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*Creating a greater partnership: Analyzing partnership in the Catholic Church
development chain*

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents results from a project designed to explore the meaning and function of partnership within the Catholic Church development chain. The geography literature has had little to say about such aid chains, especially those founded on faith-based groups. The relationships between three Catholic Church based donors – referred to as A, B and C - with development personnel of the diocese of the Abuja Ecclesiastical Province (AEP) as well as other Catholic Church structures in Nigeria were analysed. The aim was to explore the forces behind the relationships and how ‘patchy’ these relationships were in AEP. Respondents were asked to give each of the donors a score in relation to four questions covering their relationship with the donors. Results suggest that the modus operandi of donor ‘A’ allows it to be perceived as the ‘best’ partner while ‘B’ was scored less favourably because of a perception that it attempts to act independently of existing structures in Nigeria rather than work through them. There was significant variation between dioceses in this regard as well as between the diocese and other structures of the Church (Provinces, Inter-Provinces and National Secretariat). Thus ‘partnership’ in the Catholic Church aid chain is a highly complex, contested and ‘visioned’ term and the development of an analytical framework has to take account of these fundamentals.

Keywords: Catholic Church, development chain, partnership, Nigeria

Introduction

Partnership is increasingly espoused as the ideal form of relationship between development aid donors typically based in the rich North of the globe and those residing in the poorer South who receive the aid. The term is liberally applied by many but what is it and why should partnership be the ideal relationship in aid chains compared to more mechanistic alternatives such as customer-supplier? Some put the emphasis on interaction and suggest it be a "*contract between equals*" (Cox and Healey, 1998) founded on an intimate and long lasting interaction with mutual respect for each others' independence (Larkin, 1994; Lister, 2000). Others put the emphasis on output (Davies 2002), implying that partners agree as to what that should be (Brinkerhoff (2002a, 2002b) and upon a rational division of labour to achieve it (Anderson, 2000). However, in practice the term 'partnership' has such an appeal that it is indiscriminately used to cover almost all relationships, including ephemeral, non-intimate and short-term relationships of contractor and sub-contractor (Hailey, 2000; Mohan, 2002) and can mask relationships that in practice are being driven by the agenda of the donor (Green and Curtis, 2005).

An important dimension to the issue of partnership in aid chains is the diversity of the agencies involved. The development chain linking donors and intended beneficiaries can be summarized as Figure 1. The boxes to the left represents donors, those in the middle the 'intermediaries' or field agencies and those at the right the intended beneficiaries. Given that the donors to the left-hand side of the model are typically located in the developed world and the field agencies and beneficiaries in the developing world the

spatial axis of the model is predominantly North – South. Those on the left hand side of the diagram have the resources which are being distributed while those to the right hand side by definition do not. The field agencies construct representations of the poor they are trying to serve (Bebbington, 2005).

<Figure 1 near here>

Figure 1 is, of course, a simplification. Different parts of the chain may be embedded in quite diverse political, economic and cultural contexts, and each of the boxes can comprise a diverse range of organisations, each with their own structures, procedures and mandate, and may include ‘non-governmental organisations’ (NGOs) as well as government organisations (GOs) and commercial organisations who will also have a wide range of linkages and networks not described in Figure 1. What the diagram also fails to convey is the level of ‘patchiness’ of intervention both across space and time. The boxes to the right hand side of the diagram may be highly variable in scale – from one household or even individual to a whole region – and the relationships between all the actors in Figure 1 can change with time. However, it is typically assumed that partnership makes the best use of scarce resources by utilising compatibility between groups in the boxes of Figure 1 (Johnston and Lawrence, 1988; Mohan, 2002). In essence it is claimed that a donor with its range of field partners can achieve more with the same resource; donor supplies the resource and manages accountability while the field agencies have the local knowledge and infrastructure required for implementation. There may also be assumptions of mutual learning for all involved so that what the partners do is

assumed to be an improvement over more contractual relationships (Postma, 1994; Lewis, 1998).

There is a dearth of literature which critically evaluates the performance of partnership (Davies, 2002) and a lack of analytical frameworks which allow partnership to be dissected (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998). An understanding of partnership – cutting through the rhetoric – is a necessary prelude to checking whether it is succeeding. Unsurprisingly given its applied nature much of the literature which does exist on partnership in aid chains has been published within development studies and management journals. Much of it revolves around an analysis based on obvious power differentials (donors have the resources and field agencies compete for those resources) and how partnerships should be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness. These studies have tended to be case study based – illustrating examples of good practice and highlighting problems – without necessarily trying to explore broader issues (Bebbington, 2004). Perhaps more surprisingly given the spatial-temporal-institutional landscape of Figure 1 the geography literature has had little to say on partnership in aid chains.

One of the important features of Figure 1 is the role played by NGOs and in particular religious-based groups; Christian, Islamic and others (Clarke 2007). The Catholic Church is one example, with organisations based in the North charged with accessing and distributing resources to their partner organisations (also mostly Catholic) in the South. The uniqueness here arises from the fact that the Catholic Church is universal in nature and hence its northern and southern based development agencies share the same moral

beliefs in a global community of equals. It has the advantage in theory of being a community seeking lasting transformation with members open to learning from each other and not just a temporary and ephemeral partnership created to deliver a once off development project. As such the Catholic-Church chain is an example of a long-term relationship based on shared beliefs and morality which stress tolerance, respect for neighbour and a need to listen. All this pervades Figure 1 and hence must come close to being the ideal basis for partnership but does it occur and does it succeed in bringing about more and ‘better’ change as is generally assumed? Also, what degree of ‘patchiness’ occurs within the aid chain model of the Catholic Church, especially given the central thrust of Catholic Social Teaching is the sanctity of human life, the inherent dignity of human beings and the rights of every person to life and the necessities of life; *we must be our brother’s keeper* (Genesis 4:9). This immediately implies, of course, a need for Church-mediated interventions to address inequality. Answers to these questions have been few and far between, particularly within the geography literature. A recent paper by Olsen (2006) explored differences in institutions and type of intervention between Catholic and protestant Evangelical groups in one part of Peru, a country of 28 million people of whom 90% in the 1993 census declared themselves as Catholic. Peru and indeed Latin America has a long history of Catholic Church mediated development, especially following the Second Vatican Council of 1963 to 1965 which stressed the need for the Church in engage in social development. Olsen explored how these different groups with their different structures, links to donor networks and related but separate identities create “*development truths*” and then seek to put them into practice.

