

CHURCH AND THE CHALLENGES OF INSECURITY AND MIGRATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria is currently enmeshed in the crucible of affliction as she is being scourged by the twin challenges of insecurity and migration, which have stifled her socio-economic and political progress and made life generally difficult for her citizenry. It is regrettable as well as heartrending to note that these problems have persisted amid several containment efforts by governmental and non-governmental agents in the country. The church in Nigeria has been responding significantly to these challenges in her own way as she sees them as the bane of Nigeria's national development striving. This paper takes a look at the church as a religious institution in Nigeria and surveys cases of insecurity in Nigeria. It also looks at the causes and effects of insecurity in Nigeria, Government containment measures to challenges of insecurity and the effects of insecurity in Nigeria. A concise examination of the church's response to insecurity and migration in Nigeria, and challenges facing the church in Nigeria. The paper adopts a combination of historical, sociological and phenomenological methods to achieve its objectives. Finally, it concludes by stressing the need for all churches to emphasize more on Christian values of peace, love, fear of God, respect for the dignity of human persons and contentment rather than prosperity, as a way of achieving security and reduction of migration in Nigeria. The paper recommends, among others, that government should work in synergy with the church in the current fight against insecurity and the attendant migration in Nigeria.

Keywords: Challenges, Church, Insecurity, Migration, Religion, Troubled society

Introduction

The rate of insecurity and migration witnessed in Nigeria in recent times points clearly to the fact that all is not well with the country once reputed to be the giant of Africa. No nation entrapped in the sinister webs of insecurity and migration

makes significant and meaningful social, political, educational, technological and economic progress among the comity of nations. Insecurity makes environment hostile for human life and economic activities, stalls industrial production and discourages local and foreign direct investment (Adams, 2019). Migration robs the nation of her best brains, prestige, honour and integrity in the global political land space. As observed by Uneze-Amby and Obunadike, (2020), insecurity in Nigeria is fast becoming a wildfire irresistibly sweeping through the nooks and crannies of the country with alarming frequency and intensity. The incessant terrorist attacks of Boko Haram in the North East, armed banditry in the whole of northern region, farmer-herdsmen clashes, militancy in the Niger Delta region, insurgency, cultism, armed robbery, kidnapping and related security issues have made the government allocate huge budget to national security. This has continued to impinge on our national development.

Security is the bedrock upon which socio-economic stability, peace, unity and sustainable national development are built. It is the basis for national economic growth and development as various economic activities and government services go on without disruption (Enemuo& Eze, 2019). Security generally is about the condition of feeling safe from harm or danger, the defence, protection and preservation of lives and property of individuals (Danwi, Okonkwo, Amadi &Amabebe, 2019). According to Olandiran (2014) in Danwi et al (2019), security entails safety or freedom from danger, and protection from external attack or infiltration.

The present economic hardship and food crisis in Nigeria are traceable to the burgeoning insecurity cases in many parts of country, especially in the oil producing zone, industrial cities and food producing states like Benue, Ebonyi, Niger and most states of the North. Many industries, companies, firms have been closed down, many industrialists and farmers displaced and foreign investors ran back to their countries for fear of insecurity.

As most industrialists and farmers see themselves as possible targets of terrorists, they begin to migrate out of the location of insecurity and today, their migration is traced to foreign countries where safety and prospect of economic survival abound. These, migration include migration of displaced persons, people moving to other places in search of job opportunities, or for better life, migration of refugees and family reunification. Insecurity has festered, spreading its foul fragrance to every part of the nation, especially the northern region. It has led to displacement of many families, while a number of people have been turned to refugees. Reports from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

(2024) indicate that around 3.3 million people were living in internally displacement as a result of insecurity at the end of 2023, about half of them in Borno state. This was a slight decrease from 3.6 million reported in 2022. Nigeria is still among the ten countries with the largest number of IDPs globally. In the same vein the number of those migrating from Nigeria to neighbouring countries in Africa, Europe, Asia and America has continued to increase on daily basis as the push factors of migration, such as insecurity, bad economy, quest for better job conditions and lack of regard for human life have failed to receive adequate attention from the government.

