7 'A starving man cannot shout halleluyah'

African Pentecostal Churches and the challenge of promoting sustainable development

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Introduction

The subject of poverty and underdevelopment in Africa has been the focus of several publications, global summits, academic conferences and numerous research efforts within and outside the continent. The governments of various African states have also had to contend with these issues from time to time. While scholars (such as Addo Fenning 2003; Anyanwu 2003; Bornstein 2001, 2002) have devoted much effort to the activities of foreign sponsored Christianity in addressing these issues, not much has been written about the response of the African Pentecostal community. Again, in Oladipo (2000) Pentecostal activity is subsumed within general discussions of the 'African Church'. This chapter departs from this general treatment and focuses exclusively on African Pentecostalism. Again, the idea of starvation mooted in the title of this chapter is presented at a generic level. Starvation here represents not only deprivation of food, but also of basic social amenities, of security, and of a good livelihood. Any person caught in this web of lack can hardly be expected to jump in typical Pentecostal ecstasy with no hope of improvement in his/her material condition. The challenge before the Pentecostal community is thus to find solutions to material as well as spiritual needs in their social environment. How have African Pentecostals responded to these social needs? How much of the social space is taken up by Pentecostals and what networks do they exploit as they strive to meet these needs? And, most importantly, what ideological, theological, relational and material hurdles do they have to scale as they continue to grapple with issues of sustainable development?

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section provides a general background by historicising Christian social work in Africa. It provides an overview of missionary activities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It also examines the entry of Christian NGOs in Africa into social work in the late twentieth century. The second section examines the origins of African Pentecostalism and how much of social work featured in their initial activities. The third section attempts to situate the global idea of sustainable development within local paradigms. Is there a point of convergence between global discourse

on sustainable development and Christian thought on the same issue? What exactly is being 'sustained' in the idea of sustainable development? The fourth section presents a case study of the social work of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Nigeria, through their Christian Social Responsibility (CSR) platform. How does Christian Social Responsibility differ from corporate social responsibility practised by the business community? What theologies underpin CSR? What attempts were made to institutionalise these interventions and make them sustainable? The final section examines the key challenges confronting African Pentecostal Churches involved with sustainable development.

Historicising Christian social work in Africa

Social work promoted by foreign missionaries from Europe and America in sub-Saharan Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was multifaceted. It covered education, health, agriculture, trade and campaign for the emancipation of slaves and pawns within their message of egalitarianism. Barthel (1985, 140) argued that first the schools in Senegal were established in 1816 by Catholic Sisters of St. Joseph de Cluny, a teaching order, in the Island of Goree, and the coastal city of St Louis while the first school in Gambia was established by the Methodist Church in 1826 in Bathurst, now called Banjul. Similarly, the first primary schools in Nigeria were founded in the 1840s by Methodist and Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries. In Sierra-Leone, apart from several elementary schools, the popular Fourah Bay College, founded in 1819 was originally meant to train men for the CMS ministry, but later expanded into a liberal arts college. In all these and other parts of Africa, the primary concern of the missions was the planting and nurturing of Christianity. Jordan (1949, 82) observed that one of the missionaries, Bishop Joseph Shanahan who served in Igboland, Nigeria (1902–1932) opined that:

The school is becoming more and more a providential instrument of incalculable good in our hands. If we go from town to town talking only about God, we know from experience that much of our effort brings no result. But no one is opposed to the school.

Elsewhere, in the Gold Coast, it was noted that public street preaching by missionaries to win adult souls yielded marginal results. Addo-Fennings's (2003, 197–198) description of these exertions is graphic:

In 1877, for example, the Rev David Asante of the Basel Mission at Kyebi, between himself and his Catechists, travelled 190 days preaching in 50 towns and villages in Akyem Abuakwa. The results of such exertions, however, remained incommensurately small up to the late 1870s. Street preaching was little patronized. An audience of 10 people was a good attendance. Not frequently, there were no listeners at all. Most free-born adults showed little interest in Christianity and often demanded pecuniary inducement as a condition of becoming Christians.

However, the highest numbers of converts were won among pupils in the various mission schools. A majority of them ended up being baptised. The pupils were also used as 'part-time' evangelists to reach out to their communities. From the above, it is clear that schools provided an avenue from which Christian converts could easily be raised.

In addition to education, missionaries made giant strides in the field of public health. In the twentieth century, many of them had big hospitals in different parts of Africa. But the beginnings of their health endeavours were very humble. They started with clinics and dispensaries attached to schools and mission homes, where they treated wounds and other ailments for free. They also popularised scientific medicine and improved sanitation in their communities. In fact, many nineteenth-century African church leaders were expected by their local communities to respond to medical emergencies with the white-man's medicine as indicated in the experience of an Ibadan-based Yoruba CMS local agent narrated below:

Early this morning, there was a great noise not far from my house. I stood out and saw people running. On inquiring, I was told that two brothers fought together and the younger stabbed the elder with knife and forced his bowels open. Immediately, I was sent for, and met the young man half dead. I told them I am not a doctor, but however, I shall try. It may be the Lord will save him alive. I sent for needle and thread, carefully pushed the bowels in and sewed it up and sprinkled vinegar on it and covered it with plaster. The fourth day, I opened it and dressed it. Within three weeks, the wound was healed. I was since then looked upon as a Surgeon. This man promised that if he should get better from his wound, he shall regularly attend the house of God. Oh, how soon did he forget!

