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## Religious Riots And Its Effects On Sustainable Development In Nigeria

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### Abstract

This paper examined the effects of religious riots on sustainable developments in Nigeria. Nigerians, like every other African country, are religious in nature. Religion has both positively and negatively affected Nigeria. Religious-riot which is one of the negative effects of religion is one of the major factors that have directly or indirectly impaired Nigeria from achieving sustainable development. Many African countries are living in abject-poverty; hence Africa is rated among the poor-continent of the world. The work found out that consistent occurring of religious riots will continue to frustrate developments in Nigeria. Using phenomenological method of analyzing social issues, this paper aims to give recommendations on how religious motivated riots can be eliminated in an African country like Nigeria, so as to sustain development.

### Introduction

Religious riots are insurrections that are motivated by religious connotations. Human beings in their search for the known and unknown have shown themselves as higher animals by being religious, moderately or fanatically. Wars or riots connoted by religion directly or indirectly are most of times carried out on the bases of defending a religious belief by the fanatics. It is observed that "Religious adherents no doubt find that their actions in life are influenced by their religious beliefs. The association between religion and violence is long-standing."<sup>1</sup> Many African countries suffer from the continued effects of the insurgence of religious riots as it affects negatively their motivated moves to achieve and sustain good developments. It is observed that in Nigeria "Religious and ethnic tensions have frequently been strained."<sup>2</sup> Motivated tensions or

divisions are most of the times worsened by adhering to religious identities. Diverse reasons, for which religious riots are carried out most of the times, range from being religious fanatic, having unbalanced political consciousness to some other cultural components. It has been noted that “Nigeria, evenly distributed between Christians and Muslims, is a country where people identify themselves by their religion first and as Nigerians second. Religiously related violence has led to more deaths in northern and scantily in other parts of the country, and has therefore constituted among the many factors resiliently militating against consolidating peace and sustaining good developments in this Nigeria. Around 20,000 have been killed in God's name since 1990”<sup>3</sup>

Religious riots in distorting peace as well as hindering the sustainable developments, the rioters carry out their violence through suicide bombing, kidnapping and other forms of Religious attacks in a bid to exacerbating religious tensions in Nigeria. In the process of their attacks many churches and mosques have been reportedly destroyed. It has been observed that “the most deadly attacks seem to have targeted Christian holidays,”<sup>4</sup> Christmas days and Easter days. The places of worship most times being their main targets have made the churches and mosques to boost their security. Other targets of religious riots or violence apart from religious places of worship include schools, government buildings, phone masts and universities,<sup>5</sup> motor parks etc. In the short or long run, the insurgence of religious riots does cause the threatened residents of any riot most erupted areas to flee or relocate to another place, resulting to impoverished welfare and economy of that area. Religious intolerance which results to religious riots is negatively affecting almost all the facets of sustainable development in Nigeria. Statistically it has been estimated recently that about 14,000 people have been killed in religious violence which majorly occurs in the northern part of Nigeria<sup>6</sup>. Loses counted include not just the destruction of lives but properties are also destroyed. Churches, Mosques and business areas are in most cases torched in the process, culminating in the long run to an increased economic impoverishment of the nation. The sustainable development goals ambitious agenda that aims to end poverty, promote prosperity and protect the environment<sup>7</sup> are resiliently being hampered in Nigeria due to reoccurring religious motivated violence.

Nigeria like every other African country is known to be religious in nature. Religion is interwoven with communal life. Ugwu is of the view that “...religion has so dominated the thinking of the Africans that it has shaped their culture, their social life, their political organizations and economic activities.”<sup>8</sup> In other words Africans are religious in community. Africans whether in a preliterate village, in a commercial town, in a modern metropolis, religion is found woven into the fabric of their social life, and economic development.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, in Africa, religion has been a powerful force of social stability, role clarification and individual and group identity. Okwueze noted that “the church has, of course always been involved in assuaging the physical ills and miseries of

mankind...”<sup>10</sup> Okwueze’s opinion also reflects the positive influence of religion to any given society. Through religion peoples’ lives can be seriously improved in the area of taking care of the people as much as the tenants of any religion accommodates. Through religion some good developments that have been sustained for a very long time can be achieved. Factors of developments like education and educational infrastructure, improved water supplies, banishing of ignorance and superstition, improved health and sanitation- hospitals, improved communications; improved nutrition; and creation of employments are some developments that can be traced to religious developmental influences in some countries in Africa.

