

AN EXPOSITION OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGIOUS NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN NIGERIA: PERISCOPING INTO THE FEDERATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS OF NIGERIA

Mustapha Hashim Kurfi

*Department of Sociology, Boston University, Massachusetts- U.S.A.
mustapha@bu.edu*

Abstract

This paper adopts Jeavons' (1998) assumptions about the characteristics of Religious Non-governmental Organizations (RNGOs) to examine the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria. Jeavons delineates seven characteristics of RNGOs: 1. Display of self-identity; 2. participants are religiously committed; 3. material resources are provided by religious people; 4. the goals, products and services are religious by nature; 5. processing information through religious values; 6. development, distribution and use of power through deriving from religious source; and 7. interaction with other RNGOs. The paper argues that there are distinctive differences in the conceptual set of assumptions about RNGOs- their characteristics, missions, and services from what the literature tells us in the West. The differences emanated from many reasons including historical, cultural, structural and organizational variations. This reinforces the fact that when it comes to religion, there is no global rule.

Key words: Religion, Muslim, Women, Non-profit, Organization, Social services

Introduction

The role of religious ideas and organizations in promoting human well-being and bringing social change cannot be overemphasized. Faith-based organizations are¹ ideal social service providers through programs envisioned to work at two levels: reforming individuals into successful worker citizens through spiritual and psychic renewal; and building "communities" or collective social capital through urban

ministries. There is vast literature on religious non-governmental organizations (RNGOs) which offer insights on the characteristics, missions, services, and sources of funds for faith-related associations. For instance, Ebaugh *et al.* (2006) argue that to empirically examine the relative effectiveness in service delivery of faith-based and secular agencies one must first be able to clearly distinguish the two. As a result, several studies attempted to identify the characteristics, structures, processes, missions, services, effectiveness, sources of

¹ See Cnaan (1999)

resources, and challenges of secular and faith-based associations. Many scholars use different indices to identify and describe the features of faith-based organizations. Adopting Jeavons' (1998) characteristics or "ideal type" RNGOs to examine the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), I make an implicit comparison² between what is obtained in the Western³ RNGOs and African⁴ context. There are distinctive differences in the conceptual set of assumptions about RNGOs –their characteristics, missions and services from what the literature tells us in the West and what is obtained in Africa in general and specifically Nigeria. These differences emanated from many reasons including historical, cultural, structural and organizational variations. This reinforces the assertion that when it comes to religion, there is no global rule⁵. This study aims at utilizing the literature to examine some of the assumptions about RNGOs using a particular case of Muslim women⁶ association in a non-Western context with a view to explore some hypotheses or underlying questions that can provide bases for further research.

² I shall adopt Jeavons' (1998) characteristics of RNGOs as an ideal type model to test the applicability or otherwise of his model to a Nigerian women's Islamic-based association.

³ For the purpose of this paper I am using the term West to refer to the United States and Europe in general partly because of an on-going debate on America's or Europe's exceptionalism on secularism.

⁴ Asamoah-Gyadu (n.d.) argues that generally, Africans take a sacramental view of the universe. The conviction that there are no sharp dichotomies between what is physical and what is spiritual tend to be stronger in Africa than in Western thought system (pp.93-4).

⁵ See Casanova's *Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective*.

⁶ Since a vast majority of the literature talks about Western RNGOs, it will be interesting to examine a non-Western, non-Christian, and non-male religious organization in one of the developing nations. I think the gender aspect is equally important.

Assumptions about Religious Non-Governmental Organizations

Many studies revealed that Religious NGOs represent a unique hybrid of religious beliefs and sociopolitical activism at all levels of society. For instance, Kim's (2003) findings revealed that religious organizations contribute to the wellbeing of the public in specific ways (provision of welfare services, socio-economic activities, health care, education, and democratic participation). That suggests a) series of activities to pay attention and b) mechanisms by which those activities have their effects. Similarly, Clarke (2007) argues that unlike congregational and denominational structures which tend to focus on the development of their membership, RNGOs seek to fulfill explicitly public missions, usually pushing for change from both liberal and conservative platforms. That suggests that a) RNGOs' services are not specifically for members of a particular faith, b) though RNGOs are not political organizations, they nevertheless play a vital role in political participation, and c) RNGOs' missions and services are manifold and public oriented. In line with the above, Berger (2003) asserts that RNGOs constitute a new breed of religious actors shaping global policy- an organizational hybrid of religious beliefs and social activism at local, national, and international levels. But unfortunately, they are not largely regarded as an organizational field. In addition, the lack of documentary data and available literature that provide a nuanced understanding of the RNGOs' operations, especially in Africa has been a major challenge.

