NEW HORIZON IN CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: A CASE OF THE REDEEMED CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF GOD'S CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

By

Osamolu Titilayo Fehintolu
Department of Christian Religious Studies,
FCT College of Education, Zuba-Abuja.

John Atuluku, Ph.D
Department of Christian Religious Studies,
FCT College of Education, Zuba-Abuja.

And

Yusufu Blessing Eleojo, Ph.D
Department of Christian Religious Studies,
FCT College of Education, Zuba-Abuja.

Abstract

This Paper examined the corporate social responsibility interventions of the Redeemed Christian Church of God and its impact on the Nigerian society. In recent times it is evident that the Church has gone beyond the narrow confines of the wellbeing of its members to embrace the larger society. To meet up with its concern for the larger society, it has created agencies and arms involved in various aspects of developmental needs spanning various sectors such as education, health, housing, care for the poor, conscience formation, as well as other social and political needs. The RCCG in Nigeria has made contributions to religion and allied fields. The major challenge which has affected meaningful development in Nigeria has been traced to corruption, insecurity, communal crises among others. These problems are responsible for the nation woes and set-backs in the nation’s development. Consequently, it has posed a threat to the corporate existence of all Nigerians. Government and corporate organizations have sort for various ways to solve these problems, without achieving the desired result. It is in view of the above that the RCCG has decided to address some of these problems as part of its Christian Social Responsibility. For this Paper, the historical and phenomenological research methods were used. Findings of this research show that the RCCG has contributed
immensely to the educational, political, socio-economic, moral, cultural and religious spheres of this country. The purpose of all the innovations by the RCCG in Nigeria is to effect spiritual, economic and social transformation of the society in Nigeria through her corporate social responsibility.

The role of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in the national development in Nigeria in the 21st century is noteworthy. Apart from the spiritual reawakening of believers and spreading salvation message to the lost, the church has contributed to the economic, social, political, and educational growth of Nigeria as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR has attained a high enough profile (Moon, & Visser, 2006) that many consider it a necessity for organizations to define their roles in society and adhere to social, ethical, legal, and responsible standards (Lindgreen & Swaen, 2004 and Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). From a CSR perspective, organizations provide the drivers that can construct a better world and therefore experience pressure to demonstrate accountable corporate responsibility.

Organizations must deliver profits to shareholders but also frequently are subject to broader stakeholder interests and the need to demonstrate a balanced business perspective. Thus, organizations develop and update programmes and policies in an attempt to measure their social and environmental performance while also engaging in consultations with stakeholders and, during this process, communicating their values to employees, environmental groups, local communities, and governments.

New trends in the Christian religious circle in contemporary Nigeria society are that the Church is seriously taking over many of the socio-economic and infrastructural challenges neglected by the government, to this extent, the role of the church in the nation’s development in Nigeria in the 21st century cannot be over emphasized.

It is in view of the above that this paper examined the CSR activities of the RCCG and how it impacts the Nigerian society. The primary goal of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), right from its inception, has been the propagation of the gospel. It has also been concerned with the wellbeing of its members. However, its concerns in recent times have gone beyond the narrow confines of the wellbeing of its members to embrace the larger society.

To meet up with its concern for the larger society, it has created agencies and arms involved in various aspects of developmental needs spanning various sectors such as education, health, housing, care for the poor, conscience formation, as well as other social and political needs (Atuluku, 2017). This paper therefore examines the corporate social responsibility interventions of the Redeemed Christian Church of God and its impact on the Nigerian society.

Definition of CSR

Since it first emerged in the 1950s (De Bakker et al., 2005), CSR has developed from relatively uncoordinated and voluntary practices to more explicit commitments in
response to stakeholder pressures and, recently, ongoing future commitments. Although a significant body of literature exists, the problem of a singular definition remains such that alternative conceptualizations currently represent various aspects of the same concept of corporate “doing good” (Kotler & Lee, 2005).

