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## Evaluating the Role of the Christian Association of Nigeria in Addressing the Socio-economic Problems of Nigeria

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### Abstract:

*This work examined the role the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has played over the years in dealing with societal problems in Nigeria. Needed information was obtained from textbooks, journals and documents of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). Also, internet materials related to the topic were used. Findings show that: The formation of Christian Association of Nigeria was borne out of the need for a united action of the church in dealing with societal problems. The Christian Association of Nigeria has since inception made remarkable efforts in dealing with societal problems such as healthcare, education, unemployment and poverty. CAN has therefore, played and is still playing the role expected of the church in the present-day Nigeria. The paper recommends among others that CAN should collaborate with other organizations in Nigeria for the betterment of the society.*

**Keywords:** Socio-economic, problems, Christian, Association, Nigeria

### 1. Introduction

Nigerians, Christians and non-Christians alike, are besieged by various problems that make life miserable and impede national development, attainment of democracy, and national unity. The problems in Nigeria are multi-dimensional -social, economic, political and religious, they include diseases, education, poverty, unemployment, corruption, and religious crises. The yearning of every good citizen of Nigeria is the attainment of a better socio-economic and political situation. The international community and Nigerians themselves are concerned about the destiny of Nigeria. Various efforts to address the numerous problems that the Nigerian people face have been made by both government and non-governmental organizations.

The church in Nigeria, beginning with the missionaries and various church institutions, has been a significant part of this effort. However, the active involvement of the church in politics is taken for granted in Nigeria. Every government programme or activity is usually influenced or affected by religious considerations. While the church in Nigeria has never been without a voice and has always made significant progress in addressing the problems in the country, not many people acknowledge the worthiness of her contributions to the betterment of social, economic and political conditions of the country. It is the effort that the Christian Association of Nigeria has made over the years to respond to the socio-economic problems in Nigeria that this work seeks to examine.

### 2. An Overview of the Formation of Christian Association of Nigeria

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) is an Association of Christian Churches with distinct identities, recognizable Church structures and system of worship of one God in the Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the largest Ecumenical Body ever established in Nigeria and indeed Africa (<http://cannigeria.org/about-us/>). Prior to the formation of the Christian Association of Nigeria in 1976, complaints and voices were coming from churches, Christian organizations, individual Christians, and other religious bodies, in response to government policies and activities. The government treated the church as a divided house. The incident that became the immediate cause of the formation of the Christian Association of Nigeria was the experience of Christian leaders in a meeting summoned by the then Chief of Staff, Brigadier Musa Yar'adua in Lagos on August 27, 1976. The meeting was attended by 33 church leaders from 13 denominations. The denominations represented according to Enwerem (1995:79) include Roman Catholics, Methodists, Baptists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, the Salvation Army, the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, the Apostolic Church, United African Methodists, the Evangelical Churches of West Africa, the Church of Christ in Nigeria and TEKAN churches.

There was no opening prayer in the meeting. The Chief of Staff read his address which touched on many vital religious and political issues. The main issue seemed to be the new national pledge. The government wanted to know the view of the church on the pledge designed to be recited in schools with the aim of instilling religious and political values in the Nigerian Youth (Enwerem 1995:76). The meeting lasted for about forty minutes and the government expected to hear the view of the church later. After the chief of staff's address, he declared the meeting closed. One of the Christian leaders suggested that the meeting be closed with prayer. But the chief of staff cleverly and sarcastically told him that there were many Christian denominations represented and so he did not know which one to ask to pray. Then another Christian leader told him that he could ask anyone to pray, which he did.

This incident made Christian leaders to realize how they were perceived by the Muslims and the government. It also made them to think on the effect of this on the Christians in the country. The Christian leaders therefore decided to see that something was done urgently to reverse the ugly perception. When the Christian leaders went to the Catholic Secretariat to discuss issues raised by the chief of staff, the issue of Christian unity became prominent. According to Grissen (1995:95) during this meeting, a member asked, "See what has happened, why don't we have unity as the Muslims have? Why don't we have a united forum? Aren't we united?" This led to the decision of the Christian leaders to form a national Christian body without much argument. Enwerem (1995:81) quoted the observation concerning the Lagos meeting, of one time General Secretary of CAN Mr. C.O. Williams, thus; The Holy Spirit had another plan...The church leaders were destined to be founders of a very important Association which by the grace of God will ultimately bring together into one-fold all those who claim the fatherhood of God through Jesus Christ... And so, what for many years appeared an impossibility– the coming together of Roman Catholics and different shades of protestants– became under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, a simple spontaneous, and effortless achievement.