No doubt, if the security and economic situations improve in Nigeria, majority of her citizens will not like to migrate to other countries either on temporary or permanent basis. They will all like to remain in their fatherland in order to contribute their various quotas to her socio-political, cultural, educational, technological and economic development.

The church in Nigeria has shown great concern about the above ugly scenario painted by insecurity and migration in Nigeria and kids' glove with which the government has been handling these challenges impinging on our national security, peace general wellbeing and national development. It worries the church that Nigeria is fast turning into jungle, and another Somalia, where crises and insecurity reign supreme. The church is the conscience of the unconscionable society, re-orienting and redirecting her to the path of morality, rationality, humanity, tranquility and security when all things seem to have fallen apart and the centre jolted into chaos. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to examine “Religion in a troubled society: A periscope of the church's response to challenges of insecurity and migration in Nigeria”.

Conceptual Clarifications

Religion

Religion is a complex phenomenon that is hardly amenable to one single definition. Multifarious definitions of the concept have been offered by different scholars based on their personal experiences and academic disciplines. Few of these definitions will help us have an insight about the purpose and essence of religion in human society. Tiarniya (2012) in Adediran, Adelegun & Atanda (2019), defines religion as a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles to ultimate problems of human life. According to MC Gee (1950) cited in Madumere, Awusaku and Onu (2020), religion is a set of actions organized around the sacred, that is, a non empirical source of power, transcendence, mystery and awe. Usman (1987) in Nwokoye (2006) sees

religion as the beliefs and practices of a people, be it an individual, a clan, village, state, continent or the world. The foundation of all religions is one as they all aimed at uniting mankind in one love and foster peaceful coexistence. All religions propagate faith in God as the creator of the universe, promote peace, harmony and tranquility in the society (Nwokoye, 2006).

Church

Church is a religious organization made up of those who share the belief that Christ is the son of God, sent to the world for redemption purpose. It is the gathering of Christians or followers of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who is believed to have died on the cross of Calvary in order to save mankind from sin and its consequences. The New Encyclopedia Britannica (2005) in Awusaku (2013) defines church as the Christian religious community as a whole or a body or organization of Christian believers. The church is described as the soul of the world saddled with a Universalist mission to hold the world together and transform the society (Elochukwu, 1989).

Insecurity

Insecurity is the exact opposite of security. It connotes the absence of security, safety, protection and certainty for future wellbeing. Insecurity is defined by Beland (2005) in Ojukwu and Amusa (2020) as a state of fear or anxiety due to absence or lack of protection. It connotes the state or quality of being insecure. According to Ojukwu and Ahaoma (2015) in Ojukwu and Amusa (2020), an insecure person perceives the world as a life threatening jungle, feels unsafe, unhappy, rejected, hostile and pessimistic, shows a sign of tension, conflict and guilt and tends to be neurotic and generally egocentric. Insecurity denotes a situation that is capable of causing apprehension in the lives of people both as an individual and as a community (Uchendu & Obiozo, 2020). Insecurity is similarly defined by Ogazie (2020) as the absence of safety, lack of protection, anxiety and fear of both the citizenry and the cause of underdevelopment of a country. Okeke (2014) sees insecurity as presupposing lack, anxiety, fear, uncertainty, instability and lack of protection. In summary, it is a situation where one is exposed to threats to life and dangerous circumstances.

Migration

Migration entails a change in location or movement of people from one location to another probably in search of better economic opportunities or safety. Garba and Ishaya (2023) define migration as the movement of people from one place to another destination within or outside the country. In the olden days, migration, especially within the country was the vehicle for uniting citizens of

different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as such migration afforded them the opportunity to exchange ideas, learn skills and technology. But today internal migration serves as an agent of conflict and insecurity in Nigeria. No time in the history of Nigeria had she witnessed the level of migration taken place among her national like now.

Aliome (2019) in his own perception, conceptualizes migration as involving the movement of people from one geographical location to another with the intention of settling temporarily or permanently in the new location. It is usually motivated by several factors such as famine, economic recession, war, environmental degradation, youths unemployment and restiveness, lack of security, lack of respect for the sanctity of human lives, human right abuses and absence of rule of law.

