

**THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF
MIGRATION AND REFUGEE CRISES IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The study reviewed some incidences of migration and refugee crises in Nigeria and the role that the Church plays in relieving the suffering of the victims of these crises. Migration and refugee crises in this study are involuntary displacement of people from their homes to other unintended vicinities for want of safety and survival. Most times these crises are caused by natural and man-made disasters such as floods, wars, insurgency, to mention but a few. These calamities ipso facto have rendered communities, towns, villages, and cities devastated, and their inhabitants dispersed and made homeless, abject, and their lives threatened. The paper aimed at investigating how the Christian Church in Nigeria has, in the recent past, encountered these crises, and to challenge the Church to be better informed and equipped to improve on this soul-saving scheme by adopting methods and approaches that could combat, minimize or eradicate where possible, the causative factors of some of these disasters and their effects on victims. The study adopted an investigative approach. It revealed that the Christian Church in Nigeria was not fully committed to solving migration and refugee crises in Nigeria, in the recent past, and there were scanty publications or news on her activities on migrants and refugees. Recommendations are made to Christian Church leaders to educate and

encourage their Church members on the importance of caring for migrants and refugees, and to publish such activities in the media.

Key Words: The Church, Mitigating, Migration, Refugee, Crises.

Introduction

Joseph A. Yaro from a hindsight averred that migration in the pre-colonial West Africa ensued essentially in a quest for “security, new land that is safe for settlement and fertile for farming.” The change in focus came as the colonial government destroyed that spur and contents of migration as understood by Africans, and brought in mixtures of “economic structures” imposition of taxes, and creation of territorial boundaries (3).

The surging trend of migration and refugee crises in recent times has become a global phenomenon and concern. For instance, the World Affairs Council reports that, “one in every 122 humans globally is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum. If this were the population of a country, it would be the world’s 24th biggest.” It also avers that, the global record of July 18, 2015 of people compulsorily displaced at the end of 2014 rose astoundingly to 59.5 million in comparison to 51.2 million in 2013 and 37.5 million ten years previously. Insightfully, a historic consideration reveals there was no hike of migration and refugee movement in 2005, but it started accelerating because of successions of skirmishes; for example, the onslaught of the United States invasion of Iraq could be cited as one of those early causes. Mid way in 2015, the population of refugee and internally displaced persons had mounted up to more than 60 million persons. The happenings in Burma, Syria, Iraq, and Columbia contributed to 22.9 million displaced persons (5).

Africa is one of the notable continents with numerous conflicts, in especially Central Africa Republic, South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo and so forth, and has contributed in forcing displacement totals in 2014, “on a scale only marginally lower than middle East” (7). Nigeria’s numerical growth of displaced persons has been on its ascendancy beginning from 2014 with 1 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs); out of this number, Boko Haram insurgency in Northern Nigeria has generated up to 975,300 (8). An estimate of IDPs presented by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) stood at 2,152,000 as of December 31, 2015. This figure, though, according to IDMC requires an up-date.

Babatunde Adedibu identified the 21st century with a new phase of migration trends which has led to weird diversification of “cultures, ethnicities, social and religious idiosyncrasies” globally. For him, all the crises ranging from economic, political, social and religious in the Middle East, North Africa, and Africa that have taken place in the last sixty years (1960-2016) are major causes of the multiple migration of many nations to the

heterogeneous economies of the world, namely, Europe and America. He sees migration as a “worldwide, multi-directional phenomenon which is re-shaping the Christian landscape” (263, 265).

Borrowing from the idea of Adedibu, the current proposal for the establishment of cattle colonies in all States in Nigeria is looming and impregnated with migration and refugee tendencies and crises that will hyperactively diversify cultures, ethnicities, social and religious landmarks in Nigeria, if not properly managed, especially as migration is multi-directional in nature and purpose. The proposal for cattle colonies in Nigeria includes solicitation for intra-migration and inter-migration of a particular tribe to occupy where there are available grazing lands in the country. Simply put, intra-migration will involve Nigerians from one tribe moving from their present destinations to occupy other places within the same country, while inter-migration connotes that this same nomadic tribe in the Diaspora leaves their geographical locations outside the country and troops in to occupy territories in Nigeria.