To finalize and come up with the exact name of the association, another meeting was held on 7th – 8th September, 1976. This meeting discussed mainly the issue of the name, Constitution and election of pioneer officials of the association. A sub-committee was set up to come up with a name. Many names were presented for consideration. The committee presented two names to the general meeting – the Christian Association of Nigeria and Inter-denominational Christian Association of Nigeria. At the end the name Christian Association of Nigeria was adopted. The founders of CAN made it clear that the association should never become a church. The meeting also adopted a provisional constitution and elected officers. Positions were shared among churches or church groups. The first president was His Eminence, Dominic Cardinal Ekanden, while Rev. Habila Aleyideno was the vice-president. The general secretary was Rev. Dr. Adegbite and J.N. Ogbonna was elected treasurer (Enwerem, 1995:83). CAN was officially inaugurated in 1980.

### 3. Objectives of the Christian Association of Nigeria

The objectives of the Christian Association of Nigeria deal with issues of Christian unity, social relations among different people in Nigeria, its role to its member churches, and duty to the nation at large. The four objectives of CAN as contained in the 2004 constitution are:

1. To serve as a basis of the response to the unity of the church, especially as contained in our Lord's pastoral prayer: That they all may be one (John 17:21).
2. To promote understanding, peace and unity among the various people and strata of society in Nigeria, through the propagation of the gospel.
3. To act as a liaison committee, by means of which its member churches can consult together and when necessary, make common statement and take common actions.
4. To act as a watchman of the spiritual and moral welfare of the nation.

From the first objective, CAN considers itself a body fulfilling a spiritual role of bringing all Christians in Nigeria together as was the desire of our Lord. This prayer is the motto of CAN. CAN recognizes Christian unity as an obligation for the church – a divine mandate. CAN's logo reflects this desired Christian unity. The logo which was designed through the efforts of Bishop G.G. Ganka of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Jos, has two circles enclosing the map of Nigeria. In between the circles is the name of the association and the motto. There is a map of Nigeria in the inner circle and an open Bible is placed at the center of the map with a cross in the background. CAN uses green as its colour. This green signifies that CAN wants to put new life in the dying Nigerian Society. The Logo is printed on CAN's letter head and other official documents.

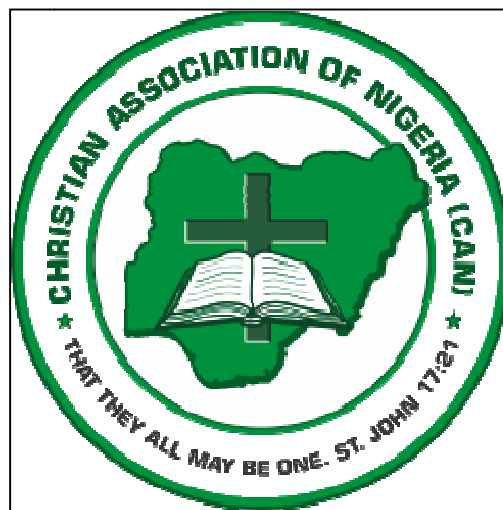


Figure 1: CAN's LOGO

Source: <http://canng.org/about-can>

The second objective expresses belief and summarizes the situation in Nigeria. In this, CAN acknowledges that Nigeria has the problem of understanding, peace and unity. The problem of understanding, peace and unity is not just among religious bodies but also

among the different ethnic groups and classes of people. There is a wide gap between the educated and the uneducated, the rich and the poor, the rural and the urban and between one political group and another. This wide gap also exists between different religious and ethnic groups. These problems bring about instability and lead to economic problems. CAN believes that the gospel is the only solution to these problems.