Nevertheless the same religion could also be used in destructive means. In the name of religion, many precarious things have been done to the human history not just in Africa but in the history of the world. Religion is seen as an instrument with dual facets; one facet is for peace while the other is a weapon for war, destruction and/or disintegration. Therefore, it is not an over-statement to point out that Religion has affected Africa’s sustainable development both positively and negatively. This paper focusing on the negative influence of religion, stresses that one major factor that militates against Africa’s sustainable development is the incessant directly or indirectly religious motivated riots, that occurs every now and then in the different countries in Africa. The African progress panel documented that “After a decade of strong growth, several of Africa’s resource-rich countries remain at the bottom of the international league-table for human development.”<sup>11</sup> Africa is still at the bottom of the international league-table for human development because of many problems troubling the continent. The New Partnership for Africa's Development, listing some of the problems confronting Africa documented that, “Besides multiple armed conflicts, insufficient access to education and widespread pandemics, such as HIV and malaria have undermined Africa's efforts to achieve sustainable development. The region is also challenged by serious environmental threats, including desertification, deforestation and climate change.”<sup>12</sup> In the group of the problem termed multiple armed conflicts are included religious riots. Many religious riots are carried out with ammunitions which results most a times to mass destruction of lives and properties. With regards to the above, Ituma, Ukeachusim and Ilechukwu noted that ...religious crisis is another factor that is resiliently contributing its quota in hindering Nigeria from being a peaceful nation. Nigeria is experiencing high level of religious crisis every now and then,<sup>13</sup> though the reference made above is on Nigeria but that is comparable to what is happening in some other countries in Africa.

This incessant occurrence of religious crises could account for one of the reasons why Africa is behind other continents in achieving and sustaining any good development. Wilbur O’Donovan, writing concerning Africa noted that, “poverty, overcrowding, pollution, sickness, crime, unemployment and the

breakdown of traditional family life threaten to destroy the very core of existence of the people these governments control.”<sup>14</sup> The problems of modern Africa are many and they are caused by human beings and human wrongdoings. Due to these problems many African countries today experience inner conflict and frustration. The constant inner conflict and frustration in turn affect the developmental rate of the continent of Africa. The inner conflicts and frustration have resulted in many Africa countries wallowing in poverty. Consequently, it has resulted in their inability to sustain any good development. The fate of many countries in Africa is a highly deplorable one. Many are living in abject and lowest level of life. Chukwuma in Samuel Okafor, has noted that “a closer look at the way things are going in many African nations is suggesting that something must be wrong somewhere”<sup>15</sup> The numerous religious crises happening every now and then is one of the factors that have gone wrong in Africa.

In fact, it is a well known problem that one of the factors that have hindered many African countries from sustaining any good development is the incessant occurring of religious motivated crises or riots. The case of incessant direct or indirectly religious crises is one of the major problems of African countries like Nigeria, Zambia, Kenya, Central African Republic's capital, Bangui.<sup>16</sup> Religious motivated riots or crises have in the long run majorly affected Africa's sustainable development negatively so much that foreign investors are scared to invest in some African countries.. Religious riots are among the major cause and effect of religion dysfunction. It occurs when, religion that suppose to function as a means of social order and contributor in any nation's development turns out to cause violence, tumult or disorder which hinders development. Religious riots have been observed to have greatly impaired development in Africa. Its causes can be traced to underlying human frailties like intolerance, greed and selfishness, ignorance, mundane interests, personal and group egotism, ambitions, stupidity, pride and retaliation, shortsightedness etc. Other causes of religious riots include co-existence of people with diverse forms of religious inclination; coexistence of differing religious groups who do not understand each other, being highly fanatic about ones' religion and political negative influence or useage of riots to achieve their aims. Religious riots have caused a lot of developmental set back in Africa. The delimitation of this research work is on Nigeria, an Africa country and this research work aims at analyzing the effects of religious riots on the sustainable development of Nigeria.

