

## **Assessment of Church and Community – Based Social Ministry Programmes of the Nigerian Baptist Convention Among Fulani Communities in Baruten Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*For more than seventy years, the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) through her Social Ministries (SM) agencies have been involved in the provision of social services to reach and affect lives by meeting needs of people of different cultures, languages, religions and social strata. The Nigerian Baptist Convention-Social Ministry adopts different Social Ministry programmes to carry out its social ministries. However, there seems to be no independent Monitoring and Evaluation (ME) to guide future improvements. Therefore, this study assessed the Nigerian Baptist Convention-Social Ministries among Fulani communities in Baruten Local Government Area, Kwara State. Maslow's Theory anchored the study and it adopted descriptive survey research design. Sample involved 161 respondents randomly selected across five Fulani communities. A self-designed validated instrument was used that is; Social Ministries Adoption Questionnaire ( $r=.947$ ). Descriptive statistics was used for data analysis. Findings revealed that highly adopted Church-based Social Ministry programmes include; Feeding during festive periods e.g Christmas/New year festivities/Easter celebrations (90.7%), Distribution of food stuff (89.3%) and Distribution of clothing materials/Household utensils (87.6%). While the adopted community-based programmes include Holiday Bible School (88.8%), Free Tutorial Classes ((86.3%), and Home Lesson (73.9%). The study concludes that the Nigerian Baptist Convention-Social Ministries is involved in social ministries and meeting Fulani people-groups' needs through diverse Social Ministries. The study recommends that the Nigerian Baptist Convention-Social Ministries should put more efforts into the programmes that affect the lives of the people through adequate Monitoring and Evaluation for greater result and advancement.*

**Keywords:** *Assessment, Nigerian Baptist Convention, Missions, Church-based social ministry programmes, Fulani communities.*

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## **Introduction**

Church Social Care Ministries are one of those areas of Christian Ministries that has not been given adequate attention. Throughout Jesus' public ministry, he laid a good example for his followers in meeting the needs of the people while working to change the social conditions that brought about the social need<sup>1</sup>. Mission is indispensable in fulfilling God's Divine agenda on earth, as it is part of the divine mandate of God that all human beings should accept the free gift of salvation in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This made the Nigerian Baptist Convention to embark on missionary enterprises in Nigeria. The Nigerian Baptist Convention, through its missionary arm, the Global Missions Board and other mission organisations in the Convention has been actively engaged in taking the gospel to people of other cultures irrespective of the distance or constraints.

The vision of the Nigerian Baptist Convention is 'to be the foremost Christ-like organisation in Nigeria, Africa and the world'; while her mission, is 'to be a community that represents Christ by proclaiming the gospel, discipling believers, caring and developing churches to be involved in holistic ministries - evangelistic, social and healings and collaborating with other Christian, agencies across the globe'<sup>2</sup>. The social ministry is an area of the ministry that has not been given enough attention. Despite the fact that Jesus' earthly ministry centres around social ministry, many churches are not doing much on it. More attention is given to church building and other church programmes within the four walls of the church. Social ministry is about giving and sharing. God himself demonstrated it by giving his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ as stated in the scriptures (John 3:16).

Jesus himself went about doing good, meeting people's spiritual and physical needs thereby laying a good foundation for all Christians to follow. In his Nazarite declaration as recorded in Luke 4:18-19, Jesus, unfolding the purpose of his ministry quoted Isaiah 61:1-3 states; The lord has appointed me to preach the good news to the poor...to bind the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion, to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of the spirit of despair.

The social ministry is an avenue through which the purpose of Jesus' coming to the world is spread to the world. Social ministry is oriented toward concrete local social circumstances and accepts people as they are. Jesus identifies himself with those in need, the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison. It should be noted that social ministry is about serving people and not membership-driven but need-driven. It is characterized by endeavouring the poor to become active subjects in change processes<sup>2</sup>.

One of the targets of the Nigerian Baptist Convention social work coordinated by her Social Ministries are the Fulani communities in Okuta Home Mission Field in Baruten Local Government

of Kwara State. The Fulani in this area are believed to have migrated from the Republic of Benin<sup>4</sup>. They syncretise Islam with traditional religion. It should also be noted that a good number of these Fulani are Christians. The first Fulani Baptist Church is situated in Taberu. Most of these Fulani became Christians by birth while very few were by conversion through the hearing or the preaching of the gospel to them. It is interesting to note that there are many Fulani Baptist pastors in Baruten Local Government Area. Among these Fulani settlements are Okuta, Ajuba, Bankubu, Dokudo, Bosubosu, Ilesha Bariba and Taberu.