The third objective is more of the function of CAN. CAN is an umbrella organization of the churches in Nigeria. It brings churches together so as to discuss their problems and work together. It also speaks on behalf of Churches and represents churches in Nigeria and to the international community. CAN performs these functions through consultative forums, issuance of communiqués and press statements on national, state and local issues.

The fourth objective shows that CAN acknowledges that it has a duty to the whole nation. Nigeria is characterized by spiritual and moral decay. In this case, CAN is assuming a prophetic role of warning the nation. There is theft and armed robbery on our high ways, in banks, villages and urban areas. Corruption and embezzlement of public funds are found in government and private sectors. Different forms of social, economic, political and religious injustices are carried out openly by governments, institutions and individuals. The rate of poverty in Nigeria is so high today, while the national cake is in the hands of a few opportune individuals. CAN wants to address this endless list of societal problems in Nigeria.

#### 4. Socio- Economic Problems of Nigeria

##### 4.1. Health Care (HIV/AIDS)

The Human Immune Virus (HIV) is the virus that causes the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. AIDS is one of the most dreaded diseases in the world in recent times. There is much fear about the devastation this pandemic disease is going to cause because, no vaccine has been found to prevent it and no medicine has been discovered to cure it. The first two cases of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria were identified in 1985 and were reported in an international AIDS Conference in 1986. In 1987, the Nigerian health sector established the National AIDS Advisory Committee, which was shortly followed by the establishment of the National Expert Advisory Committee on AIDS (NEACA). In 1991, the Federal Ministry of health assessed Nigeria's AIDS situation. The result showed that around 1.8% of the population of Nigeria was infected with HIV. (<http://www.avert.org/aids-nigeria.htm>).

There are three main means for the transmission of HIV in Nigeria. They are: Heterosexual sex, Blood Transfusion and mother-child Transmission. (<http://www.avert.org/aids-nigeria.htm>)

1. Heterosexual sex: - Approximately 80-95 percent of HIV infections in Nigeria are a result of heterosexual sex. Factors contributing to this include a lack of information about sexual health and HIV, low levels of condom use. Women are particularly affected by HIV. In 2009, women accounted for 56% of all adults aged 15 and above living with the virus. Also, poverty and high level of unemployment have led to an increase in prostitution among young girls.

2. Blood transfusions – HIV transmission through unsafe blood accounts for the second largest source of HIV infection in Nigeria. Not all Nigerian hospitals have the technology to effectively screen blood and therefore, there is a risk of using contaminated blood.

3. Mother-child transmission: Each year babies are born with HIV. These babies became infected from their mothers.

A very high number of people are infected with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. A report by Federal Ministry of Health (2008) estimates that approximately 800 – 1,000 people die daily from HIV/AIDS related illnesses. A report in Guardian (2006) shows that 5.8% of the Nigerian population was infected in 2003, in 2004 the percentage dropped to 5 while in 2005 it dropped to 4.4%. Federal Ministry of Health (2008) projects 4.6% prevalence of HIV/AIDS and 2.98% million people living with HIV/AIDS in the country in 2009. This of course is a high number, and given the fact that accurate statistics are not Nigeria's strong point, it may be possible that there is more than the stated number of Nigerians living with HIV/AIDS.

Some factors are responsible for rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. Young women are involved in commercial sex for economic gain. The wealthy promise them a job or another privilege if they offer to have sex with them. Also, in Nigeria, poverty, hunger, idleness, unemployment, and other pressures of life compel many young persons to become commercial sex workers or get involved in illicit sexual activities. Many of the young people drawn into cities lose the restraint from their parents and get involved in things that lead them to AIDS infection. Agujiobi (2003) presented a glaring picture of why and how our young girls engage in commercial sex in our cities. According to Agujiobi (2003), in response to an interview, a commercial sex worker said:

The reason why we are into this business is not because we like it, it is dangerous. Anything can happen to you at any time. We are more than twenty young girls living here. Some came to work (prostitute) because they want money. Some because their parents died and have to train their brothers and sisters. Some use to leave school to come and work (prostitute). Some like the job (prostitution) because of enjoyment and some come to make money easily... p.13.