Measuring the effectiveness and trustworthiness of faith-based and secular organizations on the recipients, findings of Wuthnow, Hackett, and Hsu (2004) supported the assertions in the literature suggesting that

FBOs have a significant place in social service delivery. In Nigerian context, Odumosu, Chete, and Alonge (2011) emphasized on the role of faith-based associations in social, political, economic, and educational development of Nigeria and therefore highlighted the imperative of developing and integrating the FBOs in national policy programs of the country. Similarly, findings of Gwarzo (2003) revealed that Islamic civil society actors⁷ are social agents that provide meaning for the new and difficult conditions in towns, new forms of bonding, and new social networks to supply comfort and emergency relief to those in distress. In line with the above then, we need to first define what religious non-governmental organizations are before identifying their characteristics and examining their applicability to other contexts.

Theoretical and Conceptual Definitions of RNGOs

There are many interpretations and definitions of religious non-governmental organizations (RNGOs) making them to be differently referred to as “religious,” “spiritual,” “faith-based,” etc. That calls for conceptual and operational definition of the concept⁸. For instance, Unruh’s (2001) study of churches in Philadelphia focused on the religious elements of their faith-based social service programs, conceptualizing two dimensions of religiosity in the programs: 1) environmental elements that include affiliation with a church or denomination, display of religious objects or images, religious literature in the space

where the program meets, the program meets, selection of board members and/or staff based on their religious beliefs, and a mission statement that has explicitly religious references; and 2) active religious elements, that is, those that involve direct communication of a religious message to clients or client involvement in specifically religious activities. Examining Unruh’s proposal, Ebaugh et’ al. (2001) argue that the above conceptual scheme was based on the author’s work in Christian churches and therefore leaving unanswered the question of whether or to what extent the characteristics she delineates as “religious” might also be found in Islamic or secular social service agencies.

The working group on Human Needs and Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, coordinated by Search for Common Ground, produced a report (2002) that includes a typology of faith characteristics of social service and educational organizations. The typology is conceptualized as a continuum of religiosity ranging from faith-saturated to secular organizations, with faith centered, faith related, faith background, and faith-secular partnership as degrees between the two extremes. The characteristics of religiosity that are used to place an organization on the continuum are: mission statement; founding for a religious purpose; religiousness of controlling board, senior management, and staff; affiliation with external religious agencies; financial support from religious sources; connection between religious content and outcomes; and religious environment like name, building, and religious symbols.

Smith and Sosin (2001) argue that there is methodological problem associated with the use of the term faith-based agencies and thereby suggested the use of “faith-related” agency. They define faith-related agency as

⁷ Although his study was limited to Kano, the findings can have implications on northern Nigeria and the country as a whole. Again, Kano is the largest state in the country with the country with a predominantly Muslim population.

⁸ For the purpose of this paper, only few will be reviewed and the term religious non-governmental organizations (RNGOs) will be interchangeably used with faith-based organizations (FBOs) and faith-related agencies (FRAs).

social service organizations that have any of the following: a formal funding or administrative arrangement with a religious authority or authorities; a historical tie of this kind; a specific commitment to act within the dictates of a particular established faith; or a commitment to work together that stems from a common religion. This attempt to describe the varieties of faith-related agencies delineates three general characteristics of such agencies: (1) dependency on religious entities for resources; (2) affiliation with and control by a denomination or other religious groups; and (3) religious culture that creates a niche or space for agencies to pursue their religious values. The degree to which an agency is linked to faith is then conceptualized as the extent of "coupling" of the agency to resources, authorities, and cultures that represent relevant faiths.

But Berger (2003) cites Martens (2002) defining "religious NGOs" as formal organizations whose identity and mission are self-consciously derived from the teachings of one or more religious or spiritual traditions and which operates on a nonprofit, independent, voluntary basis to promote and realize collectively articulated ideas about the public good at the national or international level. The above definition is striking and important because of its multidimensionality, among other things. It separates RNGOs from secular NGOs in terms of "spirituality/divinity," "missions," "independence," and "nonprofit-orientation." Berger further proposes a multidimensional framework by means of which to identify and analyze the characteristics of RNGOs. The framework draws on a model that examines four dimensions: the organizational, governance, strategic, and service (output) dimensions.

