

Rural Based Religious Organizations and Rural Community Development: The Case of Six Local Government Areas in South Western Nigeria

EKONG E. EKONG

*Department of Agricultural
Extension and Rural Sociology
University of Ife
Ile-Ife, Nigeria.*

Abstract

This study investigated the characteristics of rural based religious organizations in six Local Government areas of south-western Nigeria, and their contributions to the development of the rural areas in which they are located.

A total of forty-six settlements were involved in the study and within these, 212 leaders representing respective religious organizations were identified and interviewed on the general characteristics and activities of their organizations. In addition, 614 local residents were also interviewed to determine their perceptions of the roles played by their religious organizations in the development of their areas, the problems the organizations have and the roles which they would like to see the organizations play in their community's development. It was found that:

- (a) A variety of religious organizations exist in the area studied with the christian nativist type being most prevalent.
- (b) Most of the organizations have existed for over 30 years in the communities.
- (c) Over a half of them have less than 100 members with females predominating and membership did not cut across community boundaries significantly.
- (d) A majority of the organizations maintained vertical linkages with superordinate bodies beyond the community boundaries and were thus not independent.
- (e) Church collection forms the major source of income for the organizations and negligibly few of them operate any type of economic enterprise.
- (f) Most of the organizations are led by untrained pastors or imams and volunteer lay preachers.
- (g) The establishment of schools seems to be the major contribution of the organizations to the development of the areas in which they are located.
- (h) Lack of money, poor membership and competition for membership constitute their most important problems.

- (i) The local residents expect their religious organizations to care for their physical as well as spiritual well-being.
- (j) The problem of the proliferation of denominations and sects seems to militate greatly against the effective contribution of religious organizations to community development in the country and this would need to be further investigated.

Introduction

One might, at first sight, be tempted to ask, "What relationship exists between religion and community development?" Or in fact, 'Of what use is a study of religious organizations to rural area development?' These would be legitimate questions to raise at the very superficial level because according to Demerath (1968), contemporary society is undergoing an institutional differentiation under which traditional religion is increasingly autonomous but decreasingly relevant. However, on a deeper analysis, reflection and introspection, it becomes quite obvious that in a developing society with a cultural background such as ours, religion and religious beliefs are quintessential to meaningful existence. What then is religion and what is its relationship to community development?

Yinger (1970) defined religion as, "A system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggle with ultimate problems of human life". Similarly, Glock and Stark (1965) defined religion as comprising those institutionalized systems of beliefs, symbols, values and practices that provide groups of men with solutions to their questions of ultimate meaning. Religion is not the same as "church" or "mosque". A church is an organization of believers having a common faith and professing a common creed. It is the instrument for giving expression to this search for ultimate values in life. Ultimate meaning or problems in life have to do with experiences like death, inexplicable suffering, misery, poverty, inequality, catastrophe and all forms of difficulties faced by man in the course of his existence in society. All those systems of beliefs which aid man to cope with these experiences constitute religion. Religion also has to do with values, norms, morals and rituals. It entails the evolution of certain attitude or posture towards life, towards oneself and towards fellow men.

The community development processes seek to bring about changes in the lives and motivations of people. According to Biddle and Biddle (1965), if the processes work properly, they should help the participants to achieve a more meaningful existence, become more responsible to an expanding common good, become more responsive to human needs and become more competent to live harmoniously with

neighbours. These expectations bring them into relationship with religion. The Biddles further hold that religion and the church or any religious organization for that matter, has direct relevance to community development because of the following reasons:

- (a) Religion and religious imperatives emphasize services to mankind and love for fellowmen.
- (b) There is the influence of an appeal to men's consciences; and appeal expressed in terms of a value system that could continue to guide development into the future.
- (c) The church must not only declare the word, it must be seen to implement the word for 'faith without works is dead'. The use of small groups that seek to establish a community might give the members of the congregation an opportunity to experiment with the implementation of their beliefs.
- (d) The churches have a superior opportunity to be sponsors of community development because they are not only custodians of the tradition that would make life more abundant, but they are located everywhere: so ubiquitous are they that few community development efforts can hope to succeed without church support.
- (e) The acceptance by churches of a responsibility for community development calls for a united effort to search for the local common good. This might, in practice create a local and practical ecumenicity of church unity without necessarily erasing denominational differences.
- (f) People, their needs and potentials for growth — both economic and personal, are central to the developmental process. Such an emphasis gives a new vitality to religious activities and institutions and this may reawaken the interest of back-sliders to return to the church fold.
- (g) If religion is to become the direction-giving influence it could be, in an age that values scientific thinking, its spokesmen must accept experimentation. That is, the experimentation to try out many different ways for moving towards ideals which community development entails.

Despite all these, a number of churches have tended to shy away from involvement in the community development process for a number of reasons including:

- (a) The fear of identifying community projects with a particular religious group thereby scaring rival groups away.
- (b) It is much easier to preach about moral and ethical virtues than to live them out; hence, many religions tend to assume or give the impression that religion is more a matter of what one professes than what one does.