(CMS, 1877)

A good illustration of missionary efforts in the area of agriculture is that of Wesleyan and Basel Missions in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Gold Coast, later Ghana. These missions encouraged their converts to become economically self-reliant by engaging in agricultural activity. Apart from providing practical agricultural training for pupils in school farms, they also had special agricultural training centres for Christian farmers. They introduced a new range of cash and food crops to their converts. These included mangoes, pears, oranges and cocoyam for the food crops, while the new cash crops included tobacco, coffee, cotton, rubber and cocoa. A Basel Trading Factory at Christiansborg in 1855 bought agricultural produce from Christian farmers and arranged shipment to Liverpool and elsewhere. An interesting view was expressed by Addo-Fenning (2003) who articulated that this act not only encouraged Christian farmers, it also inspired other converts to 'take to private trade as retailers or brokers for Accra-based European firms' (197). By the beginning of the twentieth century, cocoa had already become a major income earner for Christian farmers in Ghana.

Early missionaries also campaigned against the practice of slavery and pawning in various places in Africa through their message that all men were equal before God. The Basel Mission in the Gold Coast had an Emancipation Fund from where willing slaves and pawns were given loans to purchase their freedom. Such beneficiaries almost invariably became Christians (Addo-Fenning 2003, 198). This was not without attendant social complications as 'indiscriminate conversion' of royal slaves provoked the hostility of traditional political authorities (Addo-Fenning 2003, 198). A second source of complication was the non-compliance of some members of the Christian community with the egalitarian message. A case in point is that of Mrs. Allen, wife of one of the Yoruba CMS Pastors serving in Ibadan. CMS (1879) and McIntosh (2009, 96) shed light on a fellow missionary and complained in 1879 of her use of personal slaves to run her business located in another town, far from her husband's station. Such defiance from highly placed leaders, when discovered within their local community, discredited the Christian message.

In any case, the social work of the church continued throughout the colonial period. In fact, the missions remained a dominant influence in the growth of educational institutions. After independence, many African governments in the 1970s took over these educational institutions from churches, in addition to establishing many more. The explanation often given was the need to maintain uniform standards, as many mission schools appeared starved of their previous foreign assistance. This was especially the case in Nigeria, Ghana, and a few other African nations (Anyanwu 2003, 72–73). Moreover, the logic of independence meant that postcolonial governments had to assume more responsibilities for education, public health and other social services. However, the economic crisis experienced by African states in the 1980s left its mark on the educational sector. As various African governments sought the assistance of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the Structural Adjustment Programmes they were made to implement, among other things, prescribed acute budgetary cuts. This affected the funding of education, even as user fees were paid by students from the primary to tertiary level. Schools consequently became underfunded, ill-equipped and poorly maintained. This also affected hospitals and other welfare services under the purview of the state. On the whole, all these translated to daily economic hardship for the populace (Bourne 2015, 160–168; Campbell 2010, 11–22). This was the background to the rise of NGOs, both Christian and secular, to fill the service void created by the state.

Christian NGOs are particularly significant because they continued the tradition of missionaries who promoted social and economic development in various parts of Africa. Woolnough (2011, 195–205) has traced the rise of Christian NGOs globally to the 1960s. Since then, they have assumed a direct responsibility for relief and development to tackle the needs of the poor around the world. Many of them operate in Africa and are funded by external charities, foundations, churches and individuals. Their pursuit of economic development is done within a Christian context that emphasises salvation in all its

ramifications. Commenting on the activities of two Christian NGOs: World Vision and Christian Care in Zimbabwe, Bornstein (2002, 9) notes:

by presenting Christ with boreholes and irrigation schemes, World Vision provides a moral, and Christian, interpretation of economic transformation. Economic development serves a dual purpose; to introduce Christian beliefs to individuals, and to 'redeem' the earth to its 'God-given potential'.

African Pentecostalism: origin and initial focus

Ogbu Kalu has identified the Pentecostal movement as the 'third response' of Africans to mission Christianity. African Pentecostalism embraced the 'spiritual ecology' of Africa as mapped out in its traditional worldview (Kalu 2002, 110–137).

Asamoah-Gyadu (2007, 340) was of the opinion that the precursors of the Pentecostal movement in Africa were 'indigenous prophet figures' whose uncommon spirituality had earned them immediate expulsion from their respective Mission Churches. These men included William Wade Harris of the Gold Coast, Garrick Sokari Braide of the Niger Delta in Nigeria, Simon Kimbangu of the Congo and other such itinerant prophets who preached the Christian message with unusual authority; challenging witchcraft, sorcery and the powers of traditional religion, and healing various categories of sicknesses. These prophets never directly founded churches but were hounded by colonial authorities in their respective countries because their rising fame and large followership threatened the state.

There were also external connections and rapport between African and global Pentecostalism. This did not necessarily produce increasing homogeneity between both sides but rather provided a platform for Africans to domesticate and adapt various foreign ideas and practices to their own culture. Thus, by the end of the twentieth century, African Pentecostalism had greatly diverged from what it was in the 1930s when it started.

