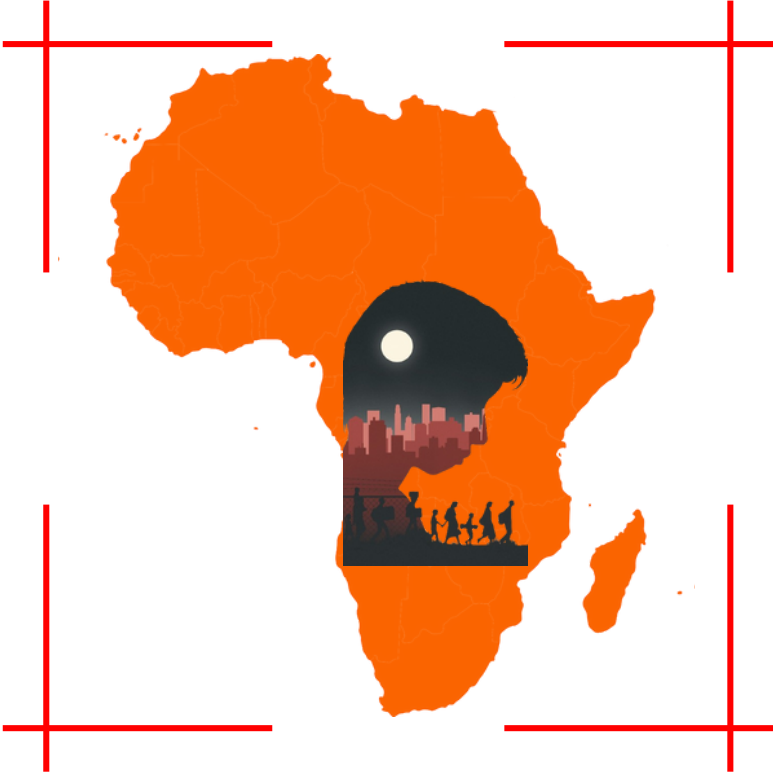


MANUAL ON DECOLONISATION AND ANTIRACISM IN SOCIAL PRACTICE



Produced by



For



MANUAL ON DECOLONISATION AND ANTIRACISM IN SOCIAL PRACTICE

PRODUCED BY

**AFRICAN CENTRE FOR LEADERSHIP, STRATEGY & DEVELOPMENT
(CENTRE LSD)**

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**A LEARNING MANUAL ON DECOLONISATION
AND ANTIRACISM FOR DEVELOPMENT WORK**

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It is important to register our thanks to our parent office based in the United Kingdom and all of our country offices across the globe. We have produced this manual to improve the quality of our work in Nigeria, however, in ensuring that the tenets prescribed in this manual are in tandem with our globally acclaimed values of dignity, equality, justice and love, the material is useful and easily adaptable to other country, community or project contexts.

We recommend its use by all who work with Christian Aid, globally.

Tope Fashola
Country Director, Christian Aid Nigeria
Abuja, March 2024

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFDB	African development bank
CACS	Christian Aid Country Strategy (2019 – 2026)
CAGS	Christian Aid Country Strategy (2019 – 2026)
CAN	Christian Aid Nigeria
Coloniality	All continuing set of attitudes, values and power structures serving to justify, memorialise and perpetuate Western dominance
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
Decoloniality	A construction of paths and practice of thinking, sensing, believing, doing and living established to delink from Western knowledge and dominance
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
FDG	Focused Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
KII	Key Informant Interview
N-power	National Social Investment Programme
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
USAIDS	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

INTRODUCTION

The history, sensitivities, and views of indigenous peoples must be taken into account in social work practice in Nigeria. Non-governmental interventions are frequently linked to colonialism and oppression. It is imperative that larger concerns about sustainable human development and sociopolitical elements including political conflicts, corruption, patriarchy, and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, and religion be addressed. To guarantee that the projects' main goals are met, social interventions must be implemented with consideration for these attitudes.

This manual advocates for decolonial and antiracial indoctrination in social work practice, addressing injustices and impacts of colonization in Nigeria. It critiques Western epistemology and advocates for an antiracist model, challenging white supremacist, colonial, and oppressive structures. The manual provides tools, guidelines, and a manifesto for transforming social practice in Nigeria, demystifying and redressing concepts of decolonisation and antiracism.

The manual also emphasises the importance of addressing the history of colonisation and race in socio-economic thoughts, actively recruiting diverse leaders, mentors, workers and beneficiaries, and going beyond data-driven approaches to create emancipatory practices.

How to start Decolonising Christian Aid Nigeria's Work

This manual is not an academic curriculum and may not exhaustively address the topics of decolonisation and antiracism. Rather this manual encourages staff and partners of CAN to understand and engage with decolonisation and antiracism concepts, supporting the process within the organization and its projects, and identifying edifying practices to advance decoloniality.