Religion and Religious Institutions in Human Society

Religion is anchored on the belief in the existence of a supreme God as the creator and sustainer of the entire universe. Religion is essentially a bipolar phenomenon. On the one end is man while on the other end is the transcendent being, God or the deity he believes to exist and which he worships (Omeregbe, 1993, in Adiele & Okereke, 2019). Religion thus denotes man's relationship with God or the supersensible beings (divine beings). It also unifies human beings or the worshipping community, fosters a sense of oneness and identity among them. Emile Durkheim in Adiele and Okereke (2019) in recognition of the relevance of religion and religious institutions in human society, defines religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite a people into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them.

Religion and religious institutions based on Durkheim definition are agents of social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in the society. Religious institutions work with the instrumentality of religious tenets, doctrines, teachings, ethical principles, norms and values to influence members of the society to live in tandem with divine and human laws in order to pave way for social harmony, justice and orderly society. They help individuals to develop God's consciousness as well as discover the meaning and purpose of life. Religion and religious institutions inculcate in people sense of value for honest, responsible and godly lifestyle. They instill in people respect for life and dignity of human persons and the need to contribute to societal growth and general wellbeing. Religious institutions exist to check the spread of evils, atrocities, corruption and practice that are inimical to human peace, happiness and fulfilled

existence in the society. According to Osoba (2007) in Adediran, Adelegun and Atanda (2019) religion gives people a way of understanding the world in which they live. It teaches us what is right and what is evil, what is just and unjust, virtue and vices and so on. It is aimed at alleviation of human sufferings and the establishment of just and egalitarian society.

The Church as a Religious Institution in Nigeria

The church is a religious institution with a divine mandate to work for the spiritual, moral and holistic wellbeing of its members in particular and the entire society in general. The church presents Jesus Christ as a model of excellence which every member of the society should emulate. Like other religious institutions in Nigeria, she works assiduously for the common good of all and moral transformation of the society. It is the mouth piece in the society marginalized and the downtrodden in the society. The church is an institution committed to the correction of societal ills through its ethical teachings, doctrines and counseling services. It is the character moulder and moral transformer whose role occupies a place of preeminence in Nigeria's socio-political economic and general scheme of things.

The church emphasizes good moral character, good works, honesty, integrity in conduct, transparency, accountability, credibility, reliability, mercy, goodness, uprightness, kindness, humanity and dutifulness as fundamental aspects of its gospel ethics. The church sees the need to inculcate the above values in both adherents and the people of Nigeria as its primary obligation (Awusaku, 2013).

The church cooperates with the state to provide certain important social services for the citizens or members of the society. Iwuagwu (1998) in Awusaku (2013, p 308) corroborates the above when he remarks thus:

From the beginning, the mission church realized that after proclamation of the good news, it has to serve the social needs of people. For the society needs education, good health, employment, food, skills and means of earning their livelihood. On account of this, the church within its resources must continue to assist the civil government in the provision of some important social services. That is why the church serves in education, health care delivery, agriculture and vocational training.

Survey of Cases of Insecurity in Nigeria

Insecurity has been a hydra-headed issue plaguing the country. It ranges from attacks by dreaded Islamic Jihadist group Boko-Haram, Islamic States of West Africa Province (ISWAP), militant groups, ethnic militia, armed robbers, kidnappers to herders farmers clashes, among others. Another source of insecurity in Nigeria is religious crisis or fanaticism. The earliest crisis that threatened Nigeria security in the early 1980s was rooted in religious fanaticism. The Maitatsine crises which occurred in parts of Kano and Maiduguri in the early 1980s claimed many lives and properties worth millions of naira. In 1984, another religious crisis erupted in Jimeta Yola, Zango Kataf in Kaduna in 1992. Muslim-Christian clash during a Christian procession at eastern in Ilorin, Kwara state in 1986, violent clash between the Yoruba traditional worshippers and Hausa groups in Ondo and Ogun states in 1999; the Gombe Sharia violence of 2000 which reportedly claimed 609 lives and 1944 houses destroyed, a total of 746 vehicles and about 123 churches and 55 mosques were set ablaze (Madumere, Awusaku & Onu, 2020).