Migration and refugee crises, in this study, is not limited to occurrences among the nationals in Nigeria. Migration in this work incorporates national and foreign migrants in Nigeria. Many erudite articles and journals have been written on migration and refugee crises as a body of information that revealed causes of migration and the consequent menaces exerted on migrants and IDPs in Nigeria. In these write-ups, more often than not, the effects of migration crises in the nation are often blamed on colonial masters, nature, and humans. Much has been written about government initiatives and those of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in combating these crises. There are scanty researches on the Christian Church’s impact in the Nigeria situation. This observation, having been reached by a search through the internet, has posed the need to call for scholarly studies to unravel what role the Christian Church has played in alleviating the sufferings of migrants and refugees in Nigeria, which is the essence of this paper.

The broad objective of this research is to investigate the extent to which the Christian Church has gone in the work of assuaging the sufferings of migrants and refugees in Nigeria. The specific objective is to study the causes and effects of migration and refugee crises, and to investigate possible ways that factors causing migration and refugee crises could be curbed or assuaged. The study is hoped to draw attention to the value of the life of a human being and the certainty of accountability to God in the way human beings take care of the destitute. The paper provides a conceptual clarification of some concepts of some of the subjects in the study. The research made use of books and online news materials, articles and related journals, which served as the secondary source. The study was a survey of the participation of the Church in combating the effects of refugee and migration crises.

Conceptual Clarification

There are principally five key concepts that need to be analyzed in this paper, namely, the Church, mitigation, migration, refugee and crises. **The Church:** in this study "the Church" refers to the Christian Church, the Christian religious body. This excludes the use of the appellation "Church" by certain New Religious Movement groups, such as Eckankar, et cetera, when identifying themselves, but are not constituent members of the Christian Church. The word "Church" in this study has a variety of meanings. James H. Smylie's definition considers "the Church" in a broad sense to stand for "a variety of relationships, ranging from that of a group of Christians professing a particular creed to the whole body of the faithful, either in the practice of their faith or in their dealing with the state" (696). The perspective of the Church in this study is "the whole body of the faithful, either in the practice of their faith or in their dealing with the state," in this case, it is the whole of the Christian Church in Nigeria. However, where "a group of Christians professing a particular creed," is referred to, it is done inclusively under the big umbrella of the Christian Church, in such a case the name of the Church group or denomination and its contribution(s) will be indicated. The World Council of Churches' (WCC's) report on Nigeria averred that:

In Nigeria, the Christian Churches are organized into five distinct groups namely the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria; Christian Council of Nigeria; Organization of African Instituted Churches; the Evangelical Church of West Africa (TEKAN/ECWA), and the Christian Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, who make up the membership of the Christian Association of Nigeria, an umbrella body representing all Christians.

It should be inferred that the World Council of Churches does not constitute all Christian denominations in the world, and so it is with its branch in Nigeria. The American Patriot Friends Network (APFN) reveals that, the World Council of Churches "is not itself a Church" but an ecumenical movement, "fully committed to the creation of a new society based on socialistic principles and deceitfully" called "The Kingdom of God". However, what is avidly projected in the Council's website is that, it is "a worldwide fellowship of Churches seeking unity, a common witness and Christian service". This study, however, is not based on denominational memberships of the World Council of Churches but on the Christian Church in Nigeria.

According to the Pew Research Centre, "Nigeria is sub-Sahara Africa's most populous country and is the home to the region's largest Christian population." It also estimated Christian population to be up to 80,510,000. The Christian Church in Nigeria is not under one roof and denomination. It is proliferated into sub-groupings. The study considers the

Church as a conglomeration of individual Christian denominations or organized Church groups under one umbrella name. Therefore, relevant activities of available individual Church groups were also utilized in this study.

Refugee: Bill Frelick asserted that the term "refugee," when considered in a broader sense, is popularly understood to include "persons fleeing war, civil strife, famine, or environmental disaster." The history of refugee as to when it came into existence is said to be a fall out of the experience of 30 million people displaced because of the Second World War. At first, in 1943, a United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was formed to take care of the situation, and in 1947 International Refugee Organization (IRO) took over this function. This development has become a global phenomenon. The definition of who a refugee is was almost misrepresented to refer to only migrants in Europe who had fled as a result of events prior to 1951, except for the reactions of those in developed countries who saw the definition to be exclusive and inadequate, especially as it did include "the many reasons people flee their homelands to seek protection elsewhere.

