Partnership and inter-dependence in aid chains: Social pathology or social health?

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Abstract

This paper explores partnership in the Catholic Church-aid chain. The focus for the research was the wielding of power in relationships and the notion that agencies involved in a relationship will be motivated to represent this as a partnership even if it is far from being so (a 'social pathology'). The aid chain selected for the research comprised a number of dioceses in Nigeria and two of the major International Catholic Church-based donors. In the Catholic Church-based aid chain there is the time and determination to work matters out, which suggests inter-dependency between all involved and avoidance of 'social pathology'.

Keywords: Partnership, aid chains, Catholic Church

1. Partnerships: A gap in knowledge or a gap in understanding?

The notion of ‘partnership’ as the ideal form of relationship between development aid donors (typically based in the Global North) and field agencies (typically based in the Global South) blossomed during the 1990s and are increasingly being espoused (Robb, 2004; O’Sullivan, 2008). Partnership has been referred to as a “*pivotal theme*” in development aid (Black and Tiessen, 2007), and is said to be founded on an intimate and long lasting interaction with mutual respect for each others’ independence (Lister, 2000). Others have stressed output, implying that partners agree as to what their partnership should be (Brinkerhoff (2002a, 2002b) and upon a rational division of labour to achieve it (Anderson, 2000), thereby making the best use of scarce resources by utilising compatibility between groups (Johnston and Lawrence, 1988; Mohan, 2002). Indeed ‘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 (Mohan, 2002).

An important dimension to the issue of partnership in aid chains is the diversity of the agencies involved. Different parts of the aid chain may be embedded in quite diverse political, economic and cultural contexts, and can comprise a range of organisations, each with their own structures, procedures and mandate, and may include ‘non-governmental organisations’ (NGOs) as well as government organisations and commercial organisations (Ashman, 2001). Indeed, one of the important features of the aid chain is the major role played by NGOs (Hill et al., 2007) and in particular religious-based groups; Christian, Islamic and others (Clarke 2007). These would be expected to be founded upon longer-term relationships with shared beliefs and ethics

which stress tolerance, respect for ones neighbours and a need to listen. Faith-based development groups also presumably have a sense of legitimacy if they reflect the presence of that faith within their society. The legitimacy of development NGOs to represent the poor has been questioned by some (Lister 2003) but it seems reasonable to suppose that the faith-based development groups are more likely to be accepted by their communities than the secular although this could be an interesting area for research. Many faith-based aid chains are also what Townsend (1999) refers to as a ‘trans-national community’. They are global in extent yet relatively under-researched (Olson 2006; Clarke, 2007).

Despite its popularity and the breadth of agencies involved in aid chains there is a dearth of literature which critically evaluates the performance of partnership. One approach often taken is to focus upon the inequality of power which is assumed to exist across the aid chain given that donors have resources and make decisions relating to what agencies to allocate resource and how these are used. This should not be surprising as power “*is a relational effect of social interaction*” (Allen, 2003; page 2) and aid chains are founded upon social interaction. The literature on power is vast (Haugaard, 1997; Allen, 2003), and cannot be covered in depth here. Robb (2004) provides a brief history of power in aid chains and concludes that what we have today is flawed and based on unequal power relations even if, on a more optimistic note, “*sometimes it works*” (page 37). It should also be noted that field agencies are not without power. Foucault (1998) argued that one cannot speak of one component in a relationship having power while another does not; both have power and instead what should be explored is the nature of the interaction and modifications which take place ensuring respect and reciprocity for all parties. Forbes (1999) has described examples