We choose to define CSR as a stakeholder-oriented concept that extends beyond the organization’s boundaries and is driven by an ethical understanding of the organization’s responsibility for the impact of its business activities, thus seeking in return society’s acceptance of the legitimacy of the organization (Gray, Owen, & Adams, 1996). This definition relies on the stakeholder concept and calls for the actual integration of CSR into the organization’s strategy. In addition, it emphasizes that CSR results in a win–win situation for the organization and its stakeholders.

**Stakeholders**

The concept of stakeholders is central to CSR. Stakeholders may be defined as “groups and individuals who can affect, or are affected by, the achievement of an organization’s mission” (Freeman, 1984: 54) or alternatively as “those groups who have a stake in or a claim on the firm” (Evan & Freeman, 1988:). Furthermore, the stakeholder concept may extend to a wider perspective and include all those entities that maintain a “critical eye” on corporate actors. Stakeholders thus form the link between the aims and ambitions of the organization and the expectations of society (Whetten, Rands, & Godfrey, 2002).

**Highlights of RCCG Corporate Social Responsibility Policy**

The Redeemed Christian Church of God in her bid to contribute her quota to national development established a corporate social responsibility department headed by a Special Assistant to the General Overseer (SATGO) on CSR to harmonize all CSR programmes, processes and activities for greater impact. Pastor Idowu Iluyomade is the current SATGO CSR.

1. The New RCCG CSR strategic thrust is anchored on:
   - **Harmonization**: aligning CSR activities along SHEMBAGS, replicating best practices, focusing on comparative strengths and uniform branding.
   - **Standardization**: Ensuring uniform guidelines, reporting, structures, methods and M&E.
   - **Communication**: Aggressive evidence-based communication focusing on impact and effective documentation.
   - **Data**: Ensuring data-driven programming and increased data appreciation by implementers.
   - **People**: Collective buy-in through capacity development, fostering innovation and ensuring sustainability. (New RCCG CSR Policy Manual, 2018)

2. To this end, there is a new RCCG CSR implementation framework a.k.a SHEMBAGS:
   - **Social**: Feeding programmes, Prison outreaches, Orphanages, the environment, Shelters among others.
3. The framework will leverage on RCCG’s extensive spread (41,420 participating parishes) and influence to ensure better coordination, increased CSR visibility and maximum impact everywhere in Nigeria.

4. **Quick-wins:** Weekly In-Parish Feeding Combo by all parishes, Charity Shops, Food Banks, Soup Kitchens, Fortress Schools, LGAF Medical Outreaches, etc. Compulsory Medical outreaches at all Go-A-Fishing venues.

5. **Expected funding sources:**
   - The CSR department is expected to generate money through: Endowment Fund which include; Monthly Contributions by each Parish, Area, Zone, Province and even Regions. Others include: Compulsory 3rd Sunday CSR Offering at all RCCG parishes every month and lastly donations from CSR Partners and Corporate Donors.

### Impact of RCCG Corporate Social Responsibility on the Nigerian Society

#### (a) **Education**

By education, we mean first and foremost the process of teaching and learning in order to lead out fully all the potentialities of an individual, and helping the society to grow to its fullest. This also means what parent, teachers and the schools do in educating the young; the process of what goes on in the child, in the process of being educated; the result of what the child acquires and the whole body of knowledge in the educational process (Frankenna cited in Jekayinfa and Kolawole, 2010). This undoubtedly is the most important aspect of development because it is concerned with human development. Alozie (2005) simply states that, “Education is conceived as the key factor in national development.

Christ the Redeemers School Management cited in Omotoye (2012) has informed that the Church has established primary and secondary schools in the nooks and crannies of the country. Some of these schools are located in almost all the states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. That, as at 2010, we recorded eighty-two Nursery and Primary schools and eighteen secondary schools. Omotoye (2012) further
stated that the Redeemers University was established at the international headquarters of the church at Mowe, Lagos-Ibadan expressway in 2003. Essentially, therefore, many Nigerians who have been yearning for admission into Federal and State Universities without success are opportune in this regard.

