the groups with a working definition of values of the rights-based approach in practice, and the evaluation exercise was based on that understanding. The head of the local LRP coordinated the evaluation exercise. All the groups were encouraged to be truthful and honest in their assessment of the
INGOs, if only for the sake of the poor and the marginalised that they work with.

ActionAid’s Head of Partnership and Local Rights Programme stated:

“For us in ActionAid, this is more of our internal self-evaluation tools. We do it every year, and we need you to do it with your CBO partners. Now we want you to mark us if we are living out our values. If we are asked to mark ourselves, we are going to rate ourselves differently. We have drawn the web; we have copies of the explanations and definitions of key values in the web provided for you to work with for the evaluation. We want you to score us on these values on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means the highest mark and one is the lowest. Each group should present a representative to present the ratings, and we will have general discussions on the presentations.”

She listed the values as humility of staff members; mutual respect for our partners; courage and conviction of our values and mission; accountability to stakeholders; equity and justice; solidarity with the poor; respect for the independence and autonomy of intermediate NGO officials; honesty and transparency. The evaluation exercise was conducted concurrently to ensure that each group’s scores did not influence the ratings of the other groups. The figure 5.1 and table 5.3 below presents the score allotted by each group to reflect their perception of the performance of ActionAid staff members for 2013 financial year on each of the values of RBA and partnership ideals.
Table 5.3. Showing ratings of ActionAid’s Officials on RBA values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RIGHTS-BASED VALUES</th>
<th>WATERMELON RATINGS</th>
<th>PAPAYA RATINGS</th>
<th>BANANA RATINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humility of Members of Staff</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability to Stakeholders</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty and Transparency</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity with the Poor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage of Conviction of our Values and Missions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for the independence and Autonomy of intermediate NGO Partners</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The representatives of each group revealed that there was a heated debate on the groups’ ratings, with some members claiming that ActionAid should be allotted lower ratings than the presented average scores of 3 on mutual respect, humility, and honesty and transparency. During the discussion the interpersonal relationship between officials of ActionAid and their intermediate NGO partners was questioned, which calls for a more significant improvement from the INGO if they would be truly living out their values. ActionAid was challenged to improve in mutual respect and humility of their members of staff in their engagement with their intermediate NGOs. The representatives of Papaya stated:

“For us in Papaya group, on mutual respect, some of us think that some of your members of staff do not deserve any score, while some deserve 100%. Because you have some employees that are working with us and epitomising these values: these set of people are very humble and very engaging. On the other hand, some of your employees are very arrogant, and they are not living out the values, and you need to consider that. We are not saying you should be a perfect organisation, but some of your members of staff need more training in public relations.”

On the same issue of mutual respect, honesty, and transparency, the representatives of Watermelon group stated:

“Based on your definition of mutual respect, we noticed that you often act contrary to it in practice. In the designing of projects, you often fail to get us involved along. We experience same the situation when we were invited to come for budget planning. We all came and tired ourselves out to come up with a budget plan for our programmes, but in most cases, we discovered later that you have made up
your mind what the budget was that are often different from our initial plan. Why are you wasting our time on discussing on those you have decided? You also need to make the budgeting processes transparent and participatory if indeed we are equal partners as you have presented.”

In addition, on the value of equity and justice, a participant from the banana group also challenged the INGOs by claiming that their excessive emphasis on women is affecting their work at the grass-roots. She claimed that men are now seeing NGO work as wholly women’s affairs which contradicts the emphasis on non-discrimination as prescribed by RBA. Men claimed that ActionAid’s focuses too much on enhancing the capacities of women to participate in the economic and political decisions of their family and communities. However, the INGO claimed to prioritise women rights based on the notion that they are often disadvantaged in access to resources and opportunities. They claimed INGO actors seek to confront some religious and traditional belief that downplay the role of women in the decisions-making process in their families and communities.

The experience suggested that the INGO created a conducive atmosphere for an open evaluation and criticisms by their intermediate NGO partners. Engendering such atmosphere from criticisms is a bold step to promote effective partnership in practice. Importantly, the intermediate NGOs felt empowered to do so. This type of environment where intermediate NGOs can be actively involved in the evaluation or assessment of INGOs would rebalance the asymmetry in power relations common in conventional partnership. That is healthy for genuine or effective engagement between NGOs and have positive implications on the development work of INGOs in the South.

In addition, the above average score of 4 and 5 on solidarity with the poor, courage of conviction, and the independence and autonomy of intermediate NGO
demonstrate ActionAid’s commitment to work as allies with the rights-holder organisations to promote rights and social transformation in the South through aid. It can also point to the practical steps that need to be taken by the INGO to promote the autonomy and independence of their intermediate NGO partners, which is crucial to promote bottom-up development initiatives.

Most importantly, the forum was satisfied with the response of a senior member of the staff of ActionAid. The informant promised to integrate the feedback into the governance of the organisation for improved partnership relationship in future. The researcher received confirmation from the participants that they were satisfied with the outcomes of the Partnership Forum. However, the data is limited in that the researcher does not know whether ActionAid will take effective action to address the complaints raised because time constraint did not permit a follow-up study. For example, the findings cannot predict what happened at the Forum the following year. Will people be angrier? Will they be happier? Will they turn up? Future research in this area is desirable to answer these questions. The findings imply that NGOs must be sensitive to the importance of managing the perceptions of their work with the people at the grass-roots, mainly from men that perceive NGO activities as only catering to women.

Nevertheless, the Partnership Forum reveals that significant steps are being made to promote productive partnership between these set of actors. The local people evidently value the Forum. Otherwise, they would not attend it. They apparently feel empowered enough to deliver challenging feedback at the Forum, which suggests can promote mutual influence and balance of power between ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners on decision-making processes. These are all positive and encouraging signs that RBA can foster meaningful dialogue between INGOs and intermediate NGO and CBO partners in a spirit of
partnership. This Forum demonstrated the influence of intermediate NGOs and CBOs and the accountability of the INGO to local organisations. Their joint commitment to the values of RBA seems to facilitate accountability by setting the standards on which performance can be defined and set the stage for balanced influence, thus can enhance downward accountability of the INGO to local organisations. Because the local organisations were empowered to assess the INGO on how they live out the values of RBA in their relationship as demonstrated in the Partnership Forum and the meeting between JDPC and the Ilado CDC, it could be argued that RBA can create negotiating space and downward accountability of INGOs to local organisations. The Partnership Forum also shows that the INGO is striving to turn the ideals of partnership into practice in their relationship with their intermediate NGOs, partly by prioritising intermediate NGOs partners that have a stronger connection with the local people. The INGO values this connection as resources from local organisations and including the knowledge of the local context. Another reason is that there are opportunities for face-to-face interactions, which provided a negotiation spaces between them. In line with the argument of Brown and Fox (1998) that direct, repeated and sustained contact between partners can promote the creation of solidarity, trust, and shared values between partners. Finally, such forum/negotiating space can provide opportunities for increasing mutual influence and trust-building between partners as well as reinforce values of solidarity and accountability. The Forum has the potential to generate a new voice for local organisations in their partnership with INGOs, which can enhance their capacities in negotiation with their government, thus improving grass-roots participation to proffer solutions to local problems. However, this research involves a limited number of organisations and participants; more studies are needed to verify these claims.
However, it could be argued that the intermediate NGOs and CBOs (as reflected in the meeting between JDPC and Ilado CDC) felt that they were excluded and patronised - these are accusations that INGOs have long faced, mainly before the introduction of RBA. It should be of concern that INGOs are still being accused of this behaviour despite their commitment to RBA in their partnership. Importantly, there seem to be indications that INGOs still have much room for improvement. Perhaps the cultural change that is needed at all levels of the organisation to implement RBA successfully will be a process that will take many years.

Notwithstanding, based on the findings, it is evident that INGOs can be committed to building an honest and open relationship or productive partnership with their intermediate NGO partners, which they anchor on dialogue in practice.

Strategically, as shown in table 5.3 below, ActionAid’s decisions are explicitly anchored on RBA, and its commitment to RBA philosophy is strong. The table summarises the argument that RBA has a strong influence on the choice of partners in ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners, whereas Oxfam-Novib and their intermediate NGO partners do not have such a strong commitment and are flexible in the conditions they set for partnership. There seems to be misalignment between the policy and practice of Oxfam-Novib based on the perspectives of their intermediate NGO partners.

Table. 5.4. Difference RBA’s influences on strategic decisions of INGOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>Guiding Philosophy</th>
<th>Does RBA determine Choice of Partners?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ActionAid</td>
<td>Strong/explicit and prominent in all discussions/ entirely anchored on RBA</td>
<td>Yes, without exception</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Relationship of convenience /Gender-Action Learning System (GALS) is the only manifestation of RBA. These seem to be a misalignment between their policy and practice/ decisions not grounded in RBA

| Oxfam-Novib | Yes, but flexible in the interpretation of rights |

#### 5.5. Conclusion

This chapter examined the extent to which RBA influences the strategic decisions of three NGO types (INGOs, Intermediate NGO and CBOs) on who to partner with. This chapter first examined if they all have a similar understanding of RBA and its interpretation in practice, followed by a focus on the extent to which RBA influences their choice of partner. The research found that there are a deeper understanding of the core principles of RBA among participants from ActionAid and their intermediate NGOs than Oxfam-Novib’s. The research data shows that majority of the informants from the INGOs and intermediate NGOs claimed that their commitment to the philosophies of RBA shaped decisions on choice of partners. The findings have shown that rights-based partnership often happens between likeminded organisations, which aligns with the expectations of the literature (see Kindornay et al. 2012). However, some of the key informants from the intermediate NGOs that work with Oxfam-Novib claimed that they are not strictly rights-based organisations, but they work with the INGO to promote rights values in areas that are relevant to their programmes. This is significant in two ways: First, the study suggests that RBA does not influence the decisions of NGOs and shape partnerships in uniform ways. Second, Oxfam-Novib’s flexibility on their
choice of partners may provide an opportunity for non-rights-based organisations to benefit from rights-based funds, with the condition that they integrate rights into their programmes. The findings suggest that expanding the numbers of organisations that integrate RBA into their work can promote the claiming of rights for social transformations in developing countries.

Most importantly, for those that are committed to RBA, it makes a demand on them to demonstrate the values of rights in their practice of partnership. Not only that, the values of solidarity can reinforce the desire of some INGOs to act as allies with local organisations, as seemed to be the case with the relationships between ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners. Therefore, one can argue that a mutual commitment to RBA can promote the effective relationship between INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners. Also, the empirical observations have shown that a commitment to the values of RBA can also enhance the answerability of INGOs to their local intermediate NGOs and CBOs, being a crucial aspect of RBA. There is room for improvement by INGOs and their intermediate NGOs to address some of the short-comings aired in the study. Again, the research data suggests INGOs aspires towards building an honest and balanced relationship with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners that focuses on the exchange of ideas in practice. The data seems to suggest that RBA values serve as standards that create negotiating space and downward accountability of INGOs to local organisations. This can possibly enhance locally grown ideas that are crucial to addressing development challenges in that context. A relationship that can compel a change in behaviour can enhance a change in practice as suggested by Brown and Fox, (1998)

The empirical observations in this chapter offer some support for the suggestion by Brehm et al. (2004: 164) that RBA can rebalance the unequal power
relationship between INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners and promote effective partnerships between them (see also Brown and Fox, 1998; Elbers, 2012). However, this would depend on their levels of commitment in practice to the values of RBA. The next chapter investigates the implications of RBA on the funding decisions of INGOs, intermediate NGOs, and CBOs that participated in this research as they work together in partnership with rights-based organisations.

CHAPTER SIX: IMPLICATIONS OF THE RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH ON THE FUNDING DECISIONS OF NGOS

6.0. Introduction

The extant literature argues that RBA would have implications on the funding decisions of INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners, by creating ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ in access to funds (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Kindornay et al. 2012). Kindornay et al. (2012) predicted that NGOs that adopt and implement RBA would have more access to funds from the rights-based official/INGO donors, while those that reject RBA or are unable to translate into rights-based programming may face funding cuts. In addition, they claimed that RBA would have negative implications on the funding of intermediate NGOs and CBOs in
developing countries because of their over-reliance on foreign donors. Importantly, Kindornay et al. (2012) did not investigate these assumptions empirically, and no other study has done so until now. Concerning the actor-specific understanding of RBA, this chapter investigates the extent to which RBA affects decisions made by INGOs, intermediate NGOs, and CBOs on accepting specific sources/conditions of funding and to whom they apply for funds.

The research is based on a case study of ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in Nigeria. The research findings focus on how key informants describe these decision-making considerations at three different levels of NGOs that connected by a series of partnership arrangements. Each of these NGO actors also receives funds from different kinds of donors. The data is also limited to the financial relationship between ActionAid Nigeria and Oxfam-Novib Nigeria Country Office and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners; both organisations claimed they had some autonomy from their international office, though this may be questionable given that they still rely on their international offices for resources and guidance on their activities. It is important to note that the researcher was not granted access to the internal financial document of these organisations and was unable to trace changes in the pattern of acceptance of specific sources of funding and to which donor they apply for funds since their adoption of RBA. Therefore, this chapter based the findings on the interview data, the caveat about the research method here is there is no form of verification.

First, this chapter suggests that RBA has a determining influence on the financial decisions of INGOs. According to the informants from both ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib, many donors including those that proclaim a commitment to RBA still prefer
project-based funding rather than a greater focus on rights-based empowerment and advocacy, contrary to the expectations of the literature. Most the respondents from Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid claimed that the donors’ preferences for project-based aid could restrict their access to funds if they do not take a project focus. Not only that, the INGO informants claimed that RBA also emboldened them to be selective in accepting certain conditions/sources of funds, and they also made efforts to explore funding opportunities from their localities. For instance, ActionAid’s Advisor on Partnership and Local Rights Programmes claimed that they do not receive funds from neoliberal donors or organisations that violate the rights of the people or discriminate against women. According to the informant, the INGO recently rejected funding from the EU because it sponsors the privatisation of public enterprises in Nigeria (Olawoore, 2017). Oxfam-Novib’s informants expressed similar opinions.

Second, all the informants from the intermediate NGO partners (CCEPE and JDPC) of ActionAid claimed that their commitments to RBA limit their funding from official/INGO donors if they do not maintain a project focus. They also claimed that RBA informed their decisions to be selective about whom they have financial relationships with. As with the INGOs, they claimed that RBA encourages them to locate alternative funding sources from their local constituencies. Although most of the informants from the intermediate NGOs that work with Oxfam-Novib claimed they are not strictly rights-based NGOs, they integrate rights-based values into their work. The informants also claimed that they do not apply for funds or receive funds from donors that do not believe in the realisation of the rights of the people. These findings support the argument made by Elbers (2012) that Southern NGOs often try to avoid accepting objectionable funding arrangements from official/INGO donors. The opportunity to be selective on fund
sources can also promote the financial autonomy and independence of intermediate NGOs from foreign/INGO donors.

Third, most CBO participants that work with the intermediate NGO partners of Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid did not explicitly use the language of RBA, and they claimed that RBA has limited influence in their financial decisions. However, CBO informants that work with CCEPE and JDPC (partners of ActionAid) claimed that their knowledge of rights encourages them to reject funds from local political actors who may want to deceive them for electoral gains. On the other hand, the CBO partners of FADU, a partner of Oxfam-Novib were more ambiguous on the relevance of RBA on their funding decisions. This chapter has three parts. Each of the remaining three parts focuses on the influence of RBA on the funding decisions of each type of NGOs (INGOs, intermediate NGOs, and CBOs) respectively, then the conclusion. The next section discusses the implications of RBA on the funding of Oxfam and ActionAid in Nigeria.

6.1. **RBA Limits the Funding of INGOs**

First, based on the opinions of the key informants from both ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib, RBA limits their access to funds including from donors that proclaimed to be guided by the rights framework. According to the Deputy Director of ActionAid Nigeria, this is because many donors still prefer project-based funding such as the construction of clinics, classrooms, and distribution of mosquito nets directly to the people rather than a focus on awareness-raising and capacity building of rights-holders. In her own words:

"It affects our work in the sense that we do not want to take money just meant for service delivery that hinders a focus on empowerment that enables people to act to
claim their rights by making powerful actors accountable for providing essential services to the people.”

For the informant, the prevailing paradigm of performance-based funding and value for money is difficult to apply in rights-based programming. However, she claimed that their commitment to RBA does not prevent them from delivering essential services to people living in poverty, but they provide services strategically to reinforce rights claiming to promote sustained change.

In another instance, the Country Director of Programme of Oxfam-Novib similarly claimed that the prevailing development architecture where there is more emphasis on payment-by-results leaves a lot to be desired in promoting rights-based development. For the informant, the emphasis of many official donors on tangible outcomes from their aid demonstrate that they have little or no understanding of the peculiarities of rights-based development in practice or at worst they are insincere in their commitment to rights-based funding. According to the Oxfam-Novib’s informant, such preferences for project-based funding reduces their access to funds from mainstream/institutional donors. These findings are contrary to the assumption that those NGOs that can translate to RBA would have access to more funds from official donors (see Kindornay et al. 2012).

In addition, the Project Officer of Oxfam-Novib claimed that many donors, especially private sector actors see rights-based work as conflictual and political. Therefore, they shy away from financing right-based programmes, which also constrains the INGO’s access to funds. Of course, RBA is political, because it seeks to alter the power imbalance in societies in favour of the people living in poverty or else it would add no value to the development sector (see Crawford and Andreassen, 2015; Campolina and Philips, 2015). Oxfam (2014) state that the
INGO believe that imbalances in power relations promote exclusion and hinder people living in poverty from exercising their rights, which reflects the organisation’s understanding of RBA.

Second, all the informants from both Oxfam and ActionAid converged on the opinion that the values of RBA shaped their decisions to be selective about the type of donors from which they choose to receive funds or funding conditions they are willing to accept. All the informants from the INGOs claimed that they only choose to have financial relationships with official/private donors that are committed or are sympathetic to rights values. For example, the Country Director of ActionAid at their Partnership Forum, (2014) claimed that collecting money from organisations that do not respect the rights of the people could be counter-productive in their quest for a just world. In his words:

“There are organisations we cannot work with. If an organisation is against fulfilling women rights or systematically discriminate against women, if your organisation is inherently corrupt or involved in child trafficking or you are biased to a political party or involved in tax evasion, we cannot work with you.”

Also, other respondents from ActionAid shared their experiences that sometimes funds may be available, but may not be rights focused, hence the challenge of ensuring that available funds align with rights-based philosophies. Another significant finding of this study is that most of the informants from the INGOs claimed that RBA determines their decisions to be selective on whom to have a financial relationship with or funding conditions they are willing to accept. For example, in the words of the Advocacy and Campaign Manager of ActionAid:

“ActionAid is strongly committed to RBA. Therefore certain places are – ‘no go areas’ - to source for funds especially organisations and donors that believe in
neo-liberalism, organisations that negate gender rights and encourage child labour, and anti-poor policies, for example, the World Bank and IMF. Also, companies that are involved in corruption, tax evasions or engage in transfer pricing. RBA constrained our approach to resource mobilisation. On many occasion, we get money but might not match what we need the money for; therefore, we do not take such money.”

Similarly, the Associate Country Director of Oxfam-Novib claimed that that they are also selective on whom the INGO receives funds from or whom they apply for funds. The informant stated:

“As for us in Oxfam, we are careful about whom we take funds from. We do not even relate to organisations that do not believe in RBA or rights of the people in their development. Oxfam will expose unethical organisations.”

Importantly, the decisions of INGOs to be selective on the types of official donors they receive funds from or on what funding they are willing to accept can lead to their financial (and other) autonomy from external donors. Proponents of RBA may argue that it can also boost their answerability to their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners. This claim is, however, debatable because such autonomy may lead to fewer accountability demands or pressure on INGOs from government/institutional donors. According to ActionAid, (2010:47) rights-based partnership may heighten the influence of local intermediate NGO and CBO actors in their relationship with INGOs because they “are challenged to ‘live’ these values in their daily lives.

Third, the informants from the two INGOs claimed that although they face challenges by the loss of funds from official/private donors that do not subscribe to the values of RBA, they strive to locate alternative sources of funds from their
country of operation. The Head of ActionAid’s Partnership and Local Rights Programme stated:

“We focus less now on official donors; we strive to design innovative methods to access funds locally such as community sponsorship and child sponsorship programmes from local supporters. Organisations such as DFID has been very supportive, and recently they sponsored voter’s education.”

