

Government Sponsorship of Pilgrimage in Nigeria: The Implication to a Challenging Economy

Charles Chidi Eleonu Phd, Madume, Winston

Dept. of Public Administration, Port Harcourt Polytechnic, Rivers State, Nigeria

Abstract - In Nigeria, over 7.9 Billion naira concession was given by the federal government of Nigeria for sponsorship of pilgrims. This has been condemned by many Nigerians for it is viewed as a reckless spending and as wasteful in the face of the Nigerian challenging economy today. The argument is that there are roads, schools, hospitals and lacking infrastructure to be built. People of Nigeria need good, portable drinking water and good rail, water, and air transport systems. Spending on pilgrimage may have more adverse effects on the economy and on the welfare of the generality of the Nigerian people. Government wealth is for the entire Nigerian populace and such wealth must be used in a way that the entire populace will benefit. At this critical time Nigeria's problems when solved will bring back the battered, disfigured image. Pilgrimage is about spirituality. Most people find their spiritual life intricately linked to their association with a church, temple, mosque and synagogue or in performing a pilgrimage. The paper observes that outright cancellation of government sponsorship of pilgrims may produce negative results on the citizen's spirituality. Not sponsoring pilgrims may not be a way to improve government's financial stand. It could be a turning away from God. The paper therefore recommends selected sponsorship of devoted clerics and religious faithful.

Keywords: Pilgrimage, Sponsorship, Challenging, Economy, Concession

I. INTRODUCTION

For decades there has been an increase in the number of people who go to pilgrimage to Jerusalem or Mecca especially among the Christian and Muslim religion faithful. This activity increases the level of exposure and integration among people from an angle of spirituality. The 2016 Nigeria outlook shows slow economic recovery though some reforms and measures begin to take effect to boost the economy. Some specific reforms pursued by the new administration are to lay a foundation for renewed growth. The key reforms include the rationalisation of the public sector in order to cut the cost of governance, enforcement of the single treasury account to block financial leakages, renewed efforts at enforcement of tax compliance, preparation for zero-budgeting starting in 2016 and increasing the ratio of capital and recurrent expenditure to 30:70. The military has stepped up the fight against the Boko Haram insurgency but the humanitarian situation has continued to deteriorate.

The number of internally displaced persons is estimated at over 2 million, located mainly in the cities where conditions are safer. Both the government and development partners continue to explore additional ways of improving the

situation. Sustainable cities can only be driven by structural transformation if there is an integrated approach to urban planning. The African Development Bank Group 2016 explains it is expected that the Federal Ministry of Power, Works and Housing will review the urban development policy and work with other line ministries to improve service delivery and chart a way forward for tapping into the opportunities provided by the growth of cities in Nigeria. Lagos is one of the seven mega-cities in Africa and has a high potential for innovation and job creation opportunities in sectors such as construction, information communications and technology (ICT) and retail trade.

The federal government approval of over 7.9 Billion Naira concessions for pilgrims has generated heated debate by Nigerians and many are on the side of protest. Brinali raised a question asking why Nigeria should pay billions in waivers to sponsor Nigerian Hajj. Basically this paper examines the constitutional provision for sponsorship of pilgrimage in Nigeria and its implication to national development especially now that Nigeria suffers a high level of economic recession. The thinking is that the federal and state governments will need to spend the necessary resources on more meaningful projects like providing and improving the needed infrastructure across our country Nigeria.

II. BACKGROUND OF NIGERIAN ECONOMY

The economy of Nigeria historically was based on agriculture, and about 70% of the workforce is still engaged in subsistence type of farming. The chief crops are cocoa, peanuts, palm oil, corn, rice, sorghum, millet, soybeans, cassava, yams, and rubber. In addition, cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs are raised. Petroleum is the leading mineral produced in Nigeria and provides about 95% of foreign exchange earnings and the majority of government revenues. It is found in the Niger delta and in the bights of Benin and Biafra. Petroleum production on an appreciable scale began in the late 1950s. Nonetheless, both refinery capacity and agriculture have not kept pace with population growth, forcing the nation to import refined petroleum products and food. Other minerals extracted include tin, iron ore, coal, limestone, columbite, lead, zinc, and gold. The United States is by far the largest trading partner, followed by China, Brazil, Spain, and Great Britain.