where field agencies have made use of their closeness to the local scene (and knowledge and representation of the 'local') to influence donor behaviour. Burbules in his essay '*A theory of power in education*' (1986) argued that for power to be a part of a social relationship there must be grounding within a conflict of interest between those who are in the relationship. Thus, power only becomes apparent when one element of the relationship attempts to influence the other(s) to do something against their will. If there was a willing and genuine acceptance of decisions by all in the relationship, then Burbules argued that this is not an exercise of power as all are truly satisfied. For example, in terms of aid chains, Burbules implies a negative, as the 'haves' can refuse to give or not give enough to agencies working on behalf of the 'have nots' in the Global South. Even with the resources they do give they can influence those who do not comply with their conditions via domination, coercion and manipulation. Thus an apparent 'consent' can occur as a result of complete domination by the 'haves' over the 'have nots'. All may readily employ the term partnership to describe their relationship but once investigated this may just be nothing more than that of contractor – client. It seems inevitable that some agencies in the South will be better able to lever resources than others (Moore and Stewart, 1998) partly because they are better able to meld themselves with the language, culture and desires of donors. Much the same can be said of donor relationships with government agencies in the North (Wallace, 2003; Townsend and Townsend, 2004) and even government agencies in the South reliant on international aid (Curtis, 2004; Samoff, 2004; Green and Curtis, 2005). However, just because the 'have nots' are forced to comply does not mean they do not materially benefit from what the 'haves' provide. Nonetheless, an espoused rhetoric of egalitarianism and respect surrounding partnership can be used to screen an essentially negative vision of power (Mohan,

2002; Green and Curtis, 2005). Burbules saw this hidden wielding of power as a kind of “*social pathology*” and argued that with suitable methods it should be discernible even if partners collude to present a positive face of equality and partnership.

Another interesting approach to analysing relationships in aid chains is the adaptation of ‘inter-dependence theory’ for individuals in close relationships such as marriage (Rusbult and Van Lange, 2003; Bantham et al., 2003). Here the partnership is viewed as being based on a longer-term interaction with a level of investment (Rusbult and Buunk, 1993), and this implies that partners need each other over the longer term and thereby in theory encourage a more open approach to the relationship. Admittedly this is an assertion more than proven, and even here the “*social pathology*” of Burbules can presumably still exist. For example, the characteristics of faith-based aid chains should, at least in theory, facilitate inter-dependence between donor and field agencies as those involved share the same ideals, underlying organisational structure, and longer term interaction could potentially minimise the risk of a “*social pathology*” developing, but is that really the case?

The Catholic Church provides one example of a faith-based aid chain, with organisations based in the North charged with accessing and distributing resources to their partner organisations (also mostly Catholic) in the South (Morse and McNamara, 2006). These aid chains have existed since the 1950s and 1960s, and the groups involved share similar structures or at least are aware of each other’s structures and mandates with all sharing a commitment to Catholic Social Teaching. The research reported here focussed specifically on the Catholic Church chain linking two donors (one in Germany and one in USA) and the dioceses of one province in Nigeria, West

Africa. The same two donors provide support for the dioceses also in contact with each other via the Province and indeed both donors are in regular contact. Relationships between these components of the aid chain were explored to examine if there was inter-dependence and whether this existed alongside the “*social pathology*” hypothesised by Burbules?

2. The partnership space and survey

Nigeria has one of the largest populations of any African country (currently assumed to be approximately 140 million people), and it is generally assumed that about 30% of it is Christian, and roughly half this Catholic. This research project focussed on Abuja Ecclesiastical Province (AEP) which comprises six dioceses (Abuja, Lafia, Idah, Makurdi, Lokoja, and Otukpo) located more or less in the geographical centre of the country. Each diocese is headed by a Bishop and has a Justice, Development and Peace Coordinator (JDPC) charged with organising development activities in the diocese as well as a Health Coordinator. Many dioceses also have a HIV/AIDS Coordinator reporting to the Health Coordinator. The bulk of project funding in many dioceses still comes from outside the country, typically from one of the many Catholic donor organisations based in the global North. There is a Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) based in Lagos and Abuja which functions as an overall coordinating body for the Bishops of Nigeria. The dioceses of AEP along with the Provincial Office and CSN are the ‘field agencies’ acting on behalf of the poor.