According to the informant, the funding constraints they face because of their commitment to RBA motivated them to think out of the box to access funds locally to support rights claiming. The informant claimed that they are intensifying efforts to attract private organisations/foundations/individuals in Nigeria who give funds, although to boost their legitimacy and credibility. Notwithstanding, this thesis argues that there could be other considerations in their areas of operations and partnership other than RBA, which may be responsible for their effort to locate alternative funding sources from their constituencies or that can account for their improved access to locally available funds. Arguably, one such consideration could be the increased awareness of the local population of the INGO’s work and the way ActionAid solicits funds. For example, one of the participants from ActionAid claimed that they are increasingly collaborating with media outfits to air their activities and campaigns.

Fourth, all the participants from ActionAid claimed that they promote RBA by integrating rights into some funds that are traditionally non-rights-based. ActionAid’s Advisor on Local Rights Programme claimed that they often integrate gender (and other) rights into funds mainly when they work with organisations that are membership-based such as community Development
Union/Community Development Committees. According to the informant, the CDCs/CDU have access to relatively substantial funds through community development levies and diaspora remittance. Also, the informant claimed that ActionAid collaborates with intermediate NGO partners to apply to both local and international funders for funds, specifically those that promote human rights, especially where such donors need an organisation with the capacity and the reputation for such funds. According to the informant, this is one of the capacity building methods where their intermediate NGO partner acquires such skills that can increase their financial autonomy and independence (see also Fowler, 2015). In the words of the informant: “these are one of how non-rights-based funds are utilised to promote rights as our way of doing things.”

Furthermore, ActionAid informants claimed that they are increasingly focusing on community sponsorship programmes to raise additional funds from the local population and organisations to support rights-based programming. ActionAid (2014-2018:28) defines community sponsorship as a

“New model of regular giving, but one that emphasises the community and not the child. ... The community sponsorship was fully rolled out with more unlimited funds to support innovative programming.”

The document states that community sponsorship has not been fully developed to contribute significantly to their finance. Hence child sponsorship still formed a more substantial part of their income (ActionAid, 2014-2018).

It is noteworthy that child sponsorship programmes have been widely criticised; it can strengthen the unequal power relations between sponsors and the children, reinforces dependencies and also makes sponsored children vulnerable to undisclosed intentions of some sponsors (see van Eekelen,
2013). Nevertheless, most key informants from both INGOs see it as a viable source of funding for their work. For the Campaign and Advocacy Manager of ActionAid, they are striving to limit the drawbacks of their child sponsorship programmes. Another informant from ActionAid claimed that is strong opposition against the programmes within the organisation. However, the informants claimed that they recognise and address all these drawbacks of child sponsorship. In response to some of these criticisms, the informant claimed, they now pool child sponsorship funds together and focus it on communities rather than on individual children, which can prevent the possible resentment of sponsored children from others in the area. The informants also claimed that ActionAid concentrates more on child-dedicated projects with proper documentation of such programmes and how they have benefited the children.

In the same vein, all the informants from Oxfam-Novib claimed that they also work with membership based intermediate NGOs such as NANTS and FADU who have their sources of funding from their members and organisations. The informant stated that these two intermediate NGOs have their Co-operative Society and Saving Schemes for members, a huge source of funds for them. According to the informant, Oxfam-Novib may sometimes collaborate with them with counterpart funds, but they mainly provide empowerment programmes and training workshops to boost their knowledge and capacities to promote rights claiming for their members. He also claimed that this is an example of ways in which they integrate rights into organisations that are not traditionally rights-based.
Based on the opinions of key informants from the INGOs, there seem to be differences between Oxfam and ActionAid on the way RBA influences on their funding decisions. On the one hand, ActionAid informants claimed that they only have a financial relationship with rights-based intermediate NGOs, which reflected in the opinions and language of their partners. On the other hand, Oxfam-Novib seems to be more flexible in the conditions they impose for partnerships with intermediate NGOs and CBOs. Most of the Oxfam-Novib participants claimed that they do not work strictly with rights-based NGOs, although some of them are very versatile on the fundamental principles of RBA as summarised in the table below. Table 6.1 presents the participants NGOs and their donors.

Table 6.1. Showing Funding Conditions/Preference of NGOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>Condition of Funding Relationship</th>
<th>Preferred Donors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ActionAid</strong></td>
<td>Mostly funds rights-based intermediate NGOs that have a strict focus on empowerment, solidarity, and campaigning</td>
<td>Mostly prefers donors that seem to uphold rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oxfam</strong></td>
<td>Flexible in their choice of which intermediate NGOs to fund, most of which are not strictly rights-based NGOs but often integrate rights issues into non-rights-based streams of income</td>
<td>Only have a financial relationship with donors that believe in rights.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above opinions are not limited to INGO informants, but also resonate in the financial decisions of intermediate NGOs that participated in this study. All the informants from the intermediate NGO (CCEPE and JDPC) partners of ActionAid expressed the opinion that RBA shapes their financial decisions on whom they apply to for funds or receive funds from and the conditions of funding they were prepared to accept. According to the key informants, the decision to prioritise a commitment to RBA in their funding relationships limits their potential funding sources. Most the informants from CCEPE and JDPC claimed that the funding constraints resulting from their commitment to RBA are not unconnected with the preferences of official/private donors including INGO donors to fund physical projects. From the perspective of the Executive Director of CCEPE, the changing aid environment in the North is partly responsible for this behaviour of donors, especially for Western governments.

Moreover, the Deputy Director of JDPC claimed that their commitment to the values of RBA shapes financial decisions to be selective on their funding sources. Hence it is not uncommon in JDPC to reject funds from donors and partners that do not subscribe to rights values or that do not have a firm belief in the dignity of the human person as demanded by God. It is important to note that JDPC is a religious-based organisation owned and funded mainly by the Catholic Church across Nigerian states. Other informants from JDPC voiced similar opinions in that they often walk away from local sponsors or private donors that violate or have sympathy for those that violate the rights of the people. The Legal Adviser of JDPC stated:
“If we notice anything not aligning with our values in a prospective partner, we stop such partnerships even before we start to discuss what the partner wants to fund. We will reject funds that are against rights, our values derived from human dignity conferred by God, to us that is the most important thing. We believe that you recognise first the rights and dignity of the people and not prioritise meeting their needs. In short, we work with partners that share our values.”

In addition, the Programme Officer of CCEPE and a partner of ActionAid claimed that donors that do not believe in the promotion and realisation of the rights of the people who are rights-holders as a definite goal of development or that are inherently corrupt or that reinforce discrimination and marginalisation cannot be their partner. The research findings support Elbers and Schulpen’s, (2013) claim that intermediate NGOs can boost their power and influence in their relationship with INGO donors when they are selective on whom they apply to for funds or the funding conditions they are willing to accept. Again, this thesis argues that it can also boost their independence and financial autonomy from foreign/INGO donors and ultimately promote an effective partnership between them as discussed in the last chapter.

In the case of Oxfam-Novib’s intermediate NGO partners, one of the informants from CISLAC claimed they also face reduced funding from foreign/INGO donors. For instance, the Programme Officer of CISLAC claimed that they are firmly committed to their partnership principles and values, which make it difficult for them to receive funds from some donors. According to the informant:

“We recently rejected funding from EU because they requested us to campaign for the privatisation of public services that is against our values.”
It is important to note that the informant did not make a direct reference to RBA values as a guiding principle in their financial decisions, although they demonstrated understandings of the core values of RBA. However, a look at the intermediate NGO’s partnership principles in their documents reflects some of the values of RBA such as solidarity, accountability, integrity, complementarity, autonomy, and independence of partners. All the informants from the intermediate NGO claimed that they are not strictly rights-based NGOs, but they integrate rights-based values in their work with Oxfam-Novib and other organisations at the grass-roots. Also, many of the informants from other Oxfam-Novib’s intermediate NGO partners made similar claims. One can argue that the implementation of RBA by Oxfam is different from the way ActionAid and partners execute their rights-based programmes. The interview extracts demonstrated a strong commitment to RBA values in the language and relationships of ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners, which is less evident from the opinions of most Oxfam-Novib’s intermediate NGO partners. However, Oxfam-Novib’s approach to the implementation of RBA signifies a divergence in approach by which INGOs can promote rights values among traditionally non-rights-based intermediate NGOs. Although Oxfam’s intermediate NGO partners also claimed that they face funding cuts, however, such experience cannot be pinned down to a commitment to RBA explicitly based on the interview extract. The declining aid volume generally from official donors could be advanced as one of the reasons for funding cuts (Campolina and Philips, 2015; Olawoore, 2017).

Furthermore, most the informants from the intermediate NGOs that work with both Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid claimed that the limited funding from foreign/INGO donors motivates them to design an alternative fund-raising approach from their local constituencies. The Executive Director of CCEPE, a
partner of ActionAid, claimed that such local funding opportunities include child and community sponsorship programmes with the support of ActionAid. According to the informant, the intermediate NGO handles such funds transparently by assuring their CBO partners and communities that they raised the child sponsorship funds on their behalf. Hence they are actively involved in the allocation and utilisation of the funds to benefit the whole community, instead of a focus on a child. For the informants, this is an avenue to demonstrate a model of good practice to government and CBOs. The informant claimed that the utilisation of child sponsorship in this way reflects ways in which NGOs introduce rights values into funds that are conventionally not rights-focussed.

In addition, one of the informants from JDPC, a partner of ActionAid claimed that they also raise funds through community sponsorship programmes and from private/group donors. The informant claimed that the bulk of such funds are raised by the Catholic Church members and groups in the area, which represent a substantial part of locally sourced funds. According to the informants, the opportunities to raise additional funds locally strengthens their commitment to RBA and enhances their influence, capacities, and skills as independent and autonomous organisations. Having access to locally available funds can also promote locally grown development alternatives that would be relevant to deal with local problems. In this instance, one can argue that RBA would be beneficial to addressing development challenges in the context.

Turning to the perspectives of Oxfam-Novib intermediate NGO partners, the President of NANTS, a partner of Oxfam claimed that they could locate alternative funding sources from their members because they can generate revenues from markets nationwide. As stated earlier, NANTS is a membership based intermediate
NGO and have members in all cities and communities in Nigeria. The informant claimed that they collect membership fees from new members while old members pay yearly subscriptions as well as from the payment of small charges from both sellers and buyers in the markets. According to the informant, these form a considerable part of their financial resources and reduces their dependency on foreign/INGO donors. The informant claimed that they only collaborate with Oxfam-Novib to support their programmes and for exchanging ideas on how to connect and explore opportunities locally and internationally to promote the development rights of their members. Through their work with Oxfam-Novib, the informant claimed, they can influence the economic policies of local, state, national governments and inter-governmental institutions on development issues. For the informant, there is no way any donors can dictate to them on what to do or how to utilise their funds, but they are only accountable to their members nationwide.

Also, the Secretary and Programme Manager of FADU, a partner of Oxfam-Novib claimed that as a membership based organisation, they have a stable source of funds from their members and co-operative societies in all towns and villages in Nigeria. The informants claimed that their partnership with Oxfam-Novib transcends a funding relationship; as partners, they can build their capacities and collaborate to promote the welfare (economic and gender rights) of their members and demonstrate to government new agricultural innovations and how they can replicate it at the grass-roots for sustainable development. The informant claimed that their work with Oxfam-Novib also granted the local farmers access to international markets and by connecting cocoa farmers and their associations to CONTINAF, an international cocoa buying organisations as well as access to initiatives that have been tested and can be replicated in other parts of the world.
According to the informant, this is changing the lives of cocoa farmers because it gave them opportunities to sell their product at a global price and getting a premium for producing high quality cocoa beans. The informant claimed that they work with Oxfam-Novib with the rights of the people in mind and their effort have increased the productivity of cocoa farmers.

In the words of one of FADU’s informants:

“We collaborate with Oxfam in disseminating issues on rights. We incorporated gender rights into our programme – Gender Action Learning System (GALS), an adaptation from WEMAN (Women Empowerment Mainstreaming and Network). GALS is a framework designed to address the discriminations regarding women in the agricultural value chain. GALS involves tools that bring to the fore the rights of women at the market level, household, and production levels and deliberately introduces policies to engage women in leadership. ... Hence, we can achieve a higher female membership in our FDAs and FCAs because our work promotes gender rights such as rights to work, right to property or farm ownership.”

The above opinion reflects one of the ways by which Oxfam works with local intermediate NGOs to integrate rights into traditionally non-rights funds. The Programme, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer of FADU claimed that some state governments are replicating their models to improve agricultural production in their various states as well as the protection of small-scale farmers from the exploitation of middlemen (especially women) from the discriminatory structural practices that disadvantage them in access to economic opportunities.

The discussions above have shown that the intermediate NGOs are becoming increasingly innovative in locating alternative funding sources to support their work despite the challenging funding environment because of their commitment.
to rights values. The findings of this study represent a significant divergence in the ways organisations (Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid) conceive and implement RBA in practice, but both are popularising the realisation of the rights of the people as the ultimate goal of development. In addition, the intermediate NGOs’ access to funds locally by themselves can enhance their power and influence in their work with INGO donors. This thesis supports the idea expressed by Brehm et al. (2004:167) that:

“where Northern and Southern NGOs work together on rights-based programmes this can lead to close co-operation, again building on the respective strengths of the parties.”

Interestingly, some Oxfam-Novib intermediate NGO partners seem to be less strict in their interpretation of RBA in practice. For instance, one of the informant from an intermediate NGO that works with Oxfam-Novib defines

“RBA as an approach that fundamentally prioritises the realisation of the rights of the marginalised or poor people who have been denied of certain things they ought to enjoy from their government.”

However, the same informant bitterly complained that government is not ready to fund the intermediate NGO’s work on rights. In his words:

“We do not get the support from government readily. Government officials that we want to partner with are not too bothered about RBA. We often meet brick walls whenever we raise issues on RBA. Also, funding agencies are scarce to work with. If (the researcher) you have any international link you can connect us since you are based in the UK. We have designed several programmes in the past but because we gave them up at last because we could not secure funds. We have programmes to fund, but there are no funders.”
A cursory look at these claims by the informant suggests a conflict between his conception of RBA and its implications in their work in practice; it is rare for the governments of developing countries to want to fund a project that intends to raise the political consciousness of the people as it may threaten their power position. It seems that this intermediary NGO is incentivised to engage with the Oxfam-Novib network to access funds, which is not uncommon in the Nigeria NGO sector (Lampert, 2012). Although Oxfam-Novib’s flexible conditions for partnership may work well with the majority of their partners, it could be problematic to ward off some intermediate NGO who might be motivated not by RBA but by the possibilities of accessing foreign currencies (see Smith, 2010).

6.3. RBA and the Funding of CBOs

Concerning the specific understanding of RBA by CBOs discussed in chapter 5, in the opinion of the informant, rights-based values have a significant influence on their decision-making on the kind of people or donors they can receive financial support from. Nevertheless, there is a divergence of opinion from their intermediate NGO partners on the appropriate balance between funding service delivery and promoting the claiming of rights. Most the CBO informants in this study except FCA (partners of FADU and Oxfam) complained that INGO and intermediate NGO donors are not favourably disposed to allocating sufficient funds for the provision of essential social services in their communities. For example, according to the Chairman of Ilado CDC, a partner of JDPC and ActionAid:

“JDPC trained us on the rights we have to demand from government to address our needs, but they (JDPC) refuse to provide more social amenities because public authorities are not reliable. JDPC and ActionAid officials insist that they do not have enough resources to provide for many of our needs, but is the obligation of
governments to do that. However, whenever we embark on any project from our self-generated funds, JDPC normally assist in connecting us to the government. We are lucky because many indigenes of this community both home and abroad and some local philanthropies donate to finance development work to complement what ActionAid and JDPC are doing” (my emphasis).

However, the Chairman of Oke-Agbede FCA, a partner of FADU and Oxfam stated:

“Through the FADU’s training and empowerment programmes, we are witnessing some progress in our farming and businesses, particularly on many things that even government cannot do for us. For example, they linked us with CONTINAF (an international cocoa buyer) and saved us from the exploitation of the middlemen. Their training focuses on improved farming practices and GALS that encourage our wives to participate more in agricultural activities.”

The differences in opinions between these two CBOs may not be unconnected with the difference in their development focus. While the former focuses on community infrastructural development, the latter focuses on the promotion of economic opportunities for its members through agriculture.

Moreover, CBO participants failed to see official/INGO donor’s preferences for project-based funding as a problem, even when they claimed that they are committed to RBA. Instead, they see the donors’ preference for projects and service delivery as aligned with their interpretation of rights-based development. Herein lies a significant difference in the meaning of RBA in practice between CBO informants and their intermediate NGO and INGO partners. This thesis argues that how an NGO perceives RBA has a strong shaping influence on the decision they make about what funding to apply for, and on what conditions. The informants from the CBOs in this study are less bothered about the rhetorical languages of
rights adopted by INGOs and their intermediate NGO partners. Instead, their utmost concern is the extent to which development intervention can meet their basic social needs.

However, despite the divergence in emphasis, the majority of CBO respondents claimed that RBA motivates them to be selective about the types of organisations and actors they can approach for funds or from whom they receive funds. Most CBO informants claimed that they reject funds from corrupt public officials who may want to deceive them for their political interests. However, it is essential to acknowledge that these responses from CBO informants may not be pinned down to RBA alone, perhaps other factors in their contexts and experience may be responsible for such reactions. Such experience may include, for instance, generalised lack of trust in their public office holders, which they did not discuss in the focus groups.

Relatedly, all the CBO informants claimed that RBA encourages them to raise more funds for development purposes from their communities. According to the Facilitator of Wasinmi-Odunwo CDC, a partner of JDPC, one of such funding sources include community development levies and diaspora remittance from the indigenes of their community, home and abroad. Diaspora remittance and community development levies are common fund raising models in use in many communities in Nigeria (Lampert, 2012). In the words of the Facilitator:

“\[The community members from home and abroad contribute to funding some of our programmes, either in the repairs of inadequate infrastructural facilities or the construction of new projects. With such funds, in collaboration with JDPC and ActionAid, we constructed a block of three classrooms for the Community Primary School.\]”
Also, the Programme Facilitator of Gbago CDC, a partner of CCEPE, shared a similar experience whereby they levy community members and local groups to raise funds to finance their project of interest. Although communities in Nigeria commonly use community development levies and diaspora remittance, traditionally it often reinforces unequal power relations and is liable to misuse. In the words of the Chairman of Gbago CDC, a partner of CCEPE:

“Our sons and daughters at home and abroad have been supportive of development projects in this community. They have demonstrated their commitment to the community development by donating generously in addition to the compulsory community development levies. They often organise themselves into age groups, which assist in the collection of membership donations from those groups to support the community. We are also transparent in the management of the resources, and we render an account of our activities at the community meeting periodically.”

According to the CBO informants, their knowledge of RBA in collaboration with their intermediate NGO and INGO partners make a demand on power holders to be answerable to the people. The informant claimed that they now lay more emphasis on honesty, transparency, integrity, and answerability in the utilisation of the funds, which increases people’s participation in such schemes. In addition, they often use their locally generated funds as counterpart funds with NGOs or government for community development projects. They claimed that NGOs or government departments usually show interest in funding an existing community self-help projects. Another informant, a partner of FADU and Oxfam claimed that some local donors or philanthropies also donate to support their work. According to the informant, some local philanthropists have donated agricultural inputs such
as inorganic fertilisers, implements, and machinery to promote agricultural production and participation of local people especially women.

It is worthwhile noting some factors that may be responsible for the outcomes of this study. In the first instance, it is pertinent to consider the fact that these three levels of NGOs have been working together for an average of ten years. For example, ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners have been implementing RBA for about ten years. It may be that the interpersonal relationship between these informants, the local understanding of the contexts, individual characteristics, expertise as well as their reputation may be some of the factors that promote a productive relationship between them. According to ActionAid Action on Rights, the INGO claimed they believe locally rooted intermediate NGO and CBO partners can reinforce local programmes. For the INGO, this is because these local actors understand the local context and local issues, as such they can quickly build relationships of trust with rights-holders. Bank and Hulme (2014) also argue that a close relationship between partners can lead to beneficial social outcomes. In sum, the opposite might be the case in a different context or with other local intermediate NGO and CBO actors. However, the findings of this study do seem to support the claims in the literature that the opportunity to locate alternative funding sources by local organisations can reduce potential power imbalances in their engagements with INGOs (see Elbers, 2012; Campolina and Philips, 2015). A proponent of RBA would argue that it indeed has potential to promote positive change in the way development actors deliver aid in developing countries.