### **Conceptualizing Religion**

Ugwu, established that a definition of religion that would include every aspect of religion both past and present is difficult to find.<sup>17</sup> Agha in his choice of words stated that “religion has been defined in various ways and some scholars have gone a step further to classify the definitions according to various schools of thought”<sup>18</sup> Consequently, different disciplines have defined religion according

to their world view. For example, Karl Marx an economist sees religion as an economic exploitation of masses.<sup>19</sup> Religion is related to many phenomena. Schmidt, established that religion is not an easy term to define, explaining that, religion is a collective term applied to such a wide range of phenomena.<sup>20</sup> Definition of religion adopted for the purpose of this research, was given by James Martineau in *Thouless* who defined religion as “the belief in an ever living God, that is in a divine mind and will ruling the universe and holding moral relations with mankind.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Religious riots**

Riot is defined as a situation in which a group of people behave in a violent way in a public place, often as a protest.<sup>22</sup> It was also defined in other words to denote an organized profligate behavior, unrestrained revelry, noise, uproar or disturbance made by revelers.<sup>23</sup> It is also a municipal violence, tumult, mayhem or disturbances of the public peace resulting to security threat by three or more persons and acting with common intent. From these definitions of riot, it can be formulated that religious riot is any public violence, tumult, disorder, destruction of properties, disturbance and killings done by three or more persons in the name of religion. Example of religious riots is seen in Muslim jihads undertaken because of personal interest, group egotism, ambition, pride, retaliations etc. Sometimes these religious riots are directly or indirectly connected to politics and their unquenchable dispositions to achieve their selfish interests.

### **Sustainable development**

Sustainable development hinges on the human motivated actions that are geared towards improving the welfare and living conditions of human beings without destroying the human environments in the long run. The sustainable development goals centers on the ambitious agenda that aims to end poverty promote prosperity and protect the environment.<sup>24</sup> Notwithstanding, the concept of sustainable development has many meanings depending on the usage and context at any point in time. Akabogu, Mba and Agalamanyi analyzing the concept of development noted that “the word ‘development’ means different things to different people. Some people take it to mean change; others see it as advancement, improvement and progress. Some scholars see the term development as modernization or westernization”<sup>25</sup> But whatsoever a scholar chooses to use to define development, it must border on a continuous process of positive change in the quality and span of life of the concerned. In like manner, sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition is from ‘Our Common future’ a source known as Brundtland Report which defined it as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own”<sup>26</sup> Sustainable development focuses on any established improvement that helps in solving human problems that are maintained for a long time that does

not expose the lives of people to danger in the nearest future. It has to do with making growth sustainable. Kwesi-Boon documented that “The concept of Sustainable Development (SD) was propounded as an alternative development strategy for improving the living conditions of the human population without degrading the quality of the environment”<sup>27</sup> Any development that advances human well being is to be maintained. Sustainable developments must focus on two key concepts: the concept of human essential needs and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization to meet present and future needs.<sup>28</sup>

### **Religion and Development**

In Religion there is always a concern for mankind (religious horizontal relationship) in his quest to discover God. Okwueze, making reference to church which also connotes religion documented that “through the centuries, the church would establish their presence together with building of hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged and infirm...”<sup>29</sup> In these and many more, Religion is presented as having a strong relationship with development. Religious observance can directly or indirectly cause increase in production. Production of goods and services can be conditioned by religious values. Yinger, holds that “religion seriously affects motivated decisions that has to do with scarce time, skill and resources which revolve around production (economics) and development.”<sup>30</sup> Religion is so much related to sustainable developments in that, Religion can influence the structure of work groups and situation. Employees may be religiously motivated to develop a higher skill in their work. Religion in its positive influence would always aim to improve the lives of people under its influence.

On the other hand, religion can influence negatively by disintegrating and impairing any state or continent from achieving a sustainable development. This dysfunction of religion can be seen in religious riots with its relation to development in Africa. Nigeria, named as the giant of Africa would have been rated among the developed countries of the world, if not for the negative effect of religious riot and other negative factors. Because of this recurring riots; a negative aspect of religion, the giant of Africa is still struggling as one of the developing countries in Africa. This ugly trend, religious riot, which impairs Nigeria from achieving sustainable development on all facets of development, is also affecting some other countries that are in the continent of African.