This brings us to the task of classifying various Pentecostal ministries in Africa. While the classification offered below may not adequately reflect Pentecostal diversification in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, it is nonetheless true of West Africa. Two broad categories can be easily identified, each with its own further subdivisions. The first is the group of classical Pentecostals while the other comprises Neo-Pentecostals. Classical Pentecostals can be subdivided into two: indigenous and foreign. Examples of indigenous Pentecostal Churches are the Christ Apostolic Church in Ghana and Nigeria, the Church of Pentecost in Ghana (treated in depth in Onyinah, Chapter 12, and Anim, Chapter 13, both in this volume), and the Deeper Life Bible Church, Nigeria. Examples of foreign Pentecostals include Assemblies of God, the Apostolic Church and the Four-square Gospel Church, all having branches in various parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, the rise of various indigenous classical Pentecostal Churches cannot be located within the same temporal milieu. While churches

like the Christ Apostolic Church and the Church of Pentecost emerged during the colonial period, others such as the Deeper Life Bible Church and the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. Different socioeconomic circumstances aided their rise and later popularity.

Classical Pentecostal Churches emphasise the Christian experience of the new birth and personal holiness exhibited in a moderate lifestyle with strict social ethics. These churches promote conservatism in dressing and physical appearance of women: no excessive jewellery, no make-up and no exposure of hair during services. It is only recently that some of these rules have been relaxed in order to attract more youth into the churches.

The second category of Pentecostals in Africa comprises Neo-Pentecostals. This cluster is made up of: trans-denominational charismatic fellowships mostly found on school campuses, renewal movements in historic mission denomination such as the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, and Charismatic Churches. Neo-Pentecostal Charismatic Churches have become very prominent in Africa since the 1970s and 1980s. Examples of such churches include: The Church of God Missions International founded by the late Benson Idahosa, Winners' Chapel founded by David Oyedepo, Christ Embassy International led by Chris Oyakhilome and Daystar Christian Centre founded by Sam Adeyemi, all in Nigeria. Ghanaian examples include the International Central Gospel Church founded by Mensah Otabil, and Lighthouse Chapel International led by Dag Heward Mills (Aiyegboyin 2018; Aiyegboyin and Ishola 1997; Aiyegboyin and Ukah 2002; Anderson 2001).

Other African examples include: Family of God Church led by Andrew Wutawunashe and Jabula New Life Covenant Church led by Tudor Bismark, both from Harare, Zimbabwe; Abundant Life Faith Center, Kampala, Uganda led by Handel Leslie, and the Redeemed Gospel Church, Huruma, Kenya founded by Arthur Kitonga. South African examples include the multiracial Rhema Bible Church, Johannesburg, founded by Ray McCauley, and Grace Bible Church led by Mosa Sono.

The RCCG straddles both the Classical and the Neo-Pentecostal divide. At its foundation in 1952 during the colonial period, it exhibited characteristics of Classical Pentecostals. But with the rise of its 'model' parishes in the 1990s and their rapid proliferation thereafter, it has taken on the features of a Neo-Pentecostal organisation with its urbane outlook and continuous engagement with developmental issues. However, some parishes retain the old outlook, and are in fact called 'classical parishes' within the larger organisation.

No doubt, all these churches – both Classical and Neo-Pentecostal – are fully committed to evangelism and soul winning. They are also concerned with the material well-being of their members though this is expressed in diverse ways. In many of these churches, concern for the health of members is shown in the healing ministry of the lead pastors. There was the case of Joseph Ayo Babalola, one of the founding prophets of the Christ Apostolic Church in Nigeria. The Pentecostal revival that he pioneered in Northeastern Yorubaland in the late 1920s drew large crowds for healing. Because of the size of the crowds, open

fields were used for the meetings and nearby streams and rivers were consecrated for use as holy water for healing purposes (Olayiwola 1995, 137–149). The ministry of Benson Idahosa in the 1980s and 1990s also witnessed spectacular healing miracles as he went across Nigeria and travelled to other African nations to conduct large Pentecostal meetings (Garlock, 1981). Many observers considered the demonstration of Pentecostal charismata within this period as unprecedented, and therefore interpreted it as representing a special move of God. Within this context, other social intervention schemes were very minimal. African Pentecostalism already generated immense spiritual capital in the form of healings and other types of miraculous manifestations.

African Pentecostal leaders also demonstrated concern for the poor social conditions of their members through the propagation of the 'prosperity doctrine'. This doctrine can be situated within the Faith Gospel or message of Abundant Life which focuses not only on the bliss of the 'hereafter' but also propagates the flourishing of the believer while on earth. Maxwell (1998, 350) argued that the prosperity gospel gave people a template for coming to terms with and benefiting from modernity's dominant values and institutions. In a study on Pentecostalism in Kenya, Parsitau and Mwaura (2010, 95–112) argue that one of the reasons Pentecostalism became popular in urban Kenya was because of its capacity for social transformation and change. Pentecostalism empowered marginalised classes and facilitated upward social mobility for several individuals through the instrumentality of the prosperity gospel preached by Kenya televangelists such as Bishop Mark Kariuki, Bishop J. B. Masinde, Margaret Wanjiru and Wilfred Lai. The urban poor are attracted to this message because Pentecostalism claims to have an answer for poverty. When this is juxtaposed with the failure of the state as an agent of modernisation, it thus makes sense that numerous people turned to Pentecostalism not only for solutions to individual problems, but also for spiritual prescriptions for national economic and social woes (Adeboye 2003/2004, 136–159). However, it seemed that some African Pentecostal Churches also augmented their spiritual prescriptions for social and community prosperity with motivational seminars and other practical interventions meant to promote sustainable development. At what point did this occur and what circumstances made this additional effort necessary? Before we explore this with the case study of RCCG, let us now clarify the concept of sustainable development and how global perspectives on it intersect with Christian and local ideas on development.