6.3. Conclusions
This chapter focused on the extent to which RBA influences the decisions of INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners on whom they choose to have a financial relationship with. The findings suggest that even official/INGO donors who proclaim to be committed to RBA still prefer to fund physical projects instead of empowering rights-holders to demand accountability from government and other duty-bearers. The donors still prefer project-based funding despite the prescribed shift in focus from the traditional role of providing services by INGO donors to needy communities into an increasing focus on rights promotion and advocacy. The findings show that funding constraints are challenging NGOs that are implementing the rights-based approach in practice.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the rights-based approach by NGOs can promote the creation of funding alternatives for their rights work. It can also rebalance the unequal power relationship based on the aid chain that has been typical of traditional North-South NGOs partnerships. The findings of this study align with the argument of Elbers (2012) that when intermediate NGOs and CBOs are selective on their decisions about where to apply for funds and their funding sources, it can enhance their power and influence with their official/INGO donors. Also, many scholars have identified the over-reliance of intermediate NGO and CBOs on foreign aid as one of the significant factors that account for the domination of Southern partners by INGOs (Fowlers, 2000, 2015; Wallace, 2003; Baaz, 2005; Brehm et al. 2005; Bond, 2015). The findings imply that successful rights-based programming can promote a genuine or balance engagement between INGO actors and their intermediate NGO and CBO actors, primarily when they can raise substantial funds to support their work.
Not only that, the interview extracts from the majority of the informants implies that RBA has the potential to enhance downward accountability of INGO donors to their intermediate NGO and CBO partners, contrary to the widely criticised traditional focus on vertical accountability to official donors. These findings may not be the case in other contexts or with different organisations. This thesis suggests that the majority of intermediate NGO and CBO informants that are committed to RBA in practice and that had access to local funding sources had a degree of autonomy from the dictates of INGO donors. Relatedly, the following chapter will look at the influence of RBA on the decisions of these three sets of NGOs on how they balance the demand of RBA for an increasing to focus on advocacy instead of the provision of essential services to needy communities.

**CHAPTER SEVEN: RIGHTS-BASED NGOS, SERVICE DELIVERY AND ADVOCACY: WHAT HAS CHANGED?**

**7.0. Introduction**

Advocates of RBA have predicted that rights-based NGOs will adopt an increasing focus on advocacy, but will not curtail their role of providing essential social services to the people (Gready and Ensor, 2005; Kindornay et al. 2012). Alternatively, they argue that there will be a more conscious effort from these organisations to combine service provision with advocacy together “in a new, synthesised developmental approach” (Kindornay et al. 2012; Crawford and Andreassen, 2015). However, these expectations were just propositions and not
empirically tested (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Kindornay et al. 2012). Concerning actors specific understanding of the meaning of RBA, this chapter aims to fill the gap in the literature and will examine the extent to which RBA determines the operational decisions made by INGOs (ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib) and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners. Specifically, it will examine whether advocacy work, is being prioritised over, than the direct provision of essential services to the people and communities in adherence to RBA philosophies.

This chapter has three parts: The first part presents the analysis of the data and the discussion on the influence of RBA on the service delivery work of INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners. The second part focuses on the influence of RBA on advocacy work of participant organisations followed by examining how these organisations balance the demand for a greater focus on advocacy with meeting the essential needs of the people at the grass-roots level. The findings reveal that the key informants from the two INGOs claim that they are increasingly focusing their resources on advocacy work. They also claimed that they are providing minimal service in extreme situations, mainly to gain the trust and the commitment of their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners and their communities as well as to demonstrate a model of good practice to governments.

The intermediate NGO partners of ActionAid have boosted their advocacy work with various empowerment programmes with their CBO partners, while (similar to INGOs) service provision is employed to garner more support from their constituencies as well as to demonstrate a model of good practice to the government. The majority of the intermediate NGO partners of Oxfam-Novib claim
that they are boosting their advocacy programmes\textsuperscript{15}, while others are more concerned with seeking project-based funding to carry out infrastructural development for the people. Although the CBOs claimed they are also committed to the philosophy of RBA, they have an understanding of the approach that differs from their partners. They interpret the approach regarding how it can enhance their access to basic social services from their INGO and intermediate NGO partners and to make government responsive to their needs. The preference of some of the informants for service provision is understandable given that it has a concrete and immediate effect on the people living in poverty and communities. Advocacy, on the other hand, takes time to change ingrained attitudes and beliefs that reinforce power imbalance and poverty, time to design new projects, and time needed for the implementation of new ideas that focuses on addressing the unequal structural relations of power in favour of the marginalised people. An interesting contribution that this study makes the literature is that the majority of the INGO and intermediate NGO informants claimed that they are increasing their focus on advocacy programmes, and curtailing their provision of essential services to the people. This counter Kindornay et al.’s (2012) suggestion that rights-based NGOs will not curtail their service delivery work, but will increasingly boost their advocacy work. The following section presents the findings.

7.1. Rights-based NGOs and Service Provision

Perspectives of INGO informants

\textsuperscript{15} The interview extracts have shown that some of Oxfam-Novib intermediate NGOs are advocacy-based organisations, but the conception of advocacy are not in tandem with the prescriptions of RBA; they still believe in advocating on behalf of the people a key feature of the conventional advocacy work where NGOs advocate for people far away from their base
The opinions of key informants from both Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid have shown that their commitment to the philosophy of RBA determines their decisions to cut back on directly providing essential services to needy communities. The majority of the key informants converge on the opinion that a focus on direct service provision to the people is unsustainable. For them, there is a renewed consciousness that it is difficult for INGOs to engender political and social transformation required to redress the systemic injustices that perpetuate poverty and marginalisation as implementers of neoliberal safety nets. ActionAid (2012) claimed that in the 1970s the organisation focused mainly on charity and welfare approach that primary implies the delivery of essential service the ‘poor’ and ‘beneficiaries’ of their charity. The document claimed that the organisation realised that the approach failed to challenge the predominant system of inequality and injustice that shaped development environment. ActionAid (2012:13) stated:

“We provided school uniforms and equipment to sponsored children and direct assistance to their families. But we became increasingly aware that our focus on individual children was random and unjust. We helped children lucky enough to be sponsored. Those who were not, despite their greater need in some cases, received no support. The sponsored children were going to school but receiving little education. Little was really changing in the lives of the children we worked with.”

The document claimed that ActionAid moved away from focusing only on service provision to embraced rights-based perspectives and builds on the notion that human development should be the main concern of development activities. According to the document claimed that their renewed focus on rights-based thinking was premised on the understanding of development as a process of expanding the freedom of the people.
According to ActionAid’ Action on Rights, (2010:1,2):

“Ten years ago we adopted a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to our work. At this time, we had a deep faith in the potential of this approach to challenge social inequalities in fundamental ways and to lead us towards sustainable solutions to poverty and exclusions. Strong HRBA programmes, supported by our skilled, passionate and politically committed programme staff are fundamental to our efforts to build a world that is just and free of poverty.”

The INGOs document, People’s Action in Practice (2012:73) argues strongly:

“ActionAid should not engage in delivering basic services (either directly or through partner organisations) where we are not also contributing to empowerment and a more sustainable process of change. We never seek to act as an ongoing substitute or replacement for the government. However, we may respond to basic needs in the short term in ways that strategically strengthen the connections between people as rights-holders and their governments as duty bearers. Service delivery conceived in this way does not see people as beneficiaries of our charitable works, but is rather a vehicle for empowering people as rights activists.”

ActionAid in the document gave an example of a community where the closest school is five kilometres away and where children especially girls are not in school because of the distance. Moreover, in a context where the people have no connection with the Ministry of Education, the INGO may facilitate the analysis of power and creation of awareness that education is a human right by undertaking such actions as distributing the constitutions and laws of the country. The document claimed that ActionAid might help to organise a school action group to present the case and testimony of their daily experiences supported with research that details the number of children that are out of school because of the distance and the absence of transport facilities. In this way, ActionAid helps to support a
delegation including women to meet the district officer to talk about this issues. According to People’s Action in Practice (2012: 74):

“But, the response may be negative, with government officials saying they have no resources to build another school. We may then support further reflection and analysis by the community, working out the cost of building a school and where they could secure resources to help. We may also help the community negotiate with the government, for example, asking, “if we can get a school built, will the government guarantee to provide three trained teachers?” … there may be a strong case for ActionAid or a local partner to support people to build classrooms if the district education office agrees to supply trained teachers and maintain the school. Supporting the school construction may be an opportunity to challenge discrimination or raise awareness of rights. For example, we could challenge gender division of labour or ensure stigmatised local people are employed. We may help set up and build the capacity of a school management committee, with equal representation of women, raising awareness of other education rights beyond just access to school.”

Similarly, the Deputy Country Director of ActionAid claimed that providing service to the people only treats the symptoms of poverty and exclusion, while the roots of it are left unchallenged. According to the informant, ActionAid is now committed to minimal service provision in the short-term in collaboration with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners, focusing instead on strengthening people’s consciousness of rights and their actions to secure long-term accountability to deliver basic needs for their people, and to link them directly to government officials. The informant described how they provide minimal service especially where it is unavoidable, but as a means of bringing together different interest groups, the rights-holders, their communities and their organisations for awareness-raising or conscientisation to promote collective actions for social changes needed in their constituencies. She claimed that people that are living in
poverty could take on and confront more powerful forces that perpetuate poverty through organising, consciousness building and by mobilisations of movements of empowered people to spearhead their struggles to advance and claim rights. In her words:

“In ActionAid, we now design and execute service provision in collaboration with our intermediate NGO and CBO partners as a strategy to empower them and their communities so that they can eventually demand accountability from their governments for the provision of such services. We focus on using service delivery to enhance the voice of our partners from their rural communities to those in power as a key component of our empowerment programmes. For us, service provision reinforces our rights claiming approaches.”

The informant gave an example of one of their Local Rights Programmes in Northern Nigeria where communities in collaboration with the INGO built one block four classrooms, employed community teachers and some volunteers, and managed the school for six months because the government refused to attend to that need. To the informant, it took several protests, and advocacy visits by the children and the community members with the support of the INGO before the local and state governments were forced to register the school, provide more teachers, and built more classrooms. The informant claimed that before the school was established children had to walk more than 12 kilometres to attend school daily, that led to many of them dropping out from and some of the girls sent to the city to be a housemaid or get impregnated before the age of 15. The informant claimed that they worked with the community to establish 40 school management committees in the communities that led to government mandating the formation of committees in all Nigerian schools. The informant claimed that this is one of
how they popularise the voice of the needy communities to claim their rights. ActionAid, (2010:96) puts it concisely:

“Together with campaigning and solidarity, empowerment enables poor and excluded people to claim rights and make changes in their lives. Our main empowerment interventions are: facilitating awareness raising on the forces that perpetuate poverty and exclusion, the building of critical consciousness to enhance self-assertiveness and esteem, and designing and implementing advocacy strategies with our partners and not for them. Meeting basic needs is an important component of our approach and often used as an entry point and vehicle for supporting these main empowerment interventions.”

Also, a member of the Advocacy and Campaign Unit of ActionAid claimed that it is the role of government and other duty-bearers to provide essential services to the people, not as a work of benevolence but as obligations prescribed by human rights laws and not INGOs. The informant claimed that the INGO does not have the resources to provide for all the pressing needs of the people and their partners, but governments are established to manage the common resources equitably. The informant described how ActionAid has decided to shift their approach from being a charity-based organisation to working with their partners in building the knowledge and power within the people to confront those that have power over them and strengthen their participation in the design and process of development that concern their lives. The informant argues that this will make development outcomes effective and sustainable. For the informant, the previous approaches mainly freed governments from their obligations to the people and have yielded more poverty and marginalisation, while the few in power have “more to eat and dump into the bin” than many in Nigeria. In the words of the informant:
“Whenever we decide to provide essential services, we mainly design it to gain the trust and commitments of the people to the issues of power and their implications on their lives and their communities. It also serves as a model of good practice to our partners to appreciate the possibility of providing essential services effectively and efficiently. Specifically, we respect the people’s rights to participation in the planning, implementation and monitoring stages of the projects we jointly agreed on based on RBA. In short, we employ service provision to reinforce rights claiming.”

Relatedly, ActionAid’s head of Partnership and Local Rights Programmes claimed that they were guided RBA in their decisions to provide essential services with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in some communities to demonstrate a good practice to the government for replication.

Turning to Oxfam-Novib, all the informant from the INGO expressed a similar opinion with ActionAid that delivering essential social services to the poor and beneficiaries of development aid overlooked the underlying causes of poverty and exclusion. They claimed Oxfam-Novib previous focused majorly on providing food materials, buying school uniforms, constructing deep well in needy communities without targeting the structural causes of poverty. The informants claimed that they started to employ RBA since the 1990s. Oxfam (2014:2) stated:

“Working with RBA means that we are acknowledging that poverty is a denial of basic human rights and that all development work should aim at the universal realisation of human rights. RBA shapes how development programmes work to achieve these goals by making the personal experience of people living in poverty a priority. RBA encourages development practitioners to show respect for people living in poverty by working in ways that enable them to be agents in their own development. This means promoting values of equality, justice, and freedom and incorporating principles of participation, accountability and non-discrimination at every stage of the programme cycle.”
Moreover, the Associate Country Director claimed that in their partnership with local intermediate NGOs and CBOs, service delivery is provided in impoverished communities as a platform to gain entry and their confidence in rights work. According to the Oxfam-Novib official, such services often include building blocks of classrooms to promote people’s access to quality education, especially where the government has failed to provide such amenities close to the people. As she claimed, this is usually done not only to meet their educational needs but as an avenue to build their capacity to demand better services from their government, in line with the precepts of RBA. She stated:

“Our decisions to jointly provide services with our intermediate NGO and CBO partners is because it helps to raise their consciousness at an early entry point and informed by our joint commitments to RBA. We had an instance, whereby one of these communities took a local contractor to court on their own informed by their understanding of RBA because he failed to execute one of the projects awarded by the government in the community according to specification. They did that because they have seen the quality of what we jointly did together. Such examples encourage us that it is possible to promote people’s ownership of their development by employing service provision to promote rights.”

Moreover, another participant from Oxfam-Novib claimed that they often provide essential services to needy communities to reinforce their claim that access to services is a human right and also because it is hard at times to lobby government for better provision without having a model of good practice that they could follow.

The findings have shown that there is no difference in the way that Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid describe their motivations for using service delivery in partnership with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners. All the informants from both INGOs argued that their understandings and commitments inform their decisions to curtail their provision of essential services to the people to the principles and
values of RBA. The interviewees portrayed the INGOs as reassessing their role and strengthening their influences as drivers of beneficial change in social conditions that reinforce unequal access to development and poverty.

**Perspectives of the Intermediate NGO Informants**

Regarding their understanding of the meaning of RBA, the intermediate NGO partners of ActionAid thoroughly demonstrated that RBA’s prescriptions informed their operational decisions to increase focus on advocacy rather than service delivery. However, the responses from interviewees from the intermediate NGOs that work with Oxfam-Novib were mixed. Moreover, some of them did not clarify if their decisions to prioritise their commitment to RBA informed advocacy instead of service provision. For example, Social Action and CISLAC claimed that they are strictly advocacy based NGOs, whereas some of Oxfam-Novib’s other intermediate NGO informants emphasised the importance of the provision of essential services to needy communities in their work. The Director of Social Action, a partner of Oxfam-Novib, claimed that service delivery is the obligation of government to the people. The informant claimed that as an advocacy organisation, they prioritise capacity building with their CBO partners on the analysis of the structural causes of poverty and exclusion as well as how to articulate their needs to demand accountability from government. However, in some cases, the need arises to deliver minimal services to support social movements for change. The researcher did not also have access to interview CBO partners of Social Action on the ground; perhaps more insight could have been generated from what they do together.

On the other hand, the Coordinator of International Foundation for the Aged, a partner of Oxfam-Novib stated:
“With our meagre resources as NGO, we provide minimal services in the communities in collaboration with indigenous CBOs in the locality informed by RBA. That creates an enabling environment and trust in the people and their communities to embrace our work. We, therefore, provide enlightenment programme on rights and enhance their capacity to support their development in the long-term. We believe that if we are not there anymore, they will continue to ask for their rights and make their governments see the need to provide those essential services.”

Furthermore, a participant from CCEPE a partner of ActionAid gave an example of how the philosophy of RBA informed his organisation’s decision using service delivery as an entry strategy to a community through the construction of a water borehole. The Community leadership shared the water in such a way that the majority of the members benefitted from the project. For example, the community prepared a time table that allocates the use of the facility by a different section of the village, which prevented overuse. The participant claimed that whenever there is any mechanical fault in water borehole, all households in the community contribute money for repair and maintenance of the machine, which is a new development in the way they previously viewed and neglected government funded projects. According to the informant, in the past, the people and their organisations often viewed donor-funded or government projects, not as their property that needs to be managed and maintained by them. In the words of the informant:

“Service delivery cannot be ruled out entirely in our work. Our source of funding and commitment to RBA informs our decisions to deliver services in certain cases where people are in dire need of some infrastructural facilities.”

In the same vein, the Administrative Officer of JDPC claimed that because of their understandings and commitment to RBA, they discover that it is practically difficult
to establish a genuine partnership with grass-roots organisations and their communities with the intention of promoting long-term social changes without a tangible service to offer. The opinion of the informant suggests that service provision empowers people, although according to RBA, this should be done with the intention of enhancing their understanding of the issues of power and to self-organise to advance their rights, which would strengthen the legitimacy of advocacy efforts. For the informant, service provision is the starting point and a crucial component of RBA to achieve sustainable and inclusive development. According to the participants if there is no attempt by the NGOs to provide concrete services to the people at the point of entry for rights-based work, it can be hard to persuade the people and their CBOs to give their time, and resources to rights-based works. The informant claimed that RBA informed their decisions to employ service provisions as part of their operational approach to promote rights claiming. For her, minimal service provision became imperative because of the deplorable condition in which people live.

Although, the opinions of the interviewees from intermediate NGOs are diverse many of them claimed to demonstrate their commitment to RBA in practice by prioritising advocacy rather service provision. It suggests that RBA has a significant influence on the operational decisions of the participant INGOs and their intermediate NGO partners. These organisations represent themselves as bringing back politics into their work, which is crucial to promote social changes in the structural relations of power that shape the lives of the poor and the excluded in access to social and economic opportunities.

**Perspectives of CBO Informants**
As discussed in the previous chapter, the informants from CBOs interpret RBA as mainly a tool to help meet their essential needs as they work with their INGOs and their intermediate NGO partners. For instance, the Facilitator of Ilado CDC, a partner of both JDPC and ActionAid claimed that the INGO and the intermediate NGO emphasised at the start of their partnership that they have limited financial resources to provide for all their essential needs. They claimed that the INGO stated that governments obligated to provide essential social infrastructures to meet their needs. This can lead to creating self-worth or self-esteem that unlock the power within the people, which can ultimately lead to demanding accountability from those in the position of power. Similarly, from Okeso CDCs, a partner of CCEPE and ActionAid, an informant claimed that their engagements with the intermediate NGO mainly focus on how they can be empowered to advocate the government to meet their development needs. In the same way, the Facilitator of Wasinmi-Odunwo claimed that most of their partnership meetings or workshops are mostly concerned with raising awareness on why they are poor (promoting self-awareness and self-worth), and they work together (building power with) as a group to confront those that are governing the collective resources to meet their basic needs. This could lead to having power over people in power or having the power to claim negotiating spaces for social changes. Also, they many be invited to spaces to influence the decisions that shape their lives. According to the informant, they feel empowered based on their knowledge of RBA with the support of JDPC and ActionAid on different approaches to making government officials respond to their advocacy visits with positive results.

Furthermore, the Chairman of Oke-Agbede FCA, a partner of FADU and Oxfam claimed that in their partnership meetings they were made to be aware that government was instituted or elected by the people to manage their collective
wealth. However, the informant claimed that in collaboration with FADU and Oxfam they were able to access financial support from their state government in the form of agricultural inputs such as improved cocoa seedlings, farm machinery, and fertiliser to boost their work. Another participant from the FCA also claimed that the FADU in collaboration with Oxfam helped the farmers in the community to gain direct access to CONTINAF (a major international cocoa buyer and maker of chocolate), which assisted in curbing the exploitations of the middlemen, who in the past made cocoa farming virtually unprofitable. According to the informant, they are now proud to be valued actors in the international cocoa market.

Overall, on the provision of essential services by these set of NGOs, empirical observations have shown that the majority of them believe that they employ service delivery in RBA as an instrument of building solidarity with likeminded organisations. It also promotes the creation of local movements of the empowered people and their organisations. According to the findings, service provision continues to be used by NGOs as an operational approach to gain the trust and confidence of the people, build local movements, and relationship for a change. The findings reflect the assumption that groups may be organised around basic needs to promote their development (see Chhotray, 2007).