This paper will seek to add to an understanding of partnership in aid chains by focussing specifically on the Catholic Church chain linking donors from three countries of Europe and North America and the diocese of one province in Nigeria, West Africa. Nigeria has one of the largest populations of any African country (currently assumed to be 140 million people. Irish Independent 21st Feb 2006), and it is generally assumed that about 30% of the population is Christian, and roughly half this Catholic. The remainder are Muslim (estimated as 40%) or traditional (polytheist), although definitions can be cloudy as both Christians and Muslims may also hold traditionalist beliefs. Nigeria has more than 250 ethnic groups, and religion is also related to ethnicity. Nigeria thereby provides a very different context to that of any country in Latin America within which to explore variation in the relationships which occur within the Catholic aid chain family and the forces which have helped drive the nature of those relationships. In order to do this it is first necessary to summarise how partnerships have traditionally been analysed within a development context before going on to present the results of the empirical study and what they say about partnership.

Analysing partnership

There are broadly three approaches taken to the analysis of partnership: power, inter-dependency and performance.

Power

A commonly expressed approach to exploring partnership is the analysis of power (Saidel, 1991; Postma, 1994; Atkinson, 1999; Lister, 2000). This is, of course, not an unfamiliar topic in development studies or geography and indeed is logical given that those with the resources (the donors) have the resources being sought by field agencies acting on behalf of beneficiaries (Fowler, 1998; Anderson, 2000; Mosse, 2001; Mohan 2002; Bebbington, 2005). Competition for resources can be intense (Smillie, 1995; Aldaba et al., 2000; Hailey, 2000), with some field agencies more competent to compete than others (Moore and Stewart, 1998). Much the same can be said of donor relationships with government agencies in the north (Lewis, 1998; Wallace, 2003; Townsend and Townsend, 2004). For example, Lister (2000) provides an analysis of power in partnership by applying Dahl's (1957) four key constituents of a power relation:

- Base of power (the resources using to bring about influence)
- Means of power (actions that can be taken to bring about influence)
- Scope of power (specific actions taken to bring about influence)
- Amount of power (the extent of the influence)

Another approach has been to analyse discourse (Atkinson, 1999). Partnership assumes that partners would bring about change in the positions and assumptions held by those involved (Hastings, 1996, 1998, 1999). One could look for evidence of influence in terms of three key areas:

- Programmes: Assumptions about what is important to address in development programmes and projects.
- Practice: How best to address the goals set in development (including issues of resourcing, timescales, assessing impact etc.)
- Accountability: How is accountability addressed and to whom?

However, one needs to be very careful when using discourse to analyse power given the pro-partnership rhetoric, whether sincere or not, that one is likely to encounter from all partners for different reasons (Hastings,1999).

Inter-dependency

Another approach to analysing partnership is based on ‘inter-dependence theory’ (Rusbult and Van Lange, 2003). Partnership is assumed to be a long-term interaction with a level of investment from all involved and thus one could explore the ways in which partners affect each other (Rusbult and Buunk, 1993). While there are obvious overlaps with an analysis of power the inter-dependency approach goes deeper. Bantham et al. (2003) posit what they refer to as:

- Mindset enabler. Awareness of tensions in relationships and a willingness to address them.

- Skillset enabler. Communication behaviours that facilitate the management of tensions. Skills such as ‘non-defensive listening’, ‘active listening’, ‘self-disclosure’ and ‘editing’ can be included here.

These are related in that a willingness to manage tensions (skillset enablers) has to follow from an awareness of such tensions coupled with a desire to do something about them (mindset enablers).

Performance

A third approach to analysing partnership is to take a more functional perspective and look at performance (Brinkerhoff, 2002a, 2002b). This approach is to be found more within the development management literature and one could explore for example:

- presence of pre-requisites and success factors
- linkage between mutuality and organizational identity
- practice of partnership. Does each partner meet their objectives? How do they seek to maintain the ‘identity’ of the partnership? How is the partnership presented?
- outcomes of the partnership relationship. Is there evidence of a rational division of labour for example?

While the Brinkerhoff (2002a, 2002b) framework is complex it is useful in setting out the characteristics to be looked for in assessing partnership.

Methodology

Site selection

The Catholic Church development chain employed in the research comprises the dioceses of Abuja Ecclesiastical Province (AEP), Nigeria. There are nine Ecclesiastical Provinces in the country, each led by an Arch Bishop and in one instance by a Cardinal, divided into 52 dioceses, each headed by a Bishop. The Catholic Church in Nigeria, as elsewhere, is highly hierarchical (Figure 2) with fairly uniform roles and these structures are expected to be universally understood and practiced.

<Figure 2 near here>

Each diocese has a Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) headed by a JDPC Coordinator, and a Health Coordinator. Given the gravity of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria there is also a HIV/AIDS Coordinator who reports to the Health Coordinator. The Province also has a structure (facilities and staff) to help coordinate and facilitate development, although the extent of this will vary between the Provinces. Development programmes (especially health care provision) are also implemented at an inter-provincial

level. Finally there is a Catholic Secretariat which acts as the administrative centre for the Catholic Church in Nigeria. The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) works directly with the diocese and provinces, dealing with civil society, development and human rights issues to mention but a few. All these church-based institutions seek funds from the same Catholic-based donors (and secular ones) for programmes and projects.

AEP is located in the centre of the country, and comprises six diocese; Abuja, Lafia, Lokoja, Makurdi, Idah and Otukpo (Figure 3). There is a provincial office based in Abuja (the Arch-Diocese), and AEP is also part of an inter-provincial programme of health care provision funded by Misereor.

<Figure 3 near here>

There are a number of reasons for selecting AEP as the focus of the research:

1. AEP encompasses the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria and at least in theory is the best placed of all provinces to have a strong interaction with Federal government. As well as being physically close to government ministries and thus having access to key politicians and civil servants the embassies are also in Abuja, and they are an important source of funding.
2. Many aid agencies have their headquarters in Abuja and again this facilitates an interaction with AEP.

3. AEP has an interesting mix of diocese. They vary in longevity, size (physical), composition, Catholic population (as a proportion of the total), location and other characteristics which could well have a bearing on their partnership with donors.

Even with the selection of just one Province in one country the interactions with donors and governments presents a complex version of Figure 1, presented here as Figure 4.