In 2012 Nigeria stood as a middle income, mixed economy and emerging market, with expanding financial, service, communications, technology and entertainment

sectors. It was ranked as the 21st largest economy in the world in terms of nominal GDP and the 20th largest in terms of purchasing power parity. It is the largest economy in Africa, its re-emergent though currently underperforming manufacturing sector is the third-largest on the continent. It produces a large proportion of goods and services for the West African sub-region. Nigeria recently changed its economic analysis to account for rapidly growing contributors to its GDP such as telecommunications, banking and its film industry.

Nigeria was previously hindered by years of mismanagement. Economic reforms of the past decade put Nigeria back on track towards achieving its full economic potential. Nigerian GDP at purchasing power parity (PPP) tripled from \$170 billion in 2000 to estimated \$630 billion in 2012. Correspondingly, the GDP per capita doubled from \$1400 per person in 2000 to an estimated \$3,900 per person in 2012. Population increased from 120 million in 2000 to 160 million in 2010.

Nigeria has pursued economic reforms to enhance management of public finance and make business regulations more efficient. However, the oil sector continues to dominate the economy, and the structural changes needed for broad-based development have not been forthcoming. Progress on privatization has been limited. Examining Nigeria's economic freedom snapshot shows that 2016 economic freedom score is at 57.5 about 1.9 points. Economic freedom status is mostly not free, the global ranking is 116th and the regional ranking is 20th in Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2016 notable successes are trade freedom and management of public finance. Areas of concerns include rule of law, open markets, and regulatory efficiency and the overall score change since 2012 is +1.2

In 2015, recent economic growth has not translated into real gains for most Nigerians. Job creation has been impeded by bureaucratic rigidity and corruption in the economy and these are causing increased frustration among underemployed youth. With the judicial system susceptible to political interference, the rule of law is weak. In May 2015, during Nigeria's first peaceful transfer of power among parties, former military ruler Muhammadu Buhari emerged as President at the polls. Ever since critical challenges include an Islamist insurgency and budgetary shortfalls due to plunging oil prices. Boko Haram attacks have continued, primarily in the northeast Nigeria, and further intense instability is prevalent in the oil-rich Niger Delta region.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and leading oil producer, has Sub-Saharan Africa's second-largest natural gas reserves. Despite efforts to diversify, the economy remains heavily dependent on oil. In 2014, Nigeria surpassed South Africa as Africa's largest economy, but an estimated 61 percent of Nigerians live in extreme poverty. In 2015 the government said that it would conduct a forensic audit of state-owned Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation after allegations that \$20 billion in oil revenue had gone missing in

recent years. This means corruption remains pervasive, and efforts to reduce graft have been inadequate.

The judiciary has some independence but is hobbled by political interference, corruption, and inadequate funding. Protection of property rights is weak and the top individual income tax rate is 24 percent and the top corporate tax rate is 30 percent. Other taxes include a value-added tax and a capital gains tax. The overall tax burden equals 3.1 percent of total domestic income. Government spending amounts to 13.4 percent of total domestic output and public debt remains below 20 percent of GDP. The minimum capital requirement for starting a business has been eliminated, but licensing costs are still over four times the average annual income. The public and energy sectors employ much of the formal labour force, and an increase in the minimum wage has reduced hiring flexibility.

The IMF reported in 2015 that in response to lower global oil prices, the government should cut fuel subsidies by 1 percent of GDP. Nigeria's average tariff rate is 10.1 percent. Meat and poultry imports are restricted. Foreign investors face regulatory and judicial barriers. The government's import substitution policy interferes with trade and investment flows. Financial-sector reform is ongoing, but the state continues to influence the allocation of credit. Measures to improve access to finance for local small and medium-sized companies have been introduced but not feasible.