In a related educational development, the RCCG has made the growth of theological education in Nigeria possible. Theological education according to Omotoye (2012) equips the Christians in the word of God. The church established the Redeemed Christian Bible College in 1980 at Ebute-Metta, Lagos before it was moved to its permanent site at Lagos-Ibadan expressway. He also informs that the school has since then become an International school with campuses in other countries like Israel, Kenya, Zambia, Cote D-voire and South Africa.

In a similar view, RCCG has also provided scholarships to many children who are in one way or the other incapacitated in funding their own education as a result of lack or the death of their parents or guardians. For instance at the Redeemer’s Private Secondary School Luge, Abuja (RPSS) one Juliana Ynisa was provided with scholarship from Senior Secondary School One (SSS1) to Senior Secondary School three (SSS3) (Akwaiki in Atuluku 2017). This is just a one case out of the many. Looking at the statement by Omotoye (2012) that “some of the churches also have scholarship programmes for indigent students”. Juliana Yunisa is a Gbayi girl from Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja.

(b) Job creation and economic development

The RCCG is a good employer of labour in Nigeria. Looking at the number of thousands of young graduates who are serving as Pastors in RCCG in Nigeria and abroad, there is no doubt that the church is a source of employment to the un-employed youth. In other words, this has reduced un-employment, crimes and youth restiveness in the country. Also those employed in the various schools have been on the payroll of the church in different locations. They were off the labour market courtesy of RCCG.

The RCCG is involved in economic mobilization of its members. As a result, the church has in place a number of two important business schools which are devoted to the training of both members and non-members of the church in business management. The first school is the Redeemer’s Business Academy (RBA) which operates under the auspices of the CRM. The RBA is regarded as the “Biblical management training arm” of the church dedicated to “declare the Lordship of Jesus Christ over every sphere of life particularly the marketplace” (RCCG INTL Directory, (2011). The church claims that part of the rational for establishing this business school is that the commandment given in Genesis to be fruitful and live in dominion on earth includes the business sector. Consequently, the RBA is designed to equip Born Again men and women to bring effective witness of Christ in their business and daily work. The RBA trains both church and non-church personnel; its activities extend to the West African sub-region where its staff goes to train candidates through formal courses and seminars.

Located in Lagos, the commercial capital of Nigeria, the RBA runs short-term courses with such titles as “Leading a Business for Christ”; “Conducting Meetings”;

The institute runs a wide range of courses. Some of these are: Ministerial Ethics, Stewardship, Urban and International Missions, Theocracy and Government, Principles of Administration, Church/Basic Accounting Principles, Social Reformation, Biblical Economics, Nigerian Legal System and Management Information. These courses run for a ten month period with lectures two days in a week (weekends) at the end of which a postgraduate diploma is awarded to candidates. In addition, a four-month certificate programme in Bible Leadership Study is available for people who desire this. Candidates for admission must possess a first degree or its equivalent but waivers are often granted for people lacking this basic requirement. The school boasts of high level lecturers, including Pastor Adeboye; many of these lecturers have Masters in Business Administration (MBA) from Nigerian universities (Ukah 2003). In 2001, the church claimed to have trained more than 7000 ministers within the church all over Nigeria.

In addition to these two main business schools of the church, there are numerous other small “business academies” and fora established by parishes of the RCCG to teach members and other Born Again Christians how to conduct and regulate their mundane activities, especially those that relate to economic practices. Attendance at these business schools attracts a fee. These schools teach church members about “strategies for a successful business”. The members are taught to tend, keep and guard their businesses on five grounds, viz.: (i) packaging a proposal, (ii) being positive on projects by believing and trusting God to deliver, (iii) ensuring security of office by sanctifying it, (iv) having a good corporate image and finally (v) releasing finances with the name of Jesus. “A businessman who wants to be successful must not be without prayer and fasting. He should be able to fix a daily appointment with God and keep it and must learn to praise God in everything. [...] With these strategies, a businessman will always be victorious in business” (Redemption Light 4/2 (41).