The two donors included in this research were part of the global Catholic Church structure but operate quite differently. Donor A is American and has the largest resource base of the two. This donor operates through in-country offices headed by a country representative within each of the countries where it works. The representative is not a national of the host country and besides being the day-to-day manager of the programmes also acts as representative of the Bishops Conference in the USA. Donor A bids for funding from government agencies (e.g. USAID) and has to compete with many other non-profit organisations and ‘for profit’ companies. Donor B is German and has a quite different *modus operandi* from Donor A in that it has no offices in Nigeria and instead functions by a combination of funding staff (Nigerian and foreign) based within the CSN and Provinces and provision of resources for projects within dioceses. Donor B receives core funding from its government aid agency (BMZ), and through collections.

There are various ways in which development networks like that of the Catholic Church can be explored (Bebbington and Kothari, 2006), including the use of textual records of meetings and communications. Here it was decided to examine relationships via conversations with those engaged in the aid chain rather than focus primarily on textual information. The use of documents depends upon availability and access and can be time-consuming to find and dissect. Data collection was primarily via semi-structured interviews which took place in Nigeria and the headquarters of the two donor agencies. Each respondent was informed of the nature of the research before the conversation and it was made clear that their names would not feature in any publications. By the time of publication many of those that were interviewed have moved onto other positions. A list of personnel interviewed is provided as Table 1.

The responses were recorded for transcription. In a paper as short as this it is only possible to provide a few quotations that represent more general views, and therefore not all the respondents listed in Table 1 have quotations reported in the text.

<Table 1 near here>

The use of interviews to elicit views on partnership is a valid approach but a disadvantage is that respondents may understandably hide or magnify issues for their own reasons. Hence some care has to be taken when interpreting such conversations. However, the authors had the significant advantage of a combined engagement in the Catholic Church-based aid chain that amounted to over 50 years and the respondents were aware of this. One of the authors had been the JDPC Coordinator of Idah Diocese from 1971 to the late 1990s, with in-depth experience of working within the Catholic Church-based aid chain. The other has worked with the Catholic Church-based agencies in Nigeria in various capacities since 1980. Because of this the authors decided to rely upon their combined experience to pick-up on and question points made by respondents. As a result, each conversation lasted for some 3 hours or more.

3. Partnership: reality or pretence?

The following two quotations (with highlighting of what the authors see as the key words and phrases) are examples as to what the diocese-based respondents felt were important when asked what partnership meant for them.

“But to me partnership means that look, we are collaborating... Yes, I use the word ‘collaboration’ for we have common interests in the sense that there is a need for people who have need on something..... And I am on the ground and I don’t have the resources to do it, and there are some people who have resources to do it, they’re in partnership, they agree with me, we will do these things for the people. So they are the ones, more or less they provide the money and I supervise the thing for them, and that is it for me, partnership, we are doing something common together for people. That means working in collaboration for the common good of society, if you want to put it like that.”

A23 (Bishop, Lafia Diocese)

“Partnership for us is to see ourselves as equals working together, rather than that of a beggar going to a donor for money, and if we’re both working for the common good of the people as I see it. An equal stake.”

A13 (Health Coordinator, Lokoja Diocese)

Diocesan personnel often stressed words such as ‘collaboration’, ‘cooperation’ and ‘benefit’ with the aim of getting things done but also stressed the need for mutual respect. The perspective of personnel from the two donors was similar to those of the diocesan personnel, showcased in the following quotation.

“it could be a principle, it could be an equal, equal rights, cooperation is always partnership..... they act together for the same purpose and if they

see that the comparative benefit is even more, then they are able to work together.”

B25 (Donor B)

Thus there was a marked degree of uniformity in perspective amongst most respondents emphasising collaboration for achievement but also stressing a relationship based upon trust, openness and respect. Given that all share the same social teaching and set of ethics this is perhaps not surprising. One has to remember that an extensive discourse has long since been taking place between all these agencies sharing the same words and phrases in documentation, letters, conversations and workshops. Therefore the starting point as to what partnership should be appears to be relatively homogenous, but do the realities match these words?