Therefore, to remove this limitation, the OAU adopted a broader definition in 1969." It includes "refugees" as " persons compelled to leave their places of habitual residence because of external aggression, foreign occupation or domination, or events seriously disturbing public order. In this study, a refugee is one who has left his home (as a national) or country (as a foreigner) involuntarily because of war, flood, and any life-threatening incident for a place of safety. The United Nation Refugee Agency (UNHCR) defines a refugee as:

[S]omeone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries. Article 1 A. 2 of the 1951 Geneva Convention, and additional procedure of 1957, in international law perspective, defines a refugee as someone who:

[O]wing to a well-found fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership, in a particular social group or political opinion, is outside a country of his nationality and is unable, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside of the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

Migration: is simply movement. In this study, we are dealing with human migration or movement. According to Michael Shally Jensen, there are both "internal and

international" movements or migrations. Migration is so classified depending on the forces causing the movements. Within each type of movement, "the migrants are either innovative or conservative." Innovative migrants are those who move from their environment wishing to "achieve something new"; they are explorative, while conservative migrants expect "to retain their way of life by moving from an environment that has changed;" anything may cause the change. However, "when the inducement to migrate is an ecological push such as the exhaustion of natural resources or famine, or when a group abandons its home land voluntarily under the pressure of enemies, the migration is called primitive." Conservative migration is said to be the oldest "type of human migration and represents the process by which all the land areas except Antarctica became populated" (98, 99).

Amnesty International defines a migrant as one who:

[M]oves from one country to another, often to find work. There may also be other reasons such as wanting to join relatives, or to escape natural disasters. Some move because they want to, while others feel forced to leave because of poverty or other serious problems. People can migrate 'regularly', which means they have official permission to stay in a country, or 'irregularly', meaning they are yet to obtain permission to stay in a country. Whatever their status, all migrants are entitled to have their human rights protected.

Migration in this study is precisely the movement of an involuntary migrant or emigrant from home (in the case of a national) or from his country (in the case of a foreigner).

The impact of migration on involuntary migrants and the refugees as they leave their countries or homes and when they arrive at the place of safety is also the concern of this study. Mitigation in this study refers to the process of alleviating or ameliorating the burdens or the effects of the calamities that ensue as a result of hardship, difficulty on the refugee or migrant—be it psychological, physical, spiritual—in order to lessen the suffering of involuntary refugees and migrants in Nigeria.

Crises: in this study refer to life-threatening conditions, difficulties and hardship that come to people to dislocate their normal life experiences. Crises vary in kind and include displacements caused by wars, insurgency, disputes and persecutions, floods, drought, epidemic diseases, and other natural disasters. Those who are victims are prone to desert their homes and run for safety to places they may either remain for quite sometime before going back to their homes or decide to remain in their newly found place of safety if the reasons for their departure are not ameliorated.

Causes of Migration and Refugee Crises in Nigeria

According to Gen. Muhammadu Buhari in 2004, "since independence in 1960, Nigeria has gone through many crises including a bloody civil war that lasted from 1967 to 1970, and cost nearly a million lives, with the attendant destruction, hunger, disease and massive population movements." That war gave Nigerians a foretaste of what refugee crises

entail. Kingdom E. Orji and Uebari Samuel explained further that the history of the first recognized case of refugee in Nigeria after independence was that which emanated as a result of the first military coup d'état in the country's political era; the coup d'état took place on 15th January, 1966. It was a military coup d'état which claimed the lives of many Nigerians "and forced about 2,200 to migrate across the Nigeria-Bénin Border to neighbouring Bénin Republic for security and safety purposes."

While this first military coup d'état caused Nigerians to emigrate outside the country, the counter coup of July 1966, intended to be a retaliatory one, was a "bestial massacre of thousands of southern Nigerians" who lived in Zaria, Kano, Gusau, Funtua and Sokoto in August and September 1966, it caused a flux of migration between September and October, 1966, "a mass movement of people from the north to the south, particularly to the east and mid-west. Over one million displaced persons were evacuated from the north to the south during this period of only one month. Of these figures, there were 12,000 refugee railway employees alone."