<Figure 4 near here>

The research also focused on three of the major Catholic Church-based donors of the north. In order to provide anonymity they will be referred to as A, B and C. 'A' and 'C' are located in Western Europe while 'B' is based in North America. All three 'sister' agencies share the Catholic Social Teaching ethos, and obtain part of their funding from Church collections in their country of origin. They also obtain funds from their respective government aid agencies. 'B' is the largest in terms of global coverage and resource base while 'C' is the smallest. Naturally all three of them are well aware of the others, including personnel, structures, preferred mode of operation and priorities, but they are quite different in the ways in which they function in Nigeria. The 'youngest' in the sense that it has only recently (1999) set up an operation in Nigeria is 'B'. However, 'B' was in Nigeria prior to the civil war (1968 to 1970) but was asked to leave the country because of a perceived support for Biafra. 'B' has a headquarters in Abuja with both Nigerian and expatriate staff (30 in total but soon to increase to 35), and funds a range of programmes

with an especial focus on HIV/AIDS (with money from USAID) and conflict resolution (peace building). ‘B’ is a member of the international Caritas network (www.caritas.org) based in the Vatican City that binds together many Catholic donors and diocese in the south. Caritas is an official grouping of the Church which seeks to promote partnership as a means of fighting “*poverty, exclusion, intolerance and discrimination*” (www.caritas.org). Members of the Caritas network (within Peru and international) provide the Catholic dimension to the Olson (2006) paper.

‘A’, by way of contrast to ‘B’, has no direct presence in Nigeria and instead tends to work by supporting and encouraging existing structures. For example, ‘A’ supports the inter-provincial health care programme which brings together three of the northern provinces in Nigeria (including AEP). ‘A’ also pays the salaries of some Nigerian staff at the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria in Lagos. ‘A’ funds a range of programmes other than health care, including rural development and water supply. ‘A’ is not a member of Caritas but does belong to an informal network of Catholic donors – CIDSE (*Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité*: www.cidse.org) – based in Brussels.

‘C’ is in-between ‘A’ and ‘B’ and is currently in a transitional phase. They do have a permanent presence in Nigeria but it is relatively small – just one officer (a Nigerian) – but is set to grow in the near future. Like ‘B’ they have tended to work directly with diocese but are now changing to a mode similar to ‘A’ by working more through the

Church structures and playing the role of a facilitator. 'C' is a member of both the Caritas network and CIDSE.

Survey

The Justice Development and Peace and Health Coordinator of each of the six dioceses were interviewed (Table 1). In some cases it was possible to also interview the HIV/AIDS Coordinator (administratively comes under the Health Coordinator). In addition the key actors/leaders in charge at the Provincial (AEP), Inter-Provincial (three provinces that previously formed Kaduna ecclesiastical province in North Nigeria) and National (CSN) levels were also interviewed.

<Table 1 near here>

The interviews were semi-structured in nature and recorded for transcription. However, included in the checklist were four questions that required a numerical ranking on the part of the respondents. Respondents were asked to provide a 'score' for each of the three donors from 0 (worst) to 10 (best). The questions and interpretation of the score are as follows:

	0	10
1. <i>How are your relations with the donors?</i>	Bad	Excellent
2. <i>Do you see the relationship with the Catholic-based donors as a partnership?</i>	Definitely Not	Very much so
3. <i>Do you think that the donors see you as an equal?</i>	Definitely Not	Very much so
4. <i>How important are inter-personal relationships when dealing with Catholic-based donors?</i>	Not at all	Very much so

While quantitative scoring of opinion is, of course, a crude device it was intended to use it as a way of triangulating with answers already provided to some questions as well as to provide the basis for further discussion. As it transpired the process worked well and the scores did match the general thrust of comments made earlier in the interviews. Hence for concision only the results from the scoring exercise along with explanatory quotations will be presented in this paper.

Analysis of the scores was via the Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test of medians (Kruskal and Wallis, 1952). This test is the non-parametric equivalent of the one-way analysis of variance. The equation for the Kruskal-Wallis statistic (H) is:

$$H = \frac{12}{N \times (N + 1)} \times \left(\sum \frac{R_i^2}{n_i} \right) - 3(N + 1)$$

Where

k = number of samples (each labeled with i) being compared in the test

n_i = number of observations in sample I (sample sizes do not have to be equal)

n = sum of all sample sizes ($= n_1 + n_2 + \dots + n_k$)

R_i = rank sum of sample i . The rank of each observation is computed according to its relative magnitude in the totality of data for the k samples. An adjustment is made for tied ranks (ties are each given the average of their ranks).

The H statistic approximates a Chi-square distribution with degrees of freedom given by $k - 1$.

The Kruskal-Wallis test assumes that the k samples are random and independent and that the sample size (n_i) is a minimum of 5. It also assumes that the data (in the case of this research, scores) can be ranked. Median separation in the Kruskal-Wallis test is via the calculation of z-values (comparison of sample median to overall median).

Results

The median scores, sample sizes (n_i), Kruskal-Wallis statistic (H; adjusted for ties) and z-values given by all the respondents (diocesan, provincial, inter-provincial and national) to the four questions and for the three main donors to feature in the survey are provided in

Table 2. Generally donor 'A' comes out the 'best' (higher median score) while 'B' tends to come out the worst (lower median score), with donor 'C' closer to 'B' than 'A'. The result for one of the questions (relations with donors) is statistically significant at 0.05 while another (partnership) is significant at 0.1. The results for the other two questions (equality and inter-personal relationship) are not significant at 0.05, but in each case 'A' has the highest median.

<Table 2 near here>

The reason typically given by respondents for a difference in median score between the donors was that 'B', and to a much lesser extent 'C', was perceived by them as not respecting the local Church structures and were more prone to dictate what should be done, where and how. 'A' was perceived as being much more 'hands off', supportive and open to discussion. Thus relationships with 'A' were seen as 'better' and this translated into partnership founded on equality.

