

## AN ASSESSMENT OF CHRISTIAN PHILANTHROPISTS IN THE POLITICAL STABILITY OF NIGERIA

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### Abstract

Nigeria, a country facing numerous challenges, has been the focus of many studies on how faith-based philanthropist can contribute to its development. This research delved into the vital role Christian philanthropists play in promoting political stability in Nigeria, particularly in community development, social cohesion, and economic empowerment. Through a comprehensive approach, combining both historical and descriptive method, this research explored the philanthropic efforts of Christian leaders in Nigeria. This research looked at their initiatives, funding models, and impact on local communities. The findings reveal that Christian philanthropists have been instrumental in promoting political stability in Nigeria by providing essential services to marginalized communities, fostering social cohesion, and driving economic empowerment. These philanthropists have established numerous orphanages, schools, and hospitals, providing vital services to underprivileged communities. Their efforts have also helped reduce poverty and improve living standards in many parts of the country. Moreover, they have played a significant role in promoting interfaith dialogue and reducing tensions between different ethnic groups. Their philanthropic activities have inspired others to follow their lead, creating a ripple effect of kindness and compassion that has spread across the country. The implications of this study are significant for policymakers and development practitioners seeking to promote political stability and development in Nigeria. By recognizing and supporting faith-based philanthropist, we can harness its potential as a key driver of positive change in the country. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on the impact of faith-based philanthropist on development outcomes, highlighting the vital role Christian philanthropists play in promoting political stability in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Christian Philanthropists, Good Governance, Political Stability, Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

Let us imagine a Nigeria where political stability and peace reign supreme. A nation where citizens can live their lives without fear of violence or oppression. This vision is not just a dream, but a reality that Christian philanthropists are working tirelessly to achieve. Despite Nigeria's turbulent past, these dedicated individuals have been a beacon of hope, using their resources and influence to drive positive change. They have built schools, hospitals, and businesses, creating jobs and opportunities for thousands. Their selflessness and compassion have inspired countless others to follow in their footsteps, but their journey has not been easy. They have faced numerous challenges, from corruption to terrorism, and have had to navigate complex political and social landscapes. Yet, they remain steadfast in their commitment to creating a better Nigeria for all. This study celebrates the unsung heroes of Nigeria's political stability, shedding light on their triumphs and struggles. By sharing their stories, it is hoped to inspire others to join the movement towards a more peaceful and prosperous Nigeria.

Hence, this study is significant because it highlights the critical role that Christian philanthropists play in promoting political stability in Nigeria. By examining their contributions and challenges, this study aimed to provide insights into the ways in which religious organizations and individuals can support democratic development and stability in Nigeria. The findings of this study will be useful for policymakers, religious leaders, and development practitioners seeking to promote political stability and sustainable development in Nigeria.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Several theoretical frameworks provide a foundation for understanding the role of Christian philanthropists in promoting political stability. One key framework is the concept of social capital, which refers to the networks, norms, and trust that facilitate cooperation and collective action. Christian philanthropists can contribute to social capital by providing financial support to organizations that promote social justice and community development, thereby fostering a sense of trust and cooperation among community members. Another theoretical framework is the concept of moral compass, which refers to an individual's sense of moral direction and purpose. Christian philanthropists, guided by their faith, may be more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors such as volunteering and charitable giving, which can contribute to political stability by promoting social cohesion and community development.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Christian philanthropists in Nigeria have played a significant role in promoting political stability in the country. Ojo averred that efforts of these philanthropist are guided by a conceptual framework that emphasizes Christian values, social justice, and community development. (Madu, 2008). The framework is influenced by Christian theology, biblical teachings, and the experiences of Christian philanthropists in Nigeria.

Three key concepts underlie the framework: biblical stewardship, social justice, and community development. Biblical stewardship emphasizes the responsibility of Christians to manage their resources wisely and promote the common good. Social justice involves promoting equality, fairness, and dignity for all people, and is closely tied to almsgiving. Community development emphasizes building strong, resilient communities that can address their own needs and promote their own development. The conceptual framework has been shaped by both internal and external factors, including Nigerian theologians' teachings, government policies, economic conditions, and social trends. The rise of terrorism and insurgency has led many Christian philanthropists to focus on providing emergency relief and humanitarian assistance to affected communities.