According to the respondents there have been problems within the network. The most oft-mentioned source of tension surrounded the operational presence of Donor A in Nigeria and its functionality as a contractor for US government aid agencies. In effect it is this combination of operational presence and contracting that some of the Nigerian respondents saw as a threat to partnership given that in their eyes Donor A represented a parallel structure to Nigerian Church institutions at National and Provincial levels. For the CSN and Province this resulted in what can only be described as a tortured relationship. Respondents at all levels often compared Donor A to the other Catholic donors they experienced, especially Donor B, and some of the wording was frank and robust as the following quotations illustrate.

“But, and this is a big but, [Donor A] operates very differently from [Donor B]. Even though in both cases they are using largely funds from government, the impact of government policies on [Donor A] is much, much heavier than it is on [Donor B]. Secondly, precisely because there's a whole lot of American government bureaucracy that they have to comply with, they always have this system of setting up big offices out in the field. So they have a big office here in Abuja, which chops [= eats] quite a lot of money, we look at it and we say for goodness sakes, the things they are doing there, those are the things we normally take in our stride in the JDPC office, but we are having... even the rent for the house of the country representative, and then they also end up bringing in a lot of expatriate staff which we are not too sure really are necessary. We are watching the development and we have already given notice that we would want to have a meeting to evaluate what has happened in the last five years. And the purpose of the evaluation is to give us an opportunity to document what we see and even to make our own strong suggestion as regards how we think things should be run in Nigeria..... You know, you don't need to bring a whole staff of people here to help distribute money that can be sent by bank draft.”

A14 (Bishop, Abuja Diocese)

“And we are now telling [Donor A] that wait a minute, you have set up parallel structures to our justice and peace infrastructures, we don't want anyone to come and set up parallel structures. And [Donor A] says this is how we function, and we say we don't want you to function this way. If

you are a 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, help train people, help empower them, but don't set up a parallel structure. Meaning that we want to function pretty much like we do function with [Donor B]; [Donor B] is the largest donor that we have."

A19 (Secretary General of the CSN)

"Maybe the only thing I can say about the other donors, for instance [Donor A] as it is in Nigeria, they don't recognise the provincial structure. What I mean by that is that I agree that they have their money with development organisations, but for instance I give you an example, [Donor B], they feel more comfortable working with the province because this is a structure that is put in place by the CBC, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria. So when they come, first and foremost they meet with us at the provincial level to discuss what are our priorities. [Donor A] does not do that, they come and they choose the diocese that they want to work with, they don't care.... they have not been to this office..... Because if [Donor A] approves a project for you, like their resources, the material, everything will have to be bought by [Donor A]. So there's no trust..... I've not seen any of them [Donor A personnel] in this office, they have not even called for us or even invited us."

A1 (Provincial Coordinator, AEP)

Donor A was perceived as going over the heads of local structures which resulted in a feeling of mistrust and lacking respect. There are also undertones of unease as Donor A brings in expatriates to run its local structure. Notice how this is contrasted with the *modus operandi* of Donor B in particular which is regarded by some as an exemplar of how a Catholic donor should function. However, it is important to note that these views were largely restricted to respondents based in the CSN and Province, neither of which received any funding from Donor A. While respondents in the dioceses were aware of these concerns their views of Donor A were quite different. Respondent A4 provides a representative response.

“[Donor A] is a wonderful experience. Wonderful positively, not negatively, wonderful. I don’t know, but what it was, because [Donor A] is one of those organisations that I personally relate with. But their experiences, our relationship with them is quite wonderful, is what you can actually call a mutual collaborative relationship because, it is not like the experience with some other donors not on this list, for some people there is some elements of a master-servant relationship. But with [Donor A] it’s unusual collaboration, mutual in the sense that we need to assist you do this one, and they provide you, both technical assistance, financial assistance and which of our assistance that is within the scope of what they can take. We live with them as partners and not like master-servant so to speak.”