Sustainable development: global discourse, Christian thought and local perspectives

The global discourse on sustainable development attracted significant attention after 1987 when the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987, 41) underscored its significance thus pushing it to the top of the agenda of the United Nations and of multilateral development banks. Its famous definition of sustainable development as 'the development that meets the needs of

the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' has been endorsed, debated, criticised and challenged by various scholars and practitioners. This concept of sustainable development is seen as addressing the relationship between three major components, namely, the economy, environment and society. In today's world, these three are not usually placed on the same pedestal. Giddings *et al.* (2002, 187–196) argued that the economy more often than not gets more attention than the others because societal progress is often measured by its economic growth. Meanwhile, this has little to do with the quality of human life, nor with inequalities in various societies. The prevailing reality is that the economy is dependent on both society and the environment. Without society, there can be no economy.

Before the 1980s, global development discourse was focused on rapid industrialisation and measurements of economic growth. This, among other things, birthed the dichotomy between developed and underdeveloped countries. The resulting quantifications of development often overlooked important sociopolitical factors and deeply entrenched inequalities among various groups of people. The persistence of mass poverty and the need for environmental justice thus triggered the debate on sustainable development (Ajulu 2010, 163–166; Giddings *et al.* 2002, 187–196).

Some scholars have called for a rethinking of the concept of sustainable development, particularly in the interrelationship among its component units. Hardi and Zdau (1997, 194) contended that modern theories of sustainable development now emphasise the need to adopt a 'whole system' approach that takes note of emergent properties, complexity and interactions. Bob Giddings *et al.* (2002, 187–196) have recommended an integrated view of the concept. According to them, 'defining its aim as human well being would encourage seeing discrimination in any form as contrary to sustainable development, rather than as present, as undesirable but justified as gains elsewhere'. They further suggested that 'instead of having a priority on the economy, which is a means to an end, the focus [of sustainable development] should be on human provisioning and satisfying needs which may be done in many ways than those prescribed within economy' (Giddings *et al.* 2002, 187–196).

In all, sustainable development is now about a holistic and integrated way of looking at the world; concentrating on sustainable livelihoods and well-being and long-term environmental sustainability (Hopwood *et al.* 2005, 38–52). The idea is to give development a broad base and create room for moral and equity dimensions hitherto suppressed. In other words, development interventions are to 'wear a human face'.

Christian thought on development also emphasises the human factor. Central to it is the concept of stewardship, which emphasises responsibility and accountability. This perspective according to (Oladipo, 2000) 'decries the unbridled quest for economic gains where no one cares about who and what are being hurt in the process' (147). The biblical support for this is taken from Gen. 2:15 where God placed mankind in the Garden of Eden to work it and care for it. The church is the true steward and it is charged with 'responsibility by God

through Jesus and is empowered by the Holy Spirit to effectively deliver holistic development for the transformation of individuals and their communities, by alleviating poverty and other social and environmental problems' (Ajulu 2010, 160). The end of development is to improve the total man: 'true development' is that which improves the total person in a holistic manner. This is summed up in *shalom*; meaning peace, completeness and well-being. Oladipo (2000, 147) affirmed that such is the goal of development from the Christian perspective.

Scholars have pointed out the need for Christians to engage in development work (Bornstein 2002, 7; Brandt 1995, 260). Each man created in the 'image of God' is entitled to a decent and dignified living. While the church is to bring the good news to the poor (Lk.4:18–19) as was the mandate of Jesus Christ, the individual Christian is also expected to demonstrate his faith in good works. 'Hence, socio-economic development is an imperative sphere of engagement for the church' (Oladipo 2000, 147). Even for Christian NGOs where economic development is often a primary objective, development is still conceived in an overall manner i.e. of the whole person, the full human – material and spiritual. The theology of holistic development is thus deployed to address spiritual and material deprivations to enable a Christian to access abundant life.

Yoruba thought on development is here presented as an example of a local perspective on the subject. The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria conceive of development as *ilosiwaju*. This describes improvement of existing social conditions. Development is not conceived only in material terms as found in western theories; it incorporates all aspects of life in a holistic manner and also connects the past with the present and future. Central to this is the idea of the development of human character, which determines competence in the management of human affairs (Oluwole 1997, 139–150). This is the propeller that drives overall societal development. Individual character development is encapsulated in the local concept of *omoluabi*.

The *omoluabi* is an epitome of moral rectitude. Such an individual is dignified and guided by culturally approved standards of behaviour. To become an *omoluabi*, emphasis is laid on the cultivation of virtues such as patience, respect for others, teachability, self-control, hardwork, diligence. The moral import of being a person imbued with character is evident in the fact that personhood, within the Yoruba moral universe, is earned. This transformation, according to Afolayan (2017, 886), 'is a positive ontological progression, a moral maturation in time, from a mere individual, to a dignified *omoluabi*'. The traditional ideals that promote community development are thus derived from *omoluabi* traits.

It is important to point out here that the dualism of western thought, which tends to consider different aspects of life as being distinct does not apply to Yoruba thought, which conceives of life holistically. A similar claim has been made for other non-western cultures by Brian Woolnough. According to him, knowledge in such contexts inevitably includes both spiritual and physical dimensions. 'There is no need to bring together, to integrate different distinct components into a single whole: they already exist in holistic unity' (Woolnough 2011, 5).