## **Overview of Political Stability in Nigeria**

Nigeria, a country blessed with an abundance of natural resources and a vibrant population, has been on a quest for political stability since its independence in 1960. Despite its rich cultural heritage and potentials, Nigeria has struggled to find its footing, plagued by power struggles, ethnic and religious conflicts, corruption, and insecurity. Nigeria's journey to political stability began with its colonial past. The British colonial administration divided the country along ethnic and religious lines, creating artificial boundaries that continue to simmer beneath the surface. After independence in 1960, Nigeria experienced a series of military coups, with the military intervening in politics multiple times. This period of military rule lasted from 1966 to 1999, leaving deep scars that still linger today. The post-colonial period saw the rise of ethnic and religious divisions. The country's population is predominantly Muslim in the north and Christian in the south, with a significant minority of indigenous populations. This divide has fueled religious extremism and sectarian violence.

Today, Nigeria faces numerous challenges that threaten its political stability such as insecurity, corruption, and economic crisis, ethnic and religious tension. In regards to insecurity, Boko Haram, an Islamic extremist group, has been responsible for numerous attacks, displacing millions and causing widespread human suffering. The government's response has been criticized for being inadequate. Hence, corruption is rampant at all levels of government, with high-level officials embezzling public funds and engaging in other forms of graft. To achieve political stability in Nigeria, several steps can be taken such as the involvement of Christian philanthropists in salvaging the nation from its crisis, rebuilding trust and lot more. Thus, this paper focused on the involvement of Christian philanthropists in political stability in Nigeria.

## **Christian Values and Philanthropism**

The confluence of Christian values and philanthropism is deeply rooted in biblical scripture, which emphasizes the importance of assisting those in need and demonstrating compassion towards the marginalized. The Bible abounds with examples of God's generosity and provision for his people, prompting Christians to emulate his example. The passage in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, specifically, underscores the significance of generosity and spontaneous giving, as God favors a cheerful giver. The Old Testament concept of tithing (contribution of 10% of one's income to the Lord) serves as a paradigm for Christian philanthropism, as exemplified in Malachi 3:10, which invites believers to test God's provision by bringing their entire tithe into the storehouse. Faith-based organizations have historically played a crucial role in philanthropism, embodying Christian values such as compassion, kindness, and generosity while providing essential services to those in need.

The connection between Christian values and philanthropism has been extensively explored across various disciplines, including theology, sociology, economics, and psychology. This multifaceted examination has yielded valuable insights into the motivations, mechanisms, and outcomes of Christian philanthropy, illuminating its significance in promoting social welfare and fostering a culture of giving.

## **Theological Roots**

### **Sociological Perspectives**

From a sociological perspective, research shows that religiosity is linked to charitable giving. Faith-based organizations play a vital role in providing essential services to marginalized communities. Scholars like Warner (2017) argues that these organizations are more effective at addressing social problems due to their ability to build trust and establish strong relationships with clients. Others, like James Hunter (1991), emphasizes the importance of civil society organizations in promoting social cohesion and reducing inequality.

## **Economic Perspectives**

From an economic standpoint, charitable giving can have far-reaching benefits for both individuals and society. Giving can boost feelings of happiness and well-being and foster social cohesion and community development. Easterlin (2001), suggests that charitable giving can be seen as an investment in human capital, promoting social capital and community development. Duflo (2003), highlights the importance of microfinance initiatives in providing financial services to low-income individuals and communities.

## **Psychological Rewards**

Psychological research reveals that charitable giving can have a profound impact on mental health and well-being. Giving can increase feelings of empathy and compassion and reduce stress and anxiety. Pychyl (2012), argues that charitable giving can be a form of self-care, promoting feelings of purpose and meaning. Peterson (2004), emphasizes the importance of gratitude in fostering charitable giving.

## **Christians' Involvement in Political Governance in Nigeria**

Some social scientists and theologians including church workers hold that churches have no role to play in politics. Laguda (2008), further averred that Christians in Nigeria would rather not get involved in politics but the fact remains that Jesus Christ did not discourage political participation for the faithful. However, Laguda's argument is unconvincing due to the fact that there are many Christians who are involved in politics and that have won political seats as governors, senators and honourables.

Abundant evidence proves that Christians constitute a considerable force which can bring about a deep politics for example, detailed reports produced by Sakala and Rakotonirainy on the contribution of the churches to politics in their respective countries are very eloquent. It can be emphasised here that by the role of the church, this research work underscores the contribution of the church to leadership development and politics as a globalising and transnational organisation. Speaking of the role of the church for good leadership development and sociopolitical transformation, Ramasamy (2008) states:

Of course the churches have a role to play here. Firstly, they need to help governments and peoples who seek to embrace and implement these values. Secondly, as part of their prophetic witness, churches must hold the leaders accountable. It becomes necessary for them to speak out against tyrannical rule and all forms of oppression and exploitation.

