

**DECOLONISATION AND ANTI-RACISM:  
NIGERIA AS A CASE STUDY**

**RESEARCH REPORT**

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## FOREWORD

Promoting Decolonisation and Anti-racism practices is a collective responsibility. This is more so for professionals who actively advocate for social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment of marginalised communities. Guided by the principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities, there will continue to be a gap in achieving absolute program sustainability if decolonial approaches are not integrated into social work practices.

As social work practitioners, this is an approach that has forced us to look internally, especially in our relationship with indigenous communities, and how program design and objectives can be more inclusive towards ensuring that program implementation upholds the rights and abilities of communities to practice self-determination in all areas of life, through cultural, psychological, political, and economic freedoms.

This masterpiece was commissioned by Christian Aid and efficiently delivered by African Center for Leadership and Strategy Development Global Consulting Limited. We strongly believe that this Research titled: ***'Decolonisation and Anti- Racism: Nigeria as a Case Study,'*** will open new opportunities and perspectives in the minds of organisations especially those engaged in development work. It is our hope that the content of this well-researched report will foster an understanding of the importance of Decolonisation and Anti-racism, and how it can be used to address historical injustices, systemic inequalities and power imbalances rooted in colonial histories.

This research stimulates new direction for investigation in Decolonisation and Anti-racism and compiles heated reactions both within and outside our domain. Decolonizing requires that we open up spaces for free thinking with regards to context, where local knowledge and local experiences in development work methodologies challenge the Eurocentric (often dominant) approach to Policies.

We must also acknowledge that this research is challenging and necessary for transformative learning, practice and anti-racism curriculum development. Finally, Decolonisation and Anti-racism is a path forward to creating systems which are just and equitable and should be embraced by All.

Talatu Aliyu

**Manager – Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL)  
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Abuja, March 2024**

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We applaud the dexterity of the Consultants who put together one of the most detailed synopses on the topics. The valuable contributions of the research participants during the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) does not go unnoticed.

A special thanks goes to the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning Team who provided technical support all through the drafting process of this Research, and the Communications Team who provided technical expertise in support of the final production and development of learning products from this Report.

We have produced this manual to improve the quality of our work in Nigeria. In ensuring that the tenets prescribed in this manual are in line with our global values of Dignity, Equality, Justice and Love, the material is useful and easily adaptable to other countries, communities or project contexts.

We recommend its use by all who work with Christian Aid, and in the Development Sector.

Temitope Fashola

**Country Director,  
Christian Aid Nigeria  
Abuja, March 2024**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In recent times, historical injustices, systemic inequalities and power imbalances rooted in colonial histories have gained prominence ushering in decolonisation and anti-racism as important frameworks vital to challenging and addressing these inequalities. In the context of Social Work within the development sector, it has become essential to understand the significance of these frameworks in fostering equality and promoting justice through practices, knowledge systems, and power structures.

This research examines the understanding of decolonisation and anti-racism among Nigerians, the impact of decolonisation in ending poverty and shifting power in Nigeria, and the connection between colonialism, poverty and development practice in Nigeria and Internationally.

Adopting a mix of participatory approaches using the qualitative research method, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIs) revealed that the legacy of colonialism affected the way people acquire knowledge, understand their history, comprehend the world and define themselves. In essence, the need for indigenisation or localisation cannot be overemphasised as Indigenisation acknowledges injustices, challenges colonial narratives and allows for indigenous communities to regain control of their own stories and knowledge systems.

Furthermore, Social Work practice and training should consider the environmental, cultural and ideological variability of a people. The study also indicated that colonial exploitation and resource extraction contributed to poverty in colonised territories including Nigeria. This calls for the need to understand the myriads of forces impacting local policy and programme development, and the relationship between foreign aid, poverty alleviation and development. Additionally, the study showed that Development partners, International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and faith-based organisations (FBOs) have great roles to play in decolonisation and anti-racism efforts.

In conclusion, the study recommended that pursuing a decolonisation and anti-racism agenda should entail promoting indigenous knowledge systems and education reform; strengthening economic self-reliance and local ownership; implementing inclusive governance and citizen engagement; developing culturally sensitive social work practices, addressing environmental exploitation and promoting environmental justice; encouraging interfaith and cultural collaboration in development work; engaging development partners in supporting decolonisation goals; and enhancing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI).

## **1.0 BACKGROUND**

Decolonisation and anti-racism are important frameworks that can be used to address historical injustices, systemic inequalities and power imbalances rooted in colonial histories. In recent times, these issues have gained prominence. It has become imperative to understand their significance especially in the context of organisations and development work. A proper study of decolonisation and anti-racism can help to address historical legacies, foster equality and promote justice. This is why organisations, especially those engaged in development work, must critically examine their practices, knowledge systems and power structures through the lenses of decolonisation and anti-racism.

Christian Aid has demonstrated commitment to developing knowledge and practices that aligns with the principles of decolonisation and anti-racism to create a foundation for transformative learning and equitable partnerships. This study is in furtherance of this commitment.

### **1.1 OBJECTIVES**

The main objective of the study is to design, develop and implement a comprehensive learning curriculum on decolonisation and anti-racism for Christian Aid staff, partners and communities with a focus on Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- I. To determine the common understanding of “decolonisation” and anti-racism for an average Nigerian.
- II. To examine the impact of decolonisation in ending poverty and shifting power in Nigeria.
- III. To examine the connection between colonialism, poverty and development practice in Nigeria and Internationally.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The twin issues of decolonisation and anti-racism have been recognised over the years to be important approaches in promoting development in Africa. There has been a lot of Academic Papers, Research Works and Debates on the issues. But it has not fundamentally changed approaches to development work. This is why the renewed interest by Christian Aid in partnership with the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (Centre LSD) is quite commendable. In this literature review, we considered various papers and theories on decolonisation and anti-racism. But first, we examined the trajectory of global development and the legacies of colonialism and racism in Africa.