Table 3 presents medians, sample sizes and H values for the score data rearranged in terms of male and female respondents. Men (mostly priests) and women (mostly religious sisters) did not differ in terms of the scores provided to the four questions. The only hint of a significant difference was for the 'partnership' question ($H = 1.51$), and suggests that men were more likely to see their relationship with the donors as a partnership than were women. There were various explanations for this. Women in this hierarchy tended to occupy the positions of Health and HIV/AIDS Coordinator (but not always – Idah,

Otukpo, Makurdi and Lokoja have priests as Health Coordinators) while a lay man occupied the post of JDPC Coordinator in Abuja. The only female religious JDPC Coordinator was in Idah diocese. This meant that every where there was a female Health Coordinator there nearly always was a male JDPC Coordinator (usually, but not always, a priest). Similarly where there was a female HIV/ AIDS Coordinator (Idah and Makurdi) the Health Coordinator was male. The perception of some of the women was that the donors preferred to work through the JDPC or Health Coordinator if that post was held by a priest. This allows females less opportunity in the overall decision making trajectory.

<Tables 3 and 4 near here>

The main difference in perception was related more to the position of the individual in the Church hierarchy. Table 4 presents the median scores given by the respondents grouped into two categories:

- diocesan personnel (JDPC, Health and HIV/AIDS coordinators and secretaries)
- others (personnel in Provincial, Inter-Provincial and National structures)

Interestingly, personnel at the diocesan level were more positive (gave higher scores) in terms of their answers to the four questions than were those at provincial, inter-provincial and national levels. This 'scale effect' was particularly apparent with regard to the questions to do with partnership and equality ($P < 0.05$), but was also true for the question regarding relationships ($P < 0.1$). It would appear that personnel at

administrative scales levels above the diocese are more likely to be critical of the ways in which the donors engage with the Church in Nigeria, and this primarily stems from the *modus operandi* of 'B'. First there is the notion that 'B' works through its own structures directly with the diocese, and to the respondents at 'higher' levels in the Church hierarchy this appears to bypass well-established and accepted structures of the Church.

'We are now telling [B] that we don't want any agency to come in and set up parallel structures. And [B] say that this is how they function and we say we don't want you to function this way. If you are a Catholic Church agency recognise that there is a Church in Nigeria and that the Church in Nigeria has structures. If the structures are not capable then empower those structures, but don't set up a parallel structure.'

Respondent from the Catholic Secretariat

Secondly there is a perception that 'B' acts as a middle man between the Nigerian Church and key bilateral donors such as USAID.

'So once we saw that happening and then [B] now making itself a contractor for us so we are not able to go to USAID now to ask for funding for something they [B] say no we are the ones to go in your name. So [B] now goes in the name of the Catholic Church in Nigeria..... We are not supposed to be a sub-contractor of [B].'

Respondent from the Catholic Secretariat

The final test applied to the score data involved grouping the AEP diocesan-based personnel into their diocese. For this comparison the scores given to the four questions have been aggregated within each diocese. The results – median, sample size, z-values and H – are shown in Table 5. The value of H (13.11) is significant at $P < 0.05$. It would appear that there are statistically significant differences between the scores provided by the six dioceses. The sample size is too small (Lafia and Otukpo sample sizes are at the limit of what is acceptable for the Kruskal-Wallis test) to break the data down into individual questions, but taken as a whole it would appear that the most positive views are held by personnel in Abuja, Makurdi, Otukpo and Lokoja diocese, while the most negative views across all four questions are held in Idah and Lafia diocese. These results are interesting, but care does need to be taken with regard to interpretation. The high score provided by Abuja is not surprising given that this is the seat of the Federal Capital and donors (not just Catholic-based ones) gravitate there like bees to honey. As well as being of political importance Abuja diocese is feted by the donors as a convenient show case for their work. This was remarked on by a number of respondents, but does mean that Abuja and the donors have an almost ‘special’ relationship. Makurdi personnel also tend to have positive views as this diocese has also been an attractive location for donors to fund projects. A high proportion of the population in Makurdi diocese is Catholic, and this diocese has a long history of development work, especially in health care and education but also rural development. Success breeds success, and the Catholic-based

donors regard Makurdi as a diocese that achieves results. As a result relationships appear to be good. The high scores given by Lokoja and Otukpo are for completely different reasons to that of Abuja and Makurdi. Both these diocese receive little funding from the three donors and their experience of them is limited. Sample sizes for Lokoja and Otukpo are small, but what little contact the personnel have had with the donors has been positive.

<Table 5 near here>

The more negative views of Idah and Lafia expressed in Table 5 are built on extensive experience with the three donors (in the case of donors A and C this experience has been for some 35 years). Although Lafia has been recently created, it was a part of Makurdi diocese for many years. Opinion is deeply divided in these two dioceses, with some ranking the donors highly while others are more inclined to score them (especially 'B') low. Issues of 'B' tending to 'dominate' again rose to the fore, and it is criticisms of this donor that is largely responsible for the low scores from Idah and Lafia. The complaints from these two dioceses largely revolve around a perceived inflexibility of 'B' in terms of conditions it sets within its HIV/AIDS programme.

Discussion

What do the results say about the relationships between the development structures of the Catholic Church in Nigeria and the donors? As expected there is variation both in terms of how the donors are perceived as well as between the Nigerian structures and the picture is certainly a complex one. Indeed concerns expressed over partnership were not restricted to the north-south dimension but also within the Nigerian structures. There were stories of diocese emerging as ‘leaders’ and hence treading on the toes of Provincial and National structures (the CSN). There were also many concerns raised about the imperfect flow of information both up and down the Church structures. Within the implementing agencies in Nigeria the landscape is clearly uneven.

Donors are obviously important but again views are very mixed as to how they should best function in terms of AEP. Donor ‘A’, although not a member of Caritas but CIDSE, is for most the partner *par excellence*, and relationships with this donor are regarded by AEP personnel as based on trust and support of in-country structures resulting in the high scores that ‘A’ tended to achieve in the interviews. ‘A’ has no permanent presence in Nigeria but works solely through existing structures. For example, ‘A’ helps fund the inter-provincial health care programme and supports Nigerian staff based at the CSN and in the Province. By way of contrast ‘B’ (which is a member of Caritas and has structures and personnel based in Abuja) has more of a mixed press. ‘B’ is a relative newcomer to Nigeria having been expelled from the country at the time of the Civil War (1968 to 1970). It was invited back by the Nigerian Bishops in 1999. Some AEP diocese are very