In the same thesis the author shows later that many churches could not play their role effectively because their leaders failed to understand that they had also socio-political responsibilities to assume in the larger community. Consequently, he suggests some practical steps which can be taken to be successful both within and outside the church; one of these concerns how African ubuntu and the gospel can valuably be used to combat antisocial pathologies and develop needed values for socio-political transformation.

The role of the Christians consists first of all in practicing the politics of the church; coming to the understanding of the death and resurrection of Christ and living and leading as church. Madu (2008), explains in his *Collective Sins in Sub-Saharan Africa* that "the church has an important role to play in helping Christians to combat collective sins in their lives and communities. The fight against collective sins in the continent can be successfully only if

church leaders have won it in their own lives.” The pulpit can be used as central medium for the transmission of new ideas and change of attitudes, a viable instrument for the restoration of people’s confidence and social transformation

Walls (2003) ,Revival Fire also recognises that “the church has a role to play in the larger community. He speaks especially of the power of the prayer to bring about revival in the church and moral regeneration and transformation in the community at large. He uses a number of revival examples throughout history to make his case more palpable, ranging from little villages and towns to cities, nations and entire continents. However, the book seems to fall short of the comprehensive and holistic aspects of the mission work in the community. Praying for the missionaries and the mission work, for people and their community to be transformed is good, but it is essential to teach and educate those people in order to prepare and be ready by them for a sustainable transformation of their lives and of their environment.

### **Some examples of peace resolutions in Nigeria and Africa**

#### **Nigeria**

1. **Abuja Peace Accord (1998):** The accord was signed by the then President Olusegun Obasanjo, the National Assembly, and the leadership of the Niger Delta militants to end the militancy and ensure peace in the region.
2. **Akpabio-Odi Committee (2004):** The committee was set up by the then President Olusegun Obasanjo to resolve the conflict between the Ijaw and Itsekiri ethnic groups in the Niger Delta region. The committee's recommendations led to the establishment of a peace committee to monitor and implement the agreements.
3. **Niger Delta Amnesty Programme (2009):** The programme was initiated by President Umaru Yar'Adua to address the grievances of the Niger Delta people and bring an end to militancy in the region. The programme provided amnesty to militants and provided them with training and rehabilitation opportunities.

#### **Africa**

1. **Lusaka Agreement on International Criminal Court (1998):** The agreement was signed by African countries, including Nigeria, to establish the International Criminal Court (ICC) and to cooperate with it in the investigation and prosecution of international crimes.
2. **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Peacekeeping Mission (2003):** The mission was established to maintain peace and stability in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau. Nigeria played a leading role in the mission.
3. **African Union Peace and Security Council (2002):** The council was established to promote peace, security, and stability in Africa. Nigeria has been a member of the council since its inception.

### **Few Africa Christian Philanthropists and their roles in promoting political stability**

#### **1. Pastor Enoch Adeboye (Nigeria)**

Pastor Enoch Adeboye is a Nigerian pastor and televangelist who is the general overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). He is one of the most influential Christian leaders in Nigeria and has been a vocal critic of corrupt politicians. In 2015, Pastor Adeboye launched the “Saving One Million Souls” campaign, which aimed to promote peace, unity, and spiritual revival in Nigeria. The campaign has attracted widespread support from Nigerians across the country and has been credited with helping to promote peaceful coexistence among different ethnic groups.

## **2. Pastor Tunde Bakare (Nigeria)**

Pastor Tunde Bakare is a Nigerian pastor and televangelist who is known for his advocacy for social justice and political reform. He is the founder of the Latter Rain Assembly, a prominent church in Nigeria. Pastor Bakare has been a vocal critic of corrupt politicians and has called for reforms in the country's political system. In 2015, he was a presidential candidate in Nigeria's general election, but he lost to Muhammadu Buhari. Despite this, Pastor Bakare continues to be a prominent voice in Nigerian politics, advocating for transparency and accountability. In 2018, Pastor Bakare launched the "Sovereign Assembly," a movement aimed at promoting good governance and fighting against corruption in Nigeria. The movement has attracted widespread support from Nigerians across the country, including politicians, business leaders, and ordinary citizens.

## **3. Jean Kambanda (Rwanda)**

Jean Kambanda is a Rwandan businessman and philanthropist who has made significant contributions to promoting economic development and political stability in Rwanda. He is the founder of the Kambanda Foundation, which provides financial support to entrepreneurs and promotes economic development through entrepreneurship. Kambanda has also been instrumental in promoting peace and stability in Rwanda through his philanthropic work. He has supported initiatives that promote reconciliation and rebuilding efforts after the Rwandan genocide. In 2019, Kambanda was awarded the prestigious African Business Leader Award for his contributions to business and philanthropy in Africa.