- (c) Weak base caused by paucity of membership, shifting local population and interdenominational conflicts.
- (d) The tendency of some churches to overemphasize proselytization or conversion at the expense of human needs.
- (e) The inability or willingness of some religious leaders to accept that local people have worthwhile ideas, initiative and leadership ability. Often these leaders regard themselves as persons with special knowledge, superior authority, the ones who must be called upon to give the correct formulation of the problem and its solution rather than accept a role as friendly collaborators who encourage others to help themselves.
- (f) The feeling that the function of religion is to integrate and strengthen existing value orientation rather than to propose new values or changes (Loomis and Beegle, 1957). Thus, if it is to play the integrative functions effectively, it can hardly be called upon to initiate changes except insofar as such changes conform with the general norms. Exception to this conservative tendency of religions is found in Buddhism in which man is invited to find his own truth by his own efforts, through continual testing of its doctrines on a personal basis over time. However, even here, it is pertinent to note that Buddhism's interest is not in the active intervention in the state of things in this world but in the attainment of "endless peace". Thus, even though its tenets are in direct contrast to those of protestantism for instance, it neither stimulated science nor industry in the world (Needham, 1956) as protestantism did (Weber, 1963).

The general inclination of religious organizations to be conservative rather than dynamic and change oriented, underlies the need to investigate their general influence on rural community development. It is expected that in Nigeria where church membership has not only become an index of social participation but also a sociocultural behaviour, if religious organizations are strictly conservative, then community development would be hindered, whereas if they are change oriented, then community development would be enhanced.

This study aimed at generally investigating the characteristics of rural religious organizations in six local government areas of south-western Nigeria and their effects on rural community development. The specific objectives were:

- (a) Identifying religious organizations in six local government areas in Oyo State and studying their characteristics.
- (b) Investigating the contributions of the religious organizations to the development or stagnation of the area in which they are located.

- (c) Identifying the felt problems of the organizations and their effects on the progress of the community.

Methods

The former Oranmiyan and Irewole Local Government areas in Oyo State have now been split into three local government areas each (Oranmiyan North, Central and South; Irewole North, Central and South). This study was conducted in these areas. Operationally, religious organizations were identified through church and mosque buildings found in a random sample of villages and towns in the local government areas. A total of forty-six settlements were involved in the sample. Within these, 212 leaders representing respective religious organizations were identified and interviewed. The interview schedule used in interviewing them solicited information on a variety of items including age of the organization in the community, current membership, source and characteristics of members; the level of autonomy of the organization; types of community development activities embarked upon by the organization since its founding in the community; sources of income to the organization; number of religious organizations in the community; proposals for future community development activities; problems of the organization; the behaviour of members; the level of conservatism of the organization; the characteristics of the leaders themselves and the nature of the church or mosque building.

To cross-check and validate the religious organization leaders' information, 614 local residents most of whom were found to be members of religious organizations, were also randomly selected and interviewed. Apart from trying to determine their levels of religiousness, their own interview also solicited information on their perceptions of the roles played by their religious organizations in the development of their areas of residence, the problems the organizations have and those roles which they would like to see their organizations play in their community's development.

Other sources of data for the study included observations made by the researcher during his participation in some of the organizations' religious activities, and conversation with high church dignitaries outside the villages studied.

Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of the data.

Results

The findings will be considered under two major broad heads. The first deals with the data obtained from the religious organizations' leaders while the second deals with those obtained from interview with the local residents.

Characteristics and Functions of Religious Organizations

Location of the religious organizations

For the purpose of this study, the settlements selected were classified into two categories – rural and urban. Only two locations, Ile-Ife and Ikire, fell into the urban category while the rest were classified as rural. These categories were based on population as well as the existence of certain infrastructural facilities as identified by Ekong (1982). Based on the categories, 24 (11 percent) of the organizations were located in urban areas, while 188 (89 percent) were in rural areas.

Types of religious organizations

The religious organizations were identified in terms of name, denomination and type (that is whether moslem or christian). Those that were christian were further classified as either foreign (that is those whose original founders were from Europe or America) or nativist (that is those whose original founders were Nigerian or African). This latter category, excludes the traditional religious groups (that is those whose founding are not influence by either christianity or islam but are conducted in their pristine manner, for example, Ifa or Orisa). Using these categories, christians foreign religious organizations were 62 (29 percent). These included organizations like the Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Seventh Day Adventist churches.

The christian Nativist churches were 89 (42 percent) and included a variety of *Aladura* churches (for example Cherubim and Seraphim, Celestial church, Christ Apostolic, etc, the African Chruch, the new sects like Jesus Kingdom, African Christianity, New Christ Church of Peace, New World Church of Christ, Ebenezer Church, etc. The variety of groups under this category was far more than those of the christian foreign category.

The moslem organizations were 61 (29 percent) and had the least variation in terms of sub-groups. The major sub-groups identified were the Ahmadiya, Ansar-Ud-Deen and Nawar-Ud-Deen.