It is thus clear from the above discussion that development is concerned with the holistic integration of different strands of human life. Moreover, the element of sustainability varies from one perspective to the other. In the global secular discourse, the emphasis is on renewable environmental resources, human livelihoods and economic growth. In Christian theology, sustainability consists in integrating God's ethical agenda into development prescriptions. In the African Yoruba worldview, sustainability relates to maintaining the centrality of human character cultivation at the heart of community development initiatives. Common to all approaches is a growing concern for human, and by extension, community well-being.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God and CSR

The RCCG was founded in 1952 by Josiah Akindayomi, formerly a prophet in the Cherubim and Seraphim Church (Adeboye 2003/2004, 23–56). Josiah had no formal education but after receiving the 'call' to ministry, it was widely believed that he demonstrated great powers of miracles and healing. For much of the period that he led the church (1952–1980), the membership was drawn mainly from the low-income class. This presupposes that various material needs were represented in the church. While reminiscences by early members emphasise acts of kindness among individuals, there are no indications of centrally organised interventions from the church to its immediate environment (Akindayomi 2010; Mulero 2012; Olateru 2007). The church was equally poor. Most of its history in this phase was taken up with hinterland preaching tours by the founder. The 1970s also saw the institution of another outreach programme called the 'Congress'. Many converts were won with accompanying 'testimonies' of miracles (Mulero 2012, 80–123). The only centrally planned social service of the church that touched others outside its walls was the operation of its maternity centres. These centres, located within bigger branches of the church, had no doctors or nurses but were manned by 'midwives' – the church's equivalent of traditional birth attendants, who were seen as invoking the power of prayers to deliver pregnant women safely. In the church narratives, one of the celebrated testimonies in the Headquarters Maternity Centre was that of a woman who had previously had three caesarean sections in government hospitals. After joining the RCCG at conversion, with her husband, her next pregnancy was safely delivered in the maternity through prayers without any need for surgical intervention. This experience encouraged her to have one more baby at the maternity. Her husband, Enoch Adejare Adeboye later ordained pastor in the church, succeeded Rev. Josiah Akindayomi as the General Overseer in 1981 (Odesola and Olubiyi 2017, 55).

Under the leadership of Pastor Adeboye, the RCCG made unprecedented expansion. Apart from widening its social base to attract middle-income members through its 'model' parishes, it also spread into different parts of the country and even beyond. From 31 parishes in 1980, it grew to 37,320 in 2017 within Nigeria (RCCG 2016, 5). Beyond the country, it has established its

presence in 190 nations of the world. Its educational programmes started in 1981 on a very small scale with the establishment of its first elementary school within the premises of the headquarters church at Ebute-Metta in Lagos. Since then, the number of schools (both primary and secondary) owned by the church has grown to 258 (227 primary and 31 secondary schools).

The inability of government in the 1980s and 1990s to meet the growing need of the nation for social services created a vacuum for NGOs and churches such as the RCCG to fill. Within Nigeria, 'model' parishes were the arrowheads of the social work of the RCCG. Between 1991 when the model parishes were becoming consolidated and 2011, there were sporadic responses from various RCCG parishes to needs in their immediate locations. RCCG (2016, 5) reported that by 2011, the church took a first step towards harmonising its social intervention by creating the office of an Assistant Provincial Pastor in each of its 210 administrative provinces to oversee its social welfare interventions, now dubbed corporate social responsibility (CSR). Early in 2018, a second step was taken in the harmonisation project. The office of a Special Assistant to the General Overseer was created to coordinate the church's CSR activities nationwide.

The driving motivation behind the CSR moves of the RCCG has been articulated by its leaders in various ways. Adeboye (2015, 8) notes that:

People want to hear not just about what is going to happen to them when they get to heaven. They also want to see the blessings they can have while they are still here on earth.... If you want people to come to know Christ, then you must also be willing to assist them in every way possible to alleviate their suffering physically, to alleviate their suffering materially by empowering them and to alleviate their suffering spiritually by casting out demons and so on and so forth.

This means that the church is not only to respond to the spiritual needs (spiritual suffering) of people but should also take care of their physical and material needs. This is a strategy to get people 'to come to know Christ'. Perhaps, a more robust justification of the CSR moves of the RCCG is that provided by Pastor Idowu Iluyomade, the head of the church's CSR department and Special Assistant to the General Overseer. Iluyomade, a lawyer by training, is the pastor-in-charge of Region 20 (presently comprising 15 provinces and over 1,500 parishes), also known as the 'Apapa Family' of model parishes. Among other groups of model parishes, Apapa Family has been the most proactive, productive, resourceful and committed to social work. It, therefore, did not come as a surprise to other members of the RCCG when the leader of that unit was given the mandate to head and coordinate the church's overall CSR activities.