### **2.2 Trajectory of Global Development**

The concept of development has undergone significant changes over the years, particularly since the mid-20th century. The initial focus was on economic growth and a developed society was seen as one that has moved from a traditional society to a modern one.<sup>i</sup> This conception was criticised by many scholars who propounded the dependency theories.<sup>ii</sup> They argued that the underdevelopment of certain regions, particularly in Africa and Latin America, is a direct result of historical and ongoing exploitation by wealthier nations.

In the 1980s and 1990s, there was dominance of neo-liberal scholars and theories organised around the Washington consensus and led by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank who promoted Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) as the model to stimulate economic growth. The core components of the programme are currency devaluation, trade liberalisation, public sector down sizing, fiscal austerity and market deregulation.<sup>iii</sup> The impact on Africa was catastrophic economic stagnation, de-industrialisation, debt crisis, poverty and inequality, lack of access to health and education, food insecurity, political, and social unrest.<sup>iv</sup>

In the 1990s, there was a shift towards a more holistic approach to development. The UNDP introduced the Human Development Index (HDI) in 1990 highlighting the importance of education, health and living standards.<sup>v</sup> This shift emphasized that development should focus on improving people's lives rather than focus on economic growth or Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This is why some scholars talk about holistic development which is a shift from focus on economic growth and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to well-being. The idea is to harmoniously advance the well-being of both people and the planet. Other scholars have developed what is called Gross National Happiness with nine pillars: Health; Education; Living Standards; Psychological Well-being; Time Use; Ecological Diversity and Resilience; Community Vitality; Cultural Diversity and Resilience; and Good Governance.

In 2000, world leaders adopted the Millenium declaration leading to the establishment of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs). The eight goals of the MDGs were meant to address the various dimensions of poverty including hunger, education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, disease, environmental sustainability and global partnership.<sup>vi</sup> By 2015, the goals of the MDGs were not met and the United Nations launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 17 SDGs aim to eradicate

poverty in all its forms and dimensions by 2030 while addressing issues such as inequality, climate change, peace and justice.<sup>vii</sup> At the present rate, we are unlikely to meet the SDGs by 2030. However, there is sufficient knowledge today on what can be done to eradicate poverty and inequality. A big blow can be dealt on poverty and inequality through inclusive growth and job creation, inclusive governance and citizen engagement, social protection policies and programmes, addressing environmental challenges including climate change, youth and women empowerment, leveraging technology, addressing issues of security and focusing on education, health, agriculture and infrastructure. The challenge is the leadership, strategy and the right method of organizing and working to ensure that political leaders, political parties, government, private sector, development workers and the whole of society focus on what needs to be done. In this context, decolonization and anti-racism will be very important tools and approaches.

In 2013, the African Union launched a 50-year development Agenda - Africa Agenda 2063. The agenda has a vision for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.<sup>viii</sup> The agenda prioritizes sustainable development, human rights, cultural renewal and economic empowerment building on the continent's strengths while addressing historical and systemic challenges such as colonial legacies and racism. The Africa Agenda 2063 is designed to promote decolonization as it focuses on economic independence and industrialisation, with emphasis on education reform and knowledge production, cultural renaissance and identity, Africa-led development models, Pan-African solidarity and unity, promotion of human rights and social justice, empowerment of African Youth and women and active role in global governance. Unfortunately, African governments, scholars and development workers hardly reference Africa Agenda 2063.

### **2.3 Colonial Legacies and Development in Africa**

In order to drive a decolonisation and anti-racism development agenda in Africa, it is imperative to first confront the deep legacies of colonialism in Africa. Colonialism has a profound impact on Africa's economic, political, social and cultural development. From the 19th to the mid-20th centuries, European powers divided Africa among themselves. At the Berlin conference from 1844-45, fourteen European countries met to partition Africa and divide it among themselves.<sup>ix</sup> The European powers exploited Africa's natural resources and imposed foreign cultures and governance systems on the people. The development of Africa was obstructed and changed. The interest of the colonialists was the extraction of minerals and raw materials to benefit European industries. That pattern of production has continued till today. Colonial infrastructure such as railways, ports and roads were built primarily to facilitate resource extraction rather than to serve the needs of the people. There was anarchy of production and colonial appropriation of the proceeds. They fixed the prices of the raw materials and the prices of finished goods from Europe leading to huge trade imbalance. This pattern has remained till today. They created ethnic divisions and hegemonic ethnic groups. They operated government that is removed from and alien to the people, hence, most Nigerian languages describe government work as *white man's job* (*Iluoyibo* in Urhoho, *Oluoyibo* in Ibo and *Aikin Bature* in Hausa). They created a judicial system that is alien to African way of conflict management characterised by mediation, adjudication, reconciliation, arbitration and

negotiation. They created a justice system based on evidence that can be created, manufactured, manipulated or jettisoned based on European technical grounds. They created educational system that denigrated African languages, traditions and belief systems. African goods were labelled bad and dangerous. Local gin or *Ogogoro* became illicit gin. Schnapps and Dry gin became the drink to use in African cultural gatherings. European languages were imposed and African languages were suppressed. Speaking of vernacular became a grievous offence that is met with punishment in African Schools. The African identity was corrupted. Any thing black was depicted as bad and even reflected in English language: blackmail, black sheep, black leg, blacklist etc. Indeed, Africans were made to believe that anything European (food, clothes etc) are better. It is so bad that in Urhobo language, if your child is well behaved and good, you say ***Omome na Oyibo*** meaning this my child is European. Our students were thought that Africa is a dark continent. My first Social Studies class in primary six in 1975 was titled: 'Why Africa remained a Dark Continent for a long time.' We were taught that Africa had no history. Even our Rivers, like River Niger, where our people were fishing in Lokoja was discovered by a European, Mungo Park. Colonialism increased inequality and widened that gap between the haves and have-nots. A Government Reservation Area (GRA) was created for the rich and powerful. After political independence, all the political, economic and social sectors were linked to the former colonial masters. There was no attempt to decolonise politics, economy, culture and social issues. Post independence leaders continued economic dependency and aid reliance.