The manual is not prescriptive as there is no one-way to embrace decolonising practices. By engaging with this manual, it is expected that users gain a basic understanding, become empowered and can step up to develop their own decolonising approaches in the context of the work or project environment.

Who is this manual for?

This manual has been commissioned by CAN as a means of practicalising or giving vent to its stated plans and programmes as enshrined in its strategy documents (CAGS and CACS, 2019-2026). It provides a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the concepts of decolonisation and antiracism, tailored to the Nigerian context. It encourages users to critically reflect on their roles and responsibilities in promoting positive change.

This manual further supports CAN's quest to integrate decoloniality and antiracism in their work and work environments across Nigeria. However, this manual can be used by everyone interested in putting to task or inculcating these proposals in their work practice. The rudimentary scope and focus of the manual make it easily accessible and useful to CAN, its partners, donors and beneficiaries of their work in Nigeria and beyond.

How is this manual structured?

In this manual, the focus has been on four aspects: concept, context, specifics and examples. Whereas these represent good starting point, it should not be considered as a definitive list. The manual should be used to advance understanding and commence personal development of decolonising strategy. By implementing the changes proposed in this manual, you can already have a positive impact on the work and work environment.

Like in other endeavours, decolonising work is an ongoing process. It is dynamic and continuously evolving. It has to respond to the challenges faced in our organisations and society. Coloniality, racism and discrimination evolve and how these practices manifest themselves in our work and societies also metamorphose. Our responses to this have to evolve too. We need to be ready to (re)act. The ultimate goal is to create a fairer work environment with just outcomes for all partners and beneficiaries. There is a need for collaborative efforts to achieve this

MODULE

1

1.0 Introduction to Decolonisation and Antiracism

Decolonisation as a theory focuses on challenging the colonial and imperialist perspectives on Africa and Africans. It seeks to debunk hegemonic discourses on Africa by continually opposing and resisting those notions that cast Africans as primitive and backward (Hooks, 2006). Most Nigerian contributors see it narrowly in light of the independence struggles of the mid-20th century. Like Cooper (1996), it is viewed as the “historic process when a nation seeks independence from foreign rule”. However, decolonising social work practice requires becoming genuine, and returning to the cultural roots for inspiration and direction. It is rooted in the postcolonial reality that African societies are still marked by colonial remnants operating within their legal, institutional, governmental and decision-making systems. For social work to be useful in Africa, reorientation of its methods toward facilitating holistic and indigenous interventions is mandatory (Ibrahima and Mattaini, 2018).

In a similar vein, antiracism is a process of actively identifying and combating racism. The goal is to become aware of racism in all its forms and/or ramifications and actively change the beliefs, behaviours and policies that perpetuate racist ideas and actions in individuals, institutions, and systems to create an equitable society

1.1 Key Concepts and Definitions

Recount that the colonisation began in the late 19th century by European powers, including Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, who sought to expand their empires and exert control over African territories.

In Nigeria, it is believed that this “Scramble for Africa” led to the “establishment of colonial administrations and the exploitation of African resources for the benefit of the colonising countries”. As Peruvian sociologist, Anibal Quijano (2000) noted in his ‘Coloniality of Power’ concept (Figure 1), colonisation transformed the political hierarchies between colonisers and the colonised, creating new power relations. In the new social order, colonised subjects were not valued as human beings, but they were disposable resources to be exploited (Maldonado-Torres, 2011).

As imposition of colonial rule expanded across African societies, so also did resistance movements and nationalist struggles seeking to reclaim sovereignty and autonomy. In essence, the first wave of decolonisation marked a significant achievement for African nations although it brought about numerous challenges including political instability, economic underdevelopment, social fragmentation, and cultural dislocation. Resultantly, stated our KII participants, “newly independent countries had to grapple with issues such as nation-building, governance structures, economic diversification, and managing diverse ethnicities within their borders”. Therefore, a new wave of decolonisation emerged as a process expanded into advocacies and practices to undo the legacies of interrelated power relations and social orders created by colonialism.