In 2016 Nigeria's economy is struggling to leverage the country's vast wealth in fossil fuels in order to displace the poverty that affects about 33% of its population. Economists refer to the coexistence of vast wealth in natural resources and extreme personal poverty in developing countries like Nigeria as the "resource curse". Resource curse is more widely understood to mean an abundance of natural resources which fuels official corruption resulting in a violent competition for the resources by the citizens of the nation. Nigeria's exports of oil and natural gas at a time of peak prices have enabled the country to post merchandise trade and current account surpluses in recent years. So, 80% of Nigeria's energy revenues flows to the government, 16% cover operational costs, and the remaining 4% go to investors but in this 2016, there is financial dryness due to shortage of oil supply.

The World Bank has estimated that as a result of corruption 80% of energy revenues benefit only 1% of the population. Outside of the energy sector, Nigeria's economy is highly inefficient. Moreover, human capital is underdeveloped and Nigeria is ranked 151 out of countries in the United Nations Development Index in 2004, and the non-energy-related infrastructure is inadequate. The largely subsistence agricultural sector has not kept up with rapid population growth, and Nigeria once a large net exporter of food, now imports a large quantity of its food products. According to a Citigroup report published in February 2011, Nigeria will get the highest average GDP growth in the world between 2010 and 2050.

III. OVERVIEW OF SPIRITUALITY

According to Thomas Merton, spirituality is a broad concept with room for many perspectives. In general spirituality includes, a sense of connection to something bigger than humans, and it typically involves a search for meaning in life. As such, it is a universal human experience, something that touches us all mankind. People describe a spiritual experience as sacred or transcendent or simply a deep sense of aliveness and interconnectedness. The origin of spirituality comes from root words in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek which all means wind, breath or air, that which gives life.

An overview of spirituality may refer it to mean almost any kind of meaningful activity, especially a search for the sacred. It may also refer to personal growth, blissful experience, or an encounter with one's own inner dimension. Spirituality has been defined in numerous ways, including a belief in a power operating in the universe that is greater than oneself, a sense of interconnectedness with all living creatures, and an awareness of the purpose and meaning of life and the development of personal values. It is the way you find a meaning, hope, comfort, and inner peace in your life. Although spirituality is often associated with religion, personal spirituality can also be developed through music, art or a connection with nature. People also find spirituality through acts of compassion and selflessness, altruism, and the experience of inner peace. Many advanced nations are becoming interested in the role of spirituality in their health and health care, perhaps because of dissatisfaction with the impersonal nature of our current medical system, and the realization that medical science does not have answers to every question about health and wellness.

Spirituality and Wellbeing

In most healing traditions, and in the beginnings of Western medicine, concerns of the body and spirit were intertwined. But with the coming of the scientific revolution and enlightenment, these considerations were removed from the medical system. Today however, a growing number of studies reveal that spirituality may play a bigger role in the healing process than the medical community previously thought. Spirituality does influence health. Spiritual practices tend to improve coping skills and social support, foster feelings of optimism and hope, promote healthy behaviour, reduce feelings of depression and anxiety, and encourage a sense of relaxation. By alleviating stressful feelings and promoting healing ones, spirituality can positively influence immune, cardiovascular (heart and blood vessels), hormonal, and nervous systems. Those who follow strict religion are particularly instructed by their Church not to consume alcohol, eat pork, or smoke tobacco. Again, the health benefits of religion and spirituality do not stem solely from healthy lifestyles. Many certain beliefs, attitudes, and practices associated with being a spiritual person influence health and total wellbeing.