Colonialism even affected and significantly shaped African perception of beauty standards leading to preference for physical traits associated with Caucasian ideals. They introduced ideals that celebrated Eurocentric traits such as fair skin and wavy hair while stigmatizing African features like dark skin and tightly coiled hair. Media, Education (school uniforms), and Religion controlled by colonial masters reinforced Eurocentric beauty standards. Western characteristics were portrayed as symbols of modernity, intelligence and sophistication while African features were represented negatively. The introduction of Western products such as bleaching creams (skin lighteners) and hair relaxers further consolidated Eurocentric beauty. Even today, these influences continue to be promoted by global media and social platforms. If you see an African woman who defies these influences to maintain a low cut or African hairstyle, wait until she has a special programme like marriage ceremony or birthday celebrations. All the peer, family and community pressure will be put on her to look beautiful (i.e. Eurocentric) on her special day.

#### **2.4 Racism in Africa**

The colonisation of Africa was underpinned by racist ideologies that justified the exploitation of Africa and control of African people. Cecil Rhodes, the Prime Minister of the Cape colony once wrote "I contend that we are the first race in the world and the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race."<sup>x</sup> Colonialism and slave trade went hand in hand. Racist justifications for slavery were used to dehumanise African people. Human beings were raided and sold. In Europe and America, African slaves were advertised in newspapers and sold publicly.

There is also environmental racism in Africa.<sup>xi</sup> Africa is disproportionately affected by environmental exploitation and degradation. International Oil Companies destroy African environments in a way that can never be contemplated in Europe and America. They do in Africa what they can never do in their own countries. A classical example is the ongoing environmental genocide in the Niger Delta. According to the UNEP report on Ogoni Land, in the community of Nisisioken Ogale, families are drinking water from wells that is contaminated with benzene - a known carcinogen - at levels over 900 times above WHO guidelines.<sup>xii</sup> They also found out that the surface water throughout the Greeks in and surrounding Ogoni Land contain hydrocarbons with floating layers of oil. In the recent report titled: **'An Environmental Genocide: Counting the Human and Environmental Cost of Oil in Bayelsa Nigeria,'** the Bayelsa State Oil and Environmental Commission documented that the Niger Delta is one of the most polluted places on earth and thousands of oil spills, unrestricted gas flaring and frequent releases of toxic contaminants have poisoned people's farmlands, the water they drink, and the air they breathe.<sup>xiii</sup> One study estimates that in 2012 alone, oil spills in Nigeria and predominantly in the Niger Delta resulted in over 16,000 additional neonatal deaths. Even official records by the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) documents that there were 16,263 oil spills within a 17-year period between 2006 and 2023 which accounted for about 823, 483 barrels of oil spill equivalent to 4,103 tanker trucks or 130,933,797 litres of crude oil poured into Niger Delta environment. As this is happening and with the global move towards energy transition, the IOCs are leaving the Niger Delta without a clear pathway on how to clean up the mess that they have created. This cannot happen in their own environment.

## **2.5 Conceptualising and Operationalising Decolonisation and Racism**

Decolonisation traditionally refers to the process by which colonised nations attain political independence from colonial masters. But today, the term is more expansive and extends beyond political sovereignty to include economic, cultural and social liberation from foreign subjugation and control. Therefore, decolonisation aims to dismantle structures and attitudes rooted in colonial ideologies and re-assert cultural identity, language, and knowledge systems that colonial powers marginalised or erased.<sup>xiv</sup>

Decolonisation is imperative because of the negative impact of colonialism. Decolonisation as an approach to development therefore require African countries to reclaim their agency, reformulate policies rooted in local context and knowledge for political, economic, and social empowerment.<sup>xv</sup> In other words, decolonisation approaches have to be comprehensive and cover economic, political, cultural and epistemological dimensions. Decolonising African economies will mean shifting away from serving as producers of raw materials towards a diversified and locally centred economies with focus on self-sufficiency, industrialisation, and production of goods and services that benefit the local people. Decolonising politics in Africa will mean prioritising African governance models that reflect African values and systems of accountability with local participation.<sup>xvi</sup> Decolonising cultural imperialism will mean reviving indigenous languages, histories and cultural practices. Decolonising knowledge systems will mean challenging Eurocentric theories and perspectives and promoting African perspectives, philosophies and solutions. As a result, operationalising decolonisation is not merely overcoming colonial legacies and impositions but also building a new future rooted in

African values, knowledge, and aspirations to build economies and governance systems that prioritise local human needs and cultural heritage.

Anti-racism encompasses a range of ideas and political actions which are meant to counter racial prejudice, systemic racism, and the oppression of specific racial groups.<sup>xvii</sup> It is a set of beliefs, actions and policies targeted at opposing racism and promoting racial equality. As some scholars have argued, anti-racism goes beyond passive rejection of racism and it requires individuals, organisations, and societies to actively identify, confront and eliminate systems and structures that perpetuate racial inequity. Within the African context, this means resisting global racial inequalities rooted in colonial and neo-colonial structures as well as internalising racism and discrimination such as ethnicity.