A4 (Health Secretary, Makurdi Diocese)

This difference in perspective between respondents in the Province and CSN and those at the diocesan level is perhaps not surprising. After all, the dioceses are working directly with Donor A then it perhaps matters not to them that Donor A may be bypassing the Province and CSN. Although they knew this existed no diocesan respondent expressed a concern about such bypassing. However, could it be that the diocesan respondents are more aware of the need to talk the right talk with regard to Donor A given that they are the ones receiving, or hoping to receive, grants? Are CSN and Province more able to be critical of Donor A precisely because they are being bypassed and have nothing to lose? Is this indeed a symptom of “*social pathology*”? It has to be said that Donor A did not escape criticism at diocesan level even if it was far more muted than that expressed by CSN and the Province. For example, there were comparisons over the pay of Nigerian staff employed by Donor A and those employed by the Church in Nigeria.

“I’m using [Donor A] as an example because they are here in Nigeria; their office is here in Abuja. So people who are working in [Donor A] are my contemporaries, my colleagues, they are living here in Abuja... And so as such we should know how much they are paid so that we begin to measure adequately if those of us who are implementing a [Donor A] project, will be paid as much as [Donor A] staff as long as the project lasts.”

A5 (JDPC Coordinator, Abuja Diocese)

“[Donor A] poaches staff.....when we have qualified staff and they see that these guys are working well, then we can’t keep the staff, [Donor A]

is able to pay three times more than what we can pay so they take our staff. And we say now rather than do that, why don't you subsidise our salary so that we can keep the staff for our work for justice and peace, which is what [Donor B] does? [Donor B] right now sponsors up to ten of our staff..... we cannot compete with [Donor A]"

A19 (Secretary General of the CSN)

There may be problems in the future if well-qualified Nigerians are understandably attracted to the employment of donors at the expense of the dioceses, especially when the former may have paid for expensive courses and provided work experience.

A further source of friction surrounding Donor A at diocesan level is centred on the 'liquidation' of funds. This term was employed by a number of respondents and refers to the demands of Donor A that every quarter (or even month) an auditor must check the entire project accounts held by the diocese. This understandably places a significant burden on diocesan staff, much more so than their dealings with the other donors even if it is appreciated that such regular 'liquidation' is good accountancy practice. This perceived drive by Donor A to monitor what is happening at diocesan level reverberates through a number of responses.

"They [Donor A] are always on it, every little thing they give you; they are on the ground to see what is happening. Because from time to time (I don't know if they call them) the programme managers or whatever, come around to check and they go down to the beneficiaries. Like if it is in the parish they go to meet the parish, talk with the parish Priest and those

who are involved in the [project] and they attend sometimes their meetings. It's good but it is not just their project, we are the Health Coordinators.....if when you give me your money it's good for you to know what I have done with it, but at the same time you should know it's not just your money I'm collecting. And as you need my time, others also need my time. And if I am to spend my time running around, in fact other things will suffer. I feel they don't give you time to even use your initiative..... They don't trust you to some level to say let them allow you to use your initiative and even arrive at some things when they are on the ground.... And [Donor B] does not follow us like this and every year they get results and when they come they are pleased with the work you are doing, so why do you have to be on the ground?"

A6 (Health Coordinator, Lafia Diocese)

Here again Donor A suffers from comparison with other donors not insisting on such regular 'liquidation' or checking. No doubt the nuances of different government demands (by USAID and BMZ) imposed on the two donors can be tortuous to explain and it is understandable that diocesan respondents would have difficulty appreciating how these can generate such significant operational differences. However, it has to be noted that the agencies have quite different *modus operandi* largely as a result of choice and history and not solely because of imposition by government agencies.