Qualities like faith, hope, and forgiveness, and the use of social support and prayer seem to have a noticeable effect on health and healing. A person's most deeply held beliefs strongly influence his or her health. Faith increases the body's resistance to stress. Without hope, a positive attitude that a person assumes in the face of difficulty, many people become depressed and prone to illness. A practice that is encouraged by many spiritual and religious traditions, forgiveness is a release of hostility and resentment from past hurts. Studies show that a close network of family and friends that lends help and emotional support offers protection against many diseases. Researchers believe that people who experience love and support tend to resist unhealthy behaviours and feel less stressed. Researchers concluded that the strong social support network helped protect this population from heart disease.

The activity of putting oneself in the presence of or conversing with a higher power has been used as a means of healing across all cultures throughout the ages. Today, many believe that prayer is an important part of daily life. In a 1996 poll, people who were prayed for showed general improvements in the course of their illness, less complications, and even fewer deaths.

IV. THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION AND GOVERNMENT SPONSORSHIP OF PILGRIMAGE

There is no such provision in the Nigerian constitution mandating the government at all levels to sponsor pilgrims. Pilgrimage is for citizens who can afford the exercise. Brinali (2016) stated that there is no such provision under the Nigerian constitution. The Nigerian Constitution provides the freedom of thought, conscience and religion as a fundamental human right. Under the Constitution, everyone has the right to observe, practice and adhere to his or her own religious creed, in private and in public in so far as such practices do not infringe upon the fundamental human rights of individuals. The constitutional guarantee was dictated by the multi-ethnic nature of the Nigerian State where the multifarious ethnic nature of the Nigerians, irrespective of their religious inclinations, ethnic backgrounds and languages are free to interact and live in any part of Nigeria. The Constitution does not impose a state religion on any individual, as it is done in theocratic States. Nigeria is a secular State.

Pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred place. A pilgrimage is a term primarily used in religion and spirituality of a long journey or search of great moral significance. In order to facilitate annual pilgrimages to Mecca and Jerusalem, the federal and state government established the Pilgrims Welfare Boards in the states that profess the two orthodox religions in Nigeria, Christianity and Islam. But nowhere in the Constitution is it stated that government shall be responsible for sponsoring pilgrimages to the holy land in either religions. It is not an obligation but a duty done by adherents of both religions themselves.

It is believed that President Buhari is strengthening the separation of the church and mosque from the state. This

will have a spill-over effect across Nigeria and Africa. While we support efforts of the government to stop all sorts of wastage in government expenditures, others oppose attempts to classify sponsoring of pilgrimage to the holy lands as a waste. What is expected is sensitization of the sponsoring of the pilgrims to make sure that poor devotees and deserving religious clergymen are beneficiaries of this very important religious obligation.

According to PM News Nigeria, Buhari is to end federal government sponsorship of pilgrimage to Israel and Saudi Arabia, noting that pilgrims will now have to sponsor themselves on the holy trip. Buhari's decision to end the sponsorship was made known by John-Kennedy Opara, the Executive Secretary of Nigerian Christian Pilgrims Commission (NCPC). Opara quoted Muhammadu Buhari saying the president will continue to encourage the Commission as it moves towards self-sustenance. According to Opara President Buhari agreed to encourage the two religious bodies to become self-sustaining by making pilgrims to pay their pilgrimage bills and thus remove government's sponsorship. President Buhari had approved one dollar to N160 for the concessional exchange rate for 2016 pilgrimage operation. He agreed to encourage (NCPC) to drive to self-sustenance and to make sure that the pilgrims are able to pay for their pilgrimage.

Some Christian and Muslim clerics across the country have expressed divergent views on government's sponsorship of pilgrimage. While some urged government at all levels to continue with the sponsorship of pilgrims, others were of the view that the exercise was a waste of public fund. Cross section of clerics and religious faithful in Bauchi, Yobe, Gombe, Adamawa, Ondo, Kwara, Calabar, Ilorin, Kano, Kaduna, Akure, Yenogoa, and Jigawa advocated the partial or complete disengagement of government in pilgrimage affairs. In separate interviews with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) some Nigerian people said such a step had become necessary, especially in view of the prevailing economic realities.