Anti-racism is needed in Africa because of legacies of colonialism and apartheid in Africa. Anti-racism in economic development will demand that African nations engage in fair trade and resist exploitative practices of multinational corporations. Anti-racism in culture will mean reclaiming African identity, values, history and conceptions of beauty from stereotypes imposed by colonial narratives. Social anti-racism will emphasize promotion of access to education, health care and social services. Anti-racism in political development will mean resisting neo-colonial influences and neo-liberal policies of the IMF and World Bank. Anti-racist environmental justice will mean addressing climate injustice and environmental genocide as it is happening in the Niger Delta.

## **2.6 Decolonisation and Anti-racism in Development Work**

Decolonisation and Antiracism in development planning and projects or sociological work environments has become increasingly mainstreamed. One issue is the relationship between such work and that of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI), or the potential reduction and co-option of decolonising for DEI purposes. The proliferation of literature on the topic in the last two decades, the establishment of journals on decolonisation in the last decade, student protests such as the #RhodesMustFall campaign at universities in South Africa and Oxford University in Britain, the French President Emmanuel Macron's call for the repatriation of African heritage from European museums, the appointment of a Deputy Minister of Decolonisation in Bolivia, bear testimonies to heightened consciousness. Moreover, we are witnessing the internationalisation of indigenous knowledge as colonised peoples across the globe use the spaces that globalisation affords to build solidarities in order to resist the homogenising and normalising effects of globalisation and to decentre western epistemologies.

Growing inequality globally and within nations, impending environmental disasters including threats associated with climate change, ongoing racism and its resurfacing in Europe, gender-based violence and sex/gender discrimination, increasing youth unemployment and financial and economic crises associated with neoliberal capitalism, may be some of the many factors that have given rise to a heightened interest in decolonisation. In a sense, decolonisation has become the invariable concept for critical responses to a range of issues characterising the present condition of the planet and people.

However, although decolonisation and anti-racism may be related concepts, they are not synonymous. Although the plethora of literature on these subjects are focused on education and schooling in the global north, the conversations are starting to trickle into the consciousness of African scholars and development practitioners. Therefore, the policy work to be delivered on decolonisation and anti-racism in development planning/programming in this proposition need to be understood in the context of the global south. This policy proposition will specifically focus on the following: **(1)** the multi-faceted nature of decolonisation and its nuanced understandings produced in different regions of the world; **(2)** the relationship between decolonisation and anti-racism and **(3)** the implications of decolonisation/anti-racism for development planning/programming, with special focus on policy execution and outcomes.

The removal of colonial administrations dates to the early 19th century when many Latin American countries gained independence from Iberian powers (Chasteen, 2008). Resurgences against colonial rule started long before World War II and provided the context for present-day decolonial scholarship. However, in Africa, the removal of colonial administrations mainly occurred Post-World War II. This period witnessed a proliferation of literature on decolonisation, and together with the inspiration from earlier decolonial scholarship, gave rise to what has become known as decolonisation practice in social and development work. What the trigger is/was for the current wave of decolonisation is not easy to pinpoint but there certainly is a heightened consciousness of decolonisation and/or greater intensity concerning this topic.

In 2001, the United Nations (UN) facilitated a global gathering in Durban, Republic of South Africa which concluded with an urgent plea for countries to adopt measures of “affirmative or positive action[s] to create equal opportunities for victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in the political, economic, social and cultural decision-making spheres.” This declaration signposted the equal urgency and importance of the issues of decolonisation and antiracism.

It could be argued that racism is both a causative and corollary of colonisation. The twin construct of colonisation and racism have found roots in historical acts of deprivations and dehumanisation, most of which have established a normalisation of otherwise despicable attitudes of human viciousness or cruelty of one person to another on the basis of various factors. So, while coloniality is traditionally associated with territorial control, racism is predicated on a system of prejudice or discrimination on the basis of ethnic or racial membership.

Theoreticians have postulated that decolonisation in its rudimentary ramifications cover all of cultural, psychological, and economic freedoms for indigenous people with the goal of centering indigenous land, indigenous sovereignty, and indigenous ways of thinking—especially, the right and ability of indigenous people to practise self-determination over their land, cultures, political, and economic systems. Frantz Fanon (1961) had argued that “(re)building cultures must interrogate colonialism’s turmoil on [the] inner world and psyche.”

In a similar vein, the critical race theory (CRT) attempts to interrogate and transform the relationships between race, racism and power. So, scholars and practitioners consider many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up but place them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, context, group, self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious. However, unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step-by-step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law.

In practice, decolonisation is about bringing to light and taking apart colonialist power in all its forms. For this, there is the need to understand that the society is built upon this power—mostly shaped through commodified institutional approaches. This includes all the things that perpetuate and reproduce the legacy of colonialism or racism in areas like education, housing, finance, policing, healthcare and many more. Some of these, going forward, reinforce the other. An example is our education systems (schools, colleges and universities) which have been built on our colonial histories. In uncovering the nature and development of knowledge-based hegemony and power, decolonising practices bring privilege into dialectical relation with the material and historical traces of alternative ways of knowing the world. In the university system, for instance, such traces have been drawn beyond current engagements with critical studies and compelled an interrogation with a range of intersecting oppressions and oppressive practices (Arday and Mirza, 2018). Accordingly, post-coloniality and anti-coloniality have been brought into the dialogue with a dominant, sector-wide and institutional focus on DEI.

It is important to state that 'decolonisation' does not have a single-straightforward meaning. For many, the term refers to a twentieth century moment and process that occurred Post-World War II, but as mentioned, it has a much longer history that dates back to the early nineteenth century in the case of Latin America. According to Jansen and Osterhammel (2013), it involved the simultaneous dissolution of several intercontinental empires and the creation of nation-states throughout the global South in a short period of four decades Post-World War II. Moreover, for these scholars, decolonisation depicts a unique historical occurrence and probably an irreversible delegitimisation of any kind of political rule by a foreign power that results in the subjugation of people. The events of the Post-World War II period were not undramatic, as Jansen and Osterhamel acknowledged, but tumultuous and complex and resulted in more nuanced understandings of decolonisation. Decolonisation was the result of resistance struggles as colonised peoples pushed back against foreign power elites. In Africa, some of the primary resistance movements were the Ndebele-Shona Uprisings in Southern Africa (1896–1897) and the Maji Maji in East Africa (1905–1907), which formed the basis for future nationalist anti-colonial struggles, exemplified by the Mau-Mau Uprisings (1952–1960) (Ndlovu-Gatsheni in Omanga, 2020).