Apart from the Nigerian civil war, A.O. Alabi reveals that between 1977 and 2010 there had been fifty religious crises in Nigeria, besides Niger Delta crises which he tagged, "resource-based crises." There were other crises between Muslims and Christians, one Muslim sect with another sect, and the 1997 Ife-Modakeke crises, the Arogbu Ijaw-Ugbo Ilaje crises of 1999, Aguleri-Umuleri communal crises of 1999-2000 (312). The World Council of Churches asserts that "violence between Muslims and Christians has occurred frequently, especially in the northern states which have established Sharia' law, but also in the south." Nigeria is really a frontier of crises. There were flood cases in the delta region and in other places. Each of these crises naturally would cause displacement of people from their homes and, consequently, would be forced to look for safety elsewhere. All these incidents posed the challenge of migration and refugee crises in the country.

Isah Mohammed Abbass, surveyed the structure of Nigeria's rural economy and concluded that the epicentre of crisis in Nigeria's rural areas basically includes "productivity, food shortages, particularly for the urban parasites, and dwindled per capita income which, no doubt, manifest a serious crisis of poverty, apathy and despair within the rural communities." He postulated that, no one would doubt the fact that poverty is phenomenal in Nigeria in spite the country's endowed oil and other mineral resources. However, he observed that, the emergence of oil has narrowed the gap which existed between the urban and rural areas creating urban bias, especially as Nigerians have looked unto the petroleum industry as the only viable source of survival.

With the concept of mono-economy in the psyche of almost every Nigerian, the country's economy is now politically-characterized and directed by public policies. Before the

exaltation of oil economy in Nigeria, the country was predominantly rural. However, when oil boom arrived “the privileged” few in urban areas, apart from wage earners, grappled with such gains that accrued from oil and enticed those who were in rural areas with oil extravaganza thereby creating a mass exodus from the rural areas to the urban areas. The nature of rural crisis in Nigeria has climaxed to the extent that peasants now find it difficult to produce enough for personal subsistence, let alone for commercial purposes. The result of this decline in rural areas is “food shortage, lower productivity, lower income, and increased poverty” as the mainstay of rural economies.

Oduwale Tajudeen A. and Fadeyi Adebayo O. researched on the causes of frequent occurrences of displacement in Nigeria, and found out that foremost among them is natural disasters such as flooding or soil erosion. Other causes are periodic internal conflicts and indiscriminate violence since the end of military rule and the return of democracy in 1999. The organized spread of inequality which characterizes Nigeria as a nation has plunged the country into a crisis-endemic milieu. Abiding multiplicity of languages, religions, culture and social consortiums in Nigeria keeps the country unstable, yet with enlarged displaced inhabitants. Other causes of conflict include quarrels over ownership of “land, kinship, cultural, residual citizenship and a broader question of identity”. Identities play a great role in “shaping the political and social arena in Nigeria both during colonial and post-colonial times” In the British colonial era in Nigeria, “religious, ethnic and regional differences were given prominence, which eventually exacerbated divisions between Muslims and Christians, northerners and southerners, and Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo groups.” Such dissimilarities which have taken prominence, particularly, to the extent of demarcating indigenous and ethnic locations, was manipulated after independence to form instruments for political objectives.

Another factor which causes migration and refugee crises in Nigeria is insurgency. Kabiru Mohammed Badau avowed that, by the year 2014, Boko Haram insurgency had rendered “large number of the population of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States as refugees in camps all over Yola South Local Government Area of Adamawa State. Most of the refugees were from seven Local Governments of the three states - Gwoza, Madagali, Michika, Gombi, Hong, Mubi North and Mubi South.” Boko Haram is the worst of all the factors which cause the largest displacements in Nigeria in recent times. Boko Haram sect, which started in 2002, has posed a lot of security threats in Nigeria. It is purported to be a jihadist militant organization that had rooted itself in northeastern Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad, whose foundational members were from Borno and Yobe States. The activities are evident in northeastern Nigeria.