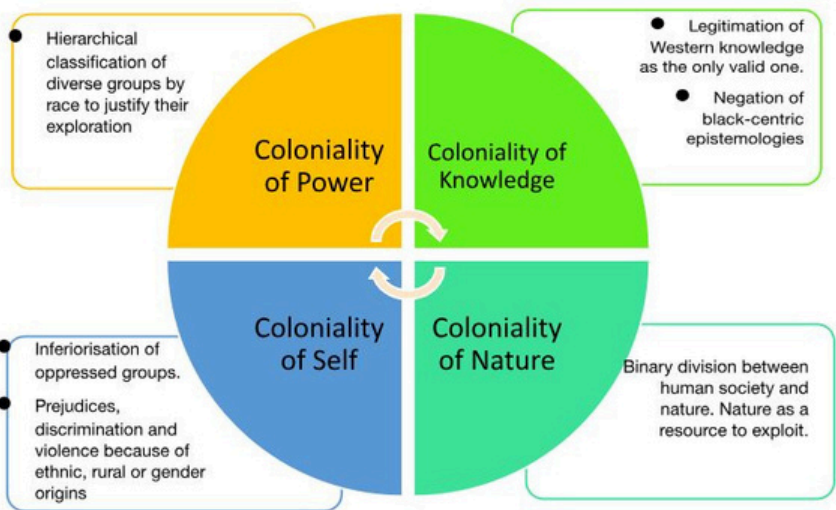


Figure 1: Coloniality of Power

The legacy of colonialism in post-colonial Africa is a culture of racial superiority orchestrated by white racists against Africans.

1.2 Historical Context

In Nigeria, the historical roots of racism can be found in the country's complex ethnic and cultural diversity. The British colonisers exploited this diversity by imposing their administrative, legal, and economic systems, which combined to promote practices that perpetuated discrimination and marginalisation of indigenous Nigerians (Eze, 2018). The historical narrative of colonialism in Nigeria is intertwined with the exploitation of resources, the imposition of foreign ideologies, and the establishment of discriminatory structures based on race and later on ethnicity. European imperialism and colonisation led to social injustices, loss of natural resources, and foreign control.

British colonizers promoted the "coloniality of knowledge" through formal education, establishing European dominance in knowledge production and subjectivity. Non-European knowledge was historically discredited and marginalized. Western domination permeated knowledge production, behavior, experience, and identities, suppressing indigenous philosophies. European knowledge continues to dominate today, without acknowledging the dynamics of domination, exploitation, and oppression in which knowledge is reproduced.

Western developmental interventions are influenced by development partners and donors, who have been indoctrinated through Western epistemology and ontological precepts. Social work practitioners must understand how Western science and interests combined with European imperialism and colonisation affected African lives and livelihoods.

1.3 Decolonisation, Poverty and Power Relations

Colonisation and coloniality have left scars of power imbalances, erasure of socio-cultural identities and economic disparities. Decolonisation is the transformative process aimed at tearing down the imperial systems that privilege few and oppress many. The decolonial approach seeks to uncover coloniality and provide new ontological and epistemological lenses to understand and act at different levels of individual and collective life.

MODULE 2

2.0 The Connection between Colonialism, Poverty and Development

Nigeria, a predominantly homogenous society, is not immune to racism and colonial rule. However, its diverse population and rich tapestry of cultures make it a witness to the enduring impacts of European exploitation and resource extraction. For example, after Haiti's liberation from France, the island nation was ordered to pay \$21 billion in reparations, including the cost of lost slaves. This systemic poverty has been linked to European exploitation and resource extraction in the Western Hemisphere.

Haiti was forced to borrow money to make part of the instalment remittances. For generations, Haiti's revenues went to service its "double debt," depriving its people of schools, hospitals, and basic infrastructure and pushing the country into a cycle of debt, poverty, and underdevelopment that persists even today

The Nigerian experience, a systematic issue, has been compared to Haiti due to mismanagement of multilateral funds by successive administrations, resulting in compounded interest rates and a significant portion of intervention funds being returned to the West through sloppy consultancies and procurement of needless items

The world's wealthiest countries continue to hoard the earth's resources, ignoring the needs of the majority of people. The West is accused of destabilising certain African regions for economic and geopolitical gains. Low literacy levels and inefficient economic systems contribute to a perpetual cycle of poverty, constricting efforts to foster economic growth. The issues persist till today.

2.1 Hegemonic Forms

Several ethical, cultural, political and personal issues can present special difficulties for social work practitioners who, in their communities, work partially as insiders, and are often employed for this purpose, and partially as outsiders, because of their Western education or because they may work across clan, ethnic, linguistic, age and gender boundaries. In a decolonising framework, deconstruction is part of the much larger intent.

A legacy of colonialism is the way formerly colonised peoples acquire knowledge, understand their history, comprehend their world and define themselves (Bulhan, 2015). Over time, this experience can be analysed into the colonised ways of knowing, behaving, and being (Figure 2). Arising from these are the popular notions of how society should be governed mostly stemming from contrived and enforced forms of social conditioning. Coloniality has constructed racialised hegemonic systems in social practice that privilege certain racial and gendered identities while marginalising others. These practices should be scrutinised, questioned, challenged, and whenever practicable, abolished.

The theory of international political change is assumed to be intrinsically linked to the history of international systems which is the rise and decline of empires and dominant States (Lascurets, 2020). To appreciate decolonising and antiracist theory, social practitioners need to understand how beyond the economic and political consequences of colonisation, there is an enduring Eurocentric epistemology, ontology, and ideology emanating from, supporting, and validating European monopoly of power, hegemonic knowledge, distorted truth, and deformed being of the colonised.