In Zimbabwe, the British named Rhodesia after the British coloniser and industrialist, Cecil John Rhodes believed that the English had an inherent right to imperial rule because they were the "first race in the world and therefore the more of the world (they) inhabited, the better it would be for the human race" (Nyangoni, 1978). This ideology of innate

British superiority served as justification for their discriminatory colonial policies. During the colonial rule that extended from 1890 to 1979, the white minority dominated and oppressed the native black population and divested them from their land. Colonial ordinances structured the inequitable distribution of the land that saw 6,000 whites seized the best half of the land while the worst half was left to the 600,000 black peasant farmers (Chung, 1989).

In the case of Algeria, there was a protracted war between the Algerian National Liberation Front and France between 1954 and 1962 before the country won independence. However, unlike societies like America in the American War of Independence (1775), Algeria in the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), Zimbabwe in the Zimbabwean Struggle for Liberation (1965-1980), and Haiti in the Haitian Revolution (1791), Nigeria secured her independence through nonviolent movements (Ememugwem, 2009). Most other African countries obtained independence in the mid-20th century, with South Africa being the last African country to be decolonised in 1994, following decades of anti-apartheid struggles. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) argues that apartheid was a form of internal white colonialism.

Gaining independence and the establishment of nation-states did not, however, mean the end of colonialism. The first President of independent Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah (1965), coined the term neo-colonialism after observing that countries such as Ghana merely achieved technical independence because ex-colonial powers and new superpowers continued to have a decisive influence on 'independent' nation-states through international monetary bodies, fixing of prices on world markets, multinational corporations and through educational and cultural institutions (Ashcroft et al., 2003). Nkrumah argued that neo-colonialism was more insidious than older forms of colonialism because it was more difficult to detect and resist. Nkrumah's perspective aligns with Hardt and Negri's (2000) notion of *Empire*, a new form of global sovereignty comprising an amalgam of national and supranational organisations united by a single logic of conquer and rule.

The '*Empire*' has become de-territorialised into an amorphous force that is not focused on the nation-state but on the entire world. Fanon (1967) too was disillusioned at the end of the Algerian war and lamented that decolonisation had not taken place, only the Africanisation of colonialism. The removal of colonial administrations Post-World War II was the impetus for a period of great intellectual ferment which served as the basis for what today is termed decolonial studies. African scholars that contributed to the period of intellectual tumult were among others: Steve Biko, Aimé Cesaire, Emmanuel Eze, Frantz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, Albert Memmi and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. Le Grange (2019) writes that the works of these scholars, "*help us in our struggle to make sense of the present, to find points of resonance and dissonance between their views and ours, to rethink their ideas so as to create something new in the present, and to enable us to imagine a different future that is a synthesis of the past and present (but more than the sum of the two)*" .

In essence, decolonising or antiracism will entail providing staff, practitioners, partners, researchers or consultants, governments and the local communities with the tools and

language to critically identify the ways our institutions, policies, programmes and projects have been formulated or executed using the same colonial or racial hierarchies. It also means empowering them to confront, challenge and reject the status quo. They would then be able to reimagine how things can be done differently and create alternatives that would benefit us all.

To allow for decolonisation of the social work, a holistic approach is recommended to deconstruct power relationships, especially, because the purpose can be entangled in the agendas of many stakeholders, funders, administrators, institutions and researchers. The struggles for 'decolonising' have evolved from the undoing of colonial rule to the even more fundamental challenge of freeing knowledge, practice and culture from deeper worldwide concentrations of incumbent power. In light of the growing global decolonisation movement, which questions various aspects of decoloniality, there are calls to '*decolonise development work and development agendas*' – which are often detached from local contexts and situations.

## **2.7 Decoloniality in the Context of the Global South**

From literature, therefore, our understanding of what needs to emerge from this exercise is broadly categorised into the four following thematic areas:

### **2.7.1 Opening Up Space for Free Thinking**

Decolonising requires that we open up space for free thinking with regard to context, where local knowledge and local experiences in development work methodologies challenge the Eurocentric (often dominant) approach to policy. This is not to say that the existing methodologies are not fit for purpose, but it means appreciating the benefits and limitations of existing methodologies and articulating them to fit local contexts.

### **2.7.2 Opening Up Spaces to Critique Positions Of Power And Dominant Culture**

Decolonisation practices offer powerful alternative narratives for those wanting to critique positions of power and dominant culture. By way of its definition around undoing colonial rule over subordinate countries, it implies looking for some level of positionality to counter aspects around incumbent power. In other words, it means telling a more honest version of events, not from the 'colonial' point of view but considering what benefit the participants/beneficiaries will derive from the policy and forming relationships with them and their communities. It is about expanding the current methods and historical perspectives that are relied upon. The space should ideally promote the potential for policymakers or practitioners to challenge power.

### **2.7.3 Consider the Relationship between the Social Worker and the Beneficiary**

One of the ways to decolonise development practices is the ability of the policymaker to incorporate the beneficiary(ies) and expound the meaning of the methods to them, and more broadly to people who do not understand policymaking. However, social work or policymakers should also go beyond seeing the people as mere beneficiaries of their work, but as collaborators, co-designers,

and co-implementers of development agendas, thereby opening opportunities for co-producing outcomes. However, on its own, decolonising methodologies may not yield desired results and needs to be part of a broader agenda in development discourses.