Insecurity took a different twist with the emergence of Boko-Haram Islamic fundamentalist group in 2002. They started with suicide bombing of churches, mosques, government establishments, police stations and military barracks. They also unleashed terror on innocent citizens, denying people the right of exercising their natural and legal freedom of movement due to fear of being attacked, particularly in Northern parts of Nigeria (Aguocha & Odocha, 2014). Over 700 persons were killed and 3500 persons displaced in Bauchi, Yobe, Kano and Borno states from 26 – 30 July, 2009), victims of which were mainly Christians (Madumere, Awusaku & Onu, 2020). Similarly, in Jos Boko-Haram attack of 2009, about 550 persons were reported killed, while over 40,000 persons were displaced (Onuekwusi, Igbokwe & Anene, 2012). In 2014, there was bomb explosion near Eagle Square Abuja which claimed lives of 12 persons and left many other people injured. In Kaduna state, 24 persons lost their lives and 130 persons injured in an attack launched by the Boko-Haram in 2012 on Christ the King Catholic Church, Evangelical; Church of West Africa and Shalom Church Trikania. These Boko-Haram attacks have continued unabatedly till today. Thousands of people lost their lives in the Boko-Haram bloody attacks between 2013 and 2017. Boko Haram since this period has become the incubus tormenting Nigeria's security and peace given its partnership with the Al-Qaedaian Islamic terrorist sect, which made its operation to assume terrifying dimensions (Madumere, Awusaku & Onu, 2020).

Reports by the United Nations (2024) reveals that more than 1,680 school children have been abducted while at school and elsewhere in the last ten years; 180 children have been killed due to attacks on schools, an estimated 60 school staff kidnapped and 14 killed and more than 70 different attacks on schools. In 2014, the Boko Haram insurgent group first abducted 276 students from a girls' secondary school in Chibok local government area in Borno state. On March, 2024 bandits invaded a primary and secondary school in Kuriga community in Chikum L.G.A of Kaduna and kidnapped 287 school children (The cable news, 2024).

Reports from International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR) (2024) indicate that over 5,000 Nigerians have been killed in first 7 months of Tinubu's regime, over 7,000 killed in 10 months. It goes on to report that at least 2,336 people were killed in various violent attacks within the first three months of 2024. Zamfara state recorded 439 deaths, Borno state, 437 deaths, Katsina 362 and Benue 221. In the whole of southeast in general 102 deaths were recorded, south-south recorded 131 deaths and South West, 53 deaths.

Besides the above, armed robbers and kidnappers have been on the rampage in the entire south-eastern states, hardly could any day pass without blood-curdling reports of someone kidnapped or robbed in the region. It is indeed regrettable that all these are happening aimed various security network set up by both federal and state governments in our country.

Causes and Effects of Insecurity in Nigeria

A lot of factors responsible for the soaring rate of insecurity in Nigeria. Briggs (2019) identified among others, militancy, unchecked herdsmen activities, ethno-religious crisis, corruption, weak institutions, impunity and non-adherence to the requirements of the law, as the causes of insecurity and factors that enhance instability in Nigeria.

Militants who operate in the Niger Delta where petroleum exploration by different oil companies goes on make life insecure in the zone through various acts of terrorism which they unleash on innocent citizens and oil companies. Proceeds from the sale of crude oil in the international market are the major source of revenue for Nigeria government who left the Niger Delta zone relatively underdeveloped. It is the alleged marginalization, exploitation, destruction of the ecosystem, means of livelihood and non-inclusion in government by the inhabitants that led to the emergence of different militant groups among the people, who now engage in all manner of atrocities including

bombing of oil installations, vandalization of oil pipelines, kidnappings of oil workers for ransom, piracy and so on, which make the area very insecure (Briggs, 2019).

Unregulated activities of Hausa/Fulani herdsmen in many parts of Nigeria have worsened the problem of insecurity in the country. They are lawless, violent, and engage the indigenous people into clash, especially farmers. These herders kill, main destroy houses and church and confiscate lands and properties of indigenous people, making life in that environment very unsafe (Briggs, 2019). Ethnic and religious differences and the desire to project one's ethnicity and religion above other people's ethnicity and religion, particularly between Muslim and Christians and between the various tribes in the country have been behind the many ethnic and religious conflicts that have occurred in Nigeria (Briggs, 2019). Corruption, according to Briggs (2019) has negatively impacted every sector of the Nigerian economy, political structure, social institutions, and her security architecture, making them ineffective and non-functional. Almost all institutions in Nigeria are adjudged to be weak, including the judiciary, law enforcement agents, and people take advantage of their weakness to commit crimes, terrorism, and banditry, and render the country insecure (Briggs, 2019). There is a culture of impunity and flagrant disregard of laws and order by citizens in Nigeria. Those who perpetrate crimes do so with the belief that nothing will be done to them (Briggs, 2019).