Others however said, disengaging completely could be counter-productive and could expose pilgrims to shyness Travels Agents in the country and abroad. Alhaji Ibrahim Musa, a Muslim cleric in Damaturu, said there must be officials to guide pilgrims and provide essential services. He suggested that only those whose services were essential should be sponsored to reduce cost. Aliyu Mohammed, a Muslim cleric and regular visitor to Saudi Arabia, observed it would be dangerous to leave pilgrims at the mercy of travel agents both at home and while in Saudi Arabia or Jerusalem. Some of the independent travel agents engage in dubious activities and defraud pilgrims, especially those travelling out of their localities for the first time. Olumba Olumba Obu, the Sole Spiritual Leader of the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star (BCS), in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Calabar, urged government to continue with the sponsorship. Obu viewed that there was nothing wrong in

government sponsorship of individuals to pilgrimage and called for the extension of the gesture to people of other religions apart from the Christianity and Islam. In his words, "I do not see anything wrong in government sponsorship of individuals to pilgrimage especially as pilgrimage is faith-based".

The Chief Imam of Uyo Central Mosque in Akwa Ibom state, Alhaji Imam Adamu advised government to discontinue sponsorship of people to pilgrimage. Adamu opined that pilgrimage was a religious exercise that should be embarked upon by individuals who were able to do so, adding that it was in line with Islam and Christian injunctions. He alleged that the greatest beneficiaries of government sponsorship of pilgrimage were government officials, who appropriate huge sum of money to the pilgrims' board. Pilgrimage is a religious exercise, which is personal. It is the fifth pillar of Islam and the Holy Quran says only those who can afford the expenses to the Holy land could perform the pilgrimage. Akinlolu Lawrence, Chairman Ondo State Christian Welfare Board, told News Agency of Nigeria in Akure that Christian pilgrimage was basically meant to enable the beneficiaries turn a new leaf and directly reflect on their immediate environment for change.

Similarly, Abdurashheed Ajifowowe, the Chairman of Ondo State Muslim Welfare Board, described pilgrimage to Mecca, otherwise known as Hajj, as a compulsory rite for individual Muslims who could afford the cost. Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam and it is more or less compulsory for Muslims who have the financial capacity to undertake it. Mrs. Olusola Odetunde, a newly sponsored pilgrim by the state government, urged government to continue with sponsorship of Christian and Muslim pilgrims to their respective holy lands. Alhaji Rafi'u Ayedun, Chairman, Ansar-ud-deen Muslim Society of Nigeria, Kano state, explained that funds spent by government to sponsor either Christians or Muslims to Mecca or Israel should be channeled to provide good roads, water and electricity for the masses. He pointed that though pilgrimage for Muslims was one of the fundamental pillars of Islam, it was not compulsory for those who could not afford to undertake the journey. He stated the pilgrimage exercise, apart from its religious fulfillment, helped the economies of Saudi Arabia and Israel where pilgrims troop to yearly.

Also, Chief Imam of Gandun Albasa Mosque, Kano, Sheik Abdullahi Sagir kicked against government sponsorship of people to pilgrimage, saying the practice was "unnecessary spending which affects the economy of any state. But the Chief Imam of Nupe Central Mosque Kaduna, Malam Nafi'u Muhammad, According to him, there was nothing wrong in government sponsorship of people for pilgrimage. Muhammad insisted that government should take interest in the health and accommodation of its citizens who travel to other countries to perform religious rites because some of the pilgrims use the opportunity to pray for the peace and stability of the country. Muhammad recommended that the only thing government should not encourage is extravagancy and that

government should also be firm in regulating the annual pilgrimages, he said.