Age of Organization in Community

The average age of the various religious organizations in their present locations was 43 years. The median and mode were 30 years respectively while the age ranged from 5 to 150 years. A closer analysis showed that the christian foreign religious organizations tended to be the oldest followed by the moslem organizations while the christian nativist churches were the youngest with very few being over 50 years old in the community.

Population of the Organizations

The membership of the organizations ranged from ten to 6,000 with a mean of 306 and mode of 100. Actually, 50 percent of the organizations surveyed had 100 or less members while only ten percent had up to 500 members and over; and these were mainly those located in the two urban areas.

The average male membership was 129 while that of female was 195; and this was highly significant at $p \leq 0.01$, indicating that females form the bulk of membership in these organizations. Furthermore, the religious organizations seemed to attract membership mainly from within the communities of their location. Only three of them (two percent) indicated having members from outside such communities, and this would indicate that they do not function effectively as instruments of systemic linkage. In other words, it would be difficult to use the religious organizations to bring two or more communities to work together in mutually beneficial community projects as membership does not cut across community boundaries.

Autonomy of the Religious Organizations

The religious leaders were asked to indicate whether their organizations are independent or branches of a larger organization with headquarters located elsewhere. They were also asked to indicate whether members decide on what to do as a group without external influence or decisions are taken from outside the community and handed down to them for implementation, or their plans have to get external approval. It was found that only 48 or 22 percent of the organizations surveyed claimed to be completely independent while the rest (164 or 78 percent) said they were branches of larger organizations located elsewhere. Data analysis showed that the moslems were most autonomous while the nativist churches were least autonomous. In terms of decision making, 26 percent indicated that they make their own decisions while 74 percent said decisions are passed down to them from outside or they have to obtain approval from external authorities be-

fore carrying out decisions. This could be readily substantiated by the fact that some of the christian church leaders refused to give any information about their organization until they were authorized by their Archdeacon.

Types of Members

The religious leaders were asked to rank the types of persons that constitute members of their organizations. Seven major groups were identified including farmers, traders, businessmen/women, the sick, barren women and spinsters, students, and civil servants. Although these categories are not strictly mutually exclusive, farmers ranked first in all the organizations. Of course since the survey concentrated mainly on rural areas, this finding was not unexpected. The sick ranked second, while businessmen/women ranked seventh. Again, since businessmen/women are more prevalent in urban areas, it was not surprising that they do not form a significant proportion of rural religious organization membership.

TABLE 1: RANK ORDER OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS' MEMBRSHIP IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE

Rank	Types of Membership	Rate of Mention by leaders (%)
1.	Farmers	42
2	The sick	41
3.	Traders	39
4.	Barren women, spinsters and students	28
5.	Civil servants	26
6.	Businessmen/women	25

Major Sources of Income

The religious leaders almost unanimously indicated that church collection and voluntary donations from the major sources of their organizations' income. Only three (one percent) of them indicated having external support, that is, from foreign missions. None indicated running economic enterprise as a source of income for the organizations. This shows that the amount of money these religious organizations have is directly dependent upon their membership.

Asked what the organizations' incomes are mainly used for 60 percent reported church or mosque maintenance; 21 percent, pastor's salary; and 11 percent, building of new church, mosque or pastor's house.

TABLE 2: MAJOR ITEMS ON WHICH INCOME IS SPENT IN SOME RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE

Items	Number of Respondents	%
Church/mosque maintenance	128	60.2
Pastor's/imam's salary	45	21.2
Building of new church/mosque or pastor's house	24	11.3
Charity	5	2.4
Hospitality	2	0.9
Community work	1	0.5
No answers	7	3.3
Total	212	

Types of Religious Leaders in the Organizations

The religious leaders interviewed were asked to indicate whether they were serving on a full-time or part-time basis. One hundred and forty-two or 67 percent of them said they were full-time while 33 percent were serving on part-time basis. When further asked to indicate whether they were in charge of one congregation or a number of congregations, 174 or 82 percent said they were in charge of a single congregation while 18 percent were in charge of more than one congregation. To further probe the commitment of the religious leaders, they were asked to indicate whether they have any other jobs apart from preaching. To this question 46 percent said 'Yes' while 50 percent said 'No'. Nine, or 4 percent, refused to say anything.

As regards their levels of education and whether they have been trained as pastors or imams, 26 percent were found to be illiterates 48 percent had primary six level of education or below; 25 percent had

some post-primary schooling while only two percent had post-secondary qualifications. In fact one of those in this last category was an Irish Catholic Reverend Father who has a university level of education. Half of the religious leaders had no formal pastoral training at all; 21 percent were teachers in local schools while only 28 percent had some pastoral training. In some of the remoter rural areas, church services were held by volunteers and lay preachers. The investigator witnessed an instance where Sunday service could not hold because the lay preacher was indisposed.