2.2. The Relevance of Decolonisation in Ending Poverty and Shifting Power Dynamics

Decolonisation plays a crucial role in poverty alleviation by reshaping various sectors, including land distribution, education, economic policies, trade relationships, and international partnerships, to prioritize social factors.

Decolonisation in Nigeria is crucial for poverty reduction and power dynamics. It involves reclaiming economic independence, preserving cultural identity, promoting indigenous education, challenging colonial biases, establishing transparent governance, ensuring equitable power distribution, and addressing land and resource rights.

According to her, decolonization affects political power distribution and agency distribution, which are critical for sustainable development models that prioritize the welfare of citizens. It also modifies power dynamics in institutional frameworks, international relations, and governance systems..

2.3 Theory of Dead Aid

Zambian economist, Dambisa Moyo, propounded the theory of ‘dead aid’ arguing that international development aid provided to Africa has done more harm than good. Aid, according to Dambisa, has neither improved economic growth or decreased poverty in Africa; rather, it is a deadly illness that has to be treated. Aid as a development strategy is illusory, as evidenced by the fact that Africa is currently poorer than Asian countries, after reaching a peak in the 1970s.

Table 1: Dead Aid and Social Work Theory

Problem with aid	Non-aid alternative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases corruption and bad governance • Causes aid-dependency and increases poverty; makes poor nations poorer. • Stifles and undermines economic activities like innovation, entrepreneurship, production, savings, investment and free enterprise. It reverses or slows economic growth, distorts markets and increases debt. • Reduces value of local products and money leading to inflation. • Attracts more aid, making the rich in rich countries to strengthen a wrong belief that alms for the poor is the solution. • Traps people in a vicious cycle of corruption, laziness, dependency and poverty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borrowing from capital markets not from other countries – the capital market offers bonds • Developing infrastructure (e.g. dams, roads and markets). For example, providing irrigation for farming through construction of dams is a direct approach that would sustain farming but donors want to give food aid instead. The food is bought from Western farmers, benefiting their economies in the process. • Genuine and fair trade with overseas countries. For example, European, American and Japanese farmers get billions of dollars in government subsidies that result in food costing less but African farmers who do not have these subsidies end up selling their produce (e.g. cotton and sugar) to global markets for far less than the production cost.

MODULE

3

3.0. Why Decolonisation Matters

Decoloniality is analytic of coloniality. It concerns the critical awareness of the logic of coloniality (the colonial matrix of power, Figure 1), a critiquing of coloniality, resisting the expressions of coloniality and taking actions to overcome coloniality. In other words, decoloniality is more than the elimination of colonial administrations and entails the decolonisation of the interlocking domains of knowledge, power and being. Decoloniality is meant to be the dismantling of relations of power and conceptions of knowledge that foment the reproduction of racial, gender, and geopolitical hierarchies that came into being or found new and more powerful forms of expression in the modern/colonial world.

The work environment in social work is influenced by various demographic groups, with factors like micro-aggressions, lack of safe spaces, and minority status affecting performance. Practitioners must design a decolonial space that accommodates underrepresented groups while ensuring their participation in project planning and execution.

3.1. Indigenisation of Social Work Practice

Indigenisation is a crucial step in the process of reconciliation and decolonisation. It acknowledges past injustices, challenges colonial narratives and allows for indigenous communities to regain control over their own stories and knowledge systems. As prescribed by one of the key informants, indigenisation of social work practice in Nigeria should entail the use of “appropriate theories and practice methods including socio-cultural values, norms and philosophies”.

The FDGs emphasize the importance of social work practice considering the ideological variability of a people's environment, culture, and beliefs. Practitioners must focus on local skills, philosophies, and models, ensuring knowledge and practice emerge from local initiatives. Indigenous theories should be developed to provide services and support systems rooted in clients' values, beliefs, and culture, ensuring a socio-cultural approach to social work.

3.2. Gender and Social Inclusion: Promoting Equity and Diversity

Gender and social inclusion emerged as key considerations in the Focused Group Discussions (FDGs) on decolonisation and antiracism. Participants emphasized the importance of ensuring that marginalized groups, including women and persons with disabilities, are actively engaged in decision-making processes and benefit from development initiatives.

"As any discourse that is social or political must ensure inclusivity," noted one participant, highlighting the imperative of promoting equity and diversity in all aspects of development programming. However, specific strategies for promoting inclusivity were not extensively discussed, suggesting a need for further exploration and action in this area.