A Christian Cleric in Bayelsa state, Evangelist James Sunday of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Days Saint, Yenogoa, urged government to discontinue sponsorship of pilgrimage. Government must overhaul the system of sponsorship because people going for the pilgrimage are just going to enrich themselves. Those ones are not the true believers of the Almighty God. Pilgrimage is not supposed to be a fun tour. Another cleric Samuel Emereonye of the Assemblies of God Church, Ovom, Yenogoa, also called for the stoppage of sponsorship of people to pilgrimage by State and Federal governments. A university lecturer, DrJide Kamaldeen, described religion as a private matter, saying that sponsoring people on pilgrimage was therefore a misplaced priority.

Malam Abdullahi Damare, the Co-chairman of North East Interfaith Mediation Centre in Yola, called for the review of government sponsorship of pilgrimage to the holy lands. Damare opined that the government's gesture had been subjected to abuse, and as such no longer desirable. A Christian cleric in Yola, Pastor Emmanuel Njaprim, said sponsorship was in order but government needed to check abuses in the exercise. Njaprim observed that performing the pilgrimage helped a lot in promoting the fear of God. Alhaji Aliyu Suleiman, Executive Secretary, Bauchi State Muslims Pilgrim Welfare Board, said that an average of 2,700 pilgrims performed Hajj annually. According to him, of this figure about 2,450 sponsor themselves while government sponsors 250. He said before the advent of the present administration in the state, 850 people were being sponsored, thereby placing a heavy burden on the economy of the state. Suleiman was against total disengagement of government in pilgrimage affairs, saying the measure would not be in the best interest of the people and the state as related to their spirituality.

Martins John, a Bauchi resident urged government to discontinue sponsorship of pilgrims. John insisted this step was necessary, especially considering the present economic situation in the country. Ishaya Maleka, Executive Secretary, Bauchi State Christian Pilgrims Welfare Board opined that partial sponsorship of people on pilgrimage is better. Government should partially support pilgrims and not complete funding, considering the economic realities on ground. Daniel Musa, Permanent Secretary, Gombe State Ministry of Higher Education, also suggested the partial sponsorship of pilgrims. He agreed that the burden of complete sponsorship of pilgrims was too heavy for government alone to carry. In Benin City Edo state capital, Bishop Goodluck Akpere of the Christ Temple Ministry International, stated that government had no business sponsoring religious faithful to pilgrimage. Akpere posited that sponsorship of pilgrims was unnecessary as there were more pressing needs that require government attention than spending scarce resources to send people to "Israel or Mecca" for religious exercise.

V. SPONSORSHIP TO PILGRIMAGES: THE IMPLICATION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Nigeria economic outlook summarises that, the global developments resulting in the fall in oil prices is impinging greatly on the Nigeria's key macroeconomic variables. These variables include exchange rate, capital flows, current account balance, inflation, and growth prospects. The macroeconomic challenges facing the economy are exerting ripple effects on macroeconomic variables. The economy has been on a slow track since the first half of 2015. Real GDP growth of 3.14% was recorded, falling far short of the 6.38% in 2014. Non-oil sector, mainly services and agriculture remains the main driver of growth, recording 5.9% and 4.1%, respectively. Industry contracted by 2.9%. The poor performance of the industry sector was as a result of manufacturing which accounted for -6.8% of the 3.14% GDP growth compared to 23.4% of the 6.38% growth in first half of 2014 and mining and quarrying -23.1% of 3.14% growth as against -1.8% of the 6.38% of the GDP growth in the corresponding period in 2014. This is worrisome and needs immediate policy remediation. Some of the challenges responsible for the slow growth appear to be the outcome of challenges that include lack of liquidity caused by lower oil revenue, tighter monetary policy resulting in higher interest rates, reduced activity in the capital market, naira devaluation that induces higher cost of imported intermediate inputs, limited fiscal space, and structural constraints.