The establishment of parallel structures by Donor A and its close monitoring of finances and projects locally may be viewed as an exercise of power. Partners must accept the in-country presence and regular liquidation as prices they must pay for

support and change their views and practices accordingly. But while these may not be positive indicators of partnership it has to be said that there was no attempt to hide these issues. Indeed another angle on this may be provided by the perceptions of those involved in the setting of priorities. Is there evidence of active listening on the part of both donors and partners in Nigeria as to what the other is saying? Views from respondents in the Nigerian Church were mixed.

“We set out priorities but sometimes based on their own conditions, we have to marry that..... Yes, we have to compromise that.”

A9 (Bishop, Makurdi Diocese)

“I believe strongly, and they [the donors] too, that they cannot put any project on us if we don't see the need for it. So our priorities are their priorities as well. So when we want to do something and we approach them, if they see the need to collaborate with us, to assist us, to carry on that programme, they do. If they bring a programme that we think is not relevant to us and to our people we say no, we don't need this one for now, maybe later.”

A11 (JDPC Coordinator, Makurdi Diocese)

“We're trying to be proactive. Because if we react to what they give us, they've already boxed us in to what we have, but we should stay clear and first of all develop a wide spectrum of issues and then we ask them where do you think you can fit in? Before they didn't involve us; but in the last

five years they're now sort of involving us in the policy which they will use for another five years."

A19 (Secretary General of the CSN)

"Not long ago we had been invited to develop a strategic HIV AIDS plan for [Donor A]. Whatever is the result of that has not been defined by [Donor A]'s Abuja office, it is we who came out with the plan, we developed the priorities, and I think this is treating somebody else as an equal."

A4 (Health Secretary, Makurdi Diocese)

These quotations have a rich mix of views and wording, with mixed feelings that span dominance, cooperation, sharing and equality. Some felt that donors did listen to the voice of the diocese and the practice of the donor was influenced by this discourse. There is also an expressed sense of freedom; that the diocese was not pushed to take on projects that it didn't want. Donors can, and indeed do, say no to many proposals they receive, but the phrase from respondent A11 who stated "*our priorities are there priorities as well*" perhaps summarises the position. There was a great deal of agreement and compromise, and even if donors had funding for a particular project the chances are that it would match the priorities of the dioceses. Given that both field agencies and donors are part of the 'universal' Catholic Church then this may not be all that surprising. There was certainly no evidence of a conscious "*social pathology*" in these comments which implies that the dioceses would consciously move their rhetoric far away from what they see as important in order to seek approval and funding from donors.

However, while discourse between donors and dioceses does take place there was a perception amongst some respondents that an ultimate sanction exists for not obeying the rules set out by donors. Some dioceses have done well in attracting funds while others have not. Indeed, relationships between the dioceses that comprise AEP while cordial do not seem to extend into practical help when it comes to accessing funds and managing projects. Each diocese maintains its independence but money really does tend to follow money and clearly the cause of some frustration:

“Our diocese is supposed to be a young diocese, but I’m afraid to say young in the sense that it is four years now, and then I’m unable to meet up with people who have the right connections for anything to come to [our] diocese. So it has been really very, very difficult..... No, nothing, nothing, nothing. Apart from this car, a single car as you can see, donated by [Donor B], nothing again.”

A2 (JDPC Coordinator, Lafia Diocese)

The Province tries hard to provide a facilitating structure to help alleviate such problems of inequality between dioceses arising from their newness and inexperience and allows space for a sharing of insights. There is a desire by the CSN and Province to try and introduce more coordination as to which diocese and projects are funded but successful dioceses still seem to have an incentive to go it alone. After all, they have the track record of success that donors find attractive. Thus there is a tension on one hand between the desire of funders to support projects in dioceses which have a good track record of success and a perceived need at national and provincial levels to

make sure that newer diocese or those that once had a bad experience are given a chance to secure funding. It wasn't so much that unsuccessful dioceses were being encouraged to change their priorities to match those of the donors but that donors were being encouraged to work with those dioceses with the support of the Province.