7.2. Rights-Based NGOs and Advocacy in Practice

Perspectives of INGOs

In the interviews, the participants from both ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib claimed that their commitment to RBA informed their decisions to increase the focus of their resources on advocacy work in their partnership with their local NGOs. They claimed that RBA emphasises that there must be more focus on creating rights awareness among the marginalised people and their organisations to combat the
underlying causes of their deprivations. RBA informed their decisions to support intermediate NGO and CBO partners to organise and hold duty-bears accountable for the provision of essential services as their rights. Most of the participants from the INGOs claimed that they premised the awareness creation on the notion that government as duty-bearers have the resources and capacity to provide these services for the people according to the values of RBA.

For ActionAid’s Adviser on Partnership and Local Rights Programme, a greater focus on the empowerment of the poor and their organisations on rights issues can mobilise more power on the side of the people to challenge the conditions that promote poverty and marginalisation. For him, the roots of powerlessness and poverty are the lack of voice in the affairs of their society, because of the unequal power arrangements in their contexts. The informant claimed that the awareness creation empowered their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners to organise themselves in collaboration with other likeminded organisations, social movements and other advocacy networks to be subjects and advocate for a change in the circumstances and power relations that defines their lives as poor and marginalised. In sum, it is giving voices to people living in conditions that are as a result of inequitable relations of power that disadvantages them in access to resources and opportunities. One may argue that people themselves are sometimes the instruments of oppression in the hands of the powerful based on ethnic, tribal or religious affiliations, but creating awareness may also help to discard those entrenched attitudes and beliefs. ActionAid’s People’s Action in Practice, (2012) claimed that the changes in consciousness and capacities of individuals and organisations might reflect how they see themselves and their position about those that have power over them. The change may also reflect how they see the underlying causes and consequences of poverty in their lives, what
they now know about their rights and public policies and benefits to inform the types of actions they take (ActionAid, 2012). Arguably this may also have to do with their skills and capacities for critical analysis and the ability to organise themselves and communicate their needs for positive changes in their lives.

Most importantly, according to the opinions of the informants from ActionAid, rights-based advocacy is different from the conventional notion of advocacy, where advocacy organisations that are not in close connection with the people but lobby for a policy change on behalf of the poor and their local organisations. For one informant, such advocacy often throws up a question of representation and legitimacy for INGOs and is often ineffective and unsustainable. In contrast, ActionAid claims that their advocacy work strictly focuses on enabling the people, their communities, and organisations to advocate or speak for themselves. For one informant, rights-based advocacy enhances the legitimacy of such actions and leave no room for governments to hide under the notion that INGOs do not have locus standi to impose their imported ideas on them. Similarly, the Deputy Country Director of ActionAid claimed that any organisation that is truly guided by RBA would focus more on supporting the people and their organisation to speak out for themselves. According to her, it could also mean that they are also not respecting the rights of their intermediate NGOs and CBO partners and their communities in the decision-making processes and actions that concern their lives if they continue to occupy their space. In her words:

"We do not take the space of our local intermediate NGO and CBO partners because different contexts demand different approaches. Local nuances make it impossible to dictate to local development actors. We normally look at how to boost their capacities to deal with the power structures in their locality. Moreover, when we notice weaknesses, we only support them to take ownership of the issue because we achieve
better results when people identify advocacy issues themselves. However, sometimes, we support our intermediate NGO and CBO partners and their communities to engage in advocacy to duty-bearers. Where advocacy is not generating the required response, we embark on a campaign with the critical mass of people. The power dynamic underlines all these. We use advocacy to unlock the power of the people, and collectively we exploit what we call power over duty-bearer to do the desirables.”

Turning to perspectives of the participants from Oxfam-Novib, the Associate Country Director claims that in collaboration with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners, they believe that empowering people to advocate for their rights is more beneficial in the long-run than advocating on their behalf based on their experience on the field. The informant argues:

“Oxfam-Novib believe that the empowerment of that experience poverty and marginalisation to advocate for themselves is the key to achieving our goal based on the rights-based approach. Empower local organisations and their members with skills and they will work out of poverty, empower them with access to market and they will be able to demand and negotiate with powerful market players and do well. Empowered rights-holders and their organisations can work with their government to demand accountability and transparency to move their society forward. Empowerment is the strategies of Oxfam; fostering transparency and accountability and gender justice. For example, gender justice programme for us points to the fact that we want to address and redress injustice as a result of patriarchy- a system that allocates all resources and rights to men. A society where there is equality of opportunity for both men and women moves on.”

The informant claimed that Oxfam-Novib’s decision to increase their focus on advocacy energises their intermediate NGO and CBO partners to encourage women in the communities to aspire to political offices because they have been marginalised too much in that area. According to the development worker, they
have introduced the development of leadership skills and vocational training for young girls in various communities to confront patriarchy. She claimed that every woman has equal rights to men. Hence a cumulative approach to development through RBA is what Oxfam-Novib sees as key to creating a just world without poverty. For the informant, a closed society where people do not have equal rights to political participation, especially in authoritarian societies like Africa, is bound to experience inequality and deprivations. The development worker claimed that that is why Oxfam-Novib has decided in collaboration with the people to confront unequal power structures typical of the communities they work. The informant claimed movements of empowered people could take actions to rebalance the unequal relations of power. Hence they claimed that they allow their local partners to lead the advocacy movement, while their role as INGO is to support them to be able to do so. According to her, they encourage the people to engage with governments to realise those things they desired including the provision of essential services, accountability of governments, and protection from violence and discriminations.

The Programme Officer of Oxfam-Novib claimed that in Nigeria, one of their frameworks called “Raising Her Voice” assisted a woman rights coalition in producing a Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill. The informant claimed that Nigerian government adopted it for domestication of the African Union’s Women’s Rights Protocol, while the support Violence Against Persons Prohibition Bill was passed into law by the Nigerian government in 2013 (see also Green, 2015b). The informant claimed that the main focus of Oxfam-Novib is to end poverty, which they conceived as injustice and the most viable way to confront it in the long-term is by empowering people to influence decisions that concern their lives. Oxfam’s Strategic Plan for 2013-2019 supported the view above and stated that the INGO
had shifted its approach towards advocacy based on their understanding that exclusion, inequality, and injustice are the real cause of poverty and not merely a lack of income. According to the document:

“The most effective solutions lie in people demanding their rights to livelihoods and decent work and working together to increase living standards and reduce vulnerability. Oxfam works to enable people to become fully integrated and respected members of their society and economy. We support people to claim and exercise their basic rights, to life and security, a sustainable livelihood, and essential services to sustain life such as health and education. The right to be heard and to have a recognised identity are also a fundamental part of human well-being. These rights are explicitly grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations, and the relevant Treaties and Covenants.”

The findings of this study suggest the internal documents and the opinions of informants in both INGOs on these issues are very similar.

**Perspectives of the Intermediate NGO Informants**

The intermediate NGOs that work with Oxfam-Novib claimed that they premised their decisions to increase their focus on advocacy on their commitment to implement RBA in practice. For instance, a participant from NANTS, a partner of Oxfam-Novib claimed that they work more on advocacy in collaboration with their CBO and INGO partners to create rights awareness from the grass-roots to the national level on the rights of the people to better conditions of life. The President of NANTS’ Secretariat claimed that his organisation funds research nationwide on different issues that promote marginalisation and poverty. According to him, they often publish the outcomes of such research and strive to distribute it widely to government offices within Nigeria and to other African countries to inform
evidence-based advocacy and campaign for social movements for change in the unequal power relations that promote poverty and exclusion.

Equally, from ActionAid’s intermediate partners, the Executive Director of CCEPE, a partner of ActionAid claimed that RBA informed their decision to increase their focus on advocacy in partnership with their CBOs. According to the informant, sometime they collaborate with their intermediate NGO and CBO to demand accountability from duty-bearers instead of directly providing essential services to the people at the grass-roots. The informant claimed that advocacy as a strategy is relevant to the conditions of lives in the communities they work. In the same manner, the Legal Adviser of JDPC, a partner of ActionAid stated:

“If we as JDPC go to a government office to advocate for a community, the first question they will ask us is are you members of that community. That is why we normally support out CBO partners and their communities to advocate for their rights. Our focus is to broaden their knowledge on the issues at hand, assist them in articulating their concerns and organise them to approach the government to claim those rights.”

Again, the Deputy Director of JDPC, a partner of ActionAid claimed that advocacy could be useful if the people and their organisations championed it, especially when they are empowered and better organised to do so. He claimed that free and meaningful participation and not consultation of the people and their organisations in advocacy work could engender a change in their lives. In sum, the empirical data demonstrated that the majority of the intermediate NGO that works with both INGOs to increase their focus on advocacy.

**CBOs’ Perspectives on Advocacy**
The perceptions of CBOs/CDCs on the issue of advocacy as spelt out in RBA are different from those of their intermediate NGO and INGO partners. To them, both advocacy and service provision are tools to meet their basic needs either from NGOs or other duty-bearers. For example, an informant from Ilosi CDC, a partner of FADU and Oxfam-Novib claimed that their work with FADU officials encouraged them to be more collaborative as members of a local organisation to promote development in this community. The informant claimed that the collaboration led to increased profit from their farming operations because they have been granted access to international market and also shielded from the exploitation of market intermediaries or local marketers. The informants, the state and local government are also learning from FADU to stabilise the prices of cocoa produce, having exposed the secrecy that traditionally characterised the affairs of their government. The informant claimed that their state government responded to the positive changes in their lives and farming activities based on their advocacy trips to their offices. According to the informant, the government provided improved Cocoa varieties and some pesticides to assist their farming business. Also, the Chairman of Igangan FCA, a partner of FADU and Oxfam-Novib claimed that they are benefitting more from the government now because of their advocacy work and because they sometimes embark on a campaign to make the government listen to them. The interview data corroborates the fact that having access to financial resources by community-based organisations can enhance advocacy as a useful empowerment tool.

Likewise, the perceptions of the CBOs that are partners of both CCEPE and JDPC, and ActionAid are similar. According to the Facilitator of Gbago CDC:
"We can boost our school enrolment being aware of the centrality of education to our future and development, based on the empowerment programmes from our partnership CCEPE and ActionAid. We encouraged our community members to support their children’s education with and community development levies to support development projects, which helped us to build a block of two classrooms and started a primary school in our community. We went for advocacy to the Local Government Council on the school, and they later approved the take-off of the school and provided qualified teachers. We are happy to see our children wearing school uniform and learning to speak the English language.”

Furthermore, the participants in the meeting claimed that when rights-holders and their organisations advocate for themselves, it confers legitimacy and credibility to their demands from their government, especially if NGOs demonstrate alternative ways of meeting those needs. Again, the participant claimed that advocacy based work could encourage local organisations and their communities to learn new skills as well lead to a renewed confidence in extending their struggle for new rights and social justice based on their emerging needs. Therefore, providing education with a focus on the raising awareness of rights is an essential component of rights-based advocacy. However, providing education based on the conventional notion of development would not be enough to create social transformation in the lives of the poor and excluded people. Based on the lived experience of the researcher, providing education alone has failed to redress power inequalities that disadvantage many Nigerians in access to resources and opportunities. Many ‘educated illiterate’ still think that the way to emancipation from poverty and underdevelopment is to ‘wait-for-our-own-time-to-chop’ - meaning our time to get to a position of authority to corruptly enrich ourselves. It makes many of them look away from the forces that perpetuate poverty and exclusion (see also Lindberg, 2003:124; Igbuzor, 2008; Smith, 2010; Lampert,
Formal education is not a guarantee that citizens will become active in exercising their rights to promote inclusive development.

7.3. **A Balance between Advocacy and Transformative Service Delivery**

Notwithstanding the above perspectives from key informants from the three sets of NGOs, some of the informants claimed that they are combining or balancing service delivery with advocacy for better outcomes. The claim supports the literature that suggests that it is possible to see more efforts by organisations to combine advocacy and service delivery in a new, integrated development approach (see also Chhotray, 2007; Guijt, 2007; Kindornay et al. 2012). A participant from CISLAC, partners of Oxfam, claimed that according to the philosophy of RBA, the essence of advocacy is to enhance the capacity of the people to demand provision of essential services as rights from their government. The participant claimed that it is not alien to rights-based thinking if they decide to provide immediate services for the people in marginalised communities in case of a compelling need for such services, primarily when it is designed to complement rights claiming. In his view, both advocacy and service delivery focuses on the same things. He stated:

“What are we advocating for? ... Without service provision in the communities we work, advocacy work will be flogging a dead horse.”

Another participant from CCEPE, a partner of ActionAid claimed that service provision is a viable means of promoting advocacy as the essential component of RBA. The participant claimed that in many instances, governments often respond to advocacy work when there is an established physical project to back up the demands of the people. According to the informant, they have decided to
innovatively by combining advocacy with service delivery in their work with local partners, but not to undermine the latter. According to the development worker, if there is a model of good practice to demonstrate to CBOs and governments regarding a viable way of providing essential services to their people, it is often a compelling starting point in the struggle for rights. Overall, the findings have shown that the majority of the INGO and intermediate NGO informants commitment to RBA informed their decisions to provide essential services to the extent to which it enhances the empowerment of the people, hence engaging in the dual approach of promoting immanent and intentional development through the transformative provision of essential social services. The findings indicate that ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners are curtailing the direct provision of essential services to the people contrary to the expectation of the literature. However, in contrast, some intermediate NGO and CBO partners of Oxfam-Novib are not curtailing their service provision, but they are increasing their focus on advocacy, which aligns with the expectation of the literature. The main challenges for these organisations are how they can maintain the link between rights-based advocacy with a particular focus on changing underlying power relations and delivering essential services to needy communities. A necessary caveat is in order: this an exploratory study. Therefore, it is difficult to generalise the findings, hence more research is required from different sets of organisations and in different contexts to verify these claims. Also, it is typical of rights-based development to develop differently in different places. Oxfam (2014:2) argues that the problems faced by people living in poverty and the solutions that will work for them will be different in every context. Hence Oxfam-Novib does not try to employ a strict idea of how rights-based development should look in practice.
7.4. Conclusion

The discussion above centred on the extent to which RBA determines the decisions of rights-based NGOs on service provision and advocacy work based on the case studies of Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in Nigeria. The extant literature suggests that development-based NGOs that are committed to the philosophy of RBA will increasingly boost their advocacy work, but will not curtail their service provision in their partnership. The empirical observations both support and contradict the propositions of the literature. The interview data suggests that RBA informed the decisions of ActionAid and their local intermediate NGOs to boost their advocacy work increasingly. However, they are reducing their role as service provider to the people, but only deliver essential services to the extent to which it enhances their access, trust, and commitment of their local partners as well as provide a model of good practice to the government. On the other hand, Oxfam-Novib and their intermediate NGOs and CBOs appeared to support the literature in that they are increasing their advocacy work, but not curtailing their service provision. The findings of this study have shown that the majority of the key informants from the three levels of NGOs based their decisions according to their commitment to RBA. They claimed that the traditional project-based approach to development can help to meet the immediate needs of the people at the grass-roots. However, it is limited in addressing the structural causes of poverty and marginalisation in poor communities, which is the focus of the rights framework. Therefore, this chapter argues that INGOs and their intermediate NGO partners are combining minimal service provision with advocacy to strengthen the capacities of their CBO partners and their communities to claim their rights.
The study confirms the suggestion in the literature that INGOs and their local partners will increasingly focus on advocacy work. However, it contradicts the assumptions that rights-based NGO will not reduce their direct delivery of essential services to the people (see Macpherson, 2009; Kindornay et al. 2012; Chalabi, 2014). What is the significance of the differences in the understandings of the philosophy of RBA by INGOs and Intermediate NGOs from their CBO partners? This study suggests that the INGOs and the majority of their intermediate NGO partners have a good awareness and feel that they have a good understanding of what are the needs and the demands of the CBOs and their communities are. Their understandings of RBA by INGOs and many of their intermediate NGO partner lead them to discuss the need to be conscious or very sensitive to the views on the ground that are relevant to the demands of rights philosophy.

Although CBO participants do not get into the technical rhetoric of rights, the principles of RBA still manifests in their activities and engagement within their organisations and with their INGO and intermediate NGO partners. They are also very sensitive to the importance of listening to the views of their people and communities to claim their rights for better service provision. In order words, despite the differences in the level of engagement and understandings of RBA, the organisations converge on the basic normative principles that underpin the approach. Notwithstanding the empirical observations discussed in the previous finding chapters, the interview extracts have shown that the adoption and implementation of RBA in their work and partnerships are facing some challenges, which will be the focus of the next chapter.
CHAPTER EIGHT: CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING RBA BY NGOS

8.0. Introduction

The implementation of RBA should inform a significant change in the way development-based INGOs work with their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners (Slim, 2002; Eyben, 2003; Uvin, 2004, 2007; Crawford and Andreassen, 2015). Previous literature suggests that rights-based NGOs that work together should have a partnership built on mutual accountability, openness, and the empowerment of local organisations to challenge the traditional power structures that cause poverty and inequality (Bebbington et al. 2007). In other words, INGOs
and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners are exhorted to democratise the plans, policies, and processes of development (Macpherson, 2009; Brehm et al., 2005; Elbers, 2012). Understanding the power arrangements within the aid industry itself and the contexts in which these sets of NGO work is critical for them because power is “socially embedded and internalised” and it also requires diverse learning approaches to grasp its dynamics (Pettit, 2006:70; Gaventa, 2006).

Therefore, implementing RBA in practice can be challenging for NGOs, especially intermediate NGOs and CBOs in the global South that lack the resources (human and financial) to make such changes. The security risks inherent in democratising development is also a big challenge (O’Brien, 2003; Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Lansdown, 2005; Hickey and Mitlin, 2009; Macpherson, 2009).

Although there are scholarly studies on the potential and actual challenges of implementing RBA by NGOs, none have directly investigated how these affect the decisions that NGO actors make on strategic, operational and financial matters (Offenheiser and Holcombe, 2001; Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Hickey and Mitlin, 2009). The literature did not also look at the challenges at different levels of NGOs – at INGO, intermediate NGO, CBO levels. Therefore, this chapter attempts to cover the gap in the literature and aims to examine how the challenges involved in implementing RBA affect the NGOs’ strategic, operational and financial decisions and will look it at three different levels of organisations in Nigeria.

The chapter has three parts. Regarding actors specific understandings of the meaning of RBA, the first part presents the influence of donors’ preferences for physical shapes the decision of these sets of organisation on strategic, operational and financial matters, while the second part examines gender discriminatory and cultural influences of these decisions. Also, the next section examines the potential
security these organisations encounter on ground and how it shapes their strategic, operational, and financial decisions. The last part summarises the key findings. According to the perspectives of the key informants, there are three major challenges to implementing RBA shape their strategic, operational and financial decisions: First, the preferences of most official, private international and INGO donors that continue projectise their funding (see Campolina and Philips, 2015). For INGOs, it is not only because service provision can generate quick and demonstrable outcomes to satisfy their donors, but the majority of them have been long-term implementers of safety nets to excluded people and communities from the benefits of globalisation. The majority of them have also developed their capacities and skills to implement service provision. However, key INGO informants claimed that their commitment to RBA shaped their decisions to focus more on building their capacities and also strengthen the capacities of their intermediate NGO and CB partners to implement rights framework. The intermediate NGO informants expressed similar opinions.

Regarding operational decisions, the INGO and intermediate NGO informants claimed that they are providing more capacity building programmes to enable them and their CBO partners have an increasing focus on advocacy. The INGOs and intermediate NGO partners claimed that RBA influenced their decisions to accommodate the concerns and needs of their local partners into their rights work, particularly CBOs and their communities, by bridging the gap between advocacy and service delivery. They also claimed that because most of their staff members are more skillful in implementing service delivery projects, hence they have decided to dedicate a chunk of their financial resources towards improving rights consciousness and advocacy skills among their staff members and their CBO partners’ to implement RBA. CBO actors differ in their opinions on the preferences
of donors for service delivery because they do not see the preference for physical projects as contrary to their understanding of what RBA stands for – fulfilling the development needs of the people. Nevertheless, they claimed that they participate in the training, workshops, advocacy and other capacity building programmes organised by their INGO and intermediate NGO partners.

Second, all the participants from the three sets of NGOs acknowledged the issue of potential security risks to their lives such as the threat of arrest from governments and harassment, kidnapping and molestation from those that see RBA as conflictual as a significant challenge for rights-based work. The INGO, Intermediate NGO and CBO participants claimed that this challenge influenced their strategic decisions. The informants from all the organisations claimed that they focus more on designing and implementing rights work in ways that reduce or eliminate such risks. Regarding operational decisions, they claimed that they do have a joint analysis of potential security threats and take necessary precautions to mitigate against them. According to the informants, such threats informed their decision to allocate adequate funds to resource their strategic and operational decisions. There is no significant difference between three sets of NGOs in this area and between Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid.