TABLE 3: CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE

Characteristic	Number responding (N = 212)	%
Occupational Status		
Full-time preacher	142	67
Part-time preacher	70	33
Holding of other jobs		
Yes	97	46
No	106	50
No answer	9	4
Level of Education		
Never attended school	55	26
Primary Six or below	101	48
Post primary	52	25
Post secondary	2	1
University	2	1
Having formal pastoral training		
None	106	50
Teaching or related training	45	21
Actual pastoral training	61	28
Place of origin		
Native	102	48
Stranger	106	50
No answer	4	2
Leaders scope of work		
In charge of single congregation	174	82
In charge of many congregation	33	16
No answers	5	2
Age of religious leaders		
30 years or below	10	5
31 — 39	56	26
40 — 49	77	36
50 and above	66	31
No answer	3	1
Mean = 44		
Median = 43.8		
Marital Status		
Married	208	98
Single	3	2
No answer	1	

Table 3 (contd.)

Number of children		
0	6	3
1 - 4	77	36
5 - 9	108	51
10	21	10
Mean = 5.5		
Mode = 4		
Duration of service in present location (years)		
5	77	35
6 - 10	57	27
11 - 20	41	19
21 - 30	25	12
31 - 40	9	4
41	6	3
Mean = 12.7		
Mode = 10.0		
Satisfaction with preaching as an occupation		
Not full-time	62	29
Would leave the job if an alternative comes	20	9
Would continue with the job	130	61
Satisfaction with salary		
Not full time	36	17
Not very satisfied	10	5
Satisfied	100	75
Very satisfied	7	3
Reasons for becoming a Pastor/Imam		
Felt called by God	68	32
Personal interest	66	31
Parental and peer group influence	25	12
Chosen by the congregation	25	12
Special training for the job	23	11
Circumstances like ill-health	2	1

Very few of the religious leaders (five percent) were 30 years of age or below while a greater proportion (67 percent) were 40 years and above. The average age was 44 while the median was 43.8 years. Apart from three of the respondents, the rest (98 percent) were married with an average family size of about six children.

About 58 percent of them were found to have served in the community where they were interviewed for between six to 20 years with an average duration of 12.7 and a mode of ten years. When asked why they chose to be preachers, 32 percent said they felt called to the ministry; 32 percent said it was a result of personal interest. Only 11 percent of them went into the ministry as a result of the special training they received while 12 percent were influenced by their parents and peers. Two of the respondents went into preaching as a pledge which they made to serve God if they should recover from the illness they were suffering.

Asked whether they were satisfied with their work as preachers or would take alternative jobs if these were available, 61 percent said they would not change job. Asked about their satisfaction with the salaries they receive as preachers, 17 percent indicated that they were not full-time preachers and so did not receive regular salaries although their congregations may reward them as they deem fit from time to time. Among those who regarded themselves as full-time preachers, only five percent said they were not very satisfied with their wages while 75 percent were satisfied and three percent said they were very satisfied. Further investigation, however, revealed that most of those who claimed to be full-time preachers, still had supplementary incomes from the trading activities of their wives and the operation of small farms from where they obtain some foodstuffs. In most of the nativist churches, the church leaders did not have fixed salaries and their remunerations tended to vary with the number and quality of patronage they received. Moreover, satisfaction with one's salary here did not seem to be synonymous with adequacy of such salaries. Instead, the respondents tended to de-emphasize the materialistic aspect and to emphasize the immeasurable gains that is derived from serving God.

Nature of the Church/Mosque Building

A visual inspection of the building under which these religious organizations carry out their worship was undertaken. The structures were appraised on nine functional points. These included the construction of the exterior walls (that is, whether with concrete and paint, mud blocks and cement, bare mud blocks, scrap wood or grass); roof floor, windows, altar, ceiling, pews or type of floor covering in the case of moslems who do not use pews; approach of the building and the preacher's house. These were all evaluated on a five point scale (0-4) hence a structure that had the most modern outlook and standard would score 36 points while one with a very low standard would score 0 point

Based on the above scale, most of the church/mosque buildings (94 percent) were of quite high standards scoring 19 points and above. The mean score was 24, mode, 22 and median, 24. It was, in fact, observed that in most of the rural communities, the church buildings tended to be the most prominent. However, it was also observed that most mosques in the rural areas were comparatively of inferior standards to churches.

Number of Religious Organizations in Community

The religious leaders interviewed were asked of the number of religious organizations in the community where they were working. In the smaller villages, it was easy to obtain an accurate answer whereas in the urban and semi-urban areas, most of the respondents were ignorant and only hazarded a guess. Nevertheless, the number of churches and mosques was estimated to range from 1 to 125 with an average of 22, a mode of two and a median of eight.

Asked to indicate how the various religious organizations relate to each other in the respective communities, 61 percent of the respondents said they tended to be in keen competition for membership while 39 percent said the organizations compete in development activities in the community.