The overall picture is one of patchiness; over space and time. Satisfaction with the donors and a sense of partnership coming from some is mixed with feelings of unease and distrust coming from others founded on a range of issues. Indeed, given this patchiness it would be all too easy to conclude that all is not well and that there is obvious tension and disharmony. The approach of Donor A to partnership was seen by some in the upper echelons of the Church in Nigeria as bypassing existing structures at national and provincial scales in its drive to help people. To some respondents it appeared to be more concerned about its function as a contractor for USAID rather than as a part of the Catholic Church. At diocesan level the impressions of Donor A were by and large very positive, even if the need to provide detailed financial reports was taxing and the criticisms over differences in pay which resulted in some haemorrhaging of experienced diocesan staff. Thus while Ashman (2001b) has pointed to the tensions that can exist between pressures for accountability within partnerships and while this was present in the aid chain explored there were also positives. For Donor B, the views at all levels were entirely positive and a readiness to employ the term 'partnership' to describe the nature of their relationship.

It was accepted by most respondents that donors had the ultimate control over resource allocation and while there was a broad acknowledgement that discussion took place one was left with an underlying sense that donors had the final say as to

what projects were funded. Meetings between the donors and coordinators had taken place on a regular basis, especially with representatives of Donor A which has offices in the country. Representatives of Donor B often travel to Nigeria and also provided support for Nigerian and foreign staff located in the provincial and national offices and having a different type of in-country presence. No doubt this degree of contact was having an influence on donors, especially as all existed within the same international structure; but there seemed no getting away from an imbalance of power represented by an axis of ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’, even if all involved were open about this.

There was also evidence that the Church itself accepted the differences in power. As Bebbington (2004; page 732) puts it “*why did nongovernmental resources flow here and not there*”? In this research the answer to that question is a relatively simple one as successful dioceses understandably wished to remain successful and cultivated links with donors. Dioceses without a track record did not seem to get much support from other dioceses or indeed the Province or CSN. The Province was trying to bring dioceses together to share best practice and endeavoured to make links between dioceses and donors, but there is a limit as to what can be achieved as decisions ultimately rest with donors and not the Province. All this might suggest evidence of power forcing compliance, but are there symptoms of the “*social pathology*” highlighted by Burbules?

There was no evidence in this research of any partners attempting to screen what they did with rhetoric that appealed to their donors. All were frank and open about what had happened and why it happened, and even issues such as the imposition of regular

‘liquidation’ which imposed a large burden on the diocese was recognised by some as being good practice. Indeed following one of the interviews a member of the Provincial team arranged to meet with the representative of Donor A to discuss some possible misunderstandings. There was no hesitancy or reticence to discuss these matters.

4. Partnership in context; a conclusion

The longer term presence of the Catholic Church aid chain within Nigeria does give it a series of advantages in terms of leveraging funds from government and international aid agencies. There are factors such as a shared set of ideals and structures which help bind the parts even if occasional difficulties emerge and some diocese fall out of favour with donors. Thus while Donor A and some people in authority within the Church in Nigeria may have had issues there is resolve and openness on the part of those involved to address them and there is certainly the time to do so. Donor A itself explains some of its problems in Nigeria as due to its departure from there in the early 1970s; returning it faced a totally different situation and acknowledges its inevitable learning curve. While some diocese had fallen out of favour with both donors they were still bound within the Provincial structure and contact with donors and successful diocese continued. Thus the Catholic Church aid chain has elements of inter-dependence and there were feelings of attachment and a desire to maintain a relationship “*for better or worse*” (Rusbult and Buunk, 1993; page 180).