The first thing that Iluyomade did was to change the caption of RCCG social intervention from corporate social responsibility to Christian Social Responsibility. In a treatise entitled *Christian Social Responsibility: A Matter of Life and Death?*, Iluyomade (2018) distinguishes between the corporate orientation of

the business world to social work and that of the Christian community. Business organisations are required by society to be ethical in their operations, not focusing mainly on profits but considering the immediate and long-term social and environmental needs of the community where they operate (Amaeshi *et al.* 2006). Christian communities, on the other hand, are required by God to be socially responsive. CSR is therefore defined as a ‘faith-based obligation to meet societal needs through the demonstration of love that positively impacts communities and individuals’ (Iluyomade 2018). Iluyomade cites various biblical injunctions to support his claims (Lev. 25:35; James 1:25; Matt. 22:36–40) but the defining passage for him is Matt. 25:31–46. Iluyomade’s (2018) exegesis of the passage presents CSR as a ‘matter of life and death’:

If truly our end goal is to make it to heaven, a wise person will investigate what conditions must be fulfilled to be able to make it to heaven and possibly receive a reward. Jesus also gave us a pre-view of the final judgment day in Matthew 25:31–46, that on that day all nations will be gathered before God and His holy angels and God will separate the sheep on His right and the goats on His left, and He would use Christian Social Responsibility as the litmus test and parameter to judge them, not how big their church is or how many missions they have or how many people fell under their anointing but Christian Social Responsibility. We all have a responsibility to be our brother’s keeper.... When we get to heaven, God would ask simple questions like: ‘Did you feed the poor? Did you give the thirsty drink and shelter the stranger? Did you take care of the sick? Did you visit and take care of prisoners?’ ... Surprisingly, all those that ignored these needs were cursed and sent to everlasting hell fire meant for the devil and his angels whilst those that heeded the call for Christian Social Responsibility where [sic] ushered into life eternal.

CSR is thus Christian love in action, systematically packaged by the church to reach out to society. It is also driven by the sheer need in contemporary times and ultimately becomes an evangelical tool.

It is important to add here that the concept of CSR came up in 1974 during the Lausanne Conference of the world evangelical community led by Billy Graham. At the end of the conference attended by 2,300 evangelical leaders from 150 countries, a Lausanne Covenant was produced, which made social concern a compulsory element in mission work. Under a heading they termed ‘Christian Social Responsibility’ they repented of their ‘neglect of social responsibility and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive’. They equally noted that ‘evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of Christian duty’ (Woolnough 2011, 4). It is not clear whether Iluyomade read this conference report, but his CSR ideas correspond to the ideals of the Lausanne Covenant.

Iluyomade (2018, 23) also offers some clarification on the importance of ‘sustainability’ in CSR initiatives in the church. The secret for ‘sustainable and

improved CSR outcomes is by studying emerging trends and global best practices and putting structures in place to remain relevant and to achieve maximum impact'. He believes churches find it difficult to attract support from institutional partners for their CSR activities because they lack proper structures, transparency, and accountability. The way out is for faith-based CSR initiatives to comply with global best practices and institutionalise their interventions. These could be done by articulating a clear vision for CSR (i.e. long-term objectives); carrying out proper needs assessment that would inform CSR interventions; designing a strategy (policy) and institutionalising a corresponding structure that delivers the interventions. Other imperatives include innovation, documentation, publicity, impact assessment and quality assurance. All these would engender transparency, accountability, and acceptability of CSR by the larger society. These would make it relatively easy for the church to attract other corporate partners not only for direct funding but also for technical support for their projects. Ultimately, they would ensure sustainability in CSR outcomes.

To illustrate this, we now turn to the CSR activities of the 'Apapa Family', an administrative unit of the RCCG, which planted its mother parish at Apapa in Lagos. Of the 15 administrative 'provinces' under the unit, 13 are located in Lagos while two are in Ibadan. The 'family' also networks effectively with its diaspora chapters in other parts of Africa, and in Europe, North America, South America, Oceania and Asia. Its main CSR platform is the Excel Charity Foundation set up in 2008 and headed by a Chief Executive Officer with a board made of seasoned technocrats to ensure corporate governance. The eight areas of intervention identified by the Foundation are designated as: social, health-care, education, media, business/economy, arts/culture/entertainment, government/politics, and sports (often called by the acronym SHEMA in the church's terminology). To effectively execute related projects, the Apapa Family mobilises all its parishes (over 1,500) with the arrowhead being its headquarters parish called the City of David (CSR Chronicles 2018; Iluyomade 2018; RCCG 2018; RCCG Apapa Family 2018). Their activities are summarised below.

Social

- The street feeding programme 'A Can Can Make a Difference' (ACCMAD) started around 2008. About 60,000 people are fed weekly. Over ₦2.5 billion (about €6 million) have been spent on this in five years.
- Since 2006, two rehabilitation centres have been successfully operated, Stepping Forth Halfway House (to rehabilitate substance abusers) and Virtuous Women Home (to rehabilitate former commercial sex workers).
- In the framework of prison ministry, they have installed solar-powered streetlights in the prison environment in Lagos, have refurbished and equipped the medical centre at Kirikiri (Federal) Maximum Security Prison, and donated generators, ambulances, pharmaceutical drugs to Agodi, Ikoyi, Badagry and Kirikiri Prisons. Moreover, they have equipped the learning

centres for inmates and enrolled 130 for the General Certificate of Education O-level exams in 2010.

- A charity shop was established in 2008, and rebranded in 2015 as 'It's New to Me'. The shop offers clothing, shoes, babywear, furniture, home accessories and appliances at affordable prices.
- Other social interventions include the donations of public toilets, boreholes, streetlights, refurbishing various police stations in Lagos and donating computers to the Lagos Police Command.