MODULE

4

4.0. Lessons from Nigeria

4.1. The “Omoluabi” Theory (aka Mutumin Kirki or Agwa)

Omoluabi (Ajadi, 2012) is the Yoruba (Nigeria) theory of the “child of character” which emanates from the orature of “introspection and retrospection”. Engaging in reflection and observation of indigenisation and decolonisation of social work practice in Nigeria will contribute to sustainable social and economic development. Besides sound theoretical knowledge, it was suggested during the interviews that “social workers must have a broad range of skills including the abilities to listen actively and communicate clearly and effectively”. Social workers must be able to “communicate verbally in at least a couple of the national/regional languages, but also non-verbally through gestures and postures”.

The Omoluabi teachings offer a new kind of interrogation that takes root in the pre-colonial past. There are several indigenous processes and practices from the past that offer practical solutions to Africa’s pressing contemporary issues. A good example is the Gracaca Tribunal, an indigenous justice system, that was modified in Rwanda for post-genocidal reconciliation as the Western system of criminal justice proved to be insufficient.

The Omoluabi ethos, rooted in reciprocity and social justice, has been passed down through generations through art, song, dance, poetry, and traditions. Samkange and Ishima Idedoo, along with other African cultural practices like Mutumin Kirki, Agwa, and Tiv, share similar concepts in promoting economic progress, resource distribution, respect, and empowerment.

4.2. Human Factor Approach to Development

A concept developed by Zimbabwean social scientist, Professor Claude Mararike to the effect that to attain development, people must adopt and adapt different strategies appropriate to their circumstances. He postulated that African societies, though independent, cannot develop as expected if they continue to function as clients of development organisations and social institutions which have their inherent economic and political agendas.

Similar thoughts have been posited by Professor Ernest Ugiagbe. Ugiagbe (2021) explains that for social work professionals to make a meaningful impact on social development, *“imported theories and models—of social work and development—require thorough interrogation”*.

The Practical Guide highlights the need for a decolonised model in social work in Nigeria, incorporating local cultures and traditions, and understanding the impact of foreign aid, poverty alleviation, and social development on vulnerable, marginalised, and oppressed groups.

Social work in the West promotes human behaviour and social justice, but its narrow theories hinder its ability to promote human rights and address neoliberal development programs that benefit the West's wealthier nations.

MODULE 5

5.0. Context-specific Differences

5.1. Intersectionality of Decolonial Methodologies

A decolonised methodology for social practice intervention challenges Eurocentric and general Western methods which otherwise undermine the local knowledge and experiences of the marginalised population groups (Smith, 1999). There are no silver-bullet methods for decolonising work. Some of the methods proposed below (Table 2) have been adapted from other disciplines and contributions from the KIIs and FDGs and can be useful in inculcating a new paradigm of decolonising work ethics for social development practitioners.

Table 2: Practical Methods for Decolonising Social Work Practice

Method of decolonising work	Clarification
Indigenous knowledge is scientific and thus should be granted equal weight to Western scientific insights about communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practitioners often prioritise their scientific insights over Indigenous knowledge.• But Indigenous knowledge has also evolved over centuries to help communities live sustainably.• This iterative development of knowledge to improve lives can be defined as scientific too.• This recognition might challenge the assumption of some field officers that Western science is more valid than Indigenous knowledge
Social practice interventions should revolve around establishing trusting, ongoing relationships between outside institutions and Indigenous communities (Datta, 2017)	Existing institutions, such as NGOs/CSOs, tend to establish strong relationships with Indigenous children and adolescents but eschew the community including elders

Method of decolonising work	Clarification
<p>Honour Indigenous protocols rather than only institutional protocols (e.g., Lavallée, 2009)</p>	<p>Outside NGOs/CSOs tend to prioritise institutional protocols, such as the regulations enforced by ethics committees and organisational policies. These protocols might attempt to respect Indigenous communities. But, as field staff/workers interact with Indigenous peoples, they will learn about other protocols often imparted orally which they should be amenable to follow. Therefore, these field staff/workers should recognise that, often, the protocols of their institution might not be adequate for the success of their field work</p>

These methods are not etched in stone: they adapt and change in coevolution with individual and collective efforts of users to shift the conceptualisation of their work environments from objects of handouts to empower people who can question, critique, theorise, communicate and action imbibed knowledge. Figure 4 below summarises a cycle for the methods of decoloniality and antiracism in the work or field environment.

5.2. Other Afro-centric Deolonisation Theories, Models and Frameworks

Traditional African cultures are collectivist—the philosophy of Ubuntu. Collectivism as a cultural pattern – and value – emphasises the extended family, community, caste, country, and related group identities (Lituchy and Michaud, 2017). Members of collectivist societies carry a sense of obligation to their collective community. Personal satisfaction, self-actualisation, and fulfilment are experienced in reference to their community; accordingly, individuals are able to maintain harmony with the collective (Haj-Yahia and Sadan, 2008). Existence-in-relation defines the African conception of life and reality. For many African people, the group has priority, but without crushing the individual (Chilisa and Ntseane, 2010).