### **Scopes of Sustainable Development that are supposed to have been achieved in Africa**

Chukwuezi is of the view that the issue of community development is a very cogent one and that countries are rated as good achievers if they are able to raise the quality of life of their citizens.<sup>31</sup> After independence, some African leaders believed that for Africa to develop, traditional cultural practices have to give

way to implant western scientific methods and thinking which will change the institutions in Africa. The aim of independence which African countries achieved was to be independent and so develop themselves and establish better life for their citizens. But those desired wholesome developments have not been sustainably achieved. Thus, the 2005 World Summit outcome estimated the “interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars” of sustainable development which every continent suppose to attain to, including Africa. These pillars include economic sustainable development, social sustainable development and cultural sustainable development, which are being hindered by religious riots.<sup>32</sup>

**1. Economic Development:** Comparing African economic development with that of the Western world, one would say that Africa has recorded poor growth. The level of development African countries have achieved would be said not to be even. Hence, the African Progress Panel noted that, “overall progress has been uneven – and in some areas it has fallen short of expectations. After a decade of strong growth, several of Africa’s resource-rich countries remain at the bottom of the international league-table for human development”<sup>33</sup> This idea is so projected because, when many African countries became independent, It was expected that African countries will take their rightful places in economic development and lots of hope were raised, but they were held stagnant by the effects of religious riots and other factors like corruption. Industrialization, modernization and urbanization were the economic areas impaired by religious wars with reference to development in Nigeria, Zambia and other African countries. With this religious tension every now and then, there is atmosphere of lost of hope, poverty, and stagnation in economic development.

**2 Social Development:** Because of different religious backgrounds in Africa as a continent, there has been social inequality and all these function towards impoverishing an African country like Nigeria. Social challenges like social disorders are seen by some researchers as opportunities for development which revolves around sociopolitical facet. Some politicians use the opportunity to pursue their political ambitions. Social development is socializing in the most improving and positive influencing ways. Social development has to do with giving people opportunity to participate meaningfully in political activities and policy making at any governmental level. For a society to be declared to have been socially developed, People in that society must have to be empowered to contribute to services that will benefit them materially, culturally and emotionally<sup>34</sup> Engaging in meaningful venture(s) by every member of any given society engenders orderliness. If the society is not in order, it can affect the religion which can in turn influence groups to run rioting-causing violence in the society.

**3 Environmental Protection Sustainable Development:** Ugwu and Ukeachusim sees sustainable environment as being “concerned with the human motivated activities that are geared towards ensuring that the natural environment and resources as used today do not endanger their continued usage

for the future generations”<sup>35</sup> In other words, environmental sustainability is the process of making sure current processes of interaction with the environment are pursued with the sole idea of keeping the environment as pristine as naturally possible based on ideal-seeking behavior.<sup>36</sup> Presently the issue of sustainable environment has become an important topic due to the fact that people are realizing the possible negative impacts of direct and indirect human activities on the environment and human beings. It is included among the scope of sustainable development which countries in Africa suppose to achieve but are being hindered because of the effect of religious riots and other factors.

**4 Cultural Sustainability Developments:** Sustainable development has to do with the process of transformation of the way of life which hinges on culture and attitudes. It could be seen as an aspect of modernization. Modernization can be traced to western European.<sup>37</sup> Some modernization projections are not positively enhancing the well being of Africans. In this regards it was noted that, “an aspect of modernization that could have very adverse effects on sustainability is the globalization of culture and economy that has exposed Africans and some indigenous peoples to advertisements via global television, video, radio, newspapers, and other media.”<sup>38</sup> Today fashion, criminal acts and lifestyles are being "marketed" through the media. On significant level the implication is that Africans in their character of not having strong cultural discipline are being influenced negatively. There is no doubt that the lack of strong cultural discipline in Africa as compared with Asia is one of the reasons that the level of savings in Africa is much lower than that in Asia.<sup>39</sup> Some of these modernizations projections do not worth being sustained. Africans should learn to sustain cultures that favorably and positively enhance human well being, because cultural aspect is one of the important facets of a wholesome development. Considering the above, United Nations in an international forum have argued that “there are four pillars of sustainable development, the fourth being cultural.”<sup>40</sup> It is a strong emphasis that sustainable development has a strong relationship with the sustenance of any life improving human culture in any society. Sustainability is a process which tells of a development of all aspect of human life and their sustenance. Religion being a part of culture has not been properly and sustainably developed hence the cause of rivals that impair African countries’ sustainable development.

#### **Causes of Religious Riots in Nigeria**

Numerous factors could cause the occurrence and or reoccurrence of riots in Africa. Many times religion has been accused of either being a remote or immediate cause of riots in most African countries. Religions differ from each other; adherents of each religion believe that their own religion is right and better than others. This religious belief system makes religion to be controversial in nature. This accusation made against religion is true because religion in itself is described as being controversial in nature. Religion can be used as a tool to mobilize people and trigger conflicts. When adherents of a particular religion

hold an extreme or irrational belief or enthusiasms about their religion, it can make them to become fanatic in nature. Consequently, religious fanaticism is one of the causes of religious motivated riots in most African countries. Being extreme about ones religion makes one not to be relating cordially with people of other religions in a given society.