The Effect of Migration and Refugee Crises in Nigeria

Edith Ochuko Amrevurayire and Vincent Nduka Ojeh deliberated on the consequences of rural-urban migration on the source region of Ughievwen Clan in Delta State of Nigeria, and asserted that migration to urban areas exerts pressure on local government authorities due to government's inability to adequately respond to the social needs of migrants and refugees of urban populations. He sighted some of those indices which usually generate pressure on government to include: inability to provide appropriate housing, causing the government to resort to informal or improvised housing, as formal housing requires much funding for a population of migrants and refugees. Health and development challenges constitute other tasks, with such accompanying necessities of life, such as water supply, sanitation and health services including HIV services. Shortage of food supply is another negative impact. Young adults are noted for eating large quantities of food because of their growing tendency. The migrants and refugees constitute nuisance and heightened burdens to farmers.

The farmer has to cover larger areas of farmland with extra assistance, work for longer hours which divest him of divergent social activities. Worst still is the reality of undeveloped agriculture, which is disdained by many because of poor turnover, has caused many farmers in rural areas to resort to petty trading. Other negative impacts are seen in the quality of rural life, especially when feeding of migrants and refugees in the city is reflected on. Migration of young adults from the rural areas also placed a greater burden on the farmers. For farmers to cover the same areas of land as when they had extra assistance, they must work for much longer hours, thus depriving themselves of some leisure time or participation in different social activities. Some able men have abandoned farming for petty trading.

It is pertinent to avoid a lopsided view on the effects of migration and refugee crises. While it evident that the care of emigrants, migrants, refugees and displaced persons is paramount in this study, there are rippling effects of these crises. Grace Atim postulated that impacts of refugees can be seen on the host countries, as there is always an insinuation of spill over outcomes on border states and host communities. Economic burden in the host community will be inevitably affected, as the need for humanitarian assistance hikes. It is also clear on the one hand, that while it is expected that aids of different sorts be administered to refugees, it is also evident, on the other hand, that the presence of refugees or migrants in a community creates negative public health hazards on the community and country as a whole. A country's facilities are shared between the citizenry and the refugees, thereby causing a dearth in economic resources at the expense or disadvantage of children and women, especially those of child bearing ages.

The Role of the Church in Mitigating Migration and Refugee Crises in Nigeria

Refugee High Way considering a global response to refugee crises presented the testimony of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in December 2012 as quoted in “What the Church Can Do: Response to the Global Refugees Crises,” constitutes a challenge to the Christian Church on their participation in refugee mitigation: Since coming to UNHCR, I have visited refugees and internally-displaced persons in dozens of countries. Listening to their stories and witnessing their daily struggle in exile or displacement, I quickly understood that, for the vast majority of uprooted people, there are few things as powerful as their faith in helping them cope with fear, loss, separation, and destitution. Faith is also central to hope and resilience. Religion very often is key in enabling refugees to overcome their trauma, to make sense of their loss and to rebuild their lives from nothing. Worship and religious traditions help uprooted people reconfirm their identity as individuals and as members of a community. Faith provides a form of personal and collective support among victims. That is crucial for their ability to recover from conflict and flight. As such, faith contributes much more than many people think to the protection and well-being of refugees ... and eventually to finding durable solutions.

It also revealed that getting informed about refugee and migration realities is the first step to be taken by the Church and her leadership and the faith community. The leaders in turn will have to educate their congregations concerning the way people are forcefully displaced in today’s world. For example, Bible narratives in the first book of the Bible, Genesis, show that Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, and the last book, Revelation, indicates that John was deported to the Island of Patmos, and there are other such accounts on the pages of the Bible. Available sources or media that will facilitate the education of the Church include current refugee related news and updates from International Association for Refugees.

It added that a survey of the needs of newly arrived migrants, immigrants and refugees should include: “temporary shelter and safe living space, basic food items, climate, appropriate clothings and footwear, local transportation, and communication with loved ones from whom they are separated.” The needs are such that the Church can help refugees improve their livelihoods. Some of these needs the Church can provide, while others can be secured by the Church for refugees through refugee agencies. In addition to the provision of physical needs, refugees and migrants have also psychological needs, which the Church should include in their plans. They include, “coping with loss, recovery of hope, making new friendships, finding and integrating into the local community in their land of refuge, and opportunities to make meaningful contributions to society.” The admonition of Jesus Christ in Matthew 25:35-36 is a guide to the Christian Church as a biblical perspective for the care of refugees and migrants: “I was hungry and you gave me

something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me; I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you came to visit me". The Christian Church in Nigeria seems not to have got here yet; it is a projection for her to follow.