Another factor is the increased communal and religious crises. The crises create many refugee camps which bring all manner of people together and become hot spots for sexual activities. Also, many Nigerians refuse the use of condoms. Many churches fight against the distribution of condoms (Odittah, 2005). Lack of awareness on the mode of transmission of the disease makes things more difficult. Education and enlightenment on HIV/AIDS has not reached every part of the country. The tempo at which agencies spread the news about HIV/AIDS has also reduced in recent time.

The effects of HIV/ AIDS are obvious. Haruna and Taiwo (2005) quote former president Obasanjo as saying that "the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which is ravaging humanity, devastates, dislocates and distorts the individual, family, community and national plans and programmes" (p.8). AIDS affects the health condition of the individual rendering him in some cases incapable for farm or other forms of labour. The national budget is affected as government allocates funds for the fight of HIV/AIDS on yearly basis.

#### 4.2. Education

Christian missionaries have made so much effort to educate Nigerians. Despite such efforts illiteracy is still high in the country. Statistics show that “more than 50% of Nigerians are illiterate, one of the highest rates in Africa” (<http://www.nigeriatoday.com/basic-facts-about-nigeria.htm>). Illiteracy is higher among women and in the rural areas. Another disturbing problem of education in Nigeria is lack of a sound and functioning educational system. The instability of the Nigerian government has tremendously affected educational policies. This is because various governments keep changing education systems. For instance, Nigeria changed from 8-6-2-3 system, that is 8-year primary, 6 year secondary, 2-year Higher School Certificate and 3-year University to a new system of 6-5-2-3, that is 6-year primary, 5 year secondary, 2-year Higher School Certificate and 3-year university, in 1954. Also, the 1969 National Curriculum Conference recommended change in education system from 6-5-4 system to 6-3-3-4 system; that is 6-year primary, 3-year Junior Secondary, 3 year Senior secondary and 4-year University education (Odo et al, 2000). The introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) has led to the change of the system to 9-3-4 system of education. This system involves 9-year basic education, 3-year senior secondary school and 4-year university. “The present UBE programme was launched on 30th September, 1999” (Eya, 2001, p.217)

There is poor funding of education. This has led to serious infrastructural decay in our schools. Many primary and secondary schools have no learning facilities and few qualified teachers. In many public schools especially in rural areas, classes are held under trees, with no seats and books. There have been incessant strike actions due to government neglect, thus the academic year has been reduced to a few months, in-between there are numerous public holidays. Most teachers show little commitment to their job due to poor remuneration. In an attempt to demand basic amenities in the school, students often embark on protests and demonstrations. This affects the school year. Most classrooms are overcrowded, and in most cases, especially in higher institutions, students stand to receive lectures. One of the problems facing Nigerian University system is cultism. According to Teghtegh (2006) Society members fight rival gangs and prey upon professors and students who are not members. Secret societies have been blamed for rapes, extortion, assaults, and arson attacks, and are widely considered the most serious problem facing the Nigerian university system (p.11).

Also, Onyechere (2006) noted that “campus cults have become the most potent cause of insecurity in institutions of higher learning. It has elevated the challenges facing the average student to new and dangerous dimension” (p.15).

While some people have the opportunity to go to school, though under harsh human condition, others do not go to school at all due to lack of money for fees or lack of schools in their area. Many Muslims and rural Nigerians do not believe in the education of the girl child. This has led to high number of illiterate girls especially in Northern part of the country. Lack of job for school graduates has also discouraged many parents from sending their children to school. However, the rich who are connected with oil money send their children to overseas schools and pay for them in foreign currencies. At home, they send them to special elite nursery/primary, secondary schools and, universities, where school fees are too high for the common man. Such elite schools have all modern educational facilities like computers, video projectors, and well equipped libraries. Hence, education in Nigeria has continued to widen the gap between the rich and the poor.