#### **2.7.4 Unpacking Disciplinary Tensions and Conflicts**

There are various philosophical underpinnings around methods that are often ignored in epistemological debates, especially as a result of the disciplinary positionality. The various strands of approaches, focus and/or interests in development work must be acknowledged in a bid to explore how to contextually deliver functional policymaking and policy-execution models. Decolonising development work will, therefore, bring in different ontological and epistemological perspectives and different disciplines and incorporate them. For instance, the Ubuntu philosophy within the African realities would perhaps be a radical challenge to Eurocentric methodology.

#### **2.7.5 Decoloniality is Multidimensional**

Considering that different disciplines have variety in 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.

### **2.8 Conclusion**

From the foregoing, a consistently evolving model for decolonisation and antiracial anthropology of theorists and practitioners of development work can be engendered through a number of hands-on ideas. To design effective corrective measures and dismantle discriminatory structures and institutions, the holistic vision proposes an emphasis on a victim-centred approach recognising an honest assessment of the past, and acknowledging the consequences of the transatlantic slave trade and of enslavement and colonialism in present times. Some of the documented victims of past colonial, racism and racial discrimination include Africans and people of African descent, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees and displaced persons, victims of human trafficking, persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistics minorities, among others. Recognition of wide global discrimination is also accorded to growing Anti-Semitic and Islamophobic sentiments as well as movements based on racism and discriminatory ideas against Jews, Muslims, and Arab communities.

Consequently, it is proposed that some practical measures to be considered shall include:

- 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, as examples).
- 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
- Guaranteeing the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, to individually enjoy their own culture, practise their religion, and use their own language.
- Taking measures to prevent racial discrimination against persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities in respect of employment, health care, housing, social services and education, taking into account multiple forms of discrimination.
- Mainstreaming a gender perspective in measures of prevention, education and protection aimed at the eradication of colonialism, racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance.
- Working to reduce violence, including violence motivated by colonialism, racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance.
- Developing educational materials to teach young people the importance of tolerance and respect.
- Establishing and implementing policies and action plans to combat colonialism, racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance, including their gender-based manifestations.

To close this treatise, it is equally important to note the affirmative/best practices which have been tested in other geographies and which may be worth considering in the framework of the current exercise. These measures may serve as inspiration for proposing effective frameworks, instruments, policies and programmes to combat colonialism, racism and racial discrimination. These measures are categorised under enactment of legislation, institution of action plans and policies, establishment of ombudsman (monitoring bodies and/or complaint mechanisms), promotion of conscience-raising activities and education, institutional proclamations, individual and institutional capacity building, research studies and data collection, community engagements, accountability measures, installation of monuments, and special funding,

These actions have to be viewed from the prism of the Sustainable Development Goals particularly **Goal 4** (ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all), **Goal 8** (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), **Goal 10** (reduce inequality within and among countries), **Goal 13** (take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts), **Goal 16** (promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, and **Goal 17** (strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development).

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

The methodology used is essentially a qualitative study with utilisation of participatory approaches. It integrates a comprehensive literature review, Key Informant Insights and participatory Focus Group Discussion to inform the development of a decolonisation and anti-racism curriculum tailored to the Nigerian context.

**3.1 Literature Review:** We conducted an extensive literature review on decolonisation, anti-racism, race, racism, racialisation, poverty and their interconnections with a focus on the Nigerian context. We identified relevant academic works, policy documents and reports that address the relationship between colonialism, poverty and development practice in Nigeria. We examined existing educational materials and curricula related to decolonisation and anti-racism to understand best practices and potential adaptations for the Nigerian context and explored the literature on the role of faith-based organisations and the church in the history of colonisation and current efforts to decolonise.

**3.2 Key Informant Interview:** Six (6) scholars and development practitioners were identified and invited to reflect on the concepts, elements and formations of decolonisation and antiracism generally in Nigeria but specifically as it relates to social or development work. The informants were not necessarily subject matter experts but practitioners with varied multidisciplinary experiences. All the interview sessions were held virtually over Zoom except two—one was over the phone while the other was physical. All sessions, held under the Chatham House-styled rules, non-ascription and confidentiality, were recorded for the records and ease of recall.

During the interviews, the existence of a global online forum where scholars gathered to discuss “Decolonisation and Decoloniality” was discovered. This information created the avenue to further learn about the concepts and contemporary scholarly works. Presenters at the forum, which lasted over 5 hours and has been published on YouTube<sup>xviii</sup>, included Prof. Sabelo J. NDLOVU-GATSHENI (Zimbabwean), Prof. Oyeronke OYEWUNMI (Nigerian), Prof. Shose KESSI (South Africa), Prof. Nelson MALDONADO-TORRES (Puerto Rican), Prof. Julia SUAREZ-KRABBE (Colombian) and Prof. Walter D. MIGNOLO (Argentinian). The forum was moderated by historian, Prof. Toyin FALOLA, an endowed professor of history at the University of Texas.

#### 3.2.1 Questions

The questions posed to the informants were structured to elicit their broad thoughts and to reflect on their experiences in their professional and personal lives. The protocol for the interviews was formulated along the following outline:

##### 1. General Understanding

- a. How would you define “decolonisation” in the context of Nigeria?
- b. How do you perceive the term “anti-racism” in the Nigerian context?

## **2. Impact of Decolonisation**

- a. In your opinion, what has been the impact of decolonisation on poverty alleviation in Nigeria?
- b. Can you share specific examples of instances where decolonisation has influenced power dynamics in the Nigerian context?