Finally, the participants from the INGOs and their intermediate partners claimed that they face stiff resistance to the adherence to RBA values of gender equality from traditions that permit gender discrimination and limits the space for women involvement in NGOs. However, this shaped their decisions to increasingly focus on women’s empowerment in their partnership strategy notwithstanding the decline in men’s engagement and interest in rights work when they insist on the principle of gender inclusiveness. In their operations, they claimed they had
increased empowerment programmes for women to have equal access to resources and opportunities, which occasionally involve financial support to women and their organisations. Also, they claimed that gender discriminatory practices determined their decisions to allocate more of their funds to support women’s empowerment as RBA guides them. From the perspectives of CBO informants, the finding show on one hand that some of the participants believe in gender equality informed by their knowledge of RBA. CBO informants claimed that their knowledge of RBA shapes their strategic decision to focus on promoting gender equality in their local organisations as well as the allocation of substantial part of their funds to implement women’s empowerment programmes. On the other hand, some CBO participants aligned with patriarchal traditions that limit the active involvement of women in the affairs of NGOs, including women themselves. Nevertheless, CBO participants claimed they focus more on improving rights awareness within their organisations to promote gender justice. A caveat is that the findings of this chapter are based interview data.

8.1. Preferences for ‘Quick Fix’ Results by Aid Donors

The existing literature suggests that donors prefer projects that can generate quick and easily demonstrable development outcomes. The following sections present the views of key informants from INGO, intermediate NGO, and CBO respectively.

From the perspectives of the INGOs

Informants from both ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib expressed similar perspectives on how the challenges to RBA influence their strategic, operational and financial decisions. Most the INGO informants claimed that the preferences of many donors
and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners for purely service provision instead of rights-based intervention is one of the major challenges to rights-based work since it is easier for service providers to achieve demonstrable outcomes to show how their aid benefits the poor directly. In addition, the majority of the informant claimed that they were previously equipped mainly skills and capacities to deliver essential services to needy communities. The informants claimed that they faced the challenges of building new sets of skills to implement rights-based programmed when their organisations adopted RBA. However, most INGO participants claimed that such preferences informed their strategic decisions premised on the philosophy of RBA to increase their focus on promoting rights consciousness, rights-based advocacy, and capacity building for their staff members and for their intermediate NGO and CBO partners to translate to rights-based interventions.

Operationally, INGO participants claimed that they conduct more awareness creation on rights, providing training on rights-based programming, advocacy campaigns within their organisations and for intermediate NGO and CBO partners. According to the INGO informants, they conduct training workshops to improve the capacities of their intermediate NGO and CBO partners on different approaches to analysing rights conditions in their constituencies, on legal matters as well as on how to articulate their needs as claims. Also, the INGO informants also claim that they focus more on showcasing successful rights-based projects to their intermediate NGO and CBO partners as a model of good practice and to boost their confidence on RBA. However, they claimed that such operational decisions make the initial take-off on rights-based work slow and resource-intensive. The findings align with the expectations of the literature (see Harris-Curtis et al. 2005). On financial issues, INGO participants claimed that part of their funds support local
partners’ capacity building and other training on RBA, while new members of staff with legal expertise were employed to support the implementation of their strategy.

According to the Associate Country Director of Oxfam-Novib, the preferences of some official and international/local private donors for quick and demonstrable results rather than a focus on the empowerment of their intermediate NGO and CBO partners to claim their rights is a significant challenge for implementing a rights framework. For the participant, such a stance limits the funds available for rights-based work but makes service provision more attractive to the intermediate NGOs and CBOs. The informant claimed that this challenge determined their decisions to pay more attention to promoting rights consciousness and building the capacity of their staff members and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners. Operationally, the Project Officer of Oxfam-Novib claimed that they had increased the number and intensity of training and workshops for their members of staff and their intermediate and CBO partners on rights-focused programming.

In like manner, the Deputy Director of ActionAid stated:

“"The key challenge to rights-based programming is getting donors to fund long-term people capacity building as embedded in RBA as well as the preferences of our local partners to delivering services in the communities they work. However, in collaboration with our local intermediate NGO and CBO partners, we are focusing mainly on promoting critical awareness on rights because of its potential to challenge unequal power relationships that perpetuate poverty. Hence, we premised our strategies, operation, and finance on RBA, which guides our members of staffs, partnerships and work with local partners.""
Moreover, ActionAid’s Adviser on Partnership and Local Rights Programme claimed that donor’s preferences for payment by results shaped their decisions to focus on promoting rights awareness and values within ActionAid increasingly and among their intermediate NGO and CBO partners to reinforce the commitment of local organisations to implementing RBA. The informant claimed that the skills and capacities of their staff members and their partners need to be enhanced to implement RBA. Therefore they claimed to have decided to dedicate more of their time and human resources on regular training programmes, workshops, and advocacy campaigns to boost the capacities of their intermediate NGO and CBO partners. However, the participant claimed that they support rights-based programming with minimal service delivery to needy communities to build their trust and confidence of local NGO partners. Consequently, this informed their decisions to allocate more funds to local empowerment programmes and capacity building workshops especially on legal matters for their staff members and their intermediate NGO and CBO staff members.

**From the Perspectives of Intermediate NGOs**

The perspectives of the intermediate NGOs’ informants are similar to the views above. A participant from CISLAC, partner of Oxfam-Novib claimed that at the initial stage of implementing RBA, some CBO officials saw the empowerment approach as time-consuming and implying a cut to their provisions of essential services. The participant also claimed that most CBO actors lack the skills or capacity needed to translate to RBA but the intermediate NGO decided as a strategy to focus more on providing platforms for advocacy campaigns. Also, the Executive Director of Social Action, a partner of Oxfam-Novib, claimed that the preference of donors and their CBO partners alike for service delivery informed
their decisions to engage legal experts in working with their grass-roots partners. The informant claimed that the engagement of legal expert is to boost CBO’s engagement with the government to claim their rights, which have yielded powerful advocacy efforts, although such decisions are financially demanding. It is important to note that these two intermediate NGO partners of Oxfam-Novib are traditionally advocacy-based organisations, but are now embracing rights-based interventions.

Furthermore, intermediate NGOs that partner with ActionAid expressed similar opinions on how donor’s preferences for project-based funding shaped their strategic, operational, and financial decisions. The Executive Director of CCEPE, a partner of ActionAid, claimed that to overcome the challenges of the preferences of some donors and CBOs for project-based funding, the intermediate NGO strategically decided to invest more of their time on capacity-building and increasing rights awareness among their CBO partners. Operationally the informant claimed that they provide frequent training and advocacy trips as well as strengthening partnership ties through an embedded culture of honesty, transparency, and accountability. According to the informant, they deliver some services as a model of good practice to CBOs and to spur advocacy efforts in their different constituencies.

Moreover, according to the Legal Adviser of JDPC, a partner of ActionAid, their strategic focus on transforming the conventional NGO partnership based on service provision into a rights-based intervention influenced their decisions to acquire new skills and expertise on advocacy and human rights laws. The participant claimed that this could help to confront the challenges of widespread illiteracy and the lack of basic knowledge of individual rights at the grass-roots
level. For instance, the participant claimed that some of their local CBO partners’ fatalistic or strong faith-based attitude of let’s-leave-them-to-God (the belief that God appoints leaders and as such, they are not to challenge them) makes the message on making government accountable “hard to sell” to local people. Nevertheless, for the participant, the challenges to implementing RBA determined their decisions to commit more time and financial resources on training local actors on skills to take on rights work as well as working together to advocate for rights in their domains in their day-to-day activities.

**From the Perspectives of CBOs**

From the interview data, the typical expectation of CBO actors is that their INGO and intermediate NGOs partners should focus more on providing services to address infrastructural deficits in their communities, which does not fit well with the rights-based partnership. Nevertheless, the participants claimed that the increased rights awareness among their members on what the roles of NGOs and government are in providing social amenities shaped their decisions to collaborate with their INGO and intermediate NGO partners to increase the focus on empowerment programmes on rights issues, in their partnerships meetings and workshops.

A participant from Oke-Agbede FCA, a partner of FADU and Oxfam-Novib, claimed that they are broadening rights consciousness among their members. Regarding how they implement this strategy, the participants claimed that they often involve opinion leaders or a prominent personality that believes in rights from their various communities in their training and partnership meetings with their intermediate NGO partners, to boost local support for rights-based interventions. The Facilitator of Okeso CDC, a partner of CCEPE and ActionAid, claimed that broadening rights
consciousness among their members and communities helps to promote a higher concentration on how to claim their rights from duty-bearers through rights-based advocacy. Most CBO informants claimed that they fund their trips to attend rights-based training and capacity development as well as on designing and implementing advocacy campaigns. The belief on the positive impact of rights awareness cut across all the CBO partners of ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib and their intermediate organisations. However, these informants may have given responses that they think are socially appropriate to the researcher, and therefore the data may not accurately capture their beliefs or behaviour.

From the above discussion, the three sets of NGOs (INGO, intermediate NGOs, and CBOs) state that they are aware of the challenges that are inherent in the implementation of RBA – mainly donor’s traditional preferences for service provision to needy communities and the demand for a ‘quick fix’ and demonstrable outcomes. Communities also make these demands. However, the interviewees state that these challenges informed their decisions to adapt their strategies, operations, and finances to promote a greater focus on improving rights awareness in their organisations and communities because of their strong commitment to RBA especially the INGOs and their intermediate NGO partners. For the CBOs, the findings showed that their primary motivations are perhaps to meet the infrastructural needs of their constituencies through their INGO and intermediate NGO partners. Financially, more resources are invested in improving rights awareness and capacity to implement RBA in their partnership engagements, which operationally translate into more training, workshops, and advocacy efforts by participant organisations. Note that despite making repeated requests, the researcher did not have access to the financial statements of these
organisations to trace the pattern of funding since the adoption of RBA to verify these claims.

8.2. **Fear of Victimisation of Local NGO Partners**
Another key challenge to implementing RBA by INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners is the fear of victimisation from those that perceive rights-based work as against their interests. The following section discusses some of their views.

**INGOs’ Perspectives**

The Associate Country Director of Oxfam-Novib claimed that the implementation of RBA with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners exposes them to risks such as unlawful arrest and detention, especially local NGO actors. The informant stated that there is a common perception among their intermediate NGO and CBO partners that they are potentially being exposed to violence because government at all levels treat them as dissidents and instruments of destabilising the traditions of a or peace of the country. However, official actors often tolerate the activities of foreign NGOs to avoid international condemnation. The Head of Partnership and Local Rights Programme of ActionAid expressed a similar opinion:

> “On many occasions, our members of staff and particularly our local partners have been faced with the threat of arrest, molestation, and kidnapping. The aggression mainly comes from corrupt politicians and government officials who see people advocating for their rights as a threat to their selfish interests. Such antagonistic behaviour from government discourages local NGOs from rights-based work. Sometimes NGO officials get arrested on trumped-up charges.”

However, the informant claimed that the potential security risks they face shaped their strategic decisions to be more conscious of such issues and map out ways of
mitigating against such risks. Operationally, they claimed they collaborate with their local intermediate NGO and CBO actors to undertake a concise analysis of the security situation in all their areas of engagement and design appropriate mechanisms to reduce or eliminate potential risks to their members of staff and partners. The Deputy Director of ActionAid stated that their commitment to RBA shaped their decisions to critically evaluate security threats inherent in the way they conduct their work in the communities they work with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners. The participant stated that they had cancelled some advocacy trips or campaigns to avoid danger and save their staff members and those of their partners from harm. Financially, the NGO official claimed that they sought to mitigate against a potential breach of security by spending more money to create a secure environment for them and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners to work. The informant claimed that such spending includes the cost of hiring security personnel in some instances to protect them and their intermediate NGO and CBO actors, where it is possible.

**Intermediate NGOs’ Perspectives**

Turning to the perspectives of intermediate NGOs, a respondent from Social Action, a partner of Oxfam-Novib, claimed that the fear that some CBO actors have of victimisation from some officials of local government and traditional institutions makes their engagement with RBA more onerous. The informant claimed there are instances of arrest of their staff members and those of people they partner with when they advocate with the people to demand the fulfilment of basic rights of the people to social amenities or political participation. The informant claimed that such actions by government officials entrenched a fear for their lives and an “I do not want to talk” attitude from their CBO partner. However,
she claimed that as a strategy at the outset of any intervention, potential security risks are analysed, and ways to mitigate against them are built-in into their programmes. For the participant, one such mitigating measure is the involvement of media organisations and the use of social media to publicise any act of aggression from antagonists of rights work, which helps in reducing security risks.

In addition, the Programmes Officer of CCEPE, a partner of ActionAid, claimed that there is also the challenge of dealing with government enacting laws to create barriers or to frustrate the move by the people to demand their rights. However, they have decided based on RBA to monitor government activities that relate to their work especially at the national and state house of assembly for any anti-NGO policies. The informant claimed that usually publicise any anti-people policies, which often elicits a public outcry to compel or prevent the enactment of such laws. The informant gave an example of how the government of a state continues secretly to pay the salary and allowances as well as the pension of a former governor who was currently a senator in the country. The development worker claimed that they publicised the atrocity, which generated public outcry and embarrassment for the government, which eventually led to a court case. In the response, the government attempted to enact a law that civil society organisation must seek permission from the governor’s office before they secured access to information, but the people frustrated the enforcement of that law. For the informant, the government often brings up tribal or religious sentiments to cause disagreement and conflict within the leadership of intermediate NGOs and CBOs, but increasing political awareness based on RBA among their CBO partners neutralises such sentiments. According to the informant, these activities shaped their financial decision to allocate some funds for media coverage of their
programmes as well as to sensitise the public on the security challenges to their officials from the government and their cronies.

**CBOs’ Perspectives**

The Facilitator of Wasinmi-Odunwo CDC, a partner of JDPC and ActionAid cited an instance where the government arrested their community leader for allowing the protests by local CBOs in his domain. The government subsequently disposed of the village head from his position and installed a pliant one. However, the informant claimed that their increasing legal awareness and access to legal experts increased their confidence in the rights framework and informed their decisions to challenge the government in court on the deposed village head, which is attracting more support for their work in the community. Another respondent from Ilado CDC, a partner of JDPC and ActionAid claimed that the chairman of the CDC and some members were arrested on trumped up charges by their local government chairman because they protested at the council secretariat on the lack of portable water in their community. Similarly, the Secretary to Shoolu CDC, a partner of CCEPE and ActionAid claimed that the government arrested 75 people when they prevented the ruling party from rigging a local government election in favour of their councillorship candidate. They claimed that the government candidate was unpopular in the community based on their commitment to transparency in the electoral process. The informant claimed that the following morning police officers invaded their communities and arrested any male members of the community they found at home. Moreover, a participant in a focus group interview from Oke-Agbede FCA, partner of FADU and Oxfam-Novib claimed that as informed by RBA, they do not allow security threats to discourage them from demanding accountability from their governments. The participant
claimed that as a strategy to outwit antagonists of rights, they usually write a formal letter to the security agencies in collaboration with Oxfam and FADU using their legal team informing them of any of such advocacy visit to government offices. According to the participant, substantial funds are spent to ensure the security of their members of staff and for CBO actors by Oxfam and FADU. The participant claimed that JDPC and ActionAid they often provide vehicles and fuel for security officials who often claim that they have neither vehicles nor fuel to provide security for the people during campaigns or protest.

Therefore, based on the opinion of the participants from INGOs, intermediate NGOs, and CBOs, RBA informed the strategic focus of analysing security risks inherent in the way they carry out their work. The outcomes of such analysis guide their operations to mitigating against such threats. However, the findings have shown that dealing with inherent security risks in the implementation of RBA by these set of organisations involves collaborative efforts. However, the INGOs and the intermediate NGOs are responsible for financing such effort. CBOs are meant to be conscious of the security threats at all time and to convey any potential breach of security to their INGO and intermediate NGO partners to take appropriate action. While the intermediate NGOs and INGOs can have a better understanding of government laws and policies on security issues, CBOs have access to relevant information on-the-ground and the legitimacy to confront adverse reactions from the would-be perpetrator of violence.

8.3. **Culture of Discrimination and Exclusion Against Women**

Some of the research participants from the three types of NGOs claimed that gender discriminatory attitudes inhibit the active participation of women in the management and activities of NGOs contrary to the spirit of RBA. However, this
challenge to the implementation of RBA shaped their strategic and operational approaches to rights-based work, while they allocate more funds on mainstreaming women’s agency in their partnership and organisations.

**Opinions of INGOs**

According to ActionAid (2012), they prioritise women issues informed by RBA because women play a crucial role in food production, processing, and provisioning, notwithstanding numerous challenges they face. The challenges include inadequate access to land and productive resources, to a disproportionate high care burden and lack of power in decision-making that concerns their lives (AidAid, 2012). To promote concrete and beneficial changes in their lives requires a focus on redressing the power imbalance based on patriarchy. ActionAid (2011 citing United Nation Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), 1994) stated that the smallholder farmers are 80% women globally and they produce 90% of food in Africa and 50% world food output. ActionAid (2011:3,4) stated the INGO focuses more on women because:

“Patriarchy, stereotypes about men and women’s rights and roles, traditional values, and cultures, as well as the current global economic model all come together to generate and reinforce why women are not recognised as equal human beings in society, never mind as farmers. ... Because women are the poorest and most disadvantaged group in many countries, the promotion and protection of women’s rights are central to achieving fair and sustainable development.”

Similarly, the Head of Partnership and Local Rights Programme of ActionAid claimed that gender discrimination affects their work and partners in two ways. Firstly, the common challenge in their partnership with their local partners is that women are only allowed to engage in NGOs’ activities with the permission of their
husbands who often see such engagement as a waste of time or an avenue to engage in an ‘unwholesome enterprise’. For the ActionAid official, their main strategy shaped by RBA is to emphasise and channel more of their funds on the empowerment of women through capacity building and awareness on their rights to equal opportunities in the management and activities of their CBO partners. Secondly, their increasing focus on women’s active involvement in NGOs made some men perceive NGO work as only meant for women. Nevertheless, the participant claimed that ActionAid decided based on RBA to focus more on awareness creation among men on the need for gender equality in their organisations, which involved investing more on such programmes instead of service provision. According to the participant, women are now organising themselves better, showcasing their capacity to contribute actively to the development of their organisations and communities.

According to Oxfam’s Strategic Plan (2013-2019:7) stated the organisation would “continue to place a high priority on supporting women at all levels to become leaders and take valued roles in the society and economy”. The document claimed that this would afford women the power to lead their communities and organisations and frustrate “the violence and oppression that has kept them illiterate and exploited in many parts of the world”. The document stated an enhanced focus on gender issues is integral to promoting beneficial changes in relations of power that perpetuate poverty and discriminations:

“One of the most serious and pervasive forms of inequality is discrimination against women and girls. Two-thirds of the world’s illiterate adults are women. Women do 60 per cent of the world’s work but earn only 10 per cent of the world’s income.” (Oxfam’s Strategic Plan, 2013-2019:8).
The Programmes Officer of Oxfam-Novib attributed the gender-based discrimination to the patriarchal traditions prevalent in the cities and communities in which they work. The INGO official claimed that such practices give leadership opportunities to grass-roots organisations to men rather than women, irrespective of the skills or expertise of the female members of these organisations. The participant claimed that some organisations even go the extent of claiming gender justice is against their religious belief, emphasising that women are not meant to preside over men in any capacity. Also, the participant claimed that in some communities, men ensure that they prevent their wives from taking an active role as members of CBOs. The participant claimed that they perceive women that are actively involved in NGO work as uncultured or prostitutes, to the extent that only single or unmarried women participate actively in NGOs’ work in such contexts. However, for the participant, gender discriminatory practices determined their decisions to increase their focus on women’s empowerment and support them to participate in the affairs of their CBOs actively and raising awareness among men on gender inclusiveness among their local partners and their activities.

**Opinions of intermediate NGOs**

The participants from the intermediate NGOs believe that patriarchy hampers the active participation of their CBO partners, particularly women. According to them, RBA informed their decisions to strategically mainstream women’s agency in their activities as NGOs, supported by the increased spending on vocational training and for providing literacy education for rural women to play an active role in the affairs of their organisations. The following quote from the Coordinator of International Foundation for the Aged, a partner of Oxfam-Novib captured the challenge concisely:
“There is a power relation issue where we work because of patriarchy. Hence we get involved in the deconstruction of what is on the ground. We frequently face resistance from the people that benefit from the subjugation of women to men, and who perceive the rights-based approach as an attacking culture. They often prevent women from taking an active role in activities of their local organisations. Notwithstanding, we promote women’s empowerment as a strategy to promote gender equality in our programmes and relationships. It determines our decision to increasingly focus on how women can organise themselves to have a voice against traditions that limit the scope of their participation in development activities of NGOs. We focused our finance on boosting the capacities of women through training and skill acquisition to challenge the unequal power relations that suppress women agency. Operationally, we support women to take up an active role their organisations and communities, while engaging with men to support gender inclusiveness”.