Many countries in Africa are multi-religious in structure. Co-existence of differing religious groups in various countries in Africa could be related to one of the causes of incessant religious motivated riots in the continent of Africa. The coexistence of differing religious groups who do not understand each other, has contributed to the resultant incessant religious crisis, each religious group parade itself as the only right religion to exist and therefore condemns the other as bad and hence do not deserve to exist. The causes of conflicts that sometimes escalate between some religious groups could be traced to factors such as suspicion and mistrust between the followers of the religious groups, modes of propagation of the religions, selfishness, ignorance and intolerance amongst the waring religious groups. There is a serious problem of intolerance among Muslims and Christians in many african countries like Nigeria, Zambia, Kenya , Central African Republic's capital, Bangui etc.

In most African countries, Muslims would not tolerate the Christians and this has resulted to killing of Christians in the northern part of Nigeria, demolishing of church buildings , destruction of individual and public properties. Christians in relenting from being pacivists retaliate on many occasions. Consequently religious motivated riots have caused the impoverished state of the continent of African countries. Corruption is another serious Corollary of religious motivated riots in most African countries. People, in the name of religion, commit all sorts of evil for them to make ends meet. Abuse of power by most acclaimed religious politicians has in some occasions resulted to religious riots. Politicians abuse their political power by secretly sponsoring people to keep causing conflicts in order to achieve their political targets. Suffering resulting to poverty of the massess is another factor that does directly or indirectly contribute to the consistent incessant occurrence of religious motivated riots in most African countries. When there is lack of job, inadequate social ammenities, the suffering masses could easily be bribed by the politicians to cause religious conflicts. It is important to note that some of the leaders and adherents of these religions do not practice truly what their holy scripts teach. This, in particular, has fuelled the concurrent occurring of crisis in this nation, Nigeria.

### **Effects of Religious Riots on Sustainable Development in Nigeria**

The consistent occurrence of Religious riots in any setting cannot be occurring without any serious consequences. It creates an unfavorable ground for sustainable development. Religious conflict (Riots) has been established to mean a situation in which a group of people in the name of religion behave in a violent

way in a public place, often as a protest, retaliation, ambition, pride, group egotism. These dysfunctions of religion have negatively affected African's attainable of sustainable development which include economic, socio-political, environmental and cultural sustainable development. The sustainable development revolves around improving human well-being by persistently pursuing of economic prosperity, environmental quality and social equity. The negative effect of religious conflict on sustainable development on African country like Nigeria include violence (mayhem), dearth of labor force, poverty, vandalization of church buildings, destruction of lives, goods and properties.

**1. Violence:** It is mostly one of the results of religious riots. In the other hand, religious conflicts have an immediate corollary of mayhem which diminishes the rate of lives and properties' security. Those participating in the riots have the high tendency of becoming brutal or aggressive. The mobs that are raised in the name of religious riots become so brutal in nature, that they don't consider the worth of lives and properties any more. This violence caused by religious riot has contributed in pushing some able bodied citizens of African countries into armed robbery and assassinations, hence the increase in the armed robbery, hired killings and threats experienced today in Nigeria.

**2. Poverty:** Boon documented that, "More than 1 billion of the world's population, especially in Africa and Asia, are still living under abject poverty"<sup>41</sup> One of the causes of this high rate of poverty can be traced to the incessant occurring of religious crisis. The harm caused by religious riots in Africa has set the continent several thousands of years backward. The people's means of getting their daily bread, shelter and their valuable properties can be raised down in a twinkling of an eye in the name of religious riots. It has caused people to experience high rated poverty and suffering. The New Partnership for Africa's Development's documentation has it that, Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio (1992), sustainable development has remained elusive for many African countries. Poverty is still a major challenge, as 41% of the Sub-Sahara African population (or roughly 300 million people) were living on one dollar a day or less in 2004.<sup>42</sup>

Poverty level is still very high in an African country like Nigeria. It is therefore not an overstatement to include the incessant religious riots in Nigeria as one of the causes of the high rate of poverty in Nigeria. In some cases, victims of religious riots are left with nothing to start their lives all over again. Thus, bad economy, hunger, sickness, insecurity etc are all corollaries of religious riots. Chuta, S. C. noted that "it has been strongly debated whether, indeed, poverty contributes to the involvement of certain individuals in corrupt acts."<sup>43</sup> Agreeably poverty can make one to indulge in immoral acts even in the name of religion. Due to poverty of the mind and resources people can make themselves available for use by politicians and religious fanatics to use them to cause religious crisis like Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria. For Nigeria to effectively

fight against poverty more effectively, religious incessant riots must be curtailed.