Many Christian social activities are on-going in the area through the presence of some churches and Christian organisations. These include distribution of clothing materials and food stuff, medical services, feeding of people during Christmas/New Year festivities and Easter celebrations, to mention a few. Research reports have it that less than 2% of the Fulani in Nigeria are evangelised as they are presumed not to positively and appropriately responsive to the gospel. This assertion justifies the reason why the Fulani people are referred to as “engaged but not reached people” by some mission assessment reports<sup>3</sup>. Social ministry is more concerned about the well-being of the people more than their religious or ethnic affiliations.

Social ministry is about sharing and caring. These have their scriptural backing. Christians are enjoined to share what they have with one another as recorded in Luke 3:11, Acts 4:32-34, 1 John 3:17 and 1 John 4:20-21. To effectively carry out the work in any given community, the people involved in social ministry should offer themselves acceptable to the people, live exemplary lives before people, also educate the church about people’s needs and how to assist them<sup>4</sup>.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is instructive to note that efforts and huge investments through manpower and social cum infrastructural developments that have been deployed and implemented among the Fulani communities in the area of study, it is perceived that not much documentation and success has been achieved amongst them in terms of social and infrastructural developments which ought to translate to community development through access to formal education, healthcare services, and intercultural harmony and understanding. This observation is likely connected to the fact that aside from mission abridged reports in bulletins and Convention’s annual reports, not much literature generated through rigorous academic research and studies are readily available on the Nigerian Baptist Convention mission efforts among the Fulani ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Especially in Baruten Local Government Area of Kwara State, many social amenities have been put in place in this study area by the NBC and her church mission agencies like the Men’s Missionary Union (MMU), Women’s Missionary Union (WMU) and other Baptist churches which are not reported to the appropriate quarters for documentation. However, such efforts have yielded some results. To this end, there is the need to re-assess and re-appraise the social ministries approaches adopted in the past few decades by the Nigerian Baptist Convention through the Social Ministries and other affiliated agencies with a view to investigating their performance among the people. Therefore, this study assessed the social ministry programmes adopted and deployed by the Nigerian Baptist Convention through her social ministries agencies among Fulani communities in Baruten Local Government Area of Kwara State.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is to assess the church and community-based social ministry programmes of the Nigerian Baptist Convention among Fulani communities in Baruten Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- a. ascertain church-based social ministry programmes deployed by the Nigerian Baptist Convention and her mission agencies among Fulani communities in Baruten Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria.
- b. ascertain community-based social ministry programmes deployed by the Nigerian Baptist Convention and her mission agencies among Fulani communities in Baruten Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following research question guided the study:

1. What are the church based social ministry programmes deployed by the Nigerian Baptist Convention through her social ministry agencies among the Fulani communities in Baruten Local Government Area of Kwara State?
2. What are the community-based social ministry programmes deployed by the Nigerian Baptist Convention through her social ministry agencies among the Fulani communities in Baruten Local Government Area of Kwara State?

### **Methodology**

The study adopted Descriptive Survey Research Design. This design affords the researcher the opportunity to gather data from a large sample within the study area. The population for this study includes all the Fulani Christian converts and missionaries working within the Fulani communities in Baruten Local Government Area of Kwara State. This comprised of five Fulani settlements namely, Taberu, Bankubu, Nikkikperu, Ajuba, and Okuta. In addition, the study adopted multistage sampling procedure. Firstly, purposive sampling technique was adopted to select five locations; Taberu, Bankubu, Nikkikperu, Ajuba and Okuta which are predominantly Fulani settlements and communities. Secondly, random sampling technique was adopted to select one hundred and sixty-one (161) Fulani Christian converts who are natives as respondents from the study area.

Thirdly, purposive sampling procedure was adopted to select ten (10) Church leaders comprising missionaries, pastors and mission volunteers who are natives and converted Christian Fulani. Also, fifteen (15) Fulani natives who are living within the Fulani communities in Baruba land, comprising of ten (10) natives and five (5) community leaders were interviewed to further ascertain the responses gathered from the Christian communities through the Churches, Church leaders, and Church members within the study area.

The instruments used for data gathering in this study were developed by the researcher. The instruments are: (a) Mission Work and Social Ministry Adoption Questionnaire (MiWoSoMiAQ)

$r = .948$ . (b) Interview Guide for Christian Mission Organisation Workers (InGuCMOW) and (c) Interview Guide for Baruba Native Christian Converts (InGaBaNaCC)  
 Each of the instruments meant for completion by the respondent were translated into Yoruba language being the predominant language of communication among the Fulani natives in Baruten Local Government Area of Kwara State and to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted in Yakparu community in Baruten Local Government of Kwara State. The reliability value of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha.

**Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents (N=161)**

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	105	65.2%
	Female	56	34.8%
Age	Below 20 years	9	5.6%
	20 – 25 years	30	18.6%
	26 – 30 years	24	14.9%
	31 – 40 years	20	12.4%
	41 – 50 years	13	8.1%
	51 – 60 years	27	16.8%
	61 years and above	8	5.0%
	Missing data	30	18.6%
Marital Status	Married	67	41.6%
	Single	41	25.5%
	Widow	12	7.5%
	Single parent	9	5.6%
	Missing data	32	19.9%
Highest Qualification	Primary six	27	16.8%
	JSCE	28	17.4%
	SSCE	16	9.9%
	Sub-Degree	27	16.8%
	Degree/Higher Diploma	23	14.3%
	Master's Degree	11	6.8%
	Missing data	29	18.0%
Occupation/Profession	Cattle rearing	17	10.6%
	Farming	16	9.9%
	Trading	28	17.4%
	Driving	7	4.3%
	Produce buying	7	4.3%
	Pastoral/mission work	49	30.4%

Unemployed/No job	10	6.2%
Retiree	8	5.0%
Missing data	19	11.8%

**Source:** Researcher's Fieldwork 2023

Table 1 presents the Demographic Data Analysis which shows the gender, age, marital status, highest qualification and the occupation of each respondent. The table reveals that a total number of 105 are males representing 65.2% while 56 representing 34.8% are females. The age range is between 21-25 years and 61 years and above. Marital Status comprised.

### Results and Discussion of Findings.

**Research Question One:** What are the Church-based social ministry programmes deployed by the Nigerian Baptist Convention and her mission agencies among Fulani communities in Baruten Local Government Area, Kwara State?

**Table 2: Church-based Social Ministry Programmes of the Nigerian Baptist Convention through Her Mission Agencies Among Fulani Communities in Baruten Local Government, Kwara State. (N = 161)**

S/N	Statement	Highly Adopted	Partially Adopted	Not Adopted	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
1.	Feeding during festive periods e.g. Christmas/ New year/ Easter celebration, etc.	131 (81.4%)	15 (9.3%)	15 (9.3%)	2.72	0.625	Adopted
2.	Distribution/Provision/supply of foodstuff	92 (57.1%)	52 (32.2%)	17 (10.6%)	2.47	0.680	Adopted
3.	Distribution of clothing materials/Household utensils	123 (76.4%)	18 (11.2%)	20 (12.4%)	2.64	0.694	Adopted
4.	Pastoral Training Scheme	86 (53.4%)	53 (32.9%)	22 (13.7%)	2.40	0.718	Adopted
5.	Free education/scholarship to attend school outside the community	68 (42.2%)	49 (30.4%)	44 (27.3%)	2.15	0.823	Adopted
6.	Distribution of Bible and Christian materials/literature	35 (21.7%)	110 (68.3%)	16 (9.9%)	2.12	0.552	Adopted



7.	Tutorial classes/Evening classes/Weekend classes.	8 (5.0%)	76 (47.2%)	77 (47.8%)	1.57	0.589	Partially Adopted
8.	Youth Empowerment/Business support.	8 (5.0%)	75 (46.6%)	78 (48.4%)	1.57	0.589	Partially Adopted
9.	Trade/Vocational Training programme.	-	76 (47.2%)	85 (52.8%)	1.47	0.501	Not adopted
10	Financial support scheme/Interest-free loan scheme.	5 (3.1%)	10 (6.2%)	146 (90.7%)	1.12	0.415	Not adopted

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

Table 2 shows the Church-based social ministry programmes of the Nigerian Baptist Convention and her mission agencies among Fulani communities. The table revealed that Feeding during festive periods e.g. Christmas/New Year/Easter celebrations (90.7%), Distribution of the Bible and Christian materials/literature (90%), Distribution/provision/Supply of food (89.3%), Distribution of clothing materials/Household utensils (87.6%), Pastoral Training Scheme (86.3%), Free Education/Scholarship Scheme (72.6%), Tutorial classes/Evening classes/Weekend classes. (52.2%), Youth Empowerment/Business support (51.6%) were adopted, while Trade/Vocational Training programme (47.2%) and Financial support scheme/Interest-free loan scheme (9.3%) were not adopted.