Porous Borders: Porous borders have been identified by Aliome (2019) as a serious issues in Nigeria national security. The influx of criminals and arms through the country's porous borders has resulted to an alarming increase in the rate of insecurity in Nigeria. According to Adamson (2006) in Aliome (2019), it is estimated that during the dry season, there are more than 10,000 unmanned routes through which trans-border criminals troop in and out of Nigeria at will. Mass unemployment and widespread poverty have been identified as causal agents of insecurity in Nigeria. Many youths in Nigeria are jobless, and many graduates, too, are unemployed and as a result find it extremely difficult to eke out a living. Their unemployment and poor conditions make them susceptible to being recruited as Boko Haram insurgents in the North, militants in the South-South, OPC in the South-West and IPOB in the South-east, through which they can vent their anger on the government and be paid for it.

Insecurity has negative effects on people's lives, and on our national peace, unity, economy and international relations. Many lives of schools children and innocent Nigerians have been washed by Boko Haram terrorists. According

to UNICEF, cited in Uneze-Amby, Ononogbo&Obunadike (2020), 2,295 teachers were killed by Boko Haram between 2009 and 2017. Insecurity instills fear in people and makes them avoid public gatherings and even absent themselves from work. It leads to economic loss, and a decline in industrial productivity as frequent attacks make the environment hostile for human life and economic activities discourage local and foreign direct investments (Adams, 2019).

Government Containment Measures to Challenges of Insecurity

The Nigerian government has continued to show serious concern over the problem of insecurity in the country through various means at its disposal. The government has increased national budget for security. The government was said to have spent 1 trillion naira to fight insecurity in six months (January – June, 2014). There has been increase in the number of security agents (Military, Police, Civil Defence personnel) in the areas where insecurity is too hot such as Northern region where Boko Haram and bandits are on the rampage, in the south east where Biafra agitators are raging and in the Niger Delta made insecure by militants (Oluwadara, 2024).

The government has begun to emphasize on border control to reduce infiltration of criminal elements, firearms, hard drugs, and so on from our porous borders. The number of customs and immigration personnel stationed on the borders has been stepped up to this effect. The federal and state governments together have begun to encourage and give support to local or community vigilantes to enable them to check the activities of hoodlums in our various communities.

Migration as one of the Effects of Insecurity in Nigeria

Insecurity in Nigeria which has reached its alarming stage has led to the displacement and migration of many affected individuals to neighbouring states, countries that share common boundaries with Nigeria such as Niger, Chad, Republic of Benin and Cameroun, while others migrate to Europe, Asia and United States of America in search of better economic or job opportunities and safety. The current net migration rate for Nigeria in 2024 is -0.267 per 1000 population, a 2.2% decline in 2023. The net migration rate for Nigeria in 2023 was -0.273 per 1000 population, a 2.5% decline from 2022 which was -0.280 per 1000 population, a 2.78% decline from 2021. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Brimoh (2021) noted that West African countries emerged as key transit points for illicit drugs, particularly cocaine, from Latin America through countries to Europe. This is evidence that West African borders

are porous and not well secured against infiltration of drug-traffickers and other criminal migrants who make the region susceptible to terrorist activities. Brimoh (2021) further observes that migration is unbridled in West African region. Migration has led to emerging security challenges in the region.

A Concise Examination of the Church's Response to Insecurity and Migration in Nigeria

The church as the agent of God for social, moral, economic, political and all round change in society has evinced tremendous concern over the state of Nigeria nation in recent times. It is the contention of the church that the challenges facing the nation, particularly insecurity and migration should not be left for the government alone but that all hands should be on the desk to ensure a rapid and lasting solution. The church has repeatedly blamed government for its failure to tackle the problems from their roots but has rather scratched them on the surface without meaningful results.