Prince Charles Dickson asserted that:

It is faith that helps sustain the mental and physical health of refugees on their harrowing journey, and faith-based humanitarian groups that are a major source of aid and comfort, research shows. Religious communities also have the ability to not only influence the moral culture of individual nations, but can be an effective voice in summoning a global sense of urgency. The moral imperative is clear.

Researcher Christine Goodall in Prince Charles Dickson avowed that, findings concerning the manner in which faith organizations practically become support systems to IDPs is essential to understanding what religious platform the work is done, and that it all depends on "individual faith, and conviction to act as leaders, motivators and innovators." For example, Pete Baklinski reported that on April 25, 2017, Cardinal Robert Sarah of the Roman Catholic Church, in "LifeSiteNews," said in a warning that, "the Church would ignore the "real crisis" she faces today if she focuses on social justice issues rather than her basic mission to evangelize." And, again, that "the Church is gravely mistaken as to the nature of the real crisis if she thinks that her essential mission is to offer solutions to all the political problems relating to justice, peace, poverty, the reception of migrants, etc., while neglecting evangelization." Cardinal Sarah meant that, the Roman Catholic Church "cannot disassociate herself from these human problems;" she will ultimately "fail in her mission" if she forgets her real purpose," which is evangelization, with a focus on the Great Commission and mandate of Matthew 28:19, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Sarah reiterated the opinion of Yahya Pallavicini, a Catholic turned Muslim, when he said:

If the Church, with the obsession she has today, with the values of justice, social rights and the struggle against poverty, ends up as a result by forgetting her contemplative soul, she will fail in her mission and she will be abandoned by a great many of her faithful, owing to the fact that they will no longer recognize in her what constitutes her specific mission.

However, the position of the Roman Catholic Church as regard refugee and migration crises is perceived in the highlights of Pope Francis as advanced by Pete Baklinski, "[t]he Pope's emphasis on building bridges, not walls, on calling migrants, "not a danger," and

on calling hospitality to refugees. “Our Greatest Security Against Hateful Acts Of Terrorism” has prompted some bishops’ conferences to shift their priorities.”

Sasa Milosevic and Prince Charles Dickson published in October 12, 2015 that, Pope Francis issued a call for “every parish, every religious community, every monastery, every sanctuary of Europe” to take in refugee families. However, this call was directed to the Roman Catholics in Europe. The Christian Churches in Nigeria should take a lift from this call and join hands with these Christians in Europe to initiate caring for the refugees and migrants in Nigeria.

Babatunde Adedibu considered an introverted disposition by the African Pentecostal Churches in London against Europe’s migration crisis by tracing in retrospect the history of migration from the time of Jesus Christ on earth, the apostles and the early Church fathers to back up his view that, “migration has always been part of the Christian narratives whether Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox or Pentecostal; it is not just a contemporary phenomenon but a major identity of the Christian faith.” Adedibu’s major thesis in his study is “an interpretative framework” of Luke 10:29, which explores the “non-response of African Pentecostal Churches in London to Europe’s migration crisis. It also scrutinizes “the biblical motif of who is thy neighbour and its implications in the intercultural engagement of these Churches about the membership of these Churches who are predominantly Africans” as against the willingness and readiness of English Churches to welcome refugees, as a “meaningful and substantial response to the scale of human suffering” that is glaring on daily basis.

The African Pentecostal Churches acted like the Priest, Levite in the narrative of Luke 10:29 by allowing the disdained attitude of homeland of the refugees and migrants to affect their Christian virtue, while the English Churches acted like the Good Samaritan. Adedibu’s study is an encouragement against unwholesome attitude toward refugees and migrants in their crises in Europe, and not migration and refugee situation in Nigeria.

