



NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency
Agence de Planification et de Coordination du NEPAD



Nigeria's Technical Aid Corps: pearl of South-South cooperation

By Samiu Babalola, Panapress*



Nigeria's Technical Aid Corps (TAC) scheme is one of the best examples of a successful South-South cooperation, which countries within the region need to build upon to foster bilateral relationships, spread knowledge and unlock the African potentials through skills exchange, according to a political scientist, Prof. Adele Jinadu.

"The Technical Aid Corps scheme is conceived as a special programme which involved the deployment of technical experts like medical doctors, nurses, lecturers, legal practitioners, architects, engineers and all kinds of professionals

to assist in the development of the recipient countries under mutually-agreed terms," Prof. Jinadu told PANA in an exclusive interview.

The Political Science teacher at the University of Lagos in South-west Nigeria has just concluded a study commissioned by The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) office in South Africa and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Titled, "South-South Cooperation in the African Region: Case Study of Nigeria's Technical Aid Corps (TAC)", the study - obtained by PANA is coming ahead of the fourth High level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, South Korea, from 28 November to 1st December 2011.

The commissioned case study is coming under the African Platform for Development Effectiveness (APDev), a physical and virtual coordinating instrument to mobilise policy makers, practitioners, knowledge resources and institutions for Africa's renewal agenda.

Its objective is to enhance African capacities to operationalise its agenda, generate policy guidance, good practices and principles on South-South Cooperation and Aid Effectiveness as key mechanisms for development effectiveness.

Under the TAC scheme, Nigeria provides skillful experts, paid their salaries as well as passage to and from the countries they are deployed to, while the recipients' countries provide accommodation, medical insurance schemes and transportation for the volunteers".

"So it is mutually owned and there is no conditional ties attached to it, rather than just one Southern country assisting another Southern country," Prof. Adele said.

"The recipient countries identify their needs and Nigeria deploys technical experts for a number of years (two), and after that they can come back or stay back under mutual agreements with the recipient countries," the political analyst said.

Since the scheme started in 1987, over 4,000 volunteers have been deployed to 38 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP). At the moment, 20 ACP countries are benefiting from the scheme, the only viable and sustainable volunteer scheme operated by an African country.

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has adopted an Afro-centric foreign policy, with aid and technical assistance being at the centre of Africa's most populous country's external relations with other countries, particularly within the continent.

The TAC scheme serves as a complement to direct financial assistance to ACP countries, as a way of fostering and deepening international understanding and continental integration.

According to Prof. Adele Jinadu "*they (volunteers) have helped in the development of the recipient countries generally. Nurses and medical doctors, for example, have been involved in meeting the needs of recipient countries. I think by and large, they have contributed to the countries they have been deployed to. That is why more countries are asking for more volunteers*".

"It has been so successful that the Commonwealth Secretariat is asking the Directorate of TAC to help recruit staff in their own programmes in countries like Sierra Leone and others. Some countries outside the South-South, like Vietnam for example, are asking for the deployment of TAC volunteers to their countries," Prof. Jinadu explained.

In Fiji Island, TAC volunteers have contributed to drafting of its new Constitution. They also helped in the design of University Curriculum in many ACP countries. Volunteers equally contributed immensely to post-conflict reconstruction in Sierra Leone and helped in drafting Jamaica's national land surveying plan.

The success of the programme has also attracted the attention of the African Union (AU). The continental organisation has expressed interest in using it as a model for designing its own programmes of technical assistance, exchange of specialists and professionals.

It has also provided the model for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Volunteers Programme and the proposed Pan African Technical Aid Corps Scheme.

According to the university teacher, "*We have a lot to learn from one another. African countries and other*

South countries can help one another by using the TAC scheme, as a model. When young professionals are deployed to another country, they learn about other cultures, they make friends and expand their contacts base."

The study also shows that up to 2009, The Gambia received the largest number of volunteers (363), followed by Zambia with 181 and Equatorial Guinea 165.

Nigeria has also increased its budgetary allocation to the scheme, an indication of its commitment to South-South development. From a budgetary allocation of 859.47 million naira in 2004, the budget rose to 1.17 billion naira in 2008 (US\$1=155 Naira).

However, in spite of the success recorded over the years, the TAC scheme is not without its challenges. Adapting to new culture, the feeling in some countries is that the volunteers have come to snatch their jobs and non-adherence of some recipient countries to TAC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is affecting the programme.

As part of efforts to improve the programme and make it more effective, Prof. Jinadu made some suggestions.

"I think the TAC directorate should speed up work on creating a network of TAC Alumni in Nigeria, so that when (those deployed) are back, they can share experiences. There is also the need to review the emolument for volunteers when they are abroad. Nigerian government also needs to do more work on public enlightenment, so that Nigerians can see the value of this scheme."

"In terms of the recipient countries, they need to publicise the TAC scheme vigorously so that their own citizens will know that these people are not taking their jobs, but contributing to capacity building and skills transfer," Prof. Adele Jinadu said.

***Samiu Babalola is Nigerian based journalist working for PANAPRESS in Lagos, and a member of NEPAD journalist's network**

About the Africa Platform for Development Effectiveness

The African Platform for Development Effectiveness (APDev) is a physical and virtual coordinating instrument to mobilise policy makers, practitioners, knowledge resources and institutions for Africa's renewal agenda. Its overarching objective is to enhance African capacities to operationalise its agenda, by generating policy guidance, good practices and principles on South-South Cooperation and Aid Effectiveness as key mechanisms for Development Effectiveness. It underscores the vital importance of promoting ownership and leadership in the design and operationalization of systematic knowledge sharing and mutual learning at the continental level. APDev was endorsed by Africa's Heads of State and Government in July 2010 and is coordinated by the African Union Commission and the NEPAD Agency.

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