MODULE

6

6.0. Strategies for NGOs and Faith-based NGOs

Tuhiwai-Smith and Matsinhe emphasize the importance of methodology in social work practice, arguing that it legitimates and delegitimizes knowledge, establishing boundaries and gatekeeping, and shaping the analysis and goal.

Indigenous experience frequently lacks virtualities, so INGOs and NGOs must develop knowledge and practices relevant to the culture. This entails applying empirical knowledge grounded in the local context to provide culturally relevant solutions. It is better to think of it as a process of decentering colonial discourse rather than as an attempt to mimic Western beliefs or practices.

In order to avoid importation and to highlight indigenous behaviours, the discourse should place a high priority on cultural relevance. The concept of indigenization needs to be understood in opposition to colonialism and globalization. It calls for "authentication," embraces culturally authentic values and practices, and moves away from Western social work theory and practice. (Gray et al., 2008).

6.1 Manifesto of Decolonisation and antiracism

To decolonise social practice, it is necessary to transform its focus from the promotion of individual happiness to the cultivation of collective well-being, from a concern with the instinct to the promotion of human needs, from prescriptions for adjustment to affordances for empowerment, from the treatment of passive victims to creation of self-determining actors, and from globalising, top-down approaches to context-sensitive, bottom-up approaches. Through these conscious efforts, the social work practitioner can attain the goal of a humane and just social order

6.2 Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity (DEI) in Social Practice

Diversity is good for equitable and inclusive social practice. As contributed during the FGDs, “when an organisation knows how to truly embrace value and make use of diversity in its leadership and workforce, it gets better ideas, questions assumptions, identifies blind spots, develops new approaches and creates better solutions”. Table 3 below respectively outlines the levels and benefits of diversity in social practice.

Table 3: Levels and models of diversity in social work practice

Level of DEI	Clarification
Cross-functional representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If your team includes only one kind of profession or function representation (e.g. engineers, doctors, lawyers etc.), then you know there is a problem. A multidisciplinary or multi-professional team is always more functional
Racial and gender diversity	The team always has to look towards balancing racial and gender representation or diversity
Socioeconomic status	In most professional situations, everyone has achieved a similar band of income and economic security which can lead to a loss of perspective on value, pricing and relevance
Educational background	Does everyone come from one or two schools? Has anyone worked their way up the ladder through a community institution or other means?
Work experience	This is always an issue in large organisations that have very structured career streams.
Location/background	Did all team members grow up in similar environments despite coming from across the country? Different groups from diverse geographical areas are important, even if everyone is from the same country.

6.3 Stages of Decolonisation

Decolonisation is a process that involves the coloniser and the colonised and it can be measured in stages as shown in the Table 4 below.

Table 4: Phases of decolonisation

Phases of Decolonisation	What this means?
Phase I – Rediscovery and Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still at the level of colonisation • Elevation of form over substance • Rediscovery of history and recovery of culture, language, identity etc.
Phase II – Mourning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no genuineness to decolonise. Colonial practices are maintained in disguise • Expression of anger against symbols of colonisation • Awfulisation of victimhood
Phase III – Dreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is potential to decolonise (in between) • Panorama of possibilities formed from imaginations, debates, (re)evaluation, consultations and aspiration • Visioning and futurism
Educational background	Does everyone come from one or two schools? Has anyone worked their way up the ladder through a community institution or other means?
Phase IV – Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decolonisation has happened. Release from colonial patriotism. • Moving in desired direction. Weighing voices rather than counting votes. • Indigenous or original does not mean going back to the colonisation era. • Formalisation of process as a pro forma expression of will
Phase V – Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous proactive steps of reasoning and/or resistance • Full decolonisation has been achieved

6.4 Decoloniality of Social Developmental Work Model

Characteristics and intentions of the decolonial theory to developmental social work approach are:

1. Improving poor people's productive capacity to address poverty
2. Ensuring access to means of production, particularly land and landed resources
3. Focusing on maximising people's form of production e.g. farming, mining, fishing, trading, processing and others
4. Creating and supporting policies that support people to realise their full potential

MODULE

7

7.0 Intersection of Gender, Decolonisation and Antiracism

Decolonisation cannot be divorced from the complex web of intersecting identities, including race, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. Recognising these intersections is paramount for crafting policies and interventions that address the unique challenges faced by different groups. Although gender disparities have been highlighted in social and development discourses, various concerns remain. Notably, gender gaps continue to exist in poverty, education, employment, etc.

Gender inequality and race have intricate relationships, which are influenced by cultural variables specific to the West. These ideas, which are influenced by Greek and Roman cultural elements, portray acceptable and unattractive characteristics in mothers, daughters, and wives. These viewpoints, however, frequently run counter to the main advantages of these initiatives or programs, emphasizing the complexity of gender disparities in society.