The Episcopal Migration Ministries and its network of local affiliates were reported to have received over 3,000 refugees and 900 Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) from 34 countries in 30 communities in their 26 bishoprics in 2017. The Episcopal Church in Europe had organized refugee reception format which were exhibited as soon as these refugees arrived their places of safety or “their new communities.” Those accepted as refugees were given free care services which included: “hospitality and assistance from professional affiliate staff and from the hundreds of generous Church volunteers who welcome the strangers through this ministry each year.” This report does indicate the place of reception and when these activities started, but it is clear that there is already an established Episcopal Migration Ministries with its local affiliates. As to whether Nigerian Episcopal Church is a part of this arrangement, is not clearly stated in this article. The

Church in Nigeria needs to learn from foreign missions how to explore caring for migrants and refugees. In this regard, Rich Warren asserts:

We can learn principles. As the old cliché says, 'methods are many, principles are few; methods change often; principles never do.' If a principle is biblical, I believe, it is transcultural. It will work anywhere. It's wise to learn and apply principles from watching how God is working around the world (68).

Coping Strategies for Migrants and Refugees

Refugee and migrants need coping measures in their present conditions, having left home. Chris Sugden looked at the duration of migrants and refugees at IDPs camps in spite of most international aid for refugees for sustaining them. He opined that the average life of a refugee in a camp is 11 years and the life of a squatter is 24 years. Leaving home is a whole lot of problems for refugees and migrants. Dickson suggested “respect for religious beliefs” as one of the coping measures. Migrants and refugees need “to be a part of a comprehensive strategy for assisting refugees, from the actions of governments and aid organizations to doctors and mental health counsellors seeking to strengthen coping mechanisms that promote optimism and physical care and reduce trauma and depression.” He averred that a study conducted among asylum-seekers in Serbia, indicated that about nine persons among 10 suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder; two-thirds had anxiety; and more three-quarters experienced depression. Nevertheless, the study also showed that belief in God to lead them through their difficulties was a source of solace—a philosophical concept from the essence of religious rituals in addition to social support networks of other believers around them. These patients regained hope and optimism to cope with their conditions.

Human beings are vulnerable to diseases and stress. Consideration for emergency attention for migrants and refugees at first contact or as they escape threats to life cannot be over emphasized as a necessary requirement. Regina Phelps stressed that, “healthcare facility managers face emergencies every single day.” Though this is almost a global phenomenon, the report is not about the Christian Church in Nigeria. Emergencies vary in sizes. “The issues facing healthcare are diverse and broad: Zika virus, Legionella growth and spread in buildings, power outages, flooding, severe weather, facility patient evacuations, and active shooters, just to name a few.” Vaccination may be required for migrants and refugees to keep them healthy before taking them to IDPs camp. There are also different kinds of emergencies, namely: “routine” emergency and “crisis” emergency. By “routine” it simply, “refers to the relative predictability of the situation that permits advanced preparation.” Crisis emergency is much more demanding, and it constitutes the following characteristics:

The threat has never been encountered before; therefore, there are no plans to manage it. It may be a familiar event; however, it is occurring at unprecedented

speed; therefore, developing an appropriate response is severely challenging. There may be a confluence of forces which, while not new individually, in combination, pose unique challenges to the response.

What this study encourages is simply emergency response activities in the country to save the lives of migrants and refugees or even victims of floods and other natural disasters, even before they are headed to IDPs camps. In some developed countries, helicopters are used for life-saving and transfer of victims to safety locations. Should the Christian Church in Nigeria be actively involved and equipped in arresting crises in Nigeria, there would be the need to go into providing coping strategies.

How to Control Migration and Refugee Crises

GVG (GESELLSCHAFT FÜR VERSICHERUNGSWISSENSCHAFT UND- STALTUNG E.V.), carried out a study to find out if social protection can reduce push factors for migration. Four countries were considered for detailed analysis, namely: Albania, Iraq, Nigeria and Pakistan. It was discovered that:

[E]conomic despondency, extreme poverty, malnutrition, infectious diseases and inequalities among the country's regions are push factors for migration in Nigeria. In the future, population growth will only reinforce these push factors, especially for the young, who represent a large proportion of the population. Social protection in Nigeria is characterized by a substantial lack of coverage, poor financing and administration, corruption, and, consequently, a lack of trust in government.