In summary, finding revealed that church-based social ministry programmes adopted and deployed include; Feeding during festive periods e.g. Christmas/New Year/Easter celebrations (90.7%), Distribution of the Bible and Christian materials/literature (90%), Distribution/provision/Supply of food, Distribution of clothing materials/Household utensils, Pastoral Training Scheme, Free Education/Scholarship Scheme, Tutorial classes/Evening classes/Weekend classes, Youth Empowerment/Business support were adopted, while Trade/Vocational Training programme and Financial support scheme/Interest-free loan scheme were not adopted. This finding aligns with an author who submits that no one can serve in Jesus Christ's fold without encountering his love as this determines the extent of risk someone can go one's life to satisfy others<sup>5</sup>.

**Research Question 2: What are the Community-based Social Programmes adopted and deployed by the Nigerian Baptist Convention and Social Ministry Agencies among Fulani Community in Baruten Local Government, Kwara State**

**Table 3: Social Ministry Approaches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention and Her Mission Agencies Among Fulani Communities in Baruten Local Government, Kwara State. (N = 161)**

S/N	Statement	Highly Adopted	Partially Adopted	Not Adopted	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
1.	Holiday Bible School	30 (18.6%)	113 (70.2%)	18 (11.2%)	2.07	0.543	Adopted
2.	Free Tutorial Classes during Holiday	3 (1.9%)	139 (86.3%)	19 (11.8%)	1.90	0.357	Adopted
3.	Free School Uniform	5 (3.1%)	136 (84.5%)	20 (12.4%)	1.91	0.384	Adopted
4.	Home lesson	66 (41.0%)	53 (32.9%)	42 (26.1%)	2.15	0.808	Adopted
5.	Donation of food to community members who are prison inmates	5 (3.1%)	89 (55.3%)	67 (41.6%)	1.61	0.548	Partially Adopted
6.	Agricultural Extension Programme/Agricultural training scheme. e.g. veterinary services, seedling supply etc.	10 (6.2%)	78 (48.2%)	73 (45.3%)	1.61	0.604	Partially Adopted
7.	Visiting community members who are prison inmates	59 (36.6%)	11 (6.8%)	91 (56.5%)	1.80	0.947	Not adopted
8.	Payment of fines or bail charges of community members involved in legal matters	3 (1.9%)	18 (11.2%)	140 (87.0%)	1.15	0.406	Not adopted
9.	Guest House/Free Accommodation service	66 (41.0%)	13 (8.1%)	82 (50.9%)	1.90	0.95 7	Not Adopted

**Source:** Field Work, 2023

Table 3 shows the Community-based social ministry programmes adopted and deployed by the Nigerian Baptist Convention and her mission agencies among Fulani communities. The table revealed that Holiday Bible School (88.8), Feeding during festive periods e.g. Christmas/New Year/Easter celebration etc. (90.4%), Free Tutorial Classes during Holiday (86.3%), Distribution



of Bible and Christian materials/literature (90%), Home lesson (73.9%), Free education/scholarship to attend school outside the community (72.6%) and Donation of food to community members who are prison inmates (58.4%) were all adopted, while Visiting community members who are prison inmates (43.4%), Payment of fines or bail charges of community members involved in legal matters (13.1%) and Guest House/Free Accommodation service were not adopted.

Findings from the interviews conducted also corroborate this submission. While some agreed this submission other did not.

In summary, finding revealed that Community-based social ministry approaches adopted include; Holiday Bible School, Feeding during festive periods e.g. Christmas/New Year/Easter celebration etc., Free Tutorial Classes during Holiday, Distribution of Bible and Christian materials/literature, Home lesson, Free education/scholarship to attend school outside the community and Donation of food to community members who are prison inmates were all adopted, while Visiting community members who are prison inmates, Payment of fines or bail charges of community members involved in legal matters and Guest House/Free Accommodation service were not adopted.

## **Conclusion**

This paper discussed the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) mission strategies among the Fulani Communities in Baruten Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

The use of social ministry approaches like feeding during Christmas/Easter celebrations, distribution of food items, distribution of clothing materials have gone a long way to reach the people, thereby getting closer to reaching the Fulani in Baruten Local Government Area of Kwara State. There should be proper documentation of activities of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) and her social ministry agencies in the area for future consideration for improvement.

## **Recommendations**

For further evaluation of social ministry approaches deployed and adopted by the Nigerian Baptist Convention, the researcher presents this recommendation:

Social ministry approaches that are highly adopted implies their prevalence and should be strengthened among selected Fulani communities in Baruten Local Government Area of Kwara State and other similar communities while approaches that are not so adopted should be improved upon. In addition, the scope of activities of the Nigerian Baptist Convention and her mission agencies should be expanded for the betterment of more Fulani communities in the area.

## Endnotes

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