The church through her understanding of transcendental and temporal issues decided to give the challenges of insecurity and migration a holistic approach, given their persistent and recurrent nature in Nigeria society. This approach involves among others, inculcation of the fear of God, emphasis on the sanctity of human life, promotion of peaceful harmonious coexistence, teaching on forgiveness and tolerance of people of different faith, education of the conscience of citizens on security consciousness, educational services, provision of jobs for unemployed youths, establishment of skills acquisition centres, partnering with the government on community policing, offering useful advice to government on security related matters, constructive criticism of government policies, inculcation of patriotism.

The church inculcates the fear of God in people through its moral teachings and gospel preaching. The church sees insecurity as the product of human moral depravity propelled by a lack of fear of God. It is the belief of the church that human beings and every aspect of the social order need transformation through the inculcation of God's consciousness in them in order to behave and act well in all situations and circumstances (Awusaku, 2013). The implication of the above is that those who have fear of God will not engage in any act of terrorism, armed robbery, ritual killings, kidnapping or wanton destruction of life and properties of their fellow citizens.

The church also emphasizes sanctity of human life. The church sees man as the image of God (Imago Dei) and his life sacred and therefore should not be

destroyed for whatever reason. The church condemns the wanton destruction of human lives by terrorist attacks as an abominable act that will attract the wrath of God on perpetrators. The church through her ethical teaching, help individuals to discover God's meaning for life (Yaro, 2019).

The church also promotes peaceful and harmonious coexistence among people in the society. Peace, love, unity and social harmony are among the cardinal ethical teachings of the church in every human society today. The church sees peace as the last and greatest gift Jesus Christ offered the world prior to his ascension to heaven. The church through the gospel of peace and harmony condemns and opposes practices and actions capable of engendering violence, social disorder, oppression and insecurity in the society (Awusaku, 2013).

The church equally teaches people the need to forgive and tolerate people of different faith. The church fight against ethno-religious crisis as one of the factors that spark off insecurity in Nigeria through her teaching on forgiveness and tolerance of people of different faith. Togetherness makes tolerance and reconciliation of broken relationship with people other faiths, especially in time of provocation, possible (Awusaku, 2013).

The church educates the conscience of citizens on security issues: The church educates members and non-members alike on the need to be vigilant and sober at all times and never to take the enemy for granted or underestimate his capability of unleashing terror at any moment, drawing scriptural reference from 1 Peter 5 Vs 8.

The church also renders educational services. The church provides educational services for members of the society to compliment those of the government. Education is seen as the means of transforming the youths who are drawn in the vortex of insecurity and migration today. Most churches in Nigeria provide qualitative pre-nursery, nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary educational services to the masses at affordable cost. There are about 38 universities owned by churches and Christian ministries in Nigeria today (Newman, 2023).

The church also provides jobs for unemployed youths. The church fight insecurity and migration today through the provision of jobs for jobless youths who out of poverty caused by joblessness become instrument for perpetration of insecurity and other forms of criminal activities, such as armed robbery, kidnappings, cyber crimes, cultism, insurgency and militancy among others. Church owned schools, printing press, radio and television stations, business

centres, transportation units, supermarkets, bookshops, guest houses and so on engage the services of large number of youths in Nigeria and ultimately improve their living standard.

The church engages in establishment of skills acquisition centres to help indigent members of the society. Many youths who would have been victims of migration and agents of terrorist acts have been graciously provided with opportunity to acquire bread-baking skills by churches and Christians ministries. Such skills include tailoring, fashion and designing, soap making, computer programming and repairs, GSM repairs, printing and publication, interior decoration, confectionaries and so on.

The church does not blench in partnering with the government on community policing. The church partners with the state and local government authorities, to ensure security of lives and properties of the people in the communities where they operate. They also provide support to community vigilante groups to ensure effective and well coordinated security network in their host communities.

Similarly, the church equally offers useful advice to the government on security related matters. No church in the northern part of Nigeria, south-west, south-east or south-south will like to be a victim of attack by terrorists, ethnic militia, kidnappers or cultists, hence they don't relent in offering useful advices as well as providing relevant information that will aid the government in providing security to the host communities.