The research held that should the German government have a grip of the social protection of these countries, it would make contributions that will diminish migration causing forces in these countries. The suggested measures which German government features as solutions are "the institutional reform of social protection systems, enhancing the accountability and reliability of social services, expanding social protection coverage and improving social protection as an alternative to migration." So long as the situations remain the way they are, it is not feasible for migrants to return home. However, if functional social protection system is established and social security is accessed, the migrants will return home. The study on this perspective concluded that, "social protection needs to be recognized as a stand-alone sector that brings about sustainable long-term development and has great potential for counteracting the causes of flight and migration." For a country to practically reduce the threats posed by migration crises, it should incorporate social protection in her development policies, *prima facie*. Other items along this line are adoption of "supporting economic growth, expanding social protection and providing financial assistance to deprived areas." Social protection and coverage are provided by government, but the Christian Church can mediate and convince government

to act in favour of the poor and the vulnerable who are actually the target group. This activity is minimally-performed by the Christian Church in Nigeria.

Prince Charles Dickson asserted that one of the ways to control and reduce migration and refugee crises is to protect religious freedom. He meant that, “the fears that civil unrest will cross borders with massive influxes of refugees is real. However, the temptation to respond by imposing restrictions on minority religions only leads to greater conflict and violence, extensive research finds.” Therefore, the most acceptable approach is to use generous aids to meet not only the benevolent needs of refugees, but also to address the root causes of conflict in their homelands. It is best also to promote understanding. For example, the use of media and cultural displays to depict ethnic and religious groups with violence and extremism should be avoided. “In a global study of religiously motivated violence, Pennsylvania State University’s researchers found that social restrictions on religion, even more than government restrictions, held the most direct and powerful relationship with conflict and violence.” There is a call to express love and concern toward migrants and refugees without discrimination.

Chris Sugden, on discussing the fate of the children of refugees and migrants, opined that there is a dire need to provide education “for children in camps to be commensurate with what they would otherwise be receiving. Without education, they will themselves become vulnerable to radicalisation.” This is an evangelistic opportunity and also an avenue for unity; nevertheless, the Christian Church in Nigeria has not yet fully tapped into it.

Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, in *Christianity Today*, saw the crisis in northern Nigeria in the name of religion as crisis not of faith but of power. In his opinion, creation of “egalitarian society in which the Constitution is the supreme law of the land and in which ordinary citizens can enjoy their rights without any discrimination,” can control crises that have caused migration in Nigeria. There is the dire need of coexistence among Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. Kukah suggested the establishment of “more spaces for young people to interact--especially at the college level--mutual trust among Christians and Muslims can be built up.” And one of such ways is an avenue where Muslim and Christian children, accept one another as equal citizens and do everything to obliterate their religious bigotry that has been inculcated into the fabric of religious Nigerians.

Conclusion

Whereas it is obvious that migration and refugee crises have come to be a global phenomenon, it is also obvious that government of this world has not been able to proffer solutions to eradicate these crises. In Nigeria, for instance, the number of refugees and migrants increases by the day as a result of insurgency, wars, natural disaster, and persecution as a result of religious bigotry.

The research aimed at studying the role the Christian Church has put up for ameliorating or mitigating the effects of migration and refugee crises in Nigeria. Record of incidents of crises in Nigeria abounds, especially as the study looked into occurrences of crises from the time of the Nigerian Civil War. Christianity in Nigeria is in the centre of the crises itself. There were scanty reports of the role of Christianity in Nigeria in mitigating or ameliorating the effects of migration and refugee crises. However, there are available records of activities of the Christian Church outside Nigeria as a significant initiative in saving suffering humanity.

The study also considered the causes of migration and refugee crises, effects of migration and refugee crises, coping strategies for migrants and refugees, and how to control migration and refugee crises. The study poses the challenge that the Christian Church in Nigeria has a lot to offer in this initiative, especially as it involves lifesaving and evangelism within the context of the Great Commission of Christ in Matthew 28:19-20: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Recommendations

1. Church leaders in Nigeria should educate their Church members on the importance of caring for migrants and refugees.
2. The Church in Nigeria should come together and contribute both human and material resources with well-drawn plans to curb the effects of refugee and migration crises.
3. The Church should join hands with government and NGOs to combat causes of migration and refugee crises.
4. The activities of Christian Churches should be publicised in journals, articles and newspapers as reference sources.
5. The study on the role of the Christian Church has a significant initiative to save life in this millennium, and should attract more researches from scholars in Nigeria, as there are seemingly scanty efforts in this direction.

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