Time per week spent on religious activities

The religious leaders were asked to indicate how many hours per week their organizations spend on various religious activities such as: choir practice, prayer meetings, Sunday school, bible/koran study, men's meetings, women's meetings, youth's meetings, church service, confirmation and baptismal classes and visits to the sick. Table 4 shows that the highest number of hours spent on any particular activity per week was seven and that most of the organizations tended to spend just one hour per week on any single activity.

TABLE 4: TIME SPENT PER WEEK ON SPECIFIC RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES BY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE

Activities	Hours spent								Mean	Mode	Median
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
Choir practice	*38	17	34	8	1	2	0	0	1.3	0	1.2
Prayer meetings	27	9	8	6	1	33	11	4	3	5	3.4
Sunday School	38	57	1	3	0	0	0	0	0.73	1	0.71
Bible/Koran studies	28	58	8	1	2	2	0	1	1.03	1	0.88
Men's meetings	30	65	4	1	0	0	0	0	0.76	1	0.81
Women's meetings	61	35	3	0	0	0	0	0	0.42	0	0.32
Youth meetings	83	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.18	0	0.11
Church service	14	67	8	0	0	2	0	8	1.54	1	1.04
Baptism and confirmation class	58	15	19	7	1	0	0	0	0.79	0	0.37
Visits to the sick	31	10	23	14	17	4	0	0	1.89	0	1.87

(*These figures represent the percentage of religious organizations Spending the indicated time for the activity mentioned.)

**TABLE 5: TOTAL TIME SPENT ON ALL RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES
BY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AREAS OF OYO STATE**

Hours per week	% Organization Spending
0 – 7	14
8 – 14	63
15 – 21	22
Over 22	1

N = 212
Mean = 12 hours
Mode = 13 hours
Media = 12 hours

On the whole, it was found that the religious organizations spent an average of 12 hours per week or less than two hours per day on formal religious activities; and this varied between denominations with the christian nativist churches spending more time on formal religious activities and the moslems spending the least. This variation was not significantly related to location. In other words, urban or rural location was not significantly related to the amount of time spent on religious activities by the organizations

Community Development Activities Carried out by the Religious Organizations

The religious leaders were asked to indicate whether their organizations have ever embarked upon any of the following development activities for the community: support or operation of schools, award of scholarships, operation of farms or other economic enterprise, support or operation of hospitals or health centres, support or operation of disabled people's homes, spiritual healing, adult literacy classes and support or execution of any other form of community development activity. Where the response was positive, the respondents scored two points and where negative, he scored zero. A "community development activity score" was thus arrived at by adding up the total scores. This ranged from 0 to 18. Table 6 shows the results. The religious organizations appeared most active in establishing and supporting schools as 46 percent of them indicated having undertaken this singular activity. However, the community development activity score

was generally poor (Table 7) with a deplorable mean of 1.9 and mode of 0. Further analysis showed that the rural religious organizations scored much lower than the urban ones, and that the nativist churches scored lowest while the foreign christian organizations scored highest.

To further probe the contributions of the religious organizations to the development of the communities of their location, the leaders were asked to name the specific development activities they have carried out since their respective organizations were established in the

TABLE 6: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT/ACTIVITY UNDERTAKEN BY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE

Project/Activity	Number and Percentage of Organizations Answering (N = 212)			
	Yes	%	No	%
Schools	97	46	115	54
Scholarship	22	10	190	90
Economic enterprise	6	3	206	97
Hospital/Health Centres	10	5	202	95
Daycare Centres	9	4	203	96
Disabled People's Homes	9	4	203	96
Spiritual healing	22	10	190	90
Adult literacy classes	15	7	197	93
Other	4	2	208	98

community. Again, 36 percent mentioned schools while 34 percent said they had done nothing and 8 percent mentioned conversion and/or spiritual healing.

**TABLE 7: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY SCORE OF
RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS
OF OYO STATE**

Number of Religious Leaders Responding (N = 212)	%	Activity Score
97	46	0
80	38	2
14	7	4
8	4	6
5	2	8
4	2	10
2	1	12
2	1	18

Mean Community Development Activity Score = 1.9; Mode = 0.

The religious leaders were also asked to indicate whether members of their congregations and other community members do consult them for advice on farming, health, business, educational, political and family problems. A positive answer was scored two while a negative answer was scored zero. The total score (ranging from 0 – 12) constituted an “advisory activity score” measuring the extent to which the religious leaders serve as advisers, enablers, experts and friends to community members.

Table 8 shows that most of the religious leaders usually advise or offer assistance to their community members on diverse problems. The advisory activity scores (Table 9) were generally higher compared to the community development activity scores. This indicates that these leaders serve more useful purpose as advisers within the community in which they serve.

Finally, the religious leaders were asked to indicate what their congregations were planning to do in the next five years which would contribute to the development of the community and improvement of the conditions of their members.