In Nigeria, there is nothing to show that the pilgrimages have had any positive impact on the well being of society. The practice has been that the same group of corrupt power holders compile a list of loyalists to embark on pilgrimages. If the pilgrimages were having some robon effect on the public morality government would have been encouraged to assist pilgrims. Pilgrimages to the holy places do not translate to economic growth. In Nigeria which is wrestling with power supply and the provision of social amenities, it is irrational for government to spend the tax payers' money to sponsor pilgrimages. Pilgrimages will not contribute to the achievement of our national vision 20: 2020 or the Millennium Development Goals. The sponsorship of pilgrimages was not part of the seven-point agenda of the Yar'Adua administration and was not part of the President Jonathan transformational agenda. Nigeria faces very fundamental development challenges such as diminishing standard of education, poor healthcare, near lack of power supply, total absence of social welfare and a near nil Foreign Direct Investment.

Nigeria is a nation known for religious extremism and there have been so many religious crises in Nigeria. Nigeria has recorded several religious crises since independence. From the Maitasine riots to the Boko Haram, what Nigerians have benefited from religion are the monumental destruction of lives and property. The implication is that religion has never helped the economy of the country. The spate of

religious riots has done violence to the economy of Nigeria. The ugly trend may continue unabated. If the several pilgrimages we have made in Nigeria cannot bring about peace and stability, then should the Nigerian State continue sponsoring pilgrimages? The huge sums of money earmarked for pilgrimages should be used to add to the N18, 000.00 minimum wages for workers without removing subsidies on petroleum product.

VI. CONCLUSION

The World economic outlook explains that Nigeria among other commodity dependent countries of Latin America and Africa, along with parts of Asia are facing difficult times. Commodity prices are 30 percent lower than their 2011 peak, driving cutbacks in mining, petroleum and agriculture. Current price levels are still better than anything seen before 2007, but they do not justify continuation of recent production levels, and not continuation of new project construction. The world will probably grow a little slower than the IMF forecast. This is due primarily to China and its neighbours. However, the 2016 growth rate would not be much different than have been seen in recent years. The texture will be different with more gains in Europe and less in China and the commodity dependent countries.

According to Adam Hayes in African Economic Outlook (AEO) January 7, 2016, Nigeria has had sluggish economic growth since the end of 2015 with the rate dropping to an estimated 3.0% in December 2015, leading the authorities to adopt an expansionary 2016 budget that aims to stimulate the economy. Security, fighting corruption, and improving the social welfare of Nigerians are at the heart of the development policy of the new administration that was inaugurated on 29 May 2015. Nigeria has been rapidly urbanising and fast-growing cities such as Lagos and Kano face increasing unemployment and income inequality because of poor urban planning and weak links between structural transformation and urbanisation.

The Nigerian economy has been adversely affected by external shocks, in particular a fall in the global price of crude oil. Growth slowed sharply from 6.2% in 2014 to an estimated 3.0% in 2015. Inflation increased from 7.8% to an estimated 9.0%. The sluggish growth is mainly attributed to a slowdown in economic activity which has been adversely impacted by the inadequate supply of foreign exchange and aggravated by the foreign exchange restrictions targeted at a list of 41 imports, some of which are inputs for manufacturing and agro-industry. This has resulted in cuts in production and shedding of labour in some sectors. However, with the increasing policy concern over the decline in growth, the central bank has moved to reduce the cost of borrowing for government and the private sector to stimulate the economy.

Based on the struggling Nigerian economy, President Buhari declared that the federal government would end sponsorship of pilgrimages. This declaration is against the current subsidy on FOREX by CBN as instructed for the

purpose of Muslim pilgrimage. A large number of participants for the pilgrimage are political loyalists, politicians, the elite groups in Nigeria. This means that the expected target which is the poor masses do not even enjoy this scheme. The provision of section (10) of the 1999 Nigerian constitution stipulates that the Government of the federation or state shall not adopt any religion as state religion. The action of government to provide concession for the Christian and Muslim on pilgrimage violates this section of the constitution.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper makes the following recommendations:

1. The government should adhere to the constitutional provision on pilgrimage.
2. Where the government decides to be magnanimous, it should sponsor genuine people.
3. Government should approve trusted and tested travel agencies that will screen individuals for pilgrimages.
4. Government needed to check abuses in the exercise.
5. Government must overhaul the system of sponsorship because people going for the pilgrimage are just going to enrich themselves.
6. It is recommended that government should not encourage extravagancy
7. Government should also be firm in regulating the annual pilgrimages.