Class structures, ecclesiastical institutions, and Judeo-Christian ideas have traditionally affected gender roles and economic systems in Western societies. Indigenous peoples are impacted by these disparities since they are ingrained in Western languages. In order to achieve social justice and confront interlocking forms of oppression, decolonization movements seek to recapture indigenous knowledge systems, revive cultural traditions, and challenge Eurocentric concepts of identity.

7.1 Gender and Social Inclusion in Decolonisation and Antiracism

To ensure gender and social inclusion in decolonisation and antiracism efforts, the following may be put in place:

Table 5: Ways of gender and social inclusion in decolonisation and antiracism

Intersectional Approaches	Inclusive Policies	Engage Diverse Voices	Invest in Capacity Building	Monitor and Evaluate Inclusively
<p>Adopt intersectional approaches that recognise the overlapping nature of identities. Address the unique challenges faced by individuals at the intersections of race, gender, and other social identities.</p>	<p>Develop and implement policies that prioritise gender and social inclusion. Ensure that marginalised groups have equal access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes.</p>	<p>Actively engage diverse voices in decision-making processes. Create spaces for marginalised individuals to contribute to the design, implementation, and evaluation of initiatives</p>	<p>Invest in capacity building for marginalised communities, particularly focusing on education, skills development, and empowerment initiatives.</p>	<p>Design monitoring and evaluation frameworks that assess the impact of initiatives on gender and social inclusion. Regularly review and adapt strategies to address emerging challenges and ensure continuous improvement</p>

7.2 Economic and Social Benefits of Decolonisation

Making a compelling case for equity is integral to garnering support for decolonisation efforts. By dismantling discriminatory structures and fostering inclusivity, decolonisation can unleash the full potential of a nation's human capital. Equity in the context of decolonisation extends beyond wealth distribution; it encompasses access to education, healthcare, and opportunities for personal and professional development.

MODULE

8

8.0 Reflecting on Faith and Decolonisation

Despite the secular dominance of development spaces, faith actors are integral actors in development and humanitarian actions. Where faith actors are part of development debates and approaches, the most local faith voices have been marginalised. Whereas local faith actors tend to be deeply rooted in their communities and stand at the forefront of developing, advocating for, and practising more fair, equitable and locally-led approaches to their work – even if they do not necessarily refer to this work as ‘decolonisation’.

The majority of Nigerians identify with a faith—Christianity, Islam or Traditional beliefs. The role of faith is often particularly strong in Nigeria. In many contexts, local capacities, social capital, leadership, expertise, networks and service provision are faith-based. Ignoring the contribution of faith and spirituality in development and humanitarian action devalues pivotal dimensions of people’s lived experiences and diminishes their sources of power, legitimacy, accountability and resilience. An inability to speak authentically as faith actors contributes to the erasure of non-white cultures and non-Western faiths.

In the process of engagement, it is important to challenge the concept of the religion used in social work. Different expressions of the same faith in various contexts or engagement with forms of cultural and social life do not fit current definitions of what counts as ‘religion’ (e.g. indigenous or traditional ‘religions’). Social work practitioners are to be aware that the nexus between religion, development and decolonisation tends to look very different from one context to another depending on the positionality of the people they engage with.

8.1 Rethinking the Secular-Religion Binary

Decolonising development also requires rethinking the binary between the religious and the secular. Although there are multiple types of secularities or secularisation, most do not imply irreligiosity. Secularity is a construction of “religious neutrality” not “anti-religious” since many activities in religious bodies are secular. The logic of the contemporary secular development project is its marginalisation of religion, which can be traced back to the European Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries. Secularisation is certainly a strong element of the European experience, whereby religion has become increasingly divorced from other areas of life, diminishing in significance in terms of how people make sense of the world and the power of its institutions over people’s lives.

However, for many communities in Nigeria such a separation of the religious from the secular is much less strongly felt. The assumption that development will result in secularisation and that therefore religion is not a relevant factor for modern, enlightened societies is another feature of the colonial development experience that fails to account for the ongoing relevance of religious beliefs in people’s lives.

In part, decolonising social work practice should look broadly at “faith” rather than “religion” in defining both personal beliefs and organised religion. It should also be stressed that ‘faith’ as a terminology of decoloniality should carry a universal perspective of the entirety of people’s beliefs, spirituality and organised practices. Part of the argument about engaging with faith actors in development has often been about decolonisation in the sense of recognising alternative epistemologies reflected in religious traditions alongside the liberal secular tradition.

MODULE

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9.0 Review and Action Planning

During the 1700s to 1900s in particular, the Western scientific paradigm evolved to unearth the objective truths or universal laws of nature—principles or assumptions that characterise or explain the world. To unearth these truths or laws of nature, scientists developed techniques that were designed to eradicate misconceptions and biases. This pursuit thus reinforced two assumptions:

First, Western scientists assumed the world can be reduced to universal, objective truths (Hughes, 2001).