TABLE 8: ADVISORY ROLES OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE

Type of Advice Sought	Number of Religious Leaders Responding (N = 212)			
	Yes	%	No	%
Farming	183	86	29	14
Health	204	96	8	4
Business	185	87	27	13
Education	200	94	12	6
Politics	162	97	50	24
Family problem	202	95	10	5

TABLE 9: ADVISORY ACTIVITY SCORE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE

Number of Religious Leaders Responding (N = 212)	%	Advisory Activity Score
2	1	0
4	2	2
5	2	4
6	4	6
8	13	8
10	57	10
12	21	12

Mean Advisory Activity Score = 9.5; Mode = 10.0

Nearly one third of them indicated that they had no specific plans; eight percent said they will provide some social amenities; 14 percent said they would build schools; 21 percent said they would embark upon some community development projects which they could not yet specify while 17 percent said they hoped to build new church building (Table 10). The religious leaders were then asked whether they felt their organizations were presently serving their communities adequately, and if they felt otherwise, how they think the communities could benefit more from them.

To the preceeding questions, 67 percent responded that their organizations were currently serving their communities adequately while the rest felt they could have done better. Among those who felt their services were inadequate, four percent felt they should provide some social amenities like water and light to the community. About 11 percent felt they could build schools while the same proportion felt they could contribute more by merely praying for peace in the communities.

TABLE 10: PROJECTED PLAN FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY OVER A FIVE-YEAR PERIOD BY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE

Planned Project	Number of Respondents	%
None	63	30
Social amenities	17	8
Build schools	30	14
Train our preachers	4	2
Economic enterprise	17	8
Community development projects (unspecified)	44	21
Evangelism	1	0
Build new church buildings	36	17

Problems of the Organizations as seen by their leaders

The leaders were asked to enumerate some of the problems facing their organizations in the communities in which they are located. As shown in Table 11, only 14 percent of the respondents said they had no particular problems. A great majority, (63 percent) said that

lack of money was their problem. This singular problem was only distantly followed by the problem of competition for membership among the various religious organizations (13%).

**TABLE 11: PROBLEMS OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS
IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE AS SEEN
BY THEIR LEADERS**

Problem	Number of Respondents	%
No problem or no answer	30	14.0
Acute competition for membership	28	13.0
Lack of money	133	63.0
Government interference	4	2.0
Lack of trained pastors	3	1.4
Land problems	3	1.4
Migration of youths	7	3.3
Poor attendance	3	1.4
Theft of church property	1	0.5
Total	212	100

Lack of money identified as the major problem is thus related to poor membership which in turn, is related to instability of rural population due to migration. This leads to competition for membership among the various religious organizations in a particular community. Lack of trained pastors may also lead to loss of members and/or poor attendance.

Conservatism of the Religious Organizations

There are a variety of ways by which conservatism could be defined and measured. In this study, conservatism was defined in terms of the degree to which the religious organizations encourage, discourage, or remain indifferent to certain practices by their members which could otherwise be regarded as profane or a deviation from sacred values and norms. These practices included the taking of drugs and hospital treatment; singing of the national anthem and reciting the national pledge; joining political parties; marrying outside the denomi-

nation; running a business enterprise; attending and hosting dance parties; joining traditional secret societies; acquiring wealth; working on holy days smoking, drinking and allowing women to wear short gowns and trousers.

An earlier test of the above items using the psychometric method, showed a relatively high intercorrelation ($r = .67$). Responses were scored on a Likert-type scale with 'encourage' given three points, 'indifferent', two points and 'discourage' one point. The total points scored therefore, constituted the "conservatism score". None of the organizations scored the maximum of 36 points while none also scored the minimum of 12. Instead, the scores ranged from 15 to 30.

Table 12 shows that 50 percent of the religious organizations could be described as very conservative, 42 percent as liberal and 8 percent as very liberal. When these scores were analysed on the basis of the types of religious organizations using chi-square, a significant relationship (at $p \leq .01$) was found between level of conservatism and the type of religious organizations. The christian nativist churches were the most liberal followed by the moslems while the most conservative were the foreign christian organizations.

TABLE 12: THE CONSERVATISM SCORES OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE

Range of Scores	Number of Respondents	%
15 – 18	45	21
19 – 21	61	29
22 – 24	41	19
25 – 27	49	23
28 – 30	16	8
Total	212	100
Mean = 21.9	Mode = 21	Median = 21

The Local People's Views About Religious Organizations

As already mentioned, 614 community residents most of which were members of various religious organizations, were randomly selected and interviewed on their opinions on the contributions of religious organizations to the development of their communities. The results are treated hereunder.

Characteristics of the Respondents

The data revealed that 99 percent of those interviewed actually belonged to one religious organization or the other. Out of these, 35 percent belonged to the foreign christian churches, 34 percent belonged to the christian nativist churches while 30 percent were moslems. About 75 percent of these respondents were baptised and confirmed members of their religious organizations while only ten percent were not. Most of them (79 percent) have held membership of their organizations for over 20 years. The mean duration of membership was 31 years and the mode, 30 years. Also, 77 percent indicated that they were natives of the communities in which they were interviewed. About 38 percent were farmers; 23 percent, retail traders; 36 percent, lower white collar workers and artisans; and less than one percent, higher white collar job workers. With regards to level of education, 53 percent were illiterates, 29 percent had the primary level of education and 17 percent, post primary.