Jeavons (1998) provides a delineation of seven characteristics that differentiate faith-

based organizations from those that are clearly secular in nature and in their functioning. These seven specific traits are:

1. Religious groups often self-identify as religious organizations and display this identity in various ways, including choice of name and mission statement.
2. Participants (i.e., paid staff, volunteers, funders, clients) in religious groups tend to be religiously committed individuals, either because of organizational requirements or because the culture of the organization appeals to those who share religious ideals.
3. Material resources, such as money, in-kind donations, and buildings, are provided to religious organizations primarily by religious people or organizations.
4. Organizational goals, products, and services provided by religious groups are usually of a religious nature, and are performed on the basis of religious values or with "spiritual technologies," meaning the use of worship, prayer, scripture, or spiritual values. He also argues that an organization's religious culture and "core values" are expressed in its rituals and routines, such as prayer and devotions with the staff.
5. Religious organizations rely on religious values, beliefs, activities, or experiences in information processing and decision making.
6. The development, distribution, and use of power within religious organizations derive from religious sources and are frequently expressed by the requirement that leadership be invested in a member of the clergy, that a theological education be required of the leadership, and that leaders be active in the life of some congregation.
7. Religious organizations tend to interact predominantly with other religious

organizations, including denominations, congregations, ecumenical forums, and special interest groups with religious goals.

The above characteristics that Jeavons provides are helpful in part because they avoid creating a dichotomous classification between religious and secular organizations. Instead, he posits that these characteristics offer key issues that point at to the relative degree of religiosity of a particular organization along a continuum ranging from clearly religious to completely secular. In line with the above, Ebaugh et al. (2003) suggest that the seven characteristics of Jeavons constitute an ideal type of religious organizations and argue that by implication, lacking all the seven characteristics is an ideal typical description of secular organizations. Against this background, I am adopting this ideal type as a model and theoretical frame of reference in examining my case study.

Examining the Characteristics of the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) as a Case Study

The Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN)⁹ was established in October 1985 and registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission the same year. With a consultative status with the United Nations, FOMWAN is a non-profit and non-governmental civil society umbrella body for Muslim women associations in Nigeria. Its national headquarters is in Abuja with branches in all the states of the federation, and has over 500 affiliate

groups. FOMWAN is a network of Muslim Women organizations nationally that emerges and grows as a national faith based non-governmental organization with emphasis on promoting and protecting the interest, welfare and aspirations of its members in line with Islamic injunctions. The impetus for the establishment and existence of FOMWAN is the provision of social services especially to its members and the desire to contribute to national development. In particular, FOMWAN seeks to contribute to the overall health, literacy and economic empowerment of its members and promotion of positive social behavior of Muslim girls for responsible living and adulthood in Nigeria. Recently, FOMWAN reviewed and adopted a new strategic plan redefining its vision, mission, value statements, goal and strategic objectives.

Religious Identity and its Public Expression

It is evident from the name, mission statement, social services agency and other physical identities of FOMWAN that it is a religious-based organization. Below is FOMWAN's mission statement:

To propagate the religion of Islam in Nigeria through Da'awah, establishment of educational institutions and other outreach activities. And to improve the socio-economic status of the populace especially women, youth and children through training, provision of qualitative education, health and humanitarian services, micro enterprise scheme and advocacy.

The FOMWAN's Vision statement is as follows:

The vision of FOMWAN is a world where women are totally empowered to be role

⁹ Callaway and Creevey (1994) argue that in Nigeria, FOMWAN is a female Muslim organization that seeks significant changes under the protection of Islamic knowledge in Nigeria.

models in making impacts in religious and secular matters.

It is also worthy to mention some of the material cultures of the associations that portray its public expression. The association's Logo is represented by two things: one is an Arabic artistic expression meaning "There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah" and the other is a symbol of a mosque with a dome. In addition, FOMWAN's leaders and by implication volunteers and paid staff appear in *hijab*¹⁰ - veils.