REFERENCES

- [1]. African Development Bank Group (2015) The Knowledge & Information Center (KVRC),
- [2]. BP 323 -1002 TUNIS Belvedere (Tunisia)
- [3]. Breitbart, W. Spirituality and meaning in supportive care: spirituality- and meaning-centered group psychotherapy interventions in advanced cancer. *Support Care Cancer*. 2002;10(4):272-80.
- [4]. Efficace, F. Marrone, R. (2002) Spiritual issues and quality of life assessment in cancer care. *Death Stud*. 2002;26(9):743-56.
- [5]. Gaudia, G. (2007) About intercessory prayer: the scientific study of miracles. *MedGenMed*.9(1):56.
- [6]. Hayes, Adam (2016) in African Economic Outlook (AEO) January 7,
- [7]. Idumange, John. (2009), Niger Delta Integrity Group, NDIG September
- [8]. Ikedo, F., Gangahar D.M, Quader M.A, Smith L.M. (2007) The effects of prayer, relaxation technique during general anesthesia. *Complement Ther Clin Pract*. 13(2):85-94.
- [9]. Kim, S.S. (2011) Spirituality and psychological well-being: testing a theory of family interdependence among family caregivers and their elders. *Res Nurs Health*.34(2):103-15.
- [10]. Lawler-Row, K.A, Elliott J. (2009) The role of religious activity and spirituality in the health and well-being of older adults. *J Health Psychol*. 14(1):43-52.
- [11]. Longo, D.A, Peterson SM. The role of spirituality in psychosocial rehabilitation. *Psychiatr Rehabil J*. 2002; 25(4):333-40.
- [12]. McCaffrey, A.M, Eisenberg D.M, Legedza A.T, Davis R.B, Phillips RS. (2004) Prayer for health concerns: results of a national survey on prevalence. *Arch Intern Med*.164(8):858-62.
- [13]. Neff, J.A, Shorkey C.T, Windsor L.C. (2006) Contrasting faith-based and traditional substance abuse treatment programs. *J Subst Abuse Treat*. 30(1):49-61.
- [14]. Peregrinio, B. (2016) every Nigerian. Vanguard news paper, 6th August. PM News July 13, 2015

- [15]. Sloan,R..P.Ramakrishnan, R. (2006) Science, medicine, and intercessory prayer. *Perspect Biol Med*.49(4):504-14.
- [16]. Sulmasy, D.P. (2009) Spirituality, religion, and clinical care. *Chest*.135(6):1634-42.
- [17]. Tanyi, R. A, Werner J. S. (2007) Spirituality in African American and Caucasian women with end-stage renal disease on hemodialysis treatment. *Health Care Women Int*. 28(2):141-54.
- [18]. Federal Republic of Nigeria:The 1999 constitution section (10) as amended Resolving Nigeria's Debt Through a Discounted Buyback". *CenterFor Global Development*. retrieved 11 June 2015.
- [19]. Forget the Brics: Citi's Willem Buiters Presents The 11 "3G" Countries That Will Win The Future". *businessinsider.com*. 22 February 2011. Retrieved 31 May 2011.
- [20]. *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. 2012, Columbia University Press. <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21600685-nigerias-nigeria-rebasing-gdp> - Google Search". Retrieved 11 June 2015.
- [21]. "Economy of Nigeria" Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia
- [22]. 2016 Index of Economic Freedom: The Heritage Foundation <http://www.wallstreetjournal.com/>