Asked why they joined the particular religious organizations each belonged to, 60 percent said their parents and other members of the family belonged to such organizations and so they followed them. Others were either brought in by circumstances of ill-health, schooling or marriage (Table 13).

TABLE 13: RESPONDENTS' REASONS FOR JOINING THEIR PARTICULAR RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE

Reasons	Number of Respondents	%
Attracted by uniform and manner of conducting service	92	15
Family members belong there	365	60
It is the only true church	61	10
Health and other problems brought me in	72	12
I was converted in the course of schooling	5	1
I was called into the group	5	1
My spouse brought me in	8	1
Total	608	100

Perceived Personal Benefits from Religious Organization

The respondents were asked to mention some specific benefits which they think they have derived from their religious organizations. The various responses are grouped into ten categories as shown in Table 14. As shown in the table, about a quarter of the respondents felt their organizations have brought them nearer to God. This benefit was only closely followed by education gained through schools established by the religious organizations. Other types of benefits perceived included material blessings, change in habits and behaviour, peace of mind, spiritual healing, gift of spouse and children and opportunity to travel to Mecca. Only three percent of the respondents could not say exactly whether they have gained anything.

Respondents were further asked to indicate whether they do look up to their religious organizations for assistance during illness scholarship for themselves or members of their families; financial assistance in times of great need; business capital, visits and comfort during ill-health; settlement of family quarrels and information on political matters. A positive answer to any of these was scored two points while

TABLE 14: PERCEIVED BENEFITS FROM RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION BY LOCAL PEOPLE IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE

Benefits	Number of Respondents	%
No benefit or cannot tell	18	2.9
Nearness to God	165	26.9
Material blessings	84	13.7
Spiritual healing	51	8.3
Spiritual powers	10	1.6
Peace of mind	58	9.5
Education	126	20.5
Gift of spouse and children	40	6.5
Change in habit/behaviour	59	9.6
Opportunity to go to Mecca	3	0.5
Total.	614	100.0

a negative response was scored zero. The total score for each individual respondent constituted the "expectation score" and this was supposed to measure the extent to which the religious organizations care for the material and social needs of their members.

Table 15 shows that the religious organizations in the areas investigated were playing their traditional roles of providing succour in times of trouble but have been least effective in the enhancement of the economic potentials of their members. The religious organizations also tend to shy away from involvement in political activities; and thus their members do not look up to them for advice or guidance in that respect. Although education seems to be the area of greatest contribution by the religious organizations to community development, a majority of their members do not look up to them for scholarship awards apparently because the government has taken over such responsibility substantially for quite some time.

Respondents Perception of the Religious Organization's Present Contributions to the Development of their Communities:

Respondents were asked to indicate what in their opinion, their various congregations have done to develop their communities. The responses were grouped into seven categories as shown in Table 17. Again; the greatest contribution identified was in the area of education through the building of schools. This was only followed distantly by the building of churches and mosques and the conversion of people into the various faiths.

TABLE 15: ASSISTANCE EXPECTED FROM RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE BY THEIR MEMBERS

Nature of Assistance	Number* Expecting	Number not Expecting	% Expecting
Assistance during ill-health	589	* 25	95
Scholarship for self or family member			

**TABLE 16: EXPECTATION SCORE OF RESPONDENTS FROM
TABLE 15**

Expectation Score	Frequency (N = 614)	%
0	19	3
2 – 4	8	1
6 – 8	157	26
10 – 12	298	49
14 – 16	132	21

Mean = 10 Median = 10; Mode = 10.

**TABLE 17: CONTRIBUTIONS OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION TO
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AS PERCEIVED BY THE LOCAL
PEOPLE IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE**

Nature of Contribution	Number of Respondents	%
Do not know or can not tell	45	7
Building of church/mosque	85	14
Establishment of schools	353	57
Spiritual healing	49	8
Unifying the community	10	2
Conversion of people	71	12
Establishment of commercial enterprise	1	
Total	614	100

How Respondents Expect their Religious Organizations to Contribute to the Development of their Communities

When asked to indicate ways by which their religious organizations could further help in the development of their communities, it was quite interesting to note that most of the respondents tended to de-

emphasize spiritual things and to call on their organizations to contribute also to their physical well-being. Table 18 shows that 28 percent mentioned schools, hospitals and support for the poor, while 26 percent called for the establishment economic enterprises.

TABLE 18: LOCAL PEOPLE'S EXPECTATION OF CONTRIBUTION TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE

Nature of Contribution	Number of Respondents	%
Nothing or no answer	35	6
Schools, hospitals and support of the poor	169	28
Establishment of economic enterprise	162	26
Provide water, electricity and good roads	62	10
Train their pastors and uplift the church	54	9
Adult education programme	14	2
Prayers and healing of the sick	44	7
Direct monetary contribution to community development projects	74	12
Total	614	100

The Problems of Religious Organizations as Perceived by Members

Respondents were asked to enumerate what in their own opinions are the problems which their congregations were facing which prevent them from contributing more to the development of their communities. The responses varied and were therefore grouped into eight categories as shown in Table 19.