While this research certainly identified points of stress in the relationships between field agencies and donors in the network there was no evidence of a “*social pathology*”. However, it has to be noted that the Burbules vision of “*social pathology*” implies a conscious effort to create screens which hides the wielding of power. In a network such as that of the Catholic Church-based aid chain where individuals share the same culture of ideals, social teaching, structures, workshops, training, media etc. and where there is close interaction between agencies and even individuals over many years it may be difficult to tease this out from more subtle (and unconscious) accommodations made by those seeking funds from donors. One is left with the feeling that in such long term and inter-dependent relationships there is a mix of relationships that span the gamut from “*social pathology*” as set out by Burbules at one extreme to ‘social health’ which equates to partnership at the other. Limited transects through the patchiness may allow any of these categories to emerge as important at any time and place but applying the categories to the whole is likely to be misleading. Field agencies may not necessarily be entirely against what a donor may stipulate but be open-minded and can see where the donor is coming from (Haugaard, 1997; Chapter 6). Thus while the extremes may be identifiable, and understandably may receive much attention from development researchers, the real challenge rests with teasing out the bulk of the relationship which rests in between and how best to explore that intricate interweaving of culture and practice.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the Arch-Bishop of Abuja Ecclesiastical Province, the Rt. Rev. Dr. John Onaiyekan, the Coordinators (JDPC and Health) and other Church personnel they met and interviewed in Nigeria. Their frankness and openness were much appreciated. They would also like to thank all those throughout the Catholic Church aid chain who agreed to be interviewed and who provided so much of their time and experience. The frankness shown displayed by respondents was most welcome.

In particular the authors would like to dedicate this paper to the memory of one of their key respondents, Reverend Sister Rosemary Mammon who died on the 2nd November 2009. Rosemary was a great champion of the poor in Nigeria and was passionate in her support of this research which she saw as vital for the Church's role in development.

This research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council under the ESRC Non-Governmental Public Action Programme. The ESRC is the UK's leading research and training agency addressing economic and social concerns. ESRC aims to provide high-quality research on issues of importance to business, the public sector and Government.

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Table 1 List of respondents.

Table provides the position of the respondent within their respective organisation and their code (for anonymity).

(a) Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) and Abuja Ecclesiastical Province (AEP) respondents.

Diocese	Bishop	JDPC Coordinator	Health Coordinator	HIV/AIDS Coordinator	Health Secretary
Abuja	A14	A5	A3		
Lafia	A23	A2	A6		
Makurdi	A9	A11	A10	A20	A4
Otukpo	A17	A18	A15/A16		
Idah			A7	A21	
Lokoja		A12	A13		
					Code
Provincial Coordinator (AEP)					A1
Project Coordinator of the Catholic Interprovincial Health project (AEP)					A8
Secretary General of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CSN)					A19
Deputy Secretary General of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CSN)					A22

All respondents were Nigerian. Blank spaces represent individuals who could not be interviewed for a variety of reasons. For example, the Lokoja JDPC Coordinator unwell as time of survey so his assistant was interviewed instead. Not all diocese have the position of 'Health Secretary', hence A4 was the only example available for interview. Four of the JDPC Coordinators interviewed are priests, and the Deputy Coordinator (Lokoja) is a male lay person. Two of the Health Coordinators are female (religious sisters; A3 and A6) while four are male (priests; A10, A15/A16, A7 and A13). A15 and A16 refer to the outgoing and incoming Health Coordinators for Otukpo Diocese. Both HIV/AIDS coordinators are female (religious sisters).

(b) Donor personnel

Donor	Personnel interviewed	Code
A (USA)	Country representative (based in Abuja)	B1
	HIV/AIDS Programme Managers	B19 and B20
	Vice President and Chief Operating Officer	B9
	Councillor to the President of Donor A	B8
	North East (US) Regional Director	B3
	Justice and Peace Promoter (US)	B4
	Director of the Programme Quality Support Department	B5
	Senior Programme Director and Chief of Party for the Antiretroviral Therapy Consortium	B6
B (Germany)	Group of three officers dealing with Nigeria spanning a 30 year period	B18 (group)
	Department Head, Katholische Zentralstelle	B25