Another sign of the decline of the Nigerian educational system is the ever-increasing examination malpractices. Examination malpractices are found at all levels, from elementary to tertiary level and even among politicians. Examination malpractices are found in class examinations as well as the First School Leaving Certificate Examination, Junior school Certificate Examination, Senior School Certificate Examination and the University Matriculation Examination. Examination fraud is perpetuated not only by students but involves parents, teachers, schools, invigilators, printing agencies and the society at large. Through examination fraud, people acquire certificates they did not work for. However, despite the increase in examination malpractice, there has been a high rate of failure in the core subjects of English and mathematics in national examinations such as those conducted by the National Examinations Council (NECO) and the West African Examination Council (WAEC), in recent time. For instance, report by Alli (2009) shows that according to the results released by WAEC and NECO for the 2009 Senior Secondary Examinations, there was a mass failure of candidates. Out of the 1,373,009 candidates who sat for the WAEC May/June Senior Secondary Examinations only 356,981 representing 25.99 percent got five credit passes and above in English, mathematics and at least three other subjects. Also, out of the 1,200,765 candidates who registered for the NECO May/June Senior Secondary Examinations, only 126,500 representing 10.7 percent scored five credits, including English and Mathematics. The presidency, shocked by the dismal performance, ordered a probe. This high rate of failure cannot be unconnected to inadequate preparation, due to inadequate teachers and poor facilities in schools.

#### 4.3. Poverty

Generally, most African countries struggle with poverty. Nigeria is not an exception. The level of poverty in Nigeria is so high that it reflects in malnutrition poor health, clothing, shelter, and lack of education. People have low standard of living. Many Nigerians are peasant farmers who employ manual labour to produce crops which earn them little income. In big cities like Lagos and Abuja many people cannot afford to rent a room or house so they sleep under overhead bridges, in motor parks, gas stations, and uncompleted buildings. In the day time, they roam the street scavenging through garbage heaps for food or clothes. Many people cannot access health care because of the financial involvement. Hence thousands of Nigerians die daily of curable diseases. It is unfortunate that many Nigerians are poor when the country is blessed with abundant natural resources. Ehusani (1996) noted that,

Nigeria has vast rich arable land for agriculture with a mild climate all year round for various crops. There are abundant water and forest resources. Fruits and vegetables, often naturally grown or cultivated, waste away as there is no preservation process. Many mineral resources are found in abundance and in high quality. Nigeria ranks seventh among oil producing countries and has an appreciable reservoir of natural gas, tin, coal, lime-stone, iron ore, niobium, lead and zinc (p.5).

The problem of Nigeria is not that of resources but that of bad leadership. Nigeria lacks good and people-oriented leadership that would give direction and create avenues for people to have access to the abundant wealth. Because of this benefits from the national resources have not been accessible to a good number of Nigerians. Poverty is a sign that many things have gone wrong with our social, economic, political and even religious systems. Class contrast is very sharp in Nigeria. While some live on the streets, under bridges and in the least developed parts of the country, others live in highly developed areas with the entire needed infrastructure, and this group turns to exploit the poor people. The attitudes of the rich are indications that poverty will likely continue in Nigeria for many more decades. The rich have monopolized education, dominated the work force, the business sector, policies and fight for policies that can only benefit their group.

The effects of poverty are enormous. It makes the idle unemployed to roam the streets and get involved in unwanted behaviours. It leads people to suppress their conscience and forget their moral obligations to the society. With little payment, the rich use them as organized thugs, hired assassins, and militia to fight political, ethnic and religious wars for their selfish interests. Poverty is responsible for the current massive prostitution among young women in Nigeria as well as increased armed robbery, cultic activities, the use of drugs as well as other related societal vices. Because of poverty, Nigeria is fast becoming a jungle of the survival of the fittest.

The Federal Government in 2001 established the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) as the primary agency of government to eradicate extreme poverty. According to Elumilade et al (2006) National Poverty Eradication Programme has been structured to integrate four sectoral schemes, namely; Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS), Social Welfare Service Scheme (SOWESS) and National Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS).

1. Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) – This is concerned with providing unemployed youth opportunities in skill acquisition, employment and wealth creation. To achieve this, the scheme was further subdivided into Capacity Acquisition Programme, Mandatory Attachment Programme and Credit Delivery Programme.
2. Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS). This deals with the provision and development of infrastructure needs in the areas of transport, energy, water and communication, especially in rural area.
3. Social Welfare Service Scheme (SOWESS) – This aims at ensuring the provision of basic social services, including quality primary and special education, strengthening the economic power of farmers, providing primary health care and so on.
4. Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS) – This seeks to promote participatory and sustainable development of agriculture, mineral and water resources.