**3. Dearth of Labour Force and Unemployment:** Religious conflicts adversely affect the sustainable development in Africa. In any setting where there is the incessant occurrence of religious riot, it results to the state of insecurity of lives and properties and it does directly or indirectly affect the economy of those countries. In any location, when Religious conflict occurs, it in some way results to the reduction in the labour personnel in that area. These religious conflicts also cause unemployment. People find it difficult to get something doing so as to earn their living. Again in any setting where there is always the tendency of religious riots, there is also the tendency that labor will be scarce in such locality.

**4. Vandalization of Buildings:** BBC News on Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2006 reported that religious riot which broke out in Kontagoria in the northern part of Nigeria in Africa, resulted to churches, shops and mosques being raised down by fire.<sup>44</sup> These shops, Churches, Mosques and houses raised down by the fury mob costed a lot of resources for them to be erected, but because of religious riots they have been razed down what took decades to build in a twinkling of an eye! The goods and other valuable properties are also destroyed in the fury of religious riots.

**5. Hindering Foreign Investment:** Oshio mentioned religious riots as one of the factors that hinders foreign investment<sup>45</sup> Due to the recurring Religious riots, foreign investors have phobia in investing their resources in any serious business in African countries. In other words, Aleyomi, expressed that “Foreign investors cannot invest in a country where daily hullabaloo of .... of cordiality which hinder development and impose fear of division”<sup>46</sup> Many foreign investors are aware of how destructive religious riots could be and would not wish to deliberately invest, to lose their resources, life and properties to recurring religious riots in Africa. Example of religious riots as observed in Nigeria have also retarded foreign investments in flow and growth.<sup>47</sup> This slow down in foreign investments among other factors can be traced to religious riots. Religious riots have impaired the sustainable development of Africa because its reoccurrence have scared foreign investors from entering into prolonged sustainable business with some African countries.

**6. Destruction of Lives:** Religious riots in Africa leave many people dead. Many people are always killed whenever there is the occurrence of religious riots. Human beings were randomly set on fire, or mercilessly butchered in a gory manner. When religious riots broke out in the northern town of Kontagora, Jos etc. many Christians were killed by machete-wielding Muslim mobs. When it happened at Onitsha many Muslim were killed as they were trying to cross the bridge. Many of the Muslims were killed in Onitsha in two days of reprisal attacks by crowds of Christian armed with machete. In fact, the actual death records cannot be adequately documented.

### **Remedies to religious riots**

Sustainable development can be achieved in countries that make up African continents if religious riots can be checkmated or reduced. It has been explained by Chukwuezi that, "it is not unusual for conflicts to arise among or within communities, but these religious conflicts should not be allowed to destroy the development of the continent, Africa."<sup>48</sup> The remedies to religious riots that can enhance the sustainable development in an African country like Nigeria include appraisal of religious practices through research and education, advocating for peace and preaching the need for unity by religious leaders, freedom of worship and electing of God fearing leaders and showing respect for the sanctity of human life.

**1. Appraisal of Religious Practices:** effectively accessing research and education can help in the reduction or elimination of recurring religious riots in Africa that has over the decades been observed to be contributing in hindering an African country like Nigeria from achieving sustainable development. Understanding other people's religion is very important for peaceful co-habitation of people from diverse religious backgrounds. Hence, it is important for people on a liberal level to find time to study other peoples' religions. If the study of religion will be embarked on qualitatively and effectively, it will profit in educating the masses on why, people do one thing or the other in the name of religion and thereby enhance people's understanding of the differences in religious practices. This will help in peaceful cohabitation of people in their diversified countries in African continent that is made up of people of different religious practices and world-views. In doing this the dream of achieving sustainable development will be made possible.