Participants

The organizational staffing of FOMWAN mainly constitutes volunteers and few paid staff. As Jeavons suggested, most of the paid staff in religious groups tend to be religiously committed individuals due to culture of the organization or religious ideals. In the case of FOMWAN, majority of the paid staff are Muslims and display religious commitments. Notwithstanding, the association's recruitment policy is fluid in the sense that it recruits others from other religion, notably skilled staff like Doctors, nurses, and teachers to "complement" and strengthen its structure, systems and processes. Also to guide conduct and actions and to assist in administering and managing the association's resources,¹¹ experts outside the faith are employed. The association utilizes volunteers extensively thereby having few paid staff.

Material Resources

In terms of funding, FOMWAN relies on internally generated sources of resources

from membership dues, sales of publications, donations, *Zakat* (alms), and grants for partnership from donor agencies. It should be noted however that FOMWAN does not rely on funding from government¹² or foreign aids.¹³ This is an important point that needs to be buttressed as a distinctive feature that distinguishes FOMWAN from secular NGOs which rely on externally generated funds. This position is in harmony with the findings of the U.S. report of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project (2007) that funds were not provided to Muslim-based associations in Nigeria.

Religious Policies, Practices, and Organizational Culture

FOMWAN's policy does not stipulate that the association's board membership must be clergy or have a theological education. It is interesting to know that the idea to found FOMWAN began in the minds of some educated¹⁴ Muslim women of establishing a national Islamic organization for women. That group felt the need to propagate knowledge and practice of Islam alongside western education. This is an interesting in the sense that the objective of the association is not only to proselytize but also to empower women to live a good life. By implication therefore, the association is faith-related but also has the potentials to be a social movement- thereby demanding a close extensive systematic

¹⁰ Although this is displayed in the 'public sphere,' they hardly use *purdahs* –the veils that cover the whole face. Again, the hijabs FOMWAN leaders and participants use are considered "passionably modest." Thus, some fundamentalist *Ulama* criticize them.

¹¹ See details online:

http://www.fomwan.org/about_fomwan.php

¹² This is because the Nigerian government claims to be "secular" and as such does not officially "fund" religions and religious organizations.

¹³ Despite that it heavily relies on internally generated income to run its activities, it nevertheless collaborates and partners with other international donor agencies like the USAID, COMPASS, Save Our Children, Packard foundation, UNICEF, etc.

¹⁴ By education here, I am referring to Western education and not Islamic education. See Thomas-Emeagwali (1994) for description of the role of education in emancipating Muslim women in Nigeria.

study¹⁵ to examine organizational culture, practices, and fluidity in mission. Although, FOMWAN consults the supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in many decisions within the dictates of Islam, there is a potential tension¹⁶ there since the council is patriarchal and clergy-oriented.

Decision making and information processing

The FOMWAN is a relatively independent religious organization despite that it consults an umbrella organization in certain matters. The association operates on committees and headed by leaders from the various geo-political zones of the 36 states in Nigeria. The committees are: Projects and international relations, Community development and humanitarian services, Health, Education and capacity building, Finance and resource mobilization, *Da'awah* and advocacy, Publication, and National headquarters and projects. Instead of having fixed or rigid principles guiding information processing and decision making, FOMWAN considers diversity while allocating positions to the varied geo-political zones to ensure representativeness. Elections are conducted in a "democratic" manner, following an end of tenures. In this regards, representatives from all the states of the federation cast their votes and the leader emerges with a simple majority. In line with the above, Gwarzo (2003) argues that all Islamic non-governmental organizations in Nigeria including FOMWAN have the problem of the neglecting the media in communicating with those outside their circles. Thus, their potentials to reach out and extend their

advocacies and also to correct the distorted pictures being portrayed of them by their adversaries are minimized.

Leadership

As established earlier, the FOMWAN's leadership does not derive from religious sources and is not expressed by the requirement that the leadership be invested in a member of the clergy. A theological education is not required of the leadership but usually those elected as leaders are active in the lives of some congregants. It is worthy to note that, in most sub-Saharan traditional African contexts, Muslim parents are the primary socialization agents that teach children basic Islamic knowledge. Once the kids go to schools, they were already introduced to some of the basics and then the school systems build on that. Thus, FOMWAN leaders mostly have these basics in Islam and not necessarily the official institutionalized knowledge. Again, there are *Madradas* –Islamic schools that teach kids the basics they need to know to practice their faith. With these backgrounds, most FOMWAN leaders were able to make it and not necessarily possessing special theological education.