#### 4.4. Unemployment

Unemployment is one of the developmental problems that face every developing economy in the 21st century. The situation of unemployment in Nigeria has been on the increase in recent times. For instance, according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2008:2) “at the end of 2008, and after almost four decades of earning petrol-dollars’ worth over 350 billion US Dollars, a large proportion of Nigeria’s population lack descent paying jobs and are impoverished.” The poor performance of the economy in providing gainful employment opportunities for a significant fraction of the working population is arguably one of the most striking manifestations of the socio-economic crises and development failure in Nigeria. From available statistics Nigeria has a very high unemployment rate when compared to other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. FRN (2008) noted that

Nigeria’s unemployment rate of over 11% is higher than the average rate of 9.5% for sub-Saharan Africa in 2004. The youths account for between 60 and 75% of the unemployed. The higher incidence of youth unemployment is as a result of their lack of sufficient work experience social contact and maturity. Unemployment has also increased among the tertiary graduates in Nigeria. This represents a negative social return on the massive investment of the Nigeria government on tertiary education. (p.5).

However, it is unfortunate that those who are hit hard by the unemployment situation in the country are young people from a relatively poor background. The children of the rich have job slots and spaces reserved for them in advance. They corner all juicy employment opportunities whether in public or private sector for their children and relatives.

This unemployment trend has a lot of negative effects on the country. The effects range from social unrest to all kinds of crime prevalent in our society today. Nwobodo (2010) cited Murphy (2008) as saying that,

---the increase in both frequency and intensity of bank robberies, is an outcome of unemployment and glaring social inequalities. The escalation of robberies despite the vigilances of the police, is as a result of social disregard for human life by the oppressed ... (p58).

Thus, the high incidence of crime in the society is attributable to the unbearable level of unemployment across the country. It is therefore clear that the rising incidence of lack of adequate and remunerative jobs for a large segment of the labour force, of which young people constitute the majority, is creating a social time bomb with potential adverse consequences for future social, economic and political development of the country.

To arrest the unemployment situation in the country, government at all levels has set up various agencies. The most prominent among them include; The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). However, “evaluation of the contributions of these programmes to youth employment has been at best marginal” (FRN, 2008: p.6). In most cases, beneficiaries of these programmes are selected through nepotism and “god-fatherism”.

### 5. Efforts of the Christian Association of Nigeria in Responding to Socio-Economic Problems of Nigeria

The Christian Association of Nigeria has taken bold and practical steps in dealing with some socio-economic problems in Nigeria. Adepeju (2006) noted that:

CAN believes in expressing Christian concern in service to people who suffer and have been victims of war or accident. Examples are, the Bomlast at Ikeja Cantonment in year 2003, where lives were lost and during the Bakassi riot. Relief materials and food were given to such victims by CAN. (p.108).

Also, CAN raises fund to help victims of religious violence. There is usually a Sunday set aside for a special offering for the victims. The money collected from the various states is given to CAN of the state affected by the violence for distribution to those churches involved. CAN also collects food items and clothes from member churches for those affected. In addition, CAN in cooperation of Voices of the Christian Martyrs, a non-governmental organization, has established centers in Jos, Kaduna and Kano, which help victims of religious violence with necessary skills and material things to start life (Ogbu, 2006). This of course is a practical approach to the solution of the problems of the Christians. Agha (nd) notes that the “church is called not only to preach the good news but also to feed the poor and shelter to the homeless...” (p.86).

HIV/AIDS has been a very big problem in the country. As HIV/AIDS began to affect members of the church, the church gradually realized that it could not just fold its arms and allow AIDS victims to suffer, but must get involved in the battle against this human enemy. Many churches within CAN have well established AIDS programmes and receive funding from overseas and international organizations. To respond to the pandemic aggressively, CAN has set up a national committee on HIV/AIDS. CAN encourages member churches to concentrate their efforts on prevention, care for people living with HIV/AIDS and orphans. The single biggest means of preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS is sexual abstinence before marriage and faithfulness within marriage. CAN promotes these practices and take a leading role in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS.