Part of the reason for getting involved in economic mobilization is the church’s concern for members’ economic welfare. According to the church, it recognizes that “widespread poverty within the body of Christ also affects the gospel as well as the economic, social and political role and significance of the church” Consequently, Adeboye established Jubilee Development Foundation (JDF) in 2002, the year of the church’s jubilee celebration, in order to enlighten and mobilize its members for economic empowerment and development (Ukah 2003). This programme was launched in the all parishes of the church on Sunday, 10 November, 2002. This foundation is set up because “the church has an enduring concern and a continuing interest in the overall development and welfare of people and society: spiritual, economic, educational, social and emotional.

To reconcile the interest of the church in people’s economic development and its spiritual concern, the church set up the Jubilee Cooperative Society (JCS) under the JDF and registered it with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture as a cooperative and thrift society. Designed exclusively for its members and ministers who are (i) credible, (ii) pay
their tithes regularly, and (iii) desire divine prosperity, the JCS is regarded as a “divine initiative” which intends using the church (parishes) as a springboard of operation. Through this means vast economic resources can be built up under this scheme with which so much can be done, meaningfully and professionally to improve the lot of the ever-growing body of Christ, majority of who are families with the scourge of poverty (Ukah 2003).

The objectives of the JDF are itemized in the 2002 RCCG National Welfare Weekend Manual (1) as follows: (i) the eradication of poverty in the church; (ii) the promotion of education, training and human development; (iii) the ensuring of availability of capital for viable “projects of credible brethren”; and (iv) assisting the wealthy to continue to prosper. Church members are advised to be part of the scheme because it is part of the “law of harvest”: “When you minister to someone’s needs, God will also send someone to minister to your needs”. The JDF is seen by the church leadership as “a catalyst for the prosperity of all members” of the church. Resources available to JCS will be channeled to equity stocks and other fiscal managements that will yield dividends for members who may also be entitled to soft loans for setting up personal businesses.

The church, in addition to the above structures of economic empowerment, has also established business ventures and companies that generate finances for her within the larger society. These companies constitute a distinct layer of structure within the organization of the church. The RCCG operates or is in partnership with four community banks, viz.: (i) Haggai Community Bank Limited; (ii) New Life Community Bank limited; (iii) Ore-Ofe Community Bank limited; and (iv) Sunrise Community Bank Limited. The managements of these banks believe in the prosperity of the church and work to help RCCG parishes “attract worshippers” into their folds. (Ukah 2003). Haggai Community Bank is arguably the strongest community bank with the largest assets base in Nigeria. The bank writes in its manifesto that “we are on a God-given mission to finance God-given dreams/vision of individuals and corporate institutions. We are resolute in our determination to bring them to manifestation to the glory of God”. (Redemption Light 7/10)

(c) Human development

Human development is a process of social change for the better. The various aspects of the development of a nation include human development, political development, social development, economic development and industrial development. According to Onimhawo and Ottuh (2007) there are various aspects to what constitutes development, however, the resultant effect is a positive change in human wellbeing. It is understood as a long-term improvement in the standard of living, as felt and judged to be for most of the people in the country.

One of the focal interests of the RCCG is the propagation of the gospel in addition to meeting the spiritual and material needs of human beings. Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity commanded His disciples in Matthew 28:19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of
the Holy Spirit”. Pastor E.A. Adeboye introduced the Holy Ghost Congress in Lagos 1986. It is an annual event that is attended from different states of the country and Federal Capital Territory Abuja. In fact, worshippers attend the programme from Europe, America and other parts of the world. It used to be a week-long event. There is also a monthly Holy Ghost service at the International headquarters of the church at Lagos –Ibadan Express way (Omotoye, 2012).

Another aspect of human development of the RCCG is the transformation of souls of bad characters to Respective, Productive, God fearing and enterprising men and women in the society. A good example is the Area boys, Cultists and Touts on Lagos streets who have been converted and turned to “Jesus boys”.

According to reports many miracles are recorded at each event monthly and annually. It is interesting to note that many worshippers at the monthly and annual programmes are from the Mainline, Aladura, and other Pentecostal churches. Our investigations have revealed that people are attracted because of divine healing. The worshippers are encouraged to run away from sins and have faith in the healing power of Jesus Christ.

Nigeria is a developing country where there is poverty, hunger, un-employment and insecurity is also affected. So, in order to overcome some of these social challenges the church is a place of refuge and protection (Omotoye 2006).