positive about the work of 'B' while others (particularly at the provincial and national levels) see its *modus operandi* as not representing true partnership as it parallels Church structures in Nigeria rather than complimenting and enhancing them. Indeed 'B' was seen by some respondents as inhibiting the development of structures in Nigeria as it almost acts as a conduit between the Church and some major US donors, particularly USAID. In other words it would appear to some that power – seen in the way in which control is exercised through control of policy, resources (Lister, 2000) or discourse (Hastings, 1996, 1998, 1999) - has been removed from the provincial and national structures and placed in the hands of the donor. The patchy view of 'B' is also due in part to it having to follow the USAID lead with regard to allocation of HIV/AIDS projects in the country and the modality in which they have to operate. As a result 'B' has no choice but to work with some mandated states and to allocate resources as stipulated by the bilateral donor; a point which has been made with regard to a number of NGO donors accessing funding from their government (Bebbington, 2005). Hence the frustration shown by some diocesan personnel at the perceived lack of flexibility of donor 'B'. Donor 'C', while not perceived as badly as 'B', is nonetheless closer to 'B' than 'A'. Interestingly 'C' is in a state of flux and is moving towards the model of 'B' even though it is fully aware of the problems that 'B' has faced in Nigeria. It sees a physical presence in Nigeria as critical for partnership, but will try and avoid the problems of 'B' by working more through provincial structures rather than directly targeting diocese. It will be fascinating to see how this strategy pans out in the coming years.

These results are challenging for donors. It would naturally be assumed that having a physical presence in a country, such as that held by 'B' and to a growing extent 'C', would almost inevitably be beneficial. It provides personnel from field agencies a space within which to directly interact with the donor on a regular basis and thus the opportunity for coordination and discourse should be maximized. It could also be assumed that 'B' would have its finger on the pulse so to speak regarding events in Nigeria at all levels – national, provincial and local. Church staff can easily visit the offices of 'B' in Abuja and 'C' in Lafia, and the donor staff spend much time in the field visiting their partners. Staff from 'A' do travel from Europe to Nigeria on a regular (e.g. yearly) basis and take the opportunity to visit their partners in the field but such visits are inevitably hectic and contact at each diocese may only be for a day or two (at most). While this contact with 'A' is valued it in no way compares with the access to 'B' and 'C'. Yet despite all of these assumed advantages 'B' still came out badly amongst a number of respondents, even though the work of all three were greatly valued. It would appear that respect for local structures in Nigeria is the critical factor in assessment of partnership rather than what is achieved in the field. Success can be diluted by a perception that the local hierarchy is being circumvented, and it is clear that while all organizations belong to the same Church there is a strong sense that sustainability has to be founded on the local. Bypassing the local hierarchy is seen by some as a threat to this sustainability.

In terms of analyzing partnership with the approaches summarized earlier in the paper these results do present something of a conundrum. To begin with there is the issue of

trade-offs. All three analytical approaches have overlaps as they are windows on the same thing. Looking for mindset and skillset enablers can help in exploring the issues of prerequisites and practice identified by Brinkerhoff. They are also the basis of good discourse. But do these different visions also imply that trade-offs are possible? Does a good partnership have to have all the elements pointing in the 'right' direction or can some aspects be sacrificed for others? For example, can discourse be less than perfect if the partnership delivers in what it is trying to achieve? Donor 'B' provides an excellent example here. All respondents, even the most critical, readily acknowledged the excellent work that 'B' is doing in terms of HIV/AIDS with some diocese.

A second issue is that of multi-strand partnership. A single diocese may have a partnership agreement with a number of donors (religious and secular) who may, or may not, have some coordination between them in terms of what they fund and their procedures. Similarly a single donor will have relationships with a number of dioceses for programmes and/or projects. Hence relationships have many components and there is an element of 'partnership management' in place by all parties. Just because the outcome of an analysis of one relationship points to 'poor' partnership it cannot be assumed that a similar analysis on another relationship involving one of the partners would yield the same result. For example, the dioceses generally scored 'B' high for all four questions while Provincial/Inter-Provincial/National respondents were far more critical. So whose view should count here? Indeed all Nigerian respondents pointed to imperfections within their own structures in terms of communication and coordination. Perfection is not humanely possible.

The third issue is that partnerships are often explored over relatively short periods – a few years – and many of the institutional factors will be constant (for example Lister, 2000). While the analytical approaches provide a useful basis for dissecting partnership at such ‘snapshots in time’ how do they play out for longer-term relationships? As institutions change (e.g. in terms of priorities, agendas and personal relationships) then it is to be expected that an analysis based, for example, on the base-means-scope-amount of power would generate different results throughout the history of the relationship. The Catholic Church aid chain is global and has longevity. Therefore, while it would appear that ‘A’ is ‘better’ than ‘B’ in terms of its partnership with the Catholic structures in Nigeria this would be a superficial analysis. ‘B’ personnel are aware of their imperfections in terms of their relationships with some of the structures in Nigeria and are actively seeking to improve them. The following is an exchange between one of the authors and the head of ‘B’ in Nigeria:

‘What you need to understand is that [B] was here in 60s and 70s we supported bringing in food for the rebel populations during the Biafra war. So we were invited to leave the country...if you put it that way.....so during those days we were primarily focused in the southern part of the country. We didn’t return until 1999 after it became a democratic state....so we are relatively new. If you go to Ghana you will see a 40 year old programme. In Sierra Leone you will see a 40/41 year old programme, with a very long-standing understanding between the Bishops and Arch Bishops about what

[B] is and how it functions and how we are going to relate to each other. Now we are back in Nigeria and we are new or young here and we are trying to define ourselves in this huge country and the Catholic Secretariat and the diocese are trying to define us as well. So we are learning. We are constantly learning.

Author: So it's not a policy decision then to go directly to diocese?

No..no...it was a growing pain. The realisation.....and I am guessing because I wasn't here during the planning stages...that when the US government expressed interest in care and support and was willing to provide money they probably had already pre-selected certain states that they wanted us to work in....it was a US government decision...and we subsequently got together with the Bishops who are in those states and said we wanted you as partners in this. Often times the best laid plansits just trying to appease all the different stakeholders.'

'B' has also run workshops on partnership with a view to identifying their weaknesses and room for improvement. After all, partnerships are not static but evolving relationships. 'B' may have received warranted criticism, but all involved are aware of each others views and 'B' is trying to change within the constraints offered by its relationship with US donors. This would suggest that mindset and skillset enablers are in

place, and given that the Catholic Church aid chain is a long-lasting one there is time for changes to be introduced.