## **3. Connection between Colonisation, Power and Development**

- a. From your perspective, how is colonialism connected to poverty in Nigeria?
- b. In the realm of development practice, what linkages do you see between colonial histories and current challenges in Nigeria?

## **4. Faith-Based Organisation**

- a. Considering the role of Faith Based Organisations (FBOs), how do you see their involvement in decolonisation efforts today?
- b. Are there specific instances or practices within faith-based organisations that contribute to the ongoing decolonisation process?

## **5. Decolonisation and Development**

- a. Why do you think that decolonisation is crucial for ending poverty and shifting power in Nigeria?
- b. What learning opportunities can Christian Aid leverage to effectively support communities in the decolonisation and anti-racism discourse?

## **6. Gender and Social Inclusion**

- a. How can we ensure gender and social inclusion (GESI) in the discourse of decolonisation and anti-racism?
- b. Are there specific considerations and challenges related to GESI?

**3.3 Focus Group Discussions:** To buttress the submissions from both the desk review and the KIIs, a total of 5 FGDs were conducted, with 48 participants drawn from 17 organizations across Nigeria. These organizations were specifically Christian Aid implementing partners. Discussions at the FGD commenced with an exploration of the concepts of decolonization and anti-racism. Participants demonstrated a nuanced understanding of decolonization, tracing its origins to the partitioning of Africa by European powers in the late 19th century. This Highlighted the struggle for self-governance, and participants emphasized the ongoing relevance of decolonization in achieving economic autonomy and cultural sovereignty. Participants shared their personal experiences or observations on these concepts in their community work and made shocking revelations of classical examples of racism taking place in Nigeria.

The discussions explored the global dimensions of colonialism, poverty, and development practice, revealing the complex interplay of power dynamics.

Participants highlighted the exploitative relationships between foreign elites and African nations, emphasizing the systemic barriers that hinder progress in decolonization and anti-racism efforts. The Focus Group Discussions provided valuable insights into the complexities of decolonization and anti-racism, highlighting the interconnectedness of historical legacies, global power dynamics, and local development efforts. While participants demonstrated a deep understanding of these issues, there were notable gaps in the discussion regarding concrete strategies for promoting inclusivity and addressing systemic barriers. The Focus Group Discussion was organised around the following themes:

- Why is decolonisation crucial for ending poverty and shifting power in Nigeria?
- What is the connection between colonialism, poverty, and development practice in Nigeria and globally?
- What learning can Christian Aid utilise to support partners and communities effectively?
- How can we ensure gender and social inclusion in the decolonisation and anti-racism discourse?

#### 4.0 FINDINGS

The research, especially the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), revealed that “most Nigerians experience racism mostly only when they travel or live in Western countries.” But the legacy of colonialism affected the way the people acquire knowledge, understand their history, comprehend the world and define themselves. It also showed that poverty can be directly linked to European exploitation and resource extraction. Colonial legacy ensured that successive administration including military regimes constructed systems that gave privilege to a few and marginalised the majority. Decolonisation is, therefore, relevant to change land distribution policies, education systems, economic policies, trade relationships and international partnerships.

An important aspect of the report is the need for indigenisation or localisation. Indigenisation acknowledges injustices, challenges colonial narratives and allows for indigenous communities to regain control of their own stories and knowledge systems. As prescribed by one of the key informants, indigenisation of work practice in Nigeria should entail the use of “appropriate theories and practice methods including socio-cultural values, norms and philosophies.”

Social work practice and training should take into account the environmental, cultural and ideological variability of a people. “It is necessary that indigenisation should focus on skills, outlook, philosophies, theories and models that are local in content,” according to a participant in one of the FGDs. In other words, social work practitioners must start from within and then go on to determine the problems and their solutions, resources and skills available, processes and procedures to use and what help may be required or borrowed from outsiders. Accordingly, social work knowledge and practice must emerge from “local initiatives which should then sustain it.” It also follows that the rightful basis of social work training must be knowledge from practice. There is the need to develop indigenous theories that will assist social workers in providing the kind of services and support systems that are derived from their client’s values, beliefs and culture. Social work practitioners and their clients need to modify and develop conceptual frameworks and methodologies rooted in their socio-cultural practice contexts.

There are a lot of lessons from the study for Nigeria. It showed that colonial exploitation and resource extraction contributed to poverty in colonised territories including Nigeria. The legacy of colonialism affected the way formerly colonised peoples acquire knowledge, understand their history, comprehend their world and define themselves. This is why decolonisation is important to address land distribution policies, educational systems, economic policies, trade relationships and international partnerships. For Nigeria, decolonisation will mean addressing poverty and reshaping power dynamics through alternative development strategies, preserving cultural identity, promoting indigenous education, establishing transparent governance, ensuring equitable power distribution, redefining international relations and challenging colonial biases. This will also mean not depending on aid for development, indigenisation of social work practice, and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI).

There are lessons from philosophical thoughts in Nigeria such as the concept of ***Omoluabi*** in Yoruba land which is founded on the principles of respect, equitable wealth

distribution, and social justice.<sup>xix</sup> Drawing from this, development workers in Nigeria can focus on people (respectful relations and collaboration), place (context and language), expectation (shared goals and shared benefits), framework (participation, cooperation and collectivism), data production strategies (field work, observations, folklore, songs, artefacts and dance), ethics (community led and community values), and representations (capacity, knowledge and skills transfer).

Participants from both the FGDs and KIs appear to agree on the need to understand the myriad of forces impacting local policy and programme development, and the relationship between foreign aid, poverty alleviation and development. One of the key interviewees suggests that social work “is concerned with the social well being of vulnerable, marginalised, and oppressed groups in the society in light of broader interventions aimed at poverty alleviation and social development.”