Seventeen percent of the respondents indicated that their organizations had no problems. This observation might either be an indication of the respondents' unwillingness to commit themselves or a sign of their insufficient familiarity with the goings on in their religious organizations. It should be observed that in Table 11, 14 percent of the religious organization leaders also either said they had no problems or refused to make comments – apparently to avoid implicating either themselves or their congregations.

However, as was noted from the religious leaders, lack of money was indentified by a greater majority of the respondents. Generally, the problems identified by the people were quite identical to those identified by the religious leaders showing that they are the actual problems faced by the organizations.

TABLE 19: PROBLEMS OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN SIX LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF OYO STATE AS SEEN BY THEIR MEMBERS

Problems	Number of Respondents	%
No problems	106	17
Lack of money	227	37
Lack of cooperation	71	12
Poor membership	38	6
Competition with other churches	52	8
Lack of trained pastors and lack of understanding Arabic language	55	9
Migration of members	30	5
Lack of governmental support	36	6
Total	614	100

Discussion

Earlier on in the justification of this study, it was maintained that religious institutions often lay the foundations of meaning on which social orders are constructed. In order to effectively play this role of creating a world view, religious organizations require highly qualified informed, dynamic and motivated leaders.. Similarly, it has been observed by Slocum (1962) that the survival of rural churches as community-oriented institutions depends to a large extent, upon the services they perform for their constituents. These, in turn, are seriously affected by the resources of the congregation in terms of the active membership and financial support. Small churches are obviously unable to provide

the same set of services which larger ones provide, neither are they able to attract and retain professional leadership of the same quality. The present study shows that these rural based religious organizations are grossly handicapped as effective instruments of community development because of their sizes, leadership and quality of membership.

The findings also go to confirm a 1935 study by Douglas and Burner in the United States which found that small villages with 500 persons or less tend to have 2.5 to three times as many churches per 100 persons as larger villages and towns. This situation often results in poorer rather than better service to the community as a whole arising from excessive competition for membership between various congregations. This competition disrupts community solidarity and aggravates factional differences. In this way, religious organizations tend to destroy instead of creating or developing community consciousness.

A situation where a large majority of religious organizations do not have plans for the development of the communities in which they are located is, of course, not propitious for the communities concerned. With the taking over of responsibility for the establishment and support of schools in the area of investigation by the government, religious organizations should define other directions for community development for themselves.

A multiplicity of religious organizations in a community detracts from rather than enhance effective community service. Religious organizations within a particular community can live out their ideal of love by fostering cooperative relationships between themselves and with other local organizations in the joint planning and execution of community projects. The problem of proliferation of denominations and sects therefore calls for further investigation as to its causes and the possible workable manner of religious organizations integration. The overarching implication here is that until such causes are established and remedies found, the contributions of religious organizations to rural community development in Nigeria might become very negligible in the future, particularly in those states where the responsibility for the basic needs of health and education have been taken over by the government.

Acknowledgement

The Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ife supported this study through its Western Nigeria Marketing Board Research Grant.

Mr. D. O. Oyeyemi of the Department of Agricultural Extension and

Rural Sociology helped in interpreting the research instrument into Yoruba while Messrs J. O. Owolabi and Adesoji Adeeso helped with data collection. The Archdeacon of Anglican Church, Ile-Ife, Reverend Akinbamijo assisted tremendously in getting all the chairmen in the Archdeaconry to accept being interviewed. The leaders of the religious organizations also cooperated in freely answering questions during the interviews.

References

- Biddle, W. W' and Biddle, L. J. 1965. *The Community Development Process: The Rediscovery of Local Initiative*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., New York, 344 pp.
- Demerath III, N. J. 1968. Trends and anti-trends in religious change, pp 344—445. In E. B. Sheldon and W. E. Moore (eds). *Indicators of Social Change*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York. 344 pp.
- Dougl  s, H.P. and des Brunner, E. 1935. *The Protestant Church as a Social Institution*. Harper, New York. 300 pp.
- Glock, C. Y., and Stark, R. 1965. *Religion and Society in Tension*. Rand McNally and Co., Chicago. 320 pp.
- Loomis, C. P. and Beegle, J. A. 1957. *Rural Sociology: The Strategy of Change*, Prentice Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N. J., U.S.A. 488 pp.
- Needham, J. 1956. *Science and Civilization in China* Cambridge University Press, U.K. 696 pp.
- Slocum, W. L. 1962. *Agricultural Sociology*. Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York. 532 pp.
- Weber, M. 1963. *The Sociology of Religion*, Beacon Press, tr Ephraim Fischhoff, Boston. 384 pp.
- Yinger, M. J. 1970. *The Scientific Study of Religion*. Cromwell-Collier and Mac-Millan, New York. 480 pp.