The church offers constructive criticisms on government policies. The church constructively criticizes various government policies that are unpopular, anti-people and misdirected, especially those related to national security and immigration. Example, the Catholic Bishop of Nigeria on August 2023 criticized the present government approach to national security as well as its decision to mobilize ECOWAS forces against the Republic of Niger coupists (Vatican News, 2023).

The church is strongly committed to inculcation of patriotism in citizens. The church helps to cultivate in citizens increased awareness and spirit of national consciousness and patriotism to show interest in working for Nigerian development, peace and unity and to defend her territorial boundaries and national interest (Yaro, 2019).

Challenges Facing the Church in Nigeria

The church in Nigeria is faced with a galaxy of challenges which impinge on its capacity to respond effectively to the challenges of insecurity and migration in Nigeria in recent times. These challenges include among others;

- Internal and inter-church conflicts
- Materialism
- Societal influence
- Double standards
- Targets of attacks by Boko Haram insurgents, bandits and kidnappers
- Political influence
- Financial constraints

Internal and Inter-Church Conflicts: today, there is a lot of internal turbulence in most churches in Nigeria. This ranges from infightings, fight for positions, disagreement on methods of church administration etc. There are also inter-church conflict hampering efficiency and commitment of most churches to service delivery. As observed by (Amaowoh, 2021) the church today is no longer one, but a fragment body with one denomination opposing the other.

Materialism: The present day Nigerian churches have become more engrossed in worldly affairs, such as excess love for money, acquisition of wealth by all means, and all forms of corrupt practices and fraud just to align with the moving trends in the society. Some are fully into occultism just to pull crowd, not for the salvation of their souls but to exploit them financially (Amaowoh, 2021).

Societal Influence: One cannot longer distinguish easily the difference between some things happening in most church and the things found in the large society.

Double Standard: Some churches do not practice what they preach or teach. They preach fear of God, holiness, uprightness and transparency but practice cruelty, corruption, partiality, nepotism and dishonesty.

Targets of Attacks by Boko Haram Insurgents, bandits and Kidnappers: The fact they have become targets of attacks by agents of insecurity today sends fearful signals to most church clerics, who now operate in fear, secretly sometimes, with distraction and anxiety.

Political Influence: Some church clerics have been influenced unduly by Nigerian politicians who now use them as political prophets, prayerwarriors,

spokes persons and campaign agents in time of electioneering campaigns. These clerics because of their affiliation with politicians and indirect involvement in political waves of the nation, can hardly condemn evil and inhuman practices going on in the society, especially those being perpetrated by politicians and government agents.

Financial Constraints: Some churches lack funds to effectively finance most of their projects and activities that are meant for both spiritual and natural wellbeing of their members and the entire society in general.

Conclusion

No matter what might be the challenges facing churches in contemporary society, the church remains a monumental force in the nation's fight against insecurity, migration and other forms of social ills in the society today. The problem of insecurity and migration have become so rooted in our country that its solution requires a holistic and multifaceted approach by both government, non-government organizations (NGOs) and the church. Joint efforts are also required by both government NGOs, churches and well meaning Nigerians so as to show the menacing challenges insecurity and migration the way out of our dear nation. Besides, there is the need for all churches to emphasize more on Christian values of peace, love, fear of God, respect for the dignity of human persons and contentment rather than on prosperity as a way of achieving security and reduction of migration in Nigeria.

Recommendation

Based on challenges and issues examine in the paper, the following suggestions are made:

- The government should work in synergy with the church in the current fight against insecurity and the attendant migration in Nigeria.
- The government should provide jobs for the teeming number of unemployed youths in Nigeria.
- Effective border control system should be employed by the government to check migration of criminal elements into the country.
- There is the need for the government to support some of the life-transforming programmes of some churches in Nigeria, such as scholarship to indigent youths, skills acquisition programmes, and moral re-orientation programmes for the youths, to make them more effective.
- The church should shun materialism and worldliness and begin to preach sound gospel that is rooted in love, fear of God, respect for the dignity of

- human persons and self control.
- Churches should ensure that they operate in unity as one body of Christ and not to allow internal strife and inter-church wrangling to weaken them in their services to God and humanity.

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