Second, to arrive at these truths, Western researchers needed to minimise the effects of biases and remain as neutral as possible, unfettered by preferences or preconceptions.

These fundamental tenets—the notion of universal truths and eradication of biases—have often served communities well and may not seem especially harmful. Nevertheless, when combined with the imperialism and racism that epitomised Europe during these centuries, these assumptions sometimes culminated in practices that were dreadfully unjust and detrimental towards communities throughout Nigeria and around the globe (Ashcroft et al., 2003).

In monitoring and evaluating development work, as it is in research, it is important to underscore that power dynamics exist, with significant implications for the outcomes of project evaluation. Project evaluators are to acknowledge this reality while also critically assessing the power dynamics at play in the evaluation context. While evaluation is not entirely value-neutral (Emerson, 2020), project evaluators are to consciously ascertain power holders, power relationships, how power is exercised, power sharing opportunities and potential impacts of the power asymmetries on the evaluation process and outcomes.

Power dynamics in international development evaluations have significant implications for evaluation designs and potential outcomes. This power tussle has come to stay. Therefore, evaluators must be conscious of their strands and biases, engage stakeholders in meaningful ways, and carefully consider the design and approach of the evaluation to ensure that it is fair, just, and reflective of all voices. By doing so, it will increase trust, and accountability and ensure that evaluation practices contribute to positive social change and transformation.

9.1 Decoloniality is multidimensional

1.1 Considering that different disciplines have a variety of methodological applications, which are perceived differently in development work, it follows that, aspects such as funding flows, research politics and biases, subtextual agendas, and the perceived demographic, economic and gender power dynamics—are likely to tilt decolonising development practice into multiple layers of actions. There can be no way to marshal an exhaustive recommendation on how to institutionalise decoloniality and antiracism in all forms. A sketch of ideas for actions in this regard is enunciated below:

Promoting better knowledge of and respect for indigenous cultures and heritage.

Increasing Indigenous peoples' access to economic activities and level of employment.

Adopting policies, promoting indigenous women and girls' rights.

Discouraging racist demonstrations and acts that generate xenophobic behaviour and negative sentiments towards, or rejection of, migrants (indigene-settler or farmer-herder tensions, for instance).

Promoting education on the human rights of nomads and information campaigns on the positive contribution of nomads to the host societies and the vulnerability of nomads.

Encouraging respect for cultural diversity, promoting fair treatment of migrants (nomads, refugees and displaced persons), facilitating integration and ensuring that migrants are treated with humanity and receive legal protection.

MODULE

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10.0 Assessment

The following questions have been developed to help social work practitioners assess their level of understanding of the concepts, topics and anecdotes given in this manual. It is hoped that the questions will help to determine the degree of understanding of essential teachings in this manual while also helping to recall the learning principles. Above all, it is expected that users will have internalised the theories and formed decolonial ideologies as the default social work practice.

Knowledge

- How do you view 'knowledge'? To what extent is it a product separate from society?
- How self-reflexive is your practice about its historical development, its dominant paradigms and methodologies, and what epistemological and ontological assumptions are these based on?
- What are the epistemic dialectics and debates that you and your colleagues engage in, who do you read and talk to, and who comprises your communities of practice? Who are the peers whom you look to who validate your work or practice?
- What conferences do you attend, and where do you disseminate your work?
- To what extent does your work regard your programme/project communities as sites of theoretical production as opposed to applications and sites for data-gathering?

Work Policy

- What principles, norms, values and worldviews inform your formulation of policies for your work area? Think about absences as well as presences, centres as well as margins.
- Does your policy articulate clearly for staff your own intellectual and social position and that of your preferred partners or collaborators?
- For whom do you design your policy or proposals? Who is the ideal/imagined staff or beneficiary or client that you hold in mind and what assumptions do you make about their backgrounds, culture, languages and social status?
- How do these assumptions play out in the criteria that you use to assess your subjects?
- How does the current Nigerian socio-political context affect your policy design choices? How does your policy reflect its location in Nigeria and Nigerian communities? To what extent does it draw on subjugated histories, voices, cultures, and languages and/or address the meaning of their absences?

Clientele/Beneficiaries

- Do you articulate clearly for your clientele or beneficiaries your own social and intellectual position?
- To what extent does your practice avoid compelling staff and clientele to become assimilated into dominant practices, dispositions and Western culture? What can you do in your practice to facilitate inclusion without assuming assimilation?

What proportion of your staff or clientele comes from subordinated groups? How does your practice recognise and affirm the agency of victims and beneficiaries? How does your practice legitimate and respect them, their experiences and cultures and use their languages in the space/field of work?

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