In the same vein, a participant from Social Action (partner of Oxfam-Novib), stated that while women are perceived as the material possessions of men and are not expected to raise their voices in public, such attitudes are discriminatory and an infringement on the rights of women to participate in the development of the society. The participant claimed that Social Action has decided to confront headlong forces that negate gender equality through sensitisation in the media and community meetings as well as the training of their CBO partners on women's rights. The participant claimed they collaborate with religious institutions as a strategy to increase the awareness on rights of both genders, and often look for public gatherings in the communities to showcase how gender equality can speed up development.

Likewise, the Deputy Director of JDPC, a partner of ActionAid, claimed that the lack of gender justice is a significant challenge to realising women rights to
participation in some local organisations. However, the participant claimed that based on RBA, JDPC through their churches and support groups are emphasising gender equality as an essential component of development. Furthermore, the Programme Officer of CCEPE claimed that men’s perception of NGOs work as women’s affairs is a critical challenge to their partnership relationship with their CBO partners. In his own words:

“Because of the traditions and religious belief that places women under the control of men, our decision to promote gender inclusiveness in our engagement with local CBOs based on RBA makes some think design our work mainly for women. Hence men are avoiding our partnership meetings and other activities of their CBOs. However, we do employ several strategies to promote gender equality within local organisations such as involving traditional rulers’ wives in the activities of NGOs.”

The participant claimed that the challenge informed their decisions to support the appointment of women as facilitators of their programmes in the local areas. The participant claimed that they also invest in vigorous sensitisation programmes in their operations to raise the consciousness of CBO members and their communities to promote equality in access to resources and opportunities for both genders. For the participant, CCEPE invests more of their funds on the empowerment of women through skills acquisition and vocational training to boost their capacities to undertake challenging roles in their local organisations.

**Opinions of CBOs**

Most of the CBOs’ informants claimed that they collaborate with their INGO and intermediate NGO partners on gender equality and to change the perceptions of men that NGOs are meant only for women. The Facilitator of Gbago CDC, a partner
of ActionAid and CCEPE, claimed that they are training and encouraging their female members to demonstrate the values of honesty, humility, and integrity in their various homes as well as increasing the awareness among men on the activities of NGOs. The participant stated that they collaborate with CCEPE and ActionAid on gender issues and allocate more financial resources to support awareness creation on women rights.

Also, a participant from Alayere, a partner of JDPC and ActionAid, claimed that women issues often dominate most of their partnership meetings, and many of their programmes focus explicitly on promoting women rights. For the participant, however, men appeared to be less motivated in NGOs activities and “that is why we have few men today in our meeting.” Nevertheless, the participant claimed that they believe in gender equality. The participant claimed that they respond to such criticisms by developing programmes that focus on issues that embrace both genders, which include providing agricultural credit facilities, training on improved farming practices, providing vocational training, and literacy education in various communities.

Moreover, the alienation of men from NGOs is not common to all CBOs that participated in this study. For example, take Alagbede FCA, where women complained of male domination of their organisations. In this instance, it is important to note that majority of the farmers are men, while women are meant only to support their husbands on the farm. The women leader of the FCA claimed that women’s participation is limited in the activities of the FCA because of their unequal access to land and financial resources. The participant claimed that women need to be empowered to be actively involved in farming and their FCA through improved access to land and credit facilities. However, the participant
claimed that they are collaborating with FADU to give women more access to land and financial resources as a strategy to improve women’s participation in agricultural production and trade. The participant claimed that the strategies increased their access to land and agricultural inputs as well as increasing women’s voices in the community because they are also contributing financially to the development of the FCA and becoming financially independent.

8.4. Conclusion
While previous literature examined the generic challenges of implementing RBA mainly by INGOs, this chapter looked explicitly into how the challenges faced by INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners as they implement RBA. The majority of the informants from the three sets of NGOs claimed that based on their commitment to the philosophy of RBA the challenges shape their strategic, operational and financial decisions as they work together in partnership. Also, RBA imposes the need for INGOs to accommodate the concerns and needs of their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in their work mainly at the grass-roots (Kindornay et al. 2012).

Most of the INGO and intermediate NGO informants claimed that the preference of some donors and CBOs for service delivery projects shaped their strategic, operational, financial decisions to focus more on building the capacities of their staff members on RBA to promote rights awareness in their work. The participants from both INGOs and intermediate NGOs claimed they provide training and workshops to empower their members of staff and those of their CBO partners. The participants also claimed that increasing their advocacy and provide minimal services to promote the rights framework. CBOs preferred the provision of essential services to redress infrastructural deficits in their communities and claimed that their partnerships with INGOs and intermediate NGOs based on RBA
influenced their decisions to adopt an empowerment strategy, which is why they give more time to training and workshops on rights and advocacy.

Furthermore, the participants from INGOs and their intermediate NGO partners claimed that another significant challenge for the implementation of RBA is gender discriminatory practice that reduces women’s involvement in NGOs’ activities especially at the grass-roots. Notwithstanding, they claimed that gender discrimination against women influenced their strategic, operational and financial decisions. They claimed that they increase their focus on promoting women’s empowerment in their partnership relationships, even when they are faced with suspicion and hostility from proponents of gender inequality, which aligns with expectations of the literature (Baaz, 2005; Brehm et al. 2005; Elbers, 2013). The participants claimed that they focus on enabling women to organise themselves better to redress the injustices against them and increase their active involvement in the management of their organisations. For some CBOs, they strategically ensure that their activities and partnerships increase the participation of both genders in their work – evidence that the empowerment programmes of INGOs and intermediate NGOs were having a positive effect on women in NGOs.

Moreover, this chapter suggests that one other significant challenge to the rights-based partnership is the potential security risks to NGO actors, especially local organisations. The findings of this chapter reveal that the challenges to RBA shaped their strategic, operational, and financial decisions of INGOs and their intermediate NGO partners to focus their work in ways that limit security risks and victimisation to their local partners from those that benefit from rights violations. Intermediate NGO participants claimed that INGOs are saddled with the responsibility in most cases to support the intermediate NGOs and CBOs in
capacity building to acquire necessary skills that fit the implementations of RBA in ways that limit security risks or violence to local NGO actors – a minor difference among these set of NGOs. CBO participant expressed the same opinion as their intermediate NGO partners. For Harris-Curtis et al. (2005), security risks are one of the critical concern of implementing RBA to local NGOs in the South because it brings the NGO actors into direct conflict with those benefiting from the status quo. There is no difference between Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid on the challenges they faced while implementing RBA and how it influenced the decisions they make on strategic, operational and financial matters.

Overall, this chapter has shown that the participant organisations ensure that their partnerships and strategies are consistent with their belief in the philosophy of RBA even in communities that are hostile to the idea of rights especially gender rights because of patriarchy, which they do by promoting awareness creation on rights. In addition, this chapter presents an account that suggests that RBA has a profound influence on the way that INGO and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners conceive of partnership and attempt to practice it. The next chapter is the conclusion of this thesis.
CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

9.0. Introduction

Since the 1990s, the integration of human rights into development discourses signalled the birth of a new development paradigm coined as the rights-based approach. As discussed in previous chapters, RBA aims to promote concrete changes in the lives of the poor and marginalised people through development aid. Because RBA intends to bring back politics back into the development sector (UNDP. 2000; Eyben, 2003; Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall, 2004; Gready and Ensor, 2005; Moyo, 2009; Easterly, 2013; Crawford and Andreassen, 2015), RBA
specifies that development actors such as government, Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs); INGOs and Multinational Corporations as duty-bearers have obligations to respect, protect, fulfil and promote the fundamental human rights of the poor, the marginalised and their organisations in developing countries. These include their civil and political rights as well as their rights to essential social services.

This thesis stated that many organisations and development agencies claim to have adopted RBA, especially INGOs with the claim that it can promote transformative change in the lives of the people living in poverty (Kindornay et al. 2012). Therefore, RBA “should entail a substantial shift in the development practices of Northern based donors, INGOs” and local intermediate NGOs and CBOs in the global South, ‘but the reality is less clear cut’ (Kindornay et al. 2012:4). In other words, to achieve its proclaimed goals, RBA needs to shape decision-making of organisations to influence the underlying relationships between development-based INGOs and their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners in the developing countries (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Gready and Ensor, 2005; Hickey and Mitlin, 2009). Therefore, this thesis investigated how RBA shaped the strategic, operational and the financial decisions of these three types of organisation. The findings demonstrate that RBA shapes the decisions of these organisations in significant ways. The findings suggest that it is possible for rights-based NGOs to experience effective partnership relationship when they reflect on the values of RBA. The findings have shown that RBA can promote the financial (and others) autonomy and independence of local intermediate NGOs and CBOs that work with INGO donors. This is because foreign donors control over funding gives them more power over local organisations in aid chain (Bradley, 2007; Elbers and Schulpen, 2013; Fowler, 2015).
Controversies surround RBA (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; D’ Hollander et al. 2013). Proponents argue that RBA can promote tangible and positive social, economic, and political changes in the lives of the poor and marginalised people (Eyben, 2003; Gready and Ensor, 2005; Crawford and Andreassen, 2015). They claim that RBA can rebalance the structural relations of power that perpetuates poverty (UNDP, 1990; Eyben, 2003; Chapman and Mancini, 2005; Miller et al. 2004; Campolina and Philips, 2015). Advocates of RBA claimed that if it would promote transformative changes in the South, it would be reflected in the basic relationship between INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Kindornay et al. 2012). However, critics argue that RBA may be another development fad because it may be irrelevant to tackle problems of poverty in developing countries (Uvin, 2007; Kindornay et al. 2012).

This study was a starting point to address the gap in the literature on the actual effects of RBA in practice on the strategic, operational, and financial decisions of the three sets of NGOs and whether it has potential to deliver on above claims. This study addressed the following research question:

In what ways does the rights-based approach to development aid shape the partnerships between the INGOs - ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in Nigeria, and influence the decisions each set of actors make on strategic, financial, and operational matters?

This thesis specifically investigated the understandings of the meanings of RBA among INGOs and their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners, and how these different understandings of RBA shape the decisions that each set of actors make regarding their choice of partner. It also examined the extent to which the differently understood notion of RBA affects decisions made by INGOs and local
intermediate NGO and CBO partners on accepting specific sources and conditions of funding and to which donor they apply to. Also, this thesis investigated the extent to which the differently understood notion of RBA determines the decisions made by INGOs and their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners relating to service delivery to poor communities and advocacy work. Finally, it studied how the challenges experienced in the implementation of RBA also informed the strategic, operational and financial decisions of each set of NGO actors.

This research employed a case study design of the partnership relationship between ActionAid and Oxfam and their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners in Nigeria. These INGOs claimed to have adopted RBA and only work with local intermediate NGOs and CBOs that are committed to the philosophy of the approach. This investigation involved 23 in-depth interviews with the participants from INGOs (ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib) and the intermediate NGOs at the management level except for JDPC who demanded a focus group discussion. Focus group discussion was employed to draw data from CBO participants. The study conducted a total of ten focus group discussions. Also, the researcher observed the Partnership Forum of ActionAid and its intermediate NGOs and CBOs. The researcher also observed a partnership meeting between JDPC and Ilado Community Development Union, a partner of the intermediate NGO and ActionAid. This study also conducted a document analysis of internal working papers of the participant organisations on RBA and partnership principles. This thesis comprises of four empirical chapters; each focused on the four specific objectives. Below are the highlights of the main findings:

1. Regarding strategic decisions, all the informants from Oxfam and ActionAid claimed that RBA informs their strategic focus and partnership decisions.
Additionally, the INGO informants claimed that they employed partnership with local intermediate NGOs and CBOs as a strategy to implement RBA. While JDPC and CCEPE (partners of ActionAid) confirmed that they are strictly rights-based NGOs, some of the intermediate NGO partners of Oxfam-Novib denied the claim that they are non-rights-based NGOs but declared that they integrate right-based values into their work appropriately. Similarly, the CBO partners of ActionAid also confirmed their commitment to RBA, while those of Oxfam-Novib are membership based organisations who claimed that they integrate rights-based values in their work. It was notable that only FADU among the Oxfam-Novib intermediate NGO partners has a relationship with CBOs at the grass-roots. This thesis argued that a close connection with the people at the grass-roots provide a platform for the increased influence of the intermediate NGOs and CBOs in their relationship with the INGOs. Not only that, the research findings show that th values of RBA served as the standards to evaluate the performance of partners, which can reinforce the negotiating space and downward accountability of (I)NGOs to grass-roots organisations. As earlier argued, face-to-face and sustained interactions between partners can improve solidarity, trust and shared values, which can redress the unequal relations of power between organisations. As evidenced in the previous chapters, inequalities are inimical to the development of vibrant civil society and sound democratic governance. Critics of RBA argue that the concept means different things to different organisations and so it is difficult to pin down its impacts in the development sector notwithstanding the claim by many development agencies that they have adopted and are implementing RBA (Harris-Curtis et al. 2005; Uvin, 2004; Hunter, 2012). A major finding of
this thesis is that majority of the informants from ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib shared a robust understanding of the basic principles and demands of the rights-based framework such as participation, equality, solidarity, accountability, empowerment, and social justice. However, the majority of CBOs’ informants see RBA as an approach that seeks to improve their access to essential social services. They also acknowledged the inherent challenges and criticisms of RBA and reflected on them in their work. While the majority of interviewees from ActionAid and their intermediate NGOs demonstrated a clear understanding of RBA, the majority of the intermediate partners of Oxfam-Novib were not well grounded in their knowledge of RBA and its implications in practice. The differing findings between Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid could be as a result of the different emphasis in their operations. For example, Oxfam-Novib appears to emphasise promoting economic justice working with local farmers and traders as demonstrated in their partnership with FADU and NANTs to advance economic rights of the people. Oxfam-Novib claimed to work with FADU to break the exploitative tendencies of local cocoa buyers that reinforces poverty and connect local farmers to the international market through CONTINAF. They also seek to promote the participation of women in agricultural activities to enhance their economic power. Oxfam-Novib in partnership with FADU encourages agricultural productivity by providing improved cocoa varieties and other inputs to boost production. ActionAid, on the other hand, focuses more on building a close and long-term relationship with the people at the grass-roots and their organisations to advance local awareness of rights and how they can engage with governments to fulfil their essential needs. Hence, they work only with
organisations that have a close link with the grass-roots, one of the essential demands of RBA. For ActionAid, providing essential services only serves to guarantee a closer contact and engagement with the people living in poverty and to empower them to challenge forces of marginalisation that perpetuate poverty.

Similarly, the CBO partners of ActionAid may not have been entirely fluent in the technicalities of rights language, but their interviewees understood the fundamental aspirations and demands of RBA, especially the obligations of different development actors and their corresponding duties towards realising their fundamental rights. Contrarily, many of the CBO partners of Oxfam-Novib are not versed in the understandings of the meaning of RBA. This implies that a common conception of the principle of RBA can create the ideational foundations of a partnership that is conducive to a successful implementation of the approach in practice.

Moreover, INGOs have been widely criticised based on their inability to demonstrate the fundamental ideals of partnership (Brehm, 2001; Baaz, 2005; Fowler, 2015). These ideals include promoting the autonomy and independence of local NGO actors in their relationships with local intermediate NGOs and CBOs in practice (Brehm, 2001; Wallace et al. 2006; Baaz, 2005; Fowler, 2015). This thesis suggests that the majority of the informants claim to aspire to promote effective partnership in practice as informed by RBA. The interview extracts from ActionAid and their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners demonstrated a commitment to shared rights values in their day-to-day activities. The research data revealed that a close connection exists between ActionAid and their local intermediate
NGO and CBO partners who draw inspiration from their perceived role as indispensable allies because of their commitment to the philosophy of RBA. Also, observation of the ActionAid Partnership Forum revealed that intermediate NGOs were empowered to challenge or criticise the INGO officials whenever there is any disagreement between them. The opportunity for local organisations to challenge their INGO donors reflects a desire to be answerable to their local partners, a key demand of RBA and ingredient of a productive partnership (see also Macpherson, 2009; Fowler, 2015; BOND, 2015). Regarding ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners, the finding reflects the position of the literature that rights-based NGOs can experience a genuine partnership in their engagements. Arguably because the power and the influence of INGOs in the rights-based partnership are constrained based on their commitment to RBA values (Brehm, 2004:164). However, not all of these positive effects may necessarily be attributable to RBA. Other factors may also be relevant, such as the long-term relationship and trust that has built up between ActionAid and their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners, the interpersonal relationship between these development workers as well as the reputation and the individual characteristics of local intermediate NGO and CBO actors. The research suggests that ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners experienced a relatively high level of mutual influence, increased participation, and balanced partnership, unlike Oxfam-Novib’s partners. Improved participation in the development plans, policies and processes are crucial to enhancing positive changes in the lives of the people because they learn to be active agents of their development though experience and action. This thesis argued that RBA can engender grass-roots links, and
active participation of less powerful people to promote collective actions, thus if sustained and expanded can enhance the power of the people to demand accountability from corrupt leaders in a context such as Nigeria. As such, this type of relationship has the potential to enhance the power and influence of people living in poverty on public policy and accountability of government to its people. This study argues that (I)NGOs and their grass-roots partners have a legitimate but non-partisan role to play in reinforcing the link between the people and government as well as with the decision-making processes that shape the lives of the people living in poverty. (I)NGOs should intensify efforts to promote public engagement through meeting grounds such as village/town hall meetings among people and governments and challenge each other to engender a movement for change including tackling corruption in different contexts as evidenced by the partnership meeting between ActionAid and their partners. As argued above, confronting corruption is crucial to promoting transformative changes in Nigeria. NGOs should intensify efforts to open closed spaces in the institutions of government through transparency, accountability and increased public engagement.

This thesis suggests that there is a need for a future study on the influence of RBA and other actor-specific factors that may explain effective partnership between INGOs and their local intermediate NGO and CBO, specifically in promoting the answerability of INGOs to their local intermediate NGO and CBO actors. Such a study may explain how RBA can be implemented to complement actor-specific factors to promote improvement in development activities by INGOs and their local intermediate NGOs and CBOs partners.
In the case of Oxfam-Novib and partners, the INGO informants demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the essentials of effective partnership and RBA demands from the interview extracts. However, the findings suggest a weak bond exists between the organisation and their local intermediate NGOs and CBOs. This finding seems to reflect the concerns expressed by critical scholars about the little or no interest shown by INGOs to promote productive partnership with their local intermediate NGOs and CBO partners. In fact, most of the intermediate NGO partners of Oxfam seemed to have no links with local CBOs. Most of these intermediate NGOs were based in the capital cities and claimed that they work directly with the local people. On the differences between these organisations, the findings suggest that RBA does not always influence the decisions of NGOs and shape their partnerships in similar ways. Whereas ActionAid focuses on establishing a long and close relationship with local organisations to challenge deeply ingrained attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate poverty and exclusion, the study suggests that Oxfam-Novib lay emphasis more narrowly on promoting economic justice, especially for women.

2. On the implications of RBA on the operational decisions of NGOs, previous literature suggests that development NGOs will increase focus on advocacy activities while curtailing their service delivery efforts. The interview data from ActionAid and their intermediate NGO partners aligned with the expectations of the literature that the philosophy of RBA shaped the decisions of the INGOs and their intermediate NGO partners to have an increased focus on advocacy while reducing their provision of essential social services to the people. These informants claimed that they have decided based on RBA to mainly focus on building the capacities of their
partners to make government accountable to their people. According to them, they only deliver minimal social services, which are designed to strengthen the capacities of their local partners and their communities to claim their rights. The majority of the informants from ActionAid and their local intermediate NGOs claimed that they also provide essential services to needy communities as a model of good practice to the government.

Interestingly, Oxfam-Novib’s informants expressed similar opinions to ActionAid and their intermediate NGO partners on advocacy and service provision. There is no distinctive difference between ActionAid and Oxfam regarding having a greater focus on advocacy. However, the former demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting advocacy in all stages of their engagement with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners, instead of service provision. The emphasis is also evident in the interview extracts from the two intermediate NGO and CBO partners of ActionAid. The informants from the intermediate NGOs that are partners of Oxfam-Novib are divided on the extent to which RBA influences their operational decisions. For instance, informants from CISLAC and Social Action (these two intermediate NGOs are advocacy-based) claimed that they focus more on advocating for the people to enjoy their fundamental civil and political rights from their government, which includes their rights to essential services.