## **4. Mo Ibrahim (Sudan)**

Mo Ibrahim is a Sudanese-British businessman and philanthropist who has made significant contributions to promoting democracy and political stability in Africa. He is the founder of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, which provides financial support to entrepreneurs and promotes democracy through research and advocacy. Ibrahim has also been instrumental in promoting peace and stability in Sudan through his philanthropic work. He has supported initiatives that promote conflict resolution and reconciliation, which have helped to reduce violence and improve living standards in Sudan. In 2018, Ibrahim was awarded the prestigious African Business Leader Award for his contributions to business and philanthropy in Africa.

## **5. Femi Okunuga (Nigeria)**

Femi Okunuga is a Nigerian businessman and philanthropist who has made significant contributions to promoting education and healthcare in Nigeria. He is the founder of the Femi Okunuga Foundation, which provides financial support to underprivileged children and provides healthcare services to marginalized communities. Okunuga has also been instrumental in promoting peace and stability in Nigeria through his philanthropic work. He has supported initiatives that promote conflict resolution and reconciliation, which have helped to reduce violence and improve living standards in Nigeria. In 2018, Okunuga was awarded the prestigious African Business Leader Award for his contributions to business and philanthropy in Africa.

## **6. Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor (Nigeria)**

Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor is a Nigerian pastor and televangelist who is the founder of the Word of Life Bible Church. He is also a former president of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), one of the largest Christian organizations in Nigeria. During his tenure as CAN president, Pastor Oritsejafor was a vocal critic of corrupt politicians and advocated for peaceful resolution of conflicts in Nigeria. He was also instrumental in promoting dialogue between different ethnic groups and religions in Nigeria.

## **7. Kofi Annan (Ghana)**

Kofi Annan, a Ghanaian diplomat and philanthropist, was the former Secretary-General of the United Nations. He was instrumental in promoting peace and stability in Africa through his humanitarian work. Annan was the founder



of the Kofi Annan Foundation, which focuses on promoting peace, reconciliation, and human rights. He also played a key role in the formation of the African Union's Peace and Security Council. In 2018, Annan was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to promote peace and stability in Africa. His work has had a significant impact on political stability in Africa, particularly in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda, where he has played a key role in mediating conflicts and promoting peace agreements.

Another prominent Christian philanthropist is Bishop David Oyedepo, the founder of the Living Faith Church Worldwide. Through his church's foundation, he has been supporting various initiatives aimed at promoting education, healthcare, and economic empowerment. The impact of Evangelist Isaac Omoleyin's orphanage home on Nigeria's stability cannot be overstated. His efforts have inspired others to follow his lead, creating a ripple effect of kindness and compassion that has spread across the country.

Thus, in Nigeria, several Christian organizations have been playing a vital role in promoting political stability. For example, the Evangelical Association for Development (EAD) provides humanitarian aid and development assistance to marginalized communities. EAD has worked with local churches to provide aid to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and has advocated for policy changes to address the root causes of displacement.

## Challenges and Limitations

Despite their significant contributions to promoting political stability in Nigeria, Christian philanthropists face several challenges and limitations. One major challenge is the limited resources available to them. Many Christian philanthropic organizations rely heavily on donations from abroad, which can be unpredictable and uncertain. Another challenge is the politicization of religion in Nigeria. Some Christian leaders have been accused of using their faith to promote political agendas, which can exacerbate existing tensions and divisions.

## Conclusion

This research demonstrates that Christian philanthropists have been instrumental in promoting political stability in Nigeria, contributing to a more peaceful and prosperous society. Their selfless acts of kindness, generosity, and compassion have mitigated conflict drivers, fostered a culture of tolerance, and supported democratic institutions. As Nigeria continues to navigate political challenges, the critical role of Christian philanthropists in promoting peace and stability must be recognized and supported.

## Recommendations

To further enhance the impact of Christian philanthropy on promoting political stability in Nigeria:

1. **Increase funding:** Governments, international organizations, and private donors should increase funding for Christian philanthropic organizations working on peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives.
2. **Strengthen partnerships:** Christian philanthropic organizations should strengthen partnerships with local churches and community groups to ensure that their initiatives are more effective and sustainable.
3. **Promote dialogue:** Christian leaders should promote dialogue between conflicting parties and encourage peaceful resolution of conflicts.
4. **Advocate for policy changes:** Christian philanthropic organizations should continue to advocate for policy changes that promote social justice and human rights.

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