Health

- In 2010, Healing Stripes Diagnostic Centre and Pharmacy was set up. The renal centre with 10 dialysis machines, offers 30 free dialysis sessions monthly (total: 3,277). Others are highly subsidised (total: 7,433). The centre partners with medical institutions in the USA and India for kidney transplants (12 transplants done already). A cancer-screening centre was established in 2011, and by 2018 it had screened over 100,000 people free and had treated 20,000 at subsidised rates.
- RCCG Apapa family has equipped government hospitals such as Massey Clinic, Yaba, and donated dialysis machines to Gbagada General Hospital, Lagos. They refurbished and equipped the intensive care unit of the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital.
- RCCG Apapa family has partnered with Mercy Ship International Floating Hospital, which docked at Cotonou, Republic of Benin in 2009. Patients were taken there for treatment and critical surgical intervention.
- They acquired three mobile medical clinics (at the cost of ₦21 million, or €50,000 each) for monthly medical outreaches to rural areas. Over 10,000 people have been treated so far.

Education

- RCCG Apapa family has established River Bank Nursery and Primary School (in addition to its existing 30 schools); and Hope Centre (a primary school) at Makoko.
- They equipped 500 public primary school libraries in Lagos State, while partnering with other churches to equip additional 250 schools.
- They provide scholarship opportunities for the youth, e.g. the so-called Wisdom Group Scholarship (from Secondary to University). Fifty-one students have benefited so far.
- Adult literacy programmes, summer volunteer programmes and youth empowerment programme are offered.
- They endowed four professorial chairs of mathematics (in honour of Pastor E. A. Adeboye) at the universities of Lagos, Ibadan, Ife and Nsukka (at ₦50 million each, equalling about €120,000).

Media

- The RCCG Apapa family sponsored the production of two soap operas (*Heaven's Gate* and *Oasis*) on terrestrial and satellite television stations.

Business and economy

- They established the City of David Business Networks to encourage and train entrepreneurs and the Excel City of David Cooperative Society.

Arts, culture and entertainment

- God's Children Great Talent, a talent competition described as a 'faith-based social development initiative with a vision to build a global brand using talents for God's glory' started in 2011. Season 7 was held in 2017. Over ₦300 million (about €712,000) have been spent on this and more than 10,000 children registered.
- There is a leadership programme which runs parallel to the competition.
- The Incubator is an event place, which hosts corporate meetings, social gatherings, conferences and seminars. It maintains a green environment and has a no-smoking and no-alcohol rule within its premises.

Governance and politics

- RCCG Apapa family has been organising town-hall meetings to encourage Christians to participate in politics.

Sports

- A professional football club, City of David United, was founded in 2007. It is owned by the City of David Parish. It engages about 15,000 youth under the Club quarterly. The vision is to use football as a tool for social impact and regeneration.
- Football is used as a platform for youth development through the following programmes:
 - *Omodelig*: a grass-roots football competition for young boys and girls between the age of 9 and 15. Over 5,000 players have featured in the competition since 2009.
 - *League of Champions*: comprises mini-tournaments and inspiring talk sessions. In nine years, there have been over 100 sessions in two centres in Lagos (Ajah and Surulere) with over 1,500 boys each week and 40,000 boys impacted annually through it.
 - *Ambassador's Cup*: the Club Ambassador, Super Eagles and Reading FC Forward, Sone Aluko interacts with young players through football clinics, media interviews, seminars and a tournament. Over 500 players are impacted through this week-long event every year.

- *City of David Football Academy* trains young footballers in five cadres: U10, U12, U14, U16 and U18. Creating opportunity for education and exposure for professional football locally and internationally.
- *City of David United Soccer Camp* offers intensive soccer training in partnership with foreign football clubs.
- *City of David United Soccer School* is designed for children aged 5–16. It offers classes every Saturday at two centres in Lagos plus additional 12 weeks of intensive coaching during summer holidays. Over 300 students enrol each year.
- Other activities include the schools' partnership programme; an international football partnership with English Premier League football clubs Bolton Wanderers FC and AFC Bournemouth to organise soccer camps in Lagos with over 70 young players each year, the *City of David United Scholarship Scheme*, players vocational training, girls football development and national team call-up.
- Two landmarks are particularly worth highlighting. In 2013, the male team won the Lagos FA Cup and represented Lagos State at the national federation cup. In 2015, the female team won the Lagos FA Cup.

Challenges of promoting sustainable development

African Pentecostal Churches face a number of challenges in their bid to promote sustainable development. First is the challenge of funding. From the example of the RCCG Apapa Family provided above, it is clear that many social problems are systemic and require the fixing of social infrastructure, which is often capital intensive – road repairs, hospital equipment, etc. Where do these funds come from? A lot of churches collect freewill donations for special projects. Where such is not enough, external help is usually sought from corporate donors who are often reluctant to assist churches with their CSR funds. This brings up the second challenge of lack of appreciation and or recognition for the social work done by Pentecostal Churches by the wider society. This is due to the lack of transparency, accountability and corporate governance of such churches. No regulatory agency audits church accounts and prospective donors are not sure of what will become of their funds. Thus, even where there are lofty social intervention schemes, they are starved of funds. However, the RCCG Apapa Family example has shown that when churches adopt global best practices in the packaging of their social intervention programmes, they are likely to attract corporate sponsorship. The Excel Charity Foundation has enjoyed at various times the support of top institutions in the Nigerian banking industry such as First Bank of Nigeria, Stanbic IBTC Bank, Access Bank; Telecommunications firms like MTN, food manufacturing giants like Cadbury Nigeria and Unilever; and even the Shell Oil exploration company donated ₦10 million (c.€25,000) to its cancer-screening centre (Iluyomade 2018, 123).