**2. Freedom of Worship:** This should be seriously advocated for and truly practiced for religious riots that impair sustainable development to be resolved. The religious riot that broke out in September 7, 2001 occurred because Christians in Kontagora were disturbed by political police and that they claimed they were being deprived of their right to religious freedom. Therefore religious freedom is one of the human right that should be respected because there can never be a time, when the African society can be totally free from religious differences.

**3. Respect for the sanctity of human life:** It is worthy to mention that all right-thinking people should have some value for human life. It is needful to condemn the barbaric act and senseless killings of innocent souls in the name of religion. Brutal killings in the name of religion should be stopped for life is meant to be valued. So many people have lost their loved family members as a result of religious motivated riots in the continent of Africa. Religious motivated violence should also be stopped because it is directly or indirectly impairing the sustainable development of Africa by causing the dearth of personnel in the work force. It also should be stopped because it hinders foreign investors from

investing in an African country like Nigeria for fear of losing their lives and investments.

**4. Election of Good leaders and advocating for peace and unity.** Leaders both in politics and churches should preach and enhance activities that will allow for peaceful co-habitation. Africa must be taken back from selfish, unfaithful and greedy leaders, who do not care about the good and protection of the citizenry under their jurisdiction. Religious leaders should persuade their adherents to stick to living peacefully with their neighbors, hence peace rather than riots will enhance African's chance of achieving sustainable development.

**5. Preaching Peace:** Religions claiming to preach peace should in practicality be living in peace with others in any given community. Many religions of the world lay claim to being peaceful. But in practicality some religions are only peaceful in theory while being troublesome and have no value for peace and human life. In practicality, they do not practice peace. Many politicians use some fanatic religious ones to carry out their nefarious political dealings. Among the religions booming in Nigeria, being a deadly religious fanatic should be condemned. The rampant hypocrisy and/or ambivalence that is often so evident in the way of life of Africans; that are although known as being religious should be checked. People should sincerely practice the dictates of peace which their religion proclaims to advance. People should not deem their religion as the religion of peace meanwhile contradicting it by not being able to co-exist with people of other religious inclination.

**6. Involvement of Religious People in Politics:** Religious people should not refrain from participating in politics: Good members of religions practicable in Africa should not shy away from participating in politics. This is so said because being that religion has a way of inculcating valuable virtues in their adherents, it is therefore capable of empowering those religious ones, to politically work towards achieving sustainable developments for the betterment of Africans directly and indirectly.

### **Conclusion**

This research work looked at how religious motivated bickering or riots can hinder countries in the African continent such as Nigeria from achieving sustainable development. Religious violence is rated as one of the major causes of poor sustainable development in Africa. It was established that violence has never solved political, economic, social or religious differences. Violence carried out in the name of religion directly or indirectly is among the many other factors that have been working hand in hand in hindering Nigeria from attaining to the level of sustainable development she should have attained to. The extent of the destruction done by religious rioters is glaring in the face of Africa as a continent. Violence can only lead to more violence; hence people should learn to resolve differences without resorting to violence. The work gave recommendations on how religious riots can be eliminated in Nigeria, an African country.

End note

<sup>1</sup>Vexen Crabtree, Religion, "Violence, Crime and Mass Suicide" <file:///C:/Users/user/Documents/religious%20riots%20in%20nigeria/Religion.%20Violence,%20Crime%20and%20Mass%20Suicide>

<sup>2</sup>"Tensions in Nigeria: A look at the country's bouts of inter-religious and ethnic clashes and terrorattacks" <HTTP://WWW.ALJAZEERA.COM/NEWS/AFRICA/2010/01/201012314018187505.HTML> 26 Dec 2010 06:52

<sup>3</sup>Crabtree, Loc.Cit

<sup>4</sup>Ibrahim Abdul, "4 killed in religious riots in central Nigeria" <http://news.yahoo.com/4-killed-religious-riots-central-nigeria-135404324.html> November 18, 2012 10:40 AM

<sup>5</sup>Ibid

<sup>6</sup>W. Patrick 14,000 killed in religious violence in Northern Nigeria in 13 years –U.S. agency <News Apr 17, 2013 IndependentConrol>

<sup>7</sup>The sustainable development goals ambitious agenda that aims to end poverty, promote prosperity and protect the environment? SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS <Global Goals for a Better World>

<sup>8</sup>C. O. T. Ugwu, *Man and his Religion in a Contemporary Society* (Nsukka: Chukka Educational Publishers, 2002) p.24

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