The picture overall is one of unevenness in the scale and type of intervention at all levels – diocesan, provincial, inter-provincial and national – even within a relatively close knit family of related actors. Such unevenness within the NGO sector has been mentioned before but there is little in the way of empirical studies in the literature (Bebbington, 2004), although it may well be, of course, that much work has been done within the context of project planning, monitoring and evaluation but not published in the academic literature. As a result Bebbington (2004 page 728) understandably calls for

“more analytical and empirical care in exploring and explaining sources of variation across space, and resisting the normative temptation to be either gratuitously critical or excessively optimistic about NGOs.”

The Catholic Church-based chain analysed here does help address this call, but it would be a mistake to focus only on variation across geographic space. As discussed above a key feature of the Church – its longevity – also imposes a rich time dimension, and its hierarchy imposes an institutional space. Variation in intervention did occur across time as well as between diocese, and the perception of this was different at various places within the hierarchy largely driven by how donors were respecting (and hence working with) structures. Clearly geography has much to contribute here.

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Figure 1. Simplified model of the development chain.

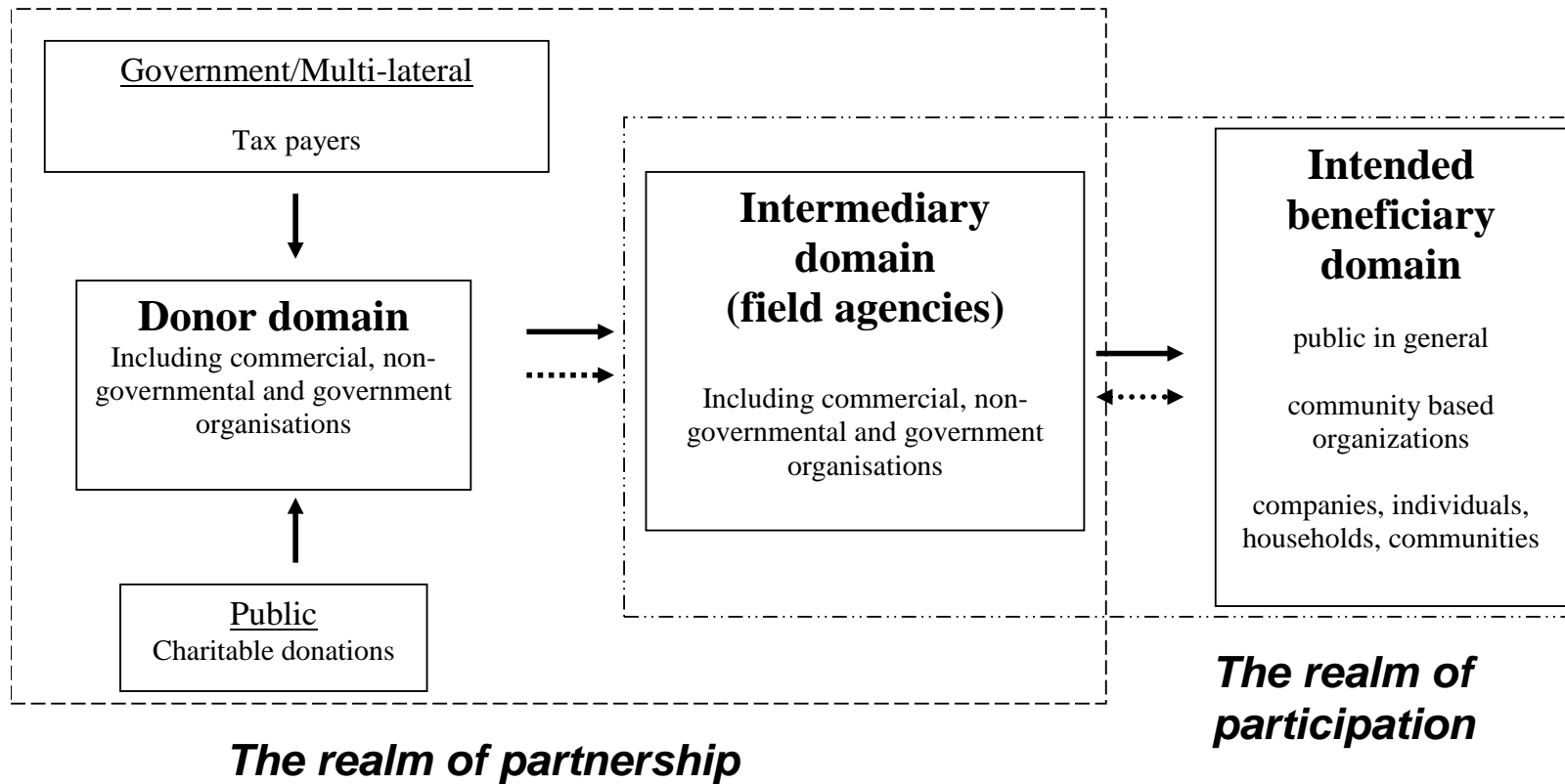


Figure 2. Catholic Church hierarchy and the variation on the theme in Nigeria.

Structures in bold are those devoted – at least in part – to development issues in Nigeria.