Furthermore, the study showed that Development partners, International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) have great roles to play in decolonisation and anti-racism efforts. It is important to note that methodology is important to social work practice and interventions since it frames the subject being tackled, determines the set of instruments and methods to be employed, shapes the analysis and defines the goal.<sup>xx</sup> It has been argued that methodology legitimates and delegitimates, validates and invalidates, approves and disapproves, passes and fails, claims to knowledge and knowledge production.<sup>xxi</sup> In other words, methodology is the exercise of power to include and exclude.

Therefore, INGOs and Faith Based Organisations should develop methodologies that promote culture-specific knowledge and practice and prioritise local, empirically-based awareness that provides culturally appropriate solutions to particular contexts. 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-specific bottom-up approaches. Through these conscious efforts, the social work practitioner can attain the goal of a humane and just social order.

Similarly, Development partners can facilitate collaborative processes, support locally led initiatives, promote localisation, challenge assumptions and values, lobby for policy changes and engage in truth and reconciliation. INGOs can play a vital role of fostering decolonisation by taking practical steps such as adopting locally relevant approaches and challenging current strategies and approaches through a decolonisation lens. FBOs can contribute to decolonisation by reassessing their world views, participating in collaborative processes and establishing decolonisation and anti-racism practices.

In addition, an important aspect of decolonisation is Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI). Decolonisation cannot be divorced from the complex web of intersecting identities including race, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status(class). Recognising these intersections is paramount to crafting policies and interventions that address the unique

challenges faced by different groups. There is, therefore, the need for inclusive policies, incorporation of diverse voices, investment in capacity building, and inclusive monitoring, evaluation and learning.

The study also indicated that Faith Actors play crucial roles in development and humanitarian actions, despite the secular dominance in these spaces. Local faith voices, deeply rooted in communities, have been marginalized even though they practice more equitable and locally-led approaches, often without labeling their work as 'decolonisation.'

There is an intersection between religious teachings and decolonisation principles, where faith organizations, once complicit in colonialism, are now taking steps to decolonize by acknowledging their past roles, supporting indigenous faith traditions, and promoting social justice. Interfaith collaboration, including traditional faiths, is essential in advancing decoloniality, fostering understanding, and promoting positive social change. A broader and more rounded interfaith collaboration, when grounded in shared values and a commitment to justice, can be a potent force in advancing decolonisation efforts, fostering understanding and promoting positive social change.

The study concluded that there are huge economic and social benefits of decolonisation and antiracism including increased self-sufficiency and economic growth; reduction in exploitation and resource drain; increased trade and investment opportunities; enhanced cultural identity and pride; improved access to education and healthcare and increased political participation and representation.

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Decolonization and Anti-racism are essential frameworks for redefining development work in Africa, addressing both historical injustices and contemporary inequalities rooted in colonial legacies and racial biases. In this study, we have underscored the deep-rooted impact of colonialism and racism on Africa's social, economic, and cultural systems, emphasizing the necessity for an African-led transformation agenda that centres local knowledge, reclaims African identity, and promotes equitable resource distribution. Colonial exploitation created structures that perpetuate poverty, restrict economic independence, and marginalize indigenous cultures. By implementing decolonization and anti-racism principles, African nations can disrupt these structures and work towards inclusive development that aligns with their values, needs, and aspirations. This reorientation requires a commitment to indigenized social work practices, inclusive governance, and equitable partnerships that honour Africa's unique socio-cultural contexts.

In order to pursue a decolonisation and anti-racism agenda, the following recommendations are proffered:

- 1. Promote Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Education Reform:** African governments and development organizations should prioritize the integration of indigenous knowledge and languages within educational and social development frameworks. This includes creating curricula that reflect African history, values, and perspectives, thereby fostering a strong cultural identity and countering the colonial narrative.
- 2. Strengthen Economic Self-Reliance and Local Ownership:** African countries should focus on policies that promote local production, self-sufficiency, and economic diversification. Regional trade initiatives, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), should be strengthened to support intra-African trade, reduce dependency on former colonial powers, and promote local industries.
- 3. Implement Inclusive Governance and Citizen Engagement:** Decolonization in governance requires adopting inclusive policies that ensure equitable power distribution and involve citizens in decision-making processes. This approach enhances accountability and aligns governance structures with African values, strengthening political sovereignty and national unity.
- 4. Develop Culturally Sensitive Social Work Practices:** Social work education and practice should be indigenized to reflect African socio-cultural realities. This involves using local methods, theories, and values in social services, enabling practitioners to offer support rooted in the lived experiences and needs of African communities.
- 5. Address Environmental Exploitation and Promote Environmental Justice:** African nations, especially those affected by environmental degradation, should enforce stringent environmental protection policies. Collaborating with local and international organizations, these nations can hold multinational corporations

accountable and advocate for sustainable practices that prioritize the health and well-being of local populations.

6. **Encourage Interfaith and Cultural Collaboration in Development Work:** Recognizing the influence of faith in African communities, development organizations should engage religious and traditional leaders in decolonization efforts. Interfaith collaborations grounded in shared values can promote social justice, enhance understanding, and contribute to community-driven change.
7. **Engage Development Partners in Supporting Decolonization Goals:** International NGOs, faith-based organizations, and other development partners should adopt methodologies that respect and integrate local knowledge. This approach encourages partnerships that empower African-led initiatives and facilitate context-specific solutions to development challenges.
8. **Enhance Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI):** Anti-racism and decolonization strategies must consider intersecting identities, including race, gender, and socio-economic status. African countries should enact inclusive policies and engage diverse voices to address the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups, ensuring that development efforts are equitable and comprehensive.

By embracing these recommendations, Africa can pursue a path of development rooted in justice, equity, and cultural pride, setting a foundation for sustainable growth and self-reliance. We cannot continue to pursue a neo-colonial agenda in Africa. A decolonisation and anti-racism agenda is imperative in Africa.

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