Interaction with others

The FOMWAN collaborates with many organizations within and outside the Islamic faith. Apart from the international donor agencies that FOMWAN collaborates and partners with, there are other religious and secular organizations that interact at different levels. Some of these associations include the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) - the major umbrella Christian association, the Catholic Justice Development and Peace Commissions and the Interfaith Coalition of Nigeria. It is striking how FOMWAN engages

¹⁵ Rinaldo's (2010) study of Muslim Women in Indonesia is an outstanding one outside the West and is worthy to replicate in another continent other than Asia.

¹⁶ This constitutes a potential research area

in interfaith dialogue with Christian and other interest organizations especially in areas that are prone to religious crisis¹⁷. In those places, joint relief and reconciliation programs are organized.

On a whole, one would see that FOMWAN possesses many of the characteristics of religious organizations as Jeavons (1998) proposes but with some degree of variance. What appears to be distinctive about FOMWAN is in leadership, organizational processes, practices and culture. When compared to sister organizations¹⁸ in the U.S., there are a lot of differences - the history, associations' autonomy, and identity, and so on. As such, variations are certainly unavoidable. Making reference to a secular women's association within the country might help though.

One of such studies was Deji's (2005) study of the characteristics of secular women's non-governmental associations in Ogun state of Western Nigeria¹⁹. His findings revealed that the women's associations were very prominent in the sampled areas, notably rural and semi-urban. The popular goals of majority of the associations were: economic empowerment (96%), community development (86.9%), donating to the needy (69.3%), and exchange of helping hands in occupations (51.1%). In terms of leadership, almost all the sampled associations' leaders

were not educated and as such, elections were conducted on popularity of the candidate. Participation in the associations was "average" with 57% attendance of meetings as the major responsibility of their members. The major source of income to the associations was internally generated and no financial support from the government. Communication was mainly channeled during meetings and through cell phones. The associations have not been engaged in partnership with other associations for partnership or implementing projects.

Relevance of the Study

One might ask "why should we care?" As Scanlan (2004) argues women play a vital role in development in less-industrial societies regardless of economic development level, population pressure, democratization, globalization, or region. Women on the African continent have taken an active role as partners in nationalist struggles, and at times spearheading the movement to declare war against many forms of colonial impositions even prior to decolonization periods. The early stages of nationalist revolt against entrenched British rule in West Africa took the form of localized skirmishes like the Aba Women's fight against colonial tyranny of 1929²⁰. It is in recognition of the role of women that Bradshaw and Wallace (1996) argue that Westerners are somewhat familiar with one side of the story that Africa is a land of famines, civil wars, coups d'état, an AIDS epidemic, orphans, and ethnic divisions but many lack familiarity with the positive historical, cultural, and social features of the continent²¹. That calls for systematic in-depth studies to investigate the roles of women in

¹⁷ Jos, Kaduna, and Bauchi are examples of such places where post-religious conflicts victims are camped as internally displaced persons (IDPs).

¹⁸ Take for example Scott's (n.d.) account of the WCTU and the YWCA. These associations have different attributes: long history of establishment, exist in communities with stable democracy, viable civil society, enhanced women liberation, individual freedom, and indeed infrastructure in terms of modernity. Similar kinds of interesting and insightful studies like this need to be replicated in other contexts.

¹⁹ Deji studied 13 women's associations and as such, it was not an in-depth study of one association that could lead to systematic comparison. As such, I am only making an implicit comparison only for the purpose of this paper.

²⁰ See Perham (1929)

²¹ They argue that Africa is known as the 'cradle of civilization', primarily because the skeleton of the oldest known human was found in Kenya by Richard Leakey and Kamoya Kimeau.

development at various organizational contexts: religious and secular.

Looking at the already established data, almost all the materials are Western-based. Thus, due to differences in historical origin among other factors, we need to explore other continents by carefully studying religions and religious organizations, their missions, characteristics, structures, services, sources of resources, and their interrelatedness with other non-religious organizations. That will give us a nuanced understanding of, and concrete empirical evidence to make analytical conclusions about patterns including similarities and differences between religion and religious organizations in the developed and in the developing worlds. It is against this background that Berger (2003) calls for studying religious organizations as a distinct organizational field.

Secondly, the population of followers practicing classic religions²² on the African continent along with the social changes the religious ideas influence through religious organizations are worthy of studying. For instance, the current Arab uprising started at North Africa: first Tunisia, then Egypt, then