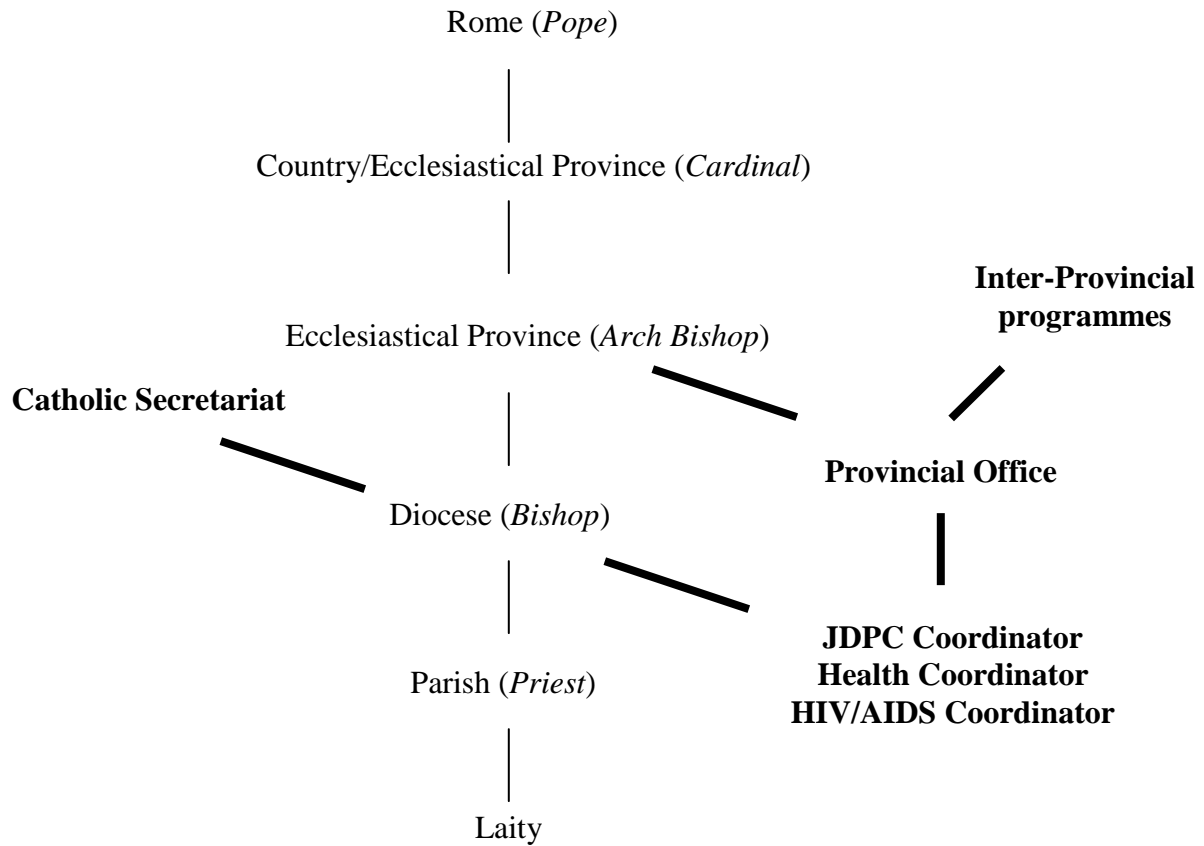
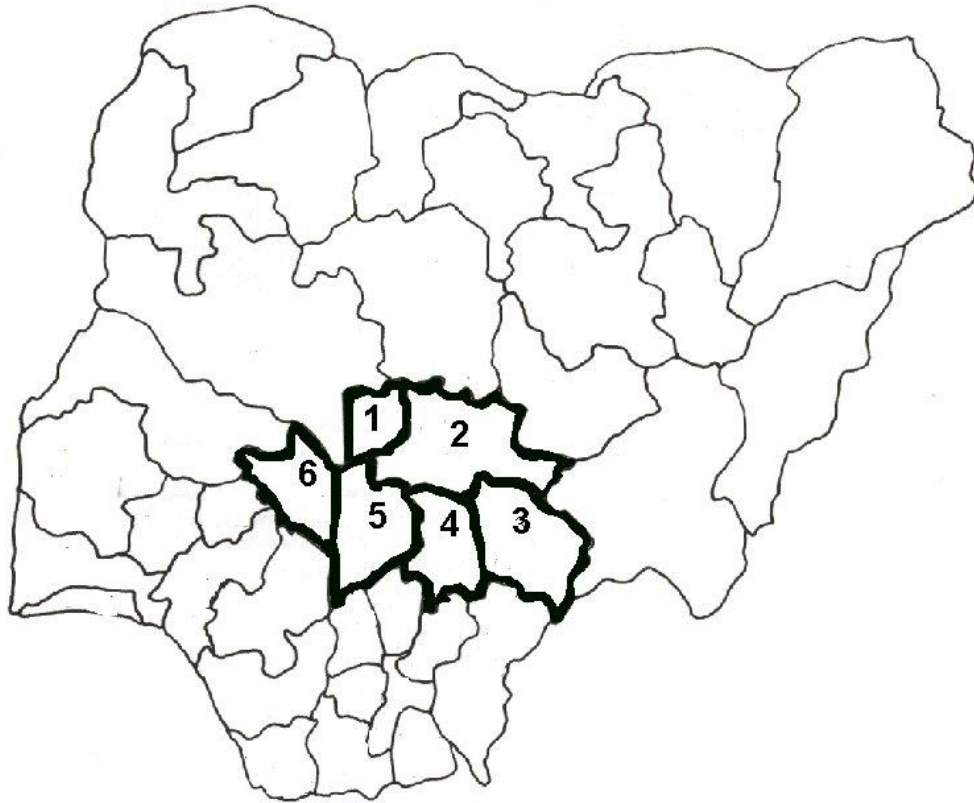


Figure 3. The Abuja Ecclesiastical province, Nigeria.



1. Abuja (early 1990s)
2. Lafia (2000)
3. Makurdi (1950s)
4. Otukpo (1995)
5. Idah (1970s)
6. Lokoja (1960s)

Figure 4. The Catholic Church aid chain: Abuja Ecclesiastical Province linked with four Catholic Church donors in the North.