Again, while the two intermediate NGO partners of ActionAid emphasises advocacy in their work with their CBO partners instead of service provision, informants from Oxfam-Novib’s intermediate NGOs claimed that they only integrate rights values into their work where it is appropriate. However, CISLAC and Social Action (partners of Oxfam-Novib) are a strictly advocacy
based organisation, who claimed that they focus more on building the capacities of their CBO partners to demand accountability from their government. The interview extracts suggest that most the informants from the other intermediate NGOs that are partners of Oxfam-Novib are mainly focusing on service delivery rather than an increasing focus on advocacy based on the values of RBA.

Moreover, according to the interview extracts, most of the CBO informants in this study maintained their focus on accessing infrastructure although they claimed that they are committed to the values of RBA. However, while the interview data shows that CBO partners of ActionAid are involved in advocacy workshops organised by the INGOs and subsequently utilised their training to demand accountability from their government with concrete results, Oxfam-Novib’s (FADU) CBO partners do not demonstrate any knowledge of advocacy demands informed by RBA. Nevertheless, the CBO informants that are partners of FADU and Oxfam claimed that their relationship with the INGO increases their access to government in agriculture. However, this thesis argues that the responses from government may not be because they are made accountable solely due to RBA values, but because they are attracted to the agricultural innovations promoted by FADU and Oxfam at the grass-roots. However, by jointly providing public service by CBOs, intermediate NGOs and INGOs can create synergy in the management of local resources, and increase the ownership of development programmes and their outcomes. This leads to cautious optimism among RBA advocates that promoting these values in the relationship between people and their government can improve governance and reduce corruption in countries such as Nigeria.
Regarding financial decisions, existing literature argues that NGOs that adopt RBA may secure more funds from rights-based donors, while those that reject the approach would face funding cuts from such donors. It is crucial to acknowledge that the researcher could only subject hypothesis to a limited test because of the sample size. The majority of the research participants from both ActionAid and their intermediate NGOs claimed that their decisions to commit to the values of RBA limit their potential access to funds. They claimed that this is because many donors including those that claimed to have adopted RBA still prefer projectised aid, suggesting many official donors’ commitment to the values of RBA is flimsy in practice. The findings aligned with Campolina and Philips (2015:2) claim that project-based funding, in reality, will lessen the concrete and long-term impact of aid, “lessen value-for-money ... and reduce real accountability to communities, as organisations shifts their accountability focus to donors.”

Moreover, the informants from ActionAid and Oxfam claimed that they have decided to be more selective accepting funding from certain sources and on whom they fund based on their commitment to RBA. Nevertheless, the informants claimed that RBA encouraged them to locate alternative funding sources from their localities to support their work. For example, the Advocacy and Campaign Manager of ActionAid claimed that they reject funds from organisations that are not rights-based and do not fund local intermediate NGOs or CBOs, but they can source for funds from their local constituencies. Oxfam-Novib’s informants expressed a similar stance in the interview.

There are differences between the local intermediate partners of ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib. The informants from the local intermediate NGOs that
are partners of ActionAid demonstrated in their interviews that the values of RBA informed their decisions to be more selective on their choice of which INGO/official donors to have a financial relationship with, which limits their access to funds. The informants claimed that this is because many of these donors who claimed to be rights-based prefer service delivery contrary to the NGOs’ understandings of RBA, often because of the pressure from their constituencies to demonstrate the impact of their aid on the poor and value for money. However, the informants claimed that RBA motivates them to locate locally available funds to support their work. They claimed such funding sources include community development levies (Smith, 2010), child sponsorship, community sponsorships, and donations from private individuals and organisations that align with rights values – although such funding may be problematic to reconcile with the values of RBA. Importantly, the intermediate NGO informants that are partners of ActionAid claimed that their decisions to be selective boosts their financial (and other) autonomy and independence from foreign/INGO donors and enhances their negotiation power and influence as they work together. These intermediate NGO informants perceived themselves as less tied to the dictates of their funders, but they are nonetheless able to work closely together with ActionAid based on solidarity, a critical value of RBA. The study has shown that organisations that have access to their resources from local contributions can resist the power and influence of their foreign donors, maintain their core missions and focus on mutual benefits. By strengthening the financial autonomy and independence of local organisations from their INGO funders, INGOs may be able to enhance authentic civil action, especially from the excluded people to demand
accountability from governments by advocating for a change in policies and practices themselves.

For Oxfam-Novib’s intermediate NGO partners, their commitment to RBA and its implications on their financial decisions are less evident, notwithstanding the claims of the INGO informants. It is relevant here to recall that during the interviews with the intermediate NGO partners of Oxfam-Novib, they claimed that they are not strictly rights-based NGOs. In fact, some of the intermediate NGO partners of Oxfam-Novib complained of their inability to access funds from the Nigerian government to support their work, which contradicts Oxfam-Novib’s claim of working only with organisations that are committed to the philosophy of RBA. This finding represents a divergence in the way INGOs implements RBA in their partnerships.

Another significant finding of this research is that the majority of the CBOs from both Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid do not explicitly use the language of RBA. However, they claimed that rights issues have a significant influence on their decisions about which intermediary NGOs or INGOs to partner with. Relatedly, the majority of the CBO informants do not consider the preference of donors for service delivery as a bad thing despite their understandings and commitment to RBA values. Their understandings of RBA aligned with donors’ preferences for projectised funding aligned. They even complained of the failure of INGOs and intermediate NGOs to fund more basic infrastructural projects in their communities. As discussed in chapter 5, CBO participants understood RBA as a vehicle to grant them access to essential services as rights, which in large part accounts for the divergent responses.
Also, CBO informants mainly from ActionAid and their intermediate NGO partners also claimed that they are selective about whom they have a financial relationship with based on their awareness of rights-based values. The example given was that they reject funds from corrupt politicians. This study argues that these responses from CBO informants may not be attributed to their knowledge of RBA alone. Other factors such as lack of trust in their political leaders based on their previous experience of neglect by politicians could be responsible. FCA partners of FADU (a partner of Oxfam-Novib) are less clear on the link between RBA and their financial decisions, unlike the intermediate NGO that works with ActionAid. However, most FCA’s informants claimed that rights-based advocacy gave them access to more financial assistance and farming inputs from their government at the state and local government levels.

Importantly, existing literature suggests that the intermediate NGOs and CBOs will be more affected by the funding constraints as compared to the INGOs because the latter has greater access to diverse human resources and funding sources (Kindornay et al. 2012). This thesis finds that local intermediate NGOs informants that are partners of ActionAid perceived themselves to have more access to funds from their local constituencies. The majority of participants from the intermediate partners of ActionAid claimed that their access to local funding opportunities increased their funding base and compensated for the shortfall from foreign/NGO donors who fixated on project-based funding. For example, JDPC, a partner of ActionAid is founded and owned by Catholic churches in Nigeria with significant access to donations and sponsorship from their congregations.
While informants from FADU and NANTS, a partner of Oxfam-Novib claimed that they mainly finance their work from their membership-based donations and savings, other intermediate partners of Oxfam-Novib were less confident in their ability to raise more money from their local constituencies. FADU and NANTS are membership based organisations, and they claimed to have membership levies and cooperative societies that increase their financial base. Notwithstanding, they are not very clear if there is a connection between RBA and their financial decisions. Also, some of the informants from the intermediate NGO partners of Oxfam-Novib look to the government to finance their work. This interpretation of RBA may not be in tandem with its focus on making government accountable to fulfil and promote the fundamental rights of the people.

CBO partners of ActionAid have access to more community levies, and diaspora remittance from their indigenes and they are obligated to be transparent and honest in the allocation and utilisation of such funds, based on RBA values. Similarly, FADU’s CBO informants (partner of Oxfam-Novib) also claimed that they have access to more financial support from their members and governments.

3. With regards to how the challenges of implementing RBA shapes the strategic, operational and financial decisions of participant organisations, the research suggests that the preferences of many official/NGO donors for payment by results constitute obstacles to the implementation of RBA. Interview extracts from both Oxfam-Novib and ActionAid support this suggestion. According to the informants from both INGOs, many local intermediate NGO and CBOs adopt a follow-the-money approach to survive,
in other words, the preferred service delivery paradigm. However, the informants from INGOs and the two intermediate partners of ActionAid (CCEPE and JDPC) claimed that they have decided to deal with such obstacles by emphasising a strategic focus on building the capacity of their local intermediate and CBOs on RBA values. Regarding operational decisions, the participants from ActionAid and their two intermediate NGO partners claimed that they have decided to focus more on providing training workshops and organised advocacy trips with their local partners to claim their rights. According to the informants, they have decided to allocate more funds to implement the empowerment programmes with their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners.

However, the strategic and operational approach to addressing the obstacles to RBA is more evident in the languages and decisions of ActionAid and their local intermediate NGO partners. The opposite is the case for Oxfam informants, mainly from their intermediate NGO partners. Although most of the CBO participants are particularly interested in promoting the delivery of essential social services in their communities, those of ActionAid participate actively in the strategic and operational decisions of the INGO to address the obstacle to RBA. The CBO partners of ActionAid claimed that they are committed to building their knowledge and applications of RBA values, and hence are actively involved in the training workshops made available by their INGO and intermediate NGO partners.

Moreover, the culture of gender discrimination and patriarchy is another obstacle to implementing RBA by some NGOs. All the participants from both Oxfam and ActionAid claimed that they have a strategic determination to adopt a greater focus on raising critical consciousness on women’s rights
among men and women alike. Regarding operational and financial decisions, the participants from the INGOs claimed that they have decided to focus more on providing vocational and literary skills for women actors at the grass-roots to boost their confidence, skills, economic power, and knowledge to challenge gender discriminatory practices. Additionally, the intermediate NGO partners of ActionAid expressed a similar opinion with ActionAid officials regarding having the same strategic and operational focus and back it up with adequate funding to support women’s rights. However, many of Oxfam’s intermediate NGO informants except Social Action are less clear on how the culture of discrimination against women in local organisations affects the way they go about addressing the challenge. The reason for the difference between ActionAid and Oxfam-Novib is that ActionAid seems to invest more time in training with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners.

CBO informants from ActionAid claimed that they cooperate with their intermediate NGO and INGO partners to promote girl’s education and women’s rights. They also claim that they support women in occupying sensitive positions (e.g., facilitators, programme officers) in their organisations with their partners, especially at the grass-roots level by ensuring that women participate actively and provide a level-playing ground for equal access to leadership positions. However, some intermediate and CBO participants of ActionAid claimed that the excessive focus on women discourages some men from NGOs’ work. Therefore, the participants claimed RBA shaped their decisions to develop programmes that aimed at increasing men’s participation in their organisation especially at the grass-roots, which are usually tailored to promote the civil, political and economic
rights of women. For FCA’s informants, partners of Oxfam and FADU, there is less emphasis on the obstacles to implementing RBA, but they claimed that their training on rights of women and children informed them about how to recognise and promote gender rights.

Also, the potential security risks to rights-based actors especially from those that benefit from human rights violations are one of the major obstacles to implementing RBA. However, the participants from ActionAid and Oxfam, their intermediate NGO, and CBO partners claimed that regarding strategic decisions, they focus on creating a secure environment for them to work, especially the latter. Operationally, most of the informants from Oxfam and ActionAid and their intermediate NGOs partners claimed that they maintain a close link with the media and security agencies to publicise and deal with possible subjects of violence. On financial decisions, most of the participants from these NGOs claimed that they allocate sufficient funds to promote a secure environment to work, by having informants from the communities in which they work to keep them abreast of security concerns, which guide their operational decisions. In addition, some of the participants from the INGOs and their intermediate NGO partners claimed that they occasionally invest in litigation against abusers or promoters of violence. Overall, the commitment of the participants to the philosophy of RBA has a profound influence on their strategic, operational and financial matters, especially ActionAid and their partners.

9.1. Summary of the Contributions to the Literature
This thesis filled several gaps in the literature on the influence of the rights-based approach on the partnership between Oxfam and ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners in Nigeria detailed below:

- The findings show that the participant INGOs have decided to employ partnership with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners as a strategy to conduct their work, and meaningful relationships manifest between likeminded NGOs based on a commitment to the philosophy of the rights-based approach. Concerning understandings of the meaning of RBA by INGO informants, the findings suggest that the values of accountability, transparency, and solidarity inherent in RBA shaped the participants’ partnership decisions. RBA values encourage genuine partnership, and it is likely to promote downward accountability of INGOs to their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners.

- Whereas the literature argues that there is no one RBA, this study shows that the participant from the INGOs and Oxfam-Novib have a shared understanding of RBA rooted in technical jargon. For intermediate NGOs, both intermediate NGOs that work with ActionAid demonstrated a shared understanding of RBA. However, some of the intermediate NGOs that work with Oxfam-Novib are less knowledgeable on the fundamental principles and demands of RBA. This could be because some of the intermediate NGO partners of Oxfam claimed they are not strictly rights-based organisations. Also, Oxfam-Novib seems to value short-term, programme-based collaboration with their intermediate NGO partners. However, CBO participant had a slightly different understanding of RBA. The majority of CBOs informants understood RBA as a framework that seeks to empower and boost their capacities to articulate their needs into rights that they can
clalm from governments. This signifies that a common conception of the principle of RBA can create the ideational foundations of a partnership that is beneficial to a fruitful implementation of the approach in practice. Most of the CBO informants are not versed in the technical language of rights mainly because many of them are less educated.

- On the assumption that RBA will create ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ between INGO donors and their local intermediate NGOs and CBOs who may be unwilling or unable to adopt RBA. Although the findings suggest that RBA may limit/reduce the potential funding of both INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBOs from their donors, the participants claimed that they were able to compensate for the reduced funds by locating alternative funding sources from their constituencies. Opportunities to locate more funding locally can lead to financial (and other) autonomy and independence of local intermediate NGOs and CBOs as well as enhance the power and influence as they work with their INGO donors. The ability of local intermediate NGOs and CBOs to locate alternative funding sources from their constituencies can promote a practical engagement with their INGO donors beyond that which is obtained in the conventional funding system (see also Elbers and Schulpen, 2013). Importantly, the findings contradict the literature, which suggests that local intermediate NGOs and CBOs will most likely face more funding constraints than their INGOs partners based on their adoption or rejection of RBA. Instead, they have more access to locally available funds. It is important to say that this case study cannot be generalised because it was based on the opinion of interviewees from a limited number of organisations in Nigeria. There is a need for future research to verify these claims with more organisations and in a different context.
- On the suggestion that the right-based NGOs will seek a greater focus on advocacy and will curtail their service delivery operations. The findings suggest that RBA shaped the decisions of these set of NGOs to have an increased focus on advocacy. The interview data revealed they balance service delivery with advocacy to enhance the power of the people experiencing poverty and exclusion to challenge those that enforce their interests over them. This study has shown that RBA has led to the emergence of organisations especially at the grass-roots that combine advocacy or struggle for rights and capacity building with service provision to enhance beneficial improvement in their constituencies, hence engaging in both immanent and concrete interventions (Cowen and Shenton, 1998; Chhotray, 2007). The majority of participants claimed that they use service provision to show a model of good practice to governments and for empowering local people and communities, which they claimed promotes the values of accountability and transparency. As such, RBA can expand the voice and participation of local organisations and marginalised people in public governance in ways that enhance accountability and responsiveness of governments to the people. Local organisations can focus on enhancing the capacity of poor and excluded people to be active agents of their development by confronting all forms of discriminations and inequalities that reinforce poverty. This study suggests that (I)NGOs through a commitment to the values of RBA could create deliberative spaces for people living in poverty to interact with governments and other stakeholders to deliver concrete changes in their lives.

- Until now, previous literature has been silent on how the obstacles to the implementation of the rights-based approach shape the decisions they
make on strategic and financial decisions. This study has shown that NGOs may attempt to respond to the obstacles they face while implementing RBA in their strategic, operational and financial decisions. Participants from INGOs, intermediate NGOs, and CBOs claimed that donors’ preferences for project-based funding, the culture of discrimination against women and potential security risks are some of the critical challenges they face in their implementation of RBA in Nigeria. Hence their strategic, operational and financial decisions were shaped by the practical issues posed by those challenges as well as their understandings of RBA.

9.2. Policy Implications of this Research

Although this study is limited to a few NGOs, the findings of this thesis on the implementations of RBA raise more questions about the assumptions regarding whether the approach is having a real effect on the delivery of development aid by NGOs. This study suggests other areas of investigation into the more widespread implications of RBA for the development work of other NGOs and donors, particularly those who claimed to have adopted and are implementing the rights framework. Future investigations may support the promising results obtained from ActionAid and their local intermediate NGO and CBOs or indicate a more nebulous commitment to RBA in practice as illustrated by the interviews with Oxfam-Novib and their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners. In other words, is RBA having a broader influence on decision-making and partnerships outside of the Nigerian context and if so, in what ways and with what effect? It would be imprudent to speculate on the extent to which the country/local context shaped
the findings, and the likelihood of the findings being replicated elsewhere, without conducting different country case studies.

Furthermore, this exploratory study shows that RBA can promote downward accountability of INGOs to their partners if there is a commitment to rights values based on the relationship between ActionAid and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners that experienced a close engagement and productive partnership. This thesis suggests that local intermediate NGOs and CBO partners of ActionAid were empowered to criticise the INGO actors, which can promote downward accountability to local NGO and CBO actors. Local organisations can develop such values and acquire the power to engender a beneficial engagement with the state. These findings need to be subjected to further empirical tests because this study based on the evidence of a small number of organisations and participants. It is possible that the participants provided opinions that they think will portray their organisations in good light. Future research can avoid this pitfall by triangulating with more extensive participant observation of interaction between the organisations and the communities. Second, the findings of this study suggest that a commitment to RBA by organisations can enhance the power and influence of local organisations (intermediate NGO and CBOs) over their INGO partners.

A further enquiry into how organisations can employ RBA to create a balanced engagement and bolster the autonomy and independence of local intermediate NGOs and CBOs in developing countries may be needed. Again, this study did not focus on the actual impact of RBA on the poor and marginalised people in the global South. Also, future studies with different methodologies and organisations or participants from different context would shed more light on these findings. Future research can expand the body of knowledge by investigating the various understandings of RBA and its impacts on the people and community that receive
development aid. Precisely, how best can an NGO implement RBA in practice to promote positive social changes in the global South?

On the policy implications of these findings, the imbalance of power and influence between INGOs and their intermediate NGOs and CBOs partners and their dependency on INGO donors remain one of the major causes of the failure of development interventions (Fowler, 2015). All types of NGOs need to work more on making their commitments to rights-based values guide their practice of partnerships and other activities. The differences in the results obtained from ActionAid and Oxfam and their local intermediate NGO and CBO partners in Nigeria have shown that there are still gaps between theories of RBA and its practical influence on the partnership as well as differences in the extent to which RBA guides their strategic, financial and operational decisions. As this study suggests that RBA has the potential to transform the traditional hierarchical relationship that exists in partnerships when organisations live out the values of RBA in practice. The NGOs are required to move beyond aspiration to promote productive relationships with their intermediate NGO and CBO partners into practice.

Moreover, the values of solidarity and a focus on social transformation by INGOs and their intermediate NGO and CBO partners necessarily means that there must be free, active and meaningful participation in setting the agendas between organisations in a partnership. These include openness in budget planning and allocations of funds into programmes by rights-based NGOs as they work in a partnership based on the values of RBA. The study demonstrated that there are meaningful efforts in this direction. Looking beyond funding issues by organisations can help them to deliver a genuine or effective relationship between them. Additionally, local organisations should be encouraged to explore locally available funds for their work. Locating funds from their constituencies will
undoubtedly enhance their power and influence and promote their financial (and other) autonomy from foreign/INGO donors. It can also engender a balanced relationship, which is crucial to promote beneficial changes in the delivery of development aid. However, the ability to acquire locally available funds may vary from country to country.