A critical element missing in the policy structure of RCCG's CSR is a commitment to social justice and social action. Jakonda (1996, 26–33) remarks that the approach would have targeted the roots of social problems and aimed at transforming prevailing socioeconomic and political systems that nurture injustice with a view to achieving sustainable development. This implies that the church has to be more preventive than curative in its approach to social issues. The history of the Nigerian Church as a whole shows that even in the face of past oppressive military regimes, mainline churches have been more vocal than their Pentecostal counterparts in calling for social justice and criticising unjust rulers. Catholic priests have often led popular protests against objectionable government policies. Pentecostal leaders, on the other hand, periodically mobilise their congregations to pray for the nation. The impression often created is that 'Pentecostals would rather seek to nurse and rehabilitate the victims of a predatory socio-political system than to directly challenge the oppressive structures of such a society' (Adeboye 2003/2004, 136–159). A notable Pentecostal exception has been Pastor Tunde Bakare of the Latter Rain Assembly in Lagos, who openly denounces social injustice during his television programmes. What will therefore become of the capital-intensive social interventions of the RCCG when the social environment continues to reinforce and perpetuate inequalities and politically induced oppression? After all, even the Bible enjoins advocacy for justice and peace (Micah 6:8).

There is also the challenge of partnership. Who do Pentecostal Churches involved in developmental projects partner with? Some prospective development partners may be interested in supporting particular social projects but may have other views with which Pentecostals do not agree. Woolnough (2011, 201) has described this as the challenge of 'unequal yoke'. This is what happens in a case where African Pentecostal Churches are not willing to receive aid or other support from international secular partners who campaign for tolerance and non-discrimination of people with unpopular sexual preferences. Such organisations may have ample funds available for development aid, but Pentecostals are wary of such an 'unequal yoke'. This also applies in cases where Pentecostal Churches are reluctant to receive assistance from local manufacturers of tobacco, alcohol, etc. even when those companies are interested in supporting particular social interventions.

Furthermore, too many of the social intervention projects are urban based. The example of the RCCG given above shows that very little attention is devoted to the rural areas. A way out of this could be for churches to network with other local development-focused bodies. A number of them are also faith-based and have acquired considerable experience on the field. To illustrate, Jakonda (1996, 31) pointed to the Christian Rural Development Association of Nigeria (sponsored by the Evangelical Churches from Northern Nigeria). Such collaboration would facilitate exchange of information, experience, resource and joint advocacy on issues of social justice and empowerment of poor communities. Development efforts yield more results if tackled from the grassroots. It must be truly comprehensive: not mostly urban-centred but well spread out to incorporate rural areas too.

Pentecostal Churches also face the moral danger of engineering their social work solely for evangelism. This presents a delicate situation in which the likelihood of discrimination in acts of service is high. Other moral concerns according to Miles and Villiers (2010, 151) include the making of what has been called 'rice Christians' (those who convert in order to access material assistance), and the potential of spiritual abuse of vulnerable people (especially children). While Christian NGOs are more susceptible to this challenge than churches whose holistic mandate already integrates the spiritual with the material, there is nonetheless a need for churches to be seen as non-discriminatory and non-coercive in their social campaigns. This is particularly crucial given the power asymmetries that characterise relationship between the church and the poor to whom it ministers. Good development is to be balanced by a Christian understanding of people as created with dignity, in God's image, irrespective of their status in life.

Finally, there are a number of development possibilities yet to be fully explored by Pentecostal Churches. The most striking is in the area of the environment and renewable natural resources. Others include intervention in the area of food security. Pentecostal Churches should lead their congregations in the mass cultivation of food crops and assist with irrigation technology in arid areas. They could also support members' cooperative societies to market and even export their produce. Beyond this, scholars have also suggested that churches should mediate in community disputes, emphasise preventive healthcare, not just curative, advocate against gender marginalisation, and for purposes of accountability clearly distinguish between projects made to earn profit for running the church and those set up to serve people (Oladipo 2000, 148–150).

Conclusion

The church generally has a lot of features that position it effectively to deliver development projects. According to Oladipo (2000, 148–150), these include its non-partisan nature, rootedness in the community, stability, concern for the poor and deprived, and a strong tradition of altruism. But more importantly, modern Pentecostal Churches with transnational branches enjoy global institutional linkages, which they can exploit for resource transfers, trainings and technical aid (Adeboye 2005, 439–465). The RCCG, for instance, has branches in 190 nations of the world. In North America alone, it has over 900 parishes. These represent ample social and material capital from which it can draw to aid its social projects.

To foster greater appreciation of the holistic dimension in development traditions and allay the fears identified above, there is a need for deeper cooperation across secular and sacred divides. Mega Pentecostal Churches like the RCCG are now adopting global best practices in their social interventions. Sustainability to such churches consists in the erection of viable structures and policies as part of their overall developmental strategy. This situates them as

legitimate actors within the global space of development work. It is thus clear that to effectively address the various deprivations that have kept indigent souls from shouting hallelujah, Pentecostals should not just rush to them with material provisions and the Bible, but also take time to effectively package such interventions. Properly institutionalised interventions by Pentecostals will go a long way to promote sustainable development.

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