(d) Health and disease prevention

It is traditional for Christian groups to establish schools and hospitals and clinic as a way of making their presence felt in a particular society. The RCCG runs a maternity centre which was established in 1962 as an arm of the church that takes care of birth deliveries but also generates finances for the church (RCCG at 50: 129-130). With its Head Quarters at Ebute-Metta, Lagos. This outfit operates in several states of the country with many branches in Lagos alone. The wife of Josiah Akindayomi was in charge until she retired and later died. Then, the unit has been headed by the wife of a senior pastor, usually an AGO. Often, hospitals, maternities, clinics and schools are regarded more as social institutions than economic ventures.

The Federal Government of Nigeria and Lagos State Government are aware of the charisma of Pastor Adeboye. In this regard he is seen as a man that could assist in the education and effective implementation of some programmes like the eradication of polio, payment of taxes and eradication of Ebola virus and HIV/AIDS pandemic in the country, in view of this, the Government always seeks for his support. For example, the church has a committee known as the Redeemed AIDS Programme Action Committee (RAPAC). The assignment of the group is to assist the patients medically, pray and meet the needs of the people. The financial needs of the committee are met by the church and appeal is usually made to some International donors like the Red Cross Society, Family Health International and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).The committee has a responsibility to encourage the youths to shun sex and say no to pre-marital sex. Regular seminars, symposia, banners and tracts are printed to assist the committee in achieving its programmes.
The HIV/AIDS pandemic has become an issue of global concern. According to the joint UN programme on HIV/AIDS report, at the end of 1999 there were about 34 million infected persons worldwide and 25 million of these are found in Sub-Saharan Africa. Since the year when the pandemic was recognized around 19 million people are said to have died from the disease. Africa took the highest toll of the death rate where four million of them were children (Omotoye 2012). The disease has become of a serious concern to the government of the country because of its effect on the health and well-being of Nigerians.

In the words of Omotoye(5); Pastor Adeboye is regularly brought on Lagos State Television (LTV) and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) emphasizing the importance of HIV test. He therefore encourages all to go for the test. I believe that the government is using the medium to enlighten and educate the general public on the essence of AIDS test.

Findings
Findings also show that the RCCG has contributed to the educational, political, socio-economic, moral, cultural and religious spheres of this country. Education wise Omotoye (2012) mentions that “Many Nigerians who have been yearning for admission into Federal and State Universities without success are opportune in this regard.” Again, he states that, “The RCCG is a good employer of labour in Nigeria looking at the number of many young graduates, there is no doubt that, the church is a source of employment to the unemployed youth. This has equally reduced the crimes and youth restiveness in the country (Omotoye, 9).

Conclusion
The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria has contributed meaningfully to the nation’s development at all level through her corporate social responsibility interventions since inception till date. These include political, socio-economic, religious, infrastructure, Education, hospital, banks, campaign against antisocial vices, HIV/Aid, provision of scholarship, establishment of Orphanage homes, social amenities in Nigeria to complements government efforts. Thus, the role of the Church to the nation’s development in Nigeria in the 21st century cannot be over emphasized.

Recommendations
Based on the findings of this paper, we recommend as follows:

1. The RCCG should extend its tentacles to provide housing for Nigerians. This is a critical area which the Nigerian government is lacking and needs assistance or the complimentary roles of other organizations and individuals to step –it-up.

2. The RCCG should also help in the provision of Agricultural mechanization where large plantations of crops and the provision of mechanized services will boost the “Green Project” of the Federal government both for sustenance and cash crops. This will to a large extent decentralize of mono-economy to multiple economic growth and development in Nigeria.
3. RCCG can also extend its contribution to the Aviation industry through the provision of Airlines to counter the monopoly of the existing Airlines that are running at the detriment of the Nigerian people. This will equally bring about high ethical standards in the air business where everything is compromised.

4. The establishment of technical colleges by RCCG can help in the industrialization bid of the Federal government. This will go a long way in boosting the human capacity of the nation in technical and allied areas including scientific development.

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