Moreover, the findings suggest that development-based organisations should maintain the balance between service provision and advocacy. However, they should focus on enabling the people themselves to advocate government for delivery of social service. The capacity of the people to advocate for themselves portends an effective means to promote development beyond foreign aid. Put differently; this study suggests that RBA can democratise development that could be beneficial to improve transparency and accountability in governance as well as curb corruption in a country such as Nigeria. The efforts to improve local consciousness or awareness on rights demonstrated engagement of these organisations with immanent or transformative social, economic and political change, while they continue to promote concrete interventions (intentional development) through service delivery. Service provision provided the close contact with community members by employing rights to create and protect local negotiating space for people and communities to engage with development actors including the state. This study demonstrated how engaging with immanent and intentional development primarily based on the case study of ActionAid and their intermediate NGOs and CBOs is crucial to the articulation of transformative change. This study argues that RBA can bridge the gap between immanent and intentional development by empowering excluded people, communities and organisations to challenge the unequal relations of power that stymies social, economic and political progress.
Furthermore, RBA can also empower excluded people and organisations to engage in physical interventions to meet the pressing needs of the people and provide a model of good practice to the government. It sets the stage for an integrated approach of the struggle for rights (confrontation) and service delivery (cooperation) that can potentially engender positive engagement of the people with the state to create concrete social changes in their lives. This study contends that the integration of a focus on the political dimension of development and concrete interventions is critical for NGOs to promote social transformation in the lives of the poor and excluded people in developing countries such as Nigeria. The findings align with literature that argues that the push for social transformations will emerge from the messy struggles and cooperation with political actors in ways that influence every area of development and society (Chhotray, 2007; VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002). The challenge lays in sustaining a balance between rights struggles and empowerment and being development organisations that deliver concrete interventions to promote transformative changes in the lives of the people living in poverty.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Babatunde Olawoore
PhD Student
SSHLS
University of Portsmouth
12th June 2014

REC reference number: 13/14:17
Please quote this number on all correspondence.

Dear Babatunde,

Full Title of Study: Role of Civil Society Organisations in Aid and Development Effectiveness: The Influence of a Rights-Based Approach

Documents reviewed:
Consent Form
Invitation Letter
Letters
Participant Information Sheet
Protocol

Further to our recent correspondence, this proposal was reviewed by The Research Ethics Committee of The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

I am pleased to tell you that the proposal was awarded a favourable ethical opinion by the committee.
Please note that this approval is based on the understanding that you will need to get permission from the organisations to access the participants and this should be done in a way which does not compromise the Computer Misuse Act or Data Protection Act.

Kind regards,
FHSS FREC Chair

Jane Winstone
Members participating in the review:
Richard Hitchcock Jane Winstone
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

RESEARCH TITLE:

THE INFLUENCE OF THE RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH ON THE DECISION-MAKING OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN THE DELIVERY OF DEVELOPMENT AID: A CASE OF ACTIONAID AND OXFAM-NOVIB IN NIGERIA

RESEARCHER: BABATUNDE OLAWOORE

(babatunde.olawoore@port.ac.uk)

Student Number: UP710796

Department of Historical and Literary Studies
Faculty of Humanity and Social Sciences
University of Portsmouth
I would like to invite you to take part in our research study. Before you decide I would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve you. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Find below more information on this study and ask me if there is anything that is not clear to you in this study.

**Brief Description of the Study**

This study examines the impacts of the rights-based approach on development work in sub-Saharan Africa. The rights-based approach is a framework that is currently being promoted and entails the integration of human rights into development work. It is a deviation from the previous development theories that view development as a form of charity to the people who are in need, while their rights are often neglected. The rights-based approach centralises the rights of the citizens as active agents of their own development. This study investigates whether the rights-based approach could promote the effectiveness of foreign development assistance or aid to enhance tangible improvements in the lives of the people. Nigeria is used as a case study. Development here merely means the management of human and material resources of a nation or the entire world to achieve better or improved lives for the citizens. However, this study only focuses on the influences of the rights-based approach on the works of international and national development based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating in Nigeria. This research is based on the premise that if the rights-based approach is having an impact on development, it will reflect on the strategies, activities and funding of NGOs.
Purpose of the Study

This research is part of my PhD studies as a requirement for the award the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in international development studies. It is common knowledge that despite the vast natural resources and the foreign assistance in the form of aid available to the countries in that region, extreme poverty and the lack of necessary infrastructural facilities are still prevalent. This research intends to contribute to academic discourses and practices in this area; perhaps to promote development through a better understanding of the influence of the rights-based approach that is being used in development work today. Let me add at this point that this research is independent, self-funded, and I receive no financial assistance from anywhere else. The research is being conducted under the supervision of experienced researchers at the University of Portsmouth.

Why Do I Invite You?

You are selected to participate in this research because you are a member of the staff of ActionAid Nigeria or Oxfam Nigeria Country Office and their partner organisations. I had earlier secured the permissions of the country offices of ActionAid to evaluate their works and their interested partner organisations for this study, while still working on Oxfam and the organisation’s interested partners. Note that ActionAid and Oxfam are not sponsors of this research and the interview shall be entirely confidential. In total, about twenty-two organisations and forty-two respondents would participate in this study. However, taking part in this study is voluntary. Should you decide to participate in this study; we would examine this information sheet together and secure your consent through voice recording during interviews or by signing a participant consent form.

What your Participation Involves?
This research will consider your tight schedule and maximise any opportunity to share your time and experience with the researcher within the agreed time frame. Your participation would involve granting an interview(s) to the researcher using a checklist of semi-structured interview questions. The interview(s) would be recorded using an audio recording electronic device if you consented to that; otherwise, the interview could be recorded in writing. It would preferably be one-on-one with the researcher. It could also be by telephone interview. The interview is expected to be between 45 minutes to 1 hour in length at your convenience. The interview would be at your chosen location to ensure it does not involve any travel expenses for you. The study is scheduled to be conducted within 6 months to 1 year starting from 1st July 2014. The interview will focus on your personal and organisation’s experiences of the application of the rights-based approach in your development activities or otherwise. All interview data would be anonymised or coded during data handling, processing, storage, and in the output of the research. This is to prevent being identified unless you consented to be associated with your data.

**Benefits and Disadvantages of Taking Part**

This research intends to enhance understanding of the relevance of the rights-based approach to achieving the goals of your organisation and the desired development outcomes - the improvement of development efforts to promote tangible improvement in the lives of the citizens.

The major disadvantages of your participation are the inconvenience this might cause regarding giving the researcher time out of your tight schedule. Other likely risks would be avoided as much as possible through anonymisation.
Confidentiality of your Participation

The researcher is bound by duty to ensure your responses are kept confidential during and after the study. Your answers will be anonymised or coded unless you consented to be identified or you want to be associated with your data. It is also possible that if you join the study that some of the data collected will be looked at by authorised persons to check that the study is carried out correctly. These authorised persons may include my supervisors, the would-be examiner and the research ethics committee of the University of Portsmouth. Research in the University is looked at by an independent group of people, called a Research Ethics Committee, to protect the interests of the researcher, the participant and the society at large. This study has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by the Faculty of European and International Studies Research Ethics Committee of the University of Portsmouth. The authorised persons will also have a duty of confidentiality to you as a research participant, and we will do their best to meet this obligation.

The university authority has a provision for secure storage and the later disposal of the data collected by interview. The storage could be for at least five years after collection, analysis and interpretation and may possibly be used for other future studies. These are all subject to securing your consent. I also want to notify you that you have the right of access to check the accuracy of data held by you during the study.

Right of Withdrawal from this Research

Please note that you have a two weeks’ period to withdraw from this study after the end of the interview if the need arises, in which case I would destroy the interview recording. If I did not hear from you after the two had elapsed, I would
start to transcribe the interview data. Therefore, if you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to the supervisory team, who will do their best to answer your questions, or me. Their contacts are stated below. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can complain to the director of the Chair of Ethics Committee, Faculty of Humanity and Social Sciences, Jane Winstone (jane.winstone@port.ac.uk; or via telephone: +44 (0) 9284 3930).

**Having Access to the Results of this Research Study**

I have agreed with the ActionAid Nigeria and Oxfam Nigeria Country Office that the output of the research would be made available to them. Note that this does not mean they will have access to interview data but only the final report, within which your identity would have been protected unless you consented to be identified. I will make available to your organisation the summary report of the outcome of this study. Should you need any further clarification on the result of the investigation, I will be happy to answer any question via contact detail below. Also, I will prepare the result of this research into a PhD Thesis. I reiterate my duty to protect your identity in any forms of communicating the outcome of this study unless you consented to be identified in any of these media.

Finally, I want to thank you for taking time to read this information sheet notwithstanding your decision to participate or not in this research. Should you decide to participate in this study, you will be given a copy of this information to keep and will go further to secure your consent. Any other specific information can be obtained by contacting my first supervisor, Dr Angela Crack by email as stated below. Thank you.

Research Team Details:

**FIRST SUPERVISOR: DR ANGELA CRACK**
SECOND SUPERVISOR: DR OLIVIA RUTAZIBWA (tamsin.bradley@port.ac.uk)

DIRECTOR OF STUDIES: PROF TONY CHAFER

(tony.Chafer@port.ac.uk)

Babatunde Olawoore (UP710796)
## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### RESEARCH QUESTION:
In what ways does the rights-based approach to development effectiveness shape the partnerships between INGOs and CSOs, and influence the decisions both sets of actors make on strategic, operational and financial matters?

### INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS:
- Would you like to ask any questions about this research?
- I will appreciate if I know how much time you can spare to speak with me
- Would you allow me to use this opportunity to agree on consent?
- Would you allow me to record this interview?

### PRIMARY QUESTIONS | SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What does your role involve?</th>
<th>Starter Question</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Could you please discuss with me your understanding of the rights-based approach?</td>
<td>Is there any essential requirement of the rights-based approach?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Development framework based on Human Right Principles</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Accountability of duty-bearers to rights-holders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Participation as a right and means to development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Empowerment of the citizens as agents of their own development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Non-discrimination and attention to vulnerable groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>How relevant is the rights-based approach to your organisation?</td>
<td>Challenges regarding:</td>
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<tr>
<td>What challenges were involved in the integration of the rights-based approach in your programmes and/or organisation?</td>
<td>▪ Need for expertise in human rights laws</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Focusing more on advocacy more than service delivery</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Gaining access to the citizens or beneficiaries of projects</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Staffs response to change of programmes or strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there any way the rights-based approach has affected the way you</td>
<td>It would be useful to me if you could please give an example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conduct your programme and/or work with partners?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Does it mean you must change some of your responsibilities, acquire</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>experts or train some of your staffs?</td>
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</table>
| **What determines your choice of local partners or projects you fund?** | Requirement could be based on  
  - Management and result  
  - Organisational capacity  
  - A focus on specific development goal |
| Please share with me your organisation’s experience in accessing funds  | How do you design programmes to meet the requirement of rights-based donors?  
  - Such as framing intervention in human rights terms  
  - Emphasis on advocacy work over service delivery  
  - Focus on accountability to, participation and empowerment of rights-holders  
  - Format of reporting |
| from donors that promote the rights-based approach                        |          |
| Are you aware of the instances where partners had failed to cope with   | How did you address that? |
| the demands of the approach successfully?                                |          |
| Does the rights-based approach add any values or benefits to your work  | Does the rights-based approach enhance the achievement of your organisational goal or maximise your impact on the beneficiaries of your projects? |
| as an organisation?                                                      |          |
| Does the rights-based approach increase the appeal of individual        | Human rights-based organisations with the expertise and structure to access funding from rights-based donors? |
| organisations which are ordinarily outside of your range of partners?    |          |
| Are there any other observations or questions you have about this       | Any advice or further clarification? |
| research?                                                               |          |
| **CONCLUDING QUESTIONS/REMARK:**                                       |          |
Do you know of any person or colleague in your organisation or any other organisation that might be willing to participate in this research?

Would you be happy if I mention your name when I invite the person to participate in this research?

I want to appreciate you for granting this interview. I promise to inform you of the outcome of this research. Thank you.
APPENDIX IV

Profiles of Participant Organisations

ActionAid Nigeria

ActionAid Nigerian is a country programme of ActionAid International, a leading international non-governmental organisation working in 45 countries that claimed to be fighting poverty and injustice worldwide. The INGO began work in Nigeria in 2000, because of the country’s vast population, economy, the enormous development challenges that contend with the majority of Nigerians and its pivotal role in the African region. ActionAid claims to promote the empowerment of women and girls, street children, people with disabilities, and landless groups to claim their rights to essential services such as healthcare, clean water and education. One of the critical activities of ActionAid is the integrated partnership against poverty with local intermediate NGOs and CBOs who shared the belief in the values of the rights-based approach with a close connection with the local people. Two prominent partners of ActionAid participated in this study: Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) and Centre for Community Empowerment and Poverty Eradication (CCEPE) and their Community-based organisations (CBOs).

Oxfam-NOVIB

Oxfam-Novib Nigeria Country programme is part of the Oxfam International that comprises of the international confederation of 19 organisations that claims to be working together with local partners and communities in Nigeria. According to Oxfam, one person in every three individuals lives in poverty globally, hence its promotion of social change in developing countries by mobilising the power of the
people against poverty premised solidarity. Oxfam-Novib Nigeria Country programmes started in Nigeria in 1997 with a limited number of partners because Nigeria is a major contributor to peacekeeping in sub-Saharan Africa be-devilled with underdevelopment, notwithstanding its enormous natural resources. Oxfam-Novib claimed to work with partners and vulnerable women and men to fight the causes of poverty and injustices by promoting improved livelihood, women rights, and good governance. The organisation claimed to work only with local partners and organisations that prioritise the rights of the poor and marginalised. This study explored the partnership between Oxfam-Novib and the following intermediate NGOs: Farmers Development Union (FADU); Civil Society on Legislative and Advocacy Commission (CISLAC); International Foundation for the Aged (IFA); Majestic Community for Justice Foundation (MCJF); National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS); and Social Action (SA).

**Justice Development and Peace Commission**

The Justice, Development and Peace Commission is an organisation founded and funded majorly by the Catholic Church. The intermediate NGO is a significant partner of ActionAid in all states and Catholic Dioceses in Nigeria. The organisation claimed to cater for all people that are in need within each diocesan jurisdiction, irrespective of religion, culture, race or gender. Each Diocese has its own wing of JDPC. This study focused on JDPC of Ondo State Diocese. The intermediate NGO claimed to have a focus on promoting the centralisation of justice and human dignity in every community they work, such that every human person is fully alive and active to realise their full potential in a just, safe and free environment. The organisation only works with INGOs and community organisations that belief in human rights as enshrined by God according to their documents. JDPC claimed that promoting human rights with likeminded organisations present holistic human
development through conscientisation of the poor and excluded people who are central to meaningful and sustainable development in Nigeria. Three community-based partners of JDPC participated in this study: Ilado Community Development Committee; Wasinmi-Odunwo Community Development Committee; and Alayeere Community Development Committee.

**Centre for Community Empowerment and Poverty Eradication**

Centre for Community Empowerment and Poverty Eradication (CCEPE) is a partner of ActionAid International, an intermediate NGO based in Ilorin, Kwara state, Nigeria. The intermediate NGO was formally a local rights programme of ActionAid Nigeria in the state but became an autonomous NGO working with several local partners, government, international Non-Governmental Organisations and governments on rights issues. However, ActionAid remains their major funder. The intermediate NGO claimed to place unalloyed priority on promote the realisation of human rights for the poor and excluded people and communities in the state to enhance just and democratic governance. Three of their community-based organisation partners are Okeso Community Development Committee, Gbago Community Development Committee, and Shoolu Community Development Committee. According to the intermediate NGO, their partnership focuses on the implementation the implementation of the rights-based approach.

**Civil Society on Legislative and Advocacy Commission**

Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), founded in 2006, is an intermediate NGO that works on advocacy, information sharing, research, and capacity-building for other local NGOs, community-based organisation and government officials. The intermediate NGOs claimed to focus on strengthening the connection between civil society and the legislature to improve legislative
processes and governance issues. Although the intermediate NGO works with many partners including INGOs and governments, this study focused on its work with Oxfam-Novib. During the research, Majestic Community for Justice Commission works closely with CISLAC. Key informants from the intermediate NGO claimed that they are not a strictly rights-based organisation but integrate rights issues in their work with partners.

**Farmers Development Union (FADU)**

This is an umbrella organisation of all local farmer’s unions and cooperative society. Every rural community in Nigeria has a wing of FADU customarily called Farmers Community Association(FCA) while several FCAs form Farmers Development Association(FDA). This research mainly focuses on the work and partnership of FADU with Oxfam-Novib and some of the community/local branch of the intermediate NGO in three communities in Osun state. FADU office is based in Oyo. Three FCA participated in this study: Oke-Agbede FCA; Ilosi FCA; and Igangan FCA. The intermediate NGOs is not rights-based NGOs, but integrate rights issues into their work as they partner with Oxfam-Novib.

**National Association of Nigerian Traders**

NANTS was formed in Lagos by a group of traders in October 1997, established as a human rights and mediating forces to confront unfriendly market policies of past military regime in Nigeria. It is now a national body present in all local communities and cities in Nigeria spread across gender and sectoral balance. The intermediate NGO focuses on influencing government policies and practices in different ways. It’s claimed mission is to promote trade, economic development and rights of the entrepreneurs by advancing business beyond buying and selling into a vehicle for promoting social justice, human rights, sustainable development
and poverty eradication. NANTS works with many non-governmental organisations, national and regional governments beyond Nigeria. Oxfam-Novib is one of the critical partners of NANTS and its local branches across Nigeria.

**Social Action**

The intermediate NGO is a major partner of Oxfam-Novib and claimed to promote democracy, social justice and human rights in the extractive industry, environmental protection, trade and public policies. Social Action also claimed to conduct research, provides popular education and advocacy in solidarity with communities, activists and scholars to promote social change in Nigeria and other countries in Africa. It claimed to employ community-based approach by establishing citizens’ groups to monitor legislations and practices to protect the environment, community rights, and livelihoods. This research focused on its work and relationship with Oxfam-Novib.

**International Foundation for the Aged**

This intermediate NGO is a partner of Oxfam-Novib based in Abuja. The organisation claimed to promote better care for the elderly. However, this study only explored the intermediate NGO relationships with Oxfam-Novib.

**Community Development Committees/ CBOs/FCA**

CBOs are grass-roots based organisations that are often smaller in an operational capacity and are frequently owned by/or working with the people in the rural communities. In this research, they are referred to as Community Development Committees (CDC)/ Farmer Community Associations. It is not an uncommon thing in rural Nigerian communities to have the Community Development Union – an umbrella name for an association of all the indigenes of rural communities both
home and abroad. Individual citizens are members with the responsibility to promote the development of their community which often include payment of compulsory development levies and donations towards development projects of their various communities. Farmers Community Association is a farmers’ union in each rural community of which majority are peasant farmers. This study focused on the working relationship between these grass-roots organisations with their intermediate NGO and INGO partners.
# Research Ethics Review Checklist

Please include this completed form as an appendix to your thesis (see the Research Degrees Operational Handbook for more information).

## Postgraduate Research Student (PGRS) Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student ID:</th>
<th>UP710796</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PGRS Name:</td>
<td>Babatunde Olawoore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department:</td>
<td>SSHLS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Supervisor:</td>
<td>Dr Angela Crack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start Date:</td>
<td>01/10/2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Study Mode and Route:

- [ ] Part-time
- [x] Full-time
- [ ] MPhil
- [x] PhD
- [ ] MD
- [ ] Professional Doctorate

### Title of Thesis:

The Influence Of The Rights-Based Approach On The Decision-Making Of Civil Society Organisations In The Delivery Of Development Aid: A Case Of Actionaid And Oxfam-Novib In Nigeria

### Thesis Word Count:

80,123
(excluding ancillary data)

If you are unsure about any of the following, please contact the local representative on your Faculty Ethics Committee for advice. Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University’s Ethics Policy and any relevant University, academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study.

Although the Ethics Committee may have given your study a favourable opinion, the final responsibility for the ethical conduct of this work lies with the researcher(s).

---

### UKRIO Finished Research Checklist:

(If you would like to know more about the checklist, please see your Faculty or Departmental Ethics Committee rep or see the online version of the full checklist at: [http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/](http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Have all of your research and findings been reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame?</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Have all contributions to knowledge been acknowledged?</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Have you complied with all agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship?</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Has your research data been retained in a secure and accessible form and will it remain so for the required duration?</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Does your research comply with all legal, ethical, and contractual requirements?</td>
<td>[x]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Candidate Statement:

I have considered the ethical dimensions of the above named research project, and have successfully obtained the necessary ethical approval(s).

Ethical review number(s) from Faculty Ethics Committee (or from NRES/SCREC):

13/14:17

If you have *not* submitted your work for ethical review, and/or you have answered ‘No’ to one or more of questions a) to e), please explain below why this is so:

---

Signed *(PGRS)*:  
Date: 30/04/2018
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COVERED WORK
I, Babatunde Olawore, 1 Selma Court, 18 Merton Road, Southsea, Hants, PO5 2AH, “the Depositor”, would like to deposit Influence of the Rights-Based Approach on the Decision-Making of Civil Society Organisations in the Delivery of Development Aid, hereafter referred to as the “Work”, in the University of Portsmouth Library and agree to the following:

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Appendix V

Figure 1: Pictorial Representation of Participant Organisations

Total Number of Organisations = 20
Number of INGOs = 2
Number of Intermediary Organisations = 3
Number of City-based Organisations = 6
Number of CBOs/CDC/FCA = 9