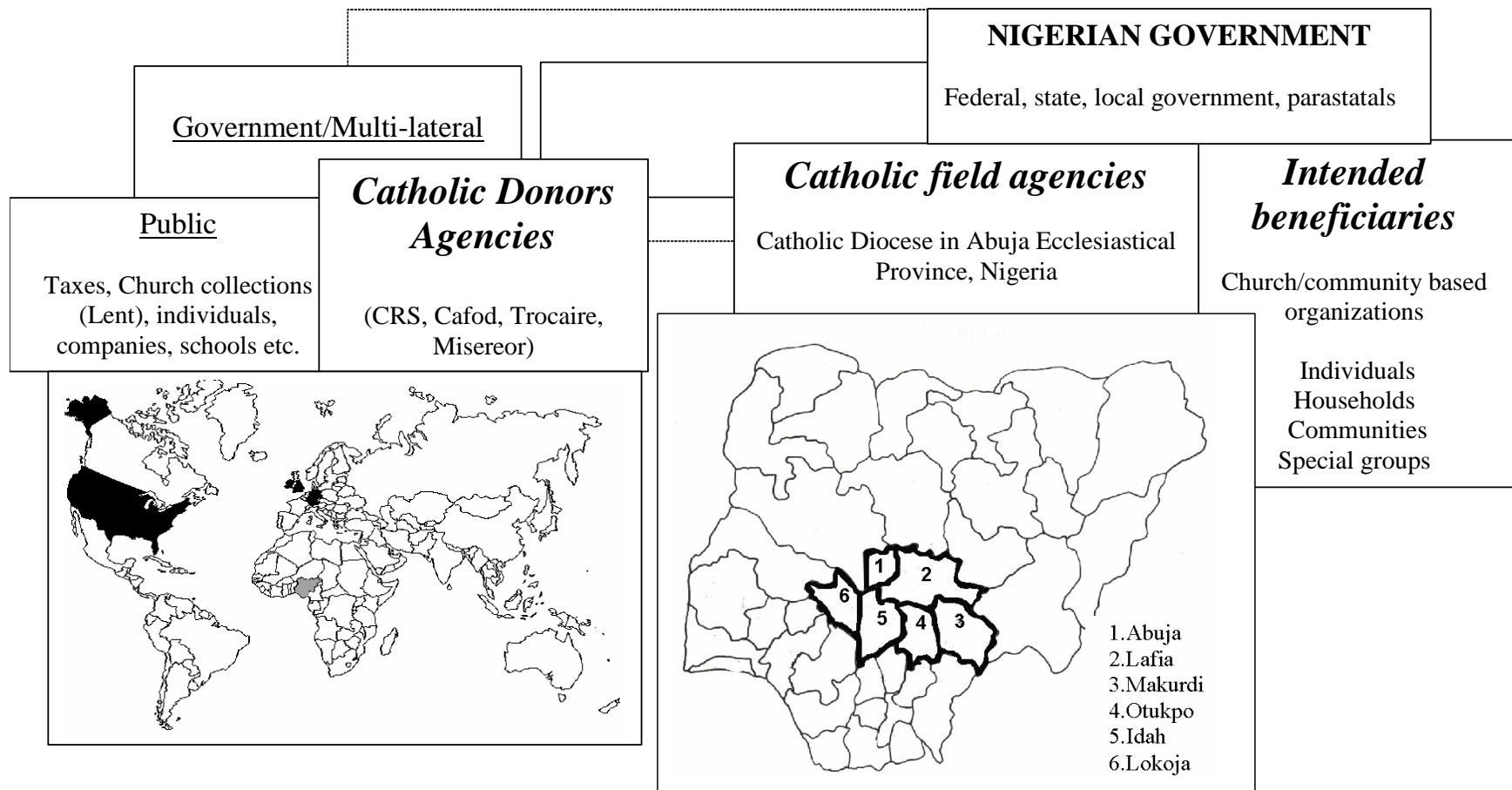


Table 1. Respondents for the 2005 survey of diocesan development personnel.

AEP Diocese	JDPC Coordinator	JDPC Secretary	Health Coordinator	HIV/AIDS Coordinator	Health Secretary
Abuja	✓		✓		
Lafia	✓		✓		
Makurdi	✓		✓	✓	✓
Otukpo	✓		✓		
Idah	✓		✓	✓	
Lokoja	¹	✓	✓		

Notes:

¹ Lokoja JDPC Coordinator was unwell as time of survey

All respondents are Nigerian

JDPC Coordinators and Secretary are all male except for Idah.

Three JDPC Coordinators are priests, one a religious sister while the Secretary is a lay person.

Two of the Health Coordinators are female (religious sisters) while four are male (priests)

Both HIV/AIDS coordinators are female (religious sisters)

The only Health Secretary interviewed is male (lay person)

Table 2. Perception of the three most prevalent Catholic-based donors by the diocesan, provincial, inter-provincial and national development personnel in Nigeria.

Question	Donors			H (adjusted for ties)
	A	B	C	df = 2
<i>How are your relations with the donors?</i>	9.0 (16)	7.0 (13)	7.75 (10)	6.0 *
	2.4	-1.15	-1.46	
<i>Do you see the relationship with the Catholic-based donors as a partnership?</i>	9.0 (15)	7.0 (13)	7.0 (10)	5.26 P=0.072
	2.25	-1.17	-1.24	
<i>Do you think that the donors see you as an equal?</i>	8.0 (14)	6.5 (12)	6.5 (8)	2.48 ns
	1.56	-1.03	-0.65	
<i>How important are inter-personal relationships when dealing with Catholic-based donors?</i>	9.0 (14)	8.0 (11)	8.5 (8)	3.3 ns
	1.78	-1.36	-0.57	

Figures are the median score (sample size); ns = not significant at $P < 0.05$ * $P < 0.05$

Table 3. Perception of the three most prevalent Catholic-based donors by male and female development personnel at the diocesan, provincial (AEP), inter-provincial (North Nigeria) and national (CSN) levels in Nigeria.

Question	Gender		H (adjusted for ties)
	Male	Female	df = 1
<i>How are your relations with the donors?</i>	8.5 (21)	8.0 (18)	0.1 ns
<i>Do you see the relationship with the Catholic-based donors as a partnership?</i>	8.25 (20)	7.0 (18)	1.51 ns
<i>Do you think that the donors see you as an equal?</i>	7.0 (18)	8.0 (16)	0.2 ns
<i>How important are inter-personal relationships when dealing with Catholic-based donors?</i>	9.0 (18)	9.0 (15)	0.01 ns

Figures are the median score (sample size)

ns = not significant at $P < 0.05$

Table 4. Perception of the three most prevalent Catholic-based donors by Diocesan development personnel and those based at the provincial, inter-provincial and national levels in Nigeria.

Question	Level within structure		H (adjusted for ties)
	Diocese	Other	df = 1
<i>How are your relations with the donors?</i>	8.5 (31)	6.5 (8)	2.97 P=0.085
<i>Do you see the relationship with the Catholic-based donors as a partnership?</i>	8.75 (30)	5.5 (8)	4.75 *
<i>Do you think that the donors see you as an equal?</i>	8.0 (27)	5.0 (7)	5.79 *
<i>How important are inter-personal relationships when dealing with Catholic-based donors?</i>	9.0 (27)	7.0 (6)	2.07 ns

Figures are the median score (sample size)

ns = not significant at $P < 0.05$

* $P < 0.05$

Table 5. Perception of the three most prevalent Catholic-based donors by Diocesan development personnel in Nigeria.

Diocese	Median (sample size)	Z value
Abuja	9.0 (20)	2.63
Lafia	7.25 (20)	-0.94
Makurdi	9.0 (36)	0.31
Otukpo	9.0 (6)	1.05
Idah	7.0 (28)	-2.56
Lokoja	9.0 (5)	0.4

Figures are the median score (sample size)

H (adjusted for ties) = 13.11 * df = 5