In caring for people with AIDS, CAN works toward developing new and better counseling techniques to deal with the dying and their survivors. It also develops programmes to help families involved in caring for the dying ones at home without infecting themselves. Another important work of CAN is developing programmes that focus on removing the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. CAN is developing new strategies of dealing with the problem of orphans in Nigeria (McCain, 2004).

Right from its inception in 1976, CAN has always felt very strongly, that a crucial part of its mission is to be the watch person of the type of education which our children are receiving from the various institutions of learning in Nigeria. For this reason, the very first memorandum, which the association presented to the Federal Government, contained a formidable chapter on education. What has been and still is a source of tremendous concern to CAN, is the very sharp decline in the spiritual, moral and academic standards of these great institutions of learning which were founded by the early Christian missionaries. As far as those pious founders were concerned, education without God is simply not education, for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

CAN believes very strongly, that as a sacred part of its mission if it is to continue to be a faithful watch person of the spiritual and moral welfare of our nation, CAN must ceaselessly call the attention of our Governments (federal and state) to the heinous and abominable sin committed through the destruction the Christian Schools and Colleges, which were being used to mould the minds and character of our children. CAN shall never be tired of warning the Government that until the Church is wooed back to rebuild the moral, spiritual and intellectual standards of those once great citadels of learning, unless the Church is called upon to repair her heritage which the Government takeover has wantonly and mischievously destroyed, one does not have to be a prophet to predict that the juvenile and adult delinquencies which we are now witnessing, will be child’s play to those malpractices which, God forbid, shall soon engulf Nigeria in an annihilating catastrophe.

CAN has fought relentlessly against the government takeover of schools and hospitals. In different communiqués, press conferences, and minutes, CAN condemned the takeover as an act of discrimination against Christians, a denial of the rights of the Christian parents and a main contributor to the moral decay of the nation. Onaiyekan (1991) noted that “the takeover lowered the standard of education but only affected the poor, because government officials and armed forces personnel had good schools and hospitals that catered for their needs” (p.1). In the communiqué of the 5th Assembly, CAN supported, endorsed, and applauded the action of some State governments that started returning schools and hospitals to churches and called on the other states to do same without delay. Examples of States that returned schools to churches are: Lagos, Delta, Anambra, Enugu and Ogun. Ebonyi State for instance, returned mission hospitals to the churches and even assisted them with funds. Through the actions of CAN life is gradually returning to our educational system and private universities are now being established by churches following Federal Government’s lifting of the ban on the establishment of private universities. Such private schools have been of good quality. However, it is still meant for the few rich ones, as the fees are usually high for the common man.

### 6. Recommendations

Having considered the socio-economic problems facing Nigeria and the responses of the Christian Association of Nigeria, the following recommendations are necessary:

1. CAN should establish hospitals to cater for the health needs of the poor masses in the country.
2. CAN should organize skills acquisition programmes for the training of unemployed youths. This will help in reducing the rate of unemployment in the country.
3. CAN should launch scholarship programmes for indigent students.
4. CAN should collaborate with other organizations in Nigeria such as the Civil Liberties Organization, Human Rights Monitor, and Human Rights Watch, for the betterment of the society.

5. To ensure a consolidated effort in the fight against HIV/AIDS, the Women and Youth wings of CAN should be encouraged to sensitize their members and the public on HIV/AIDS matters.
6. CAN's activities should be directed more to the rural areas. Any poverty alleviation programme that does not target the rural poor will achieve little.
7. CAN should urge the government to engage in policies that will lead to provision of jobs to engage the idle youths.

### 7. Conclusion

Societal ills and problems will not be solved by Christians deserting politics and avoiding participation in policy making processes. Socio-economic, political and religious problems can be surmounted through the church's participation in policy making, prayers, exemplary behaviour and non-conformist and uncompromising attitudes towards issues of injustice. Given the deplorable state of the Nigerian society, the battle against societal ills is not an easy one. CAN must be commended for taking proactive stance in dealing with the problems of the society. Also, CAN must not relent in her effort. It must speak boldly, powerfully, forcefully and concisely without fear or favour to the government and political elites on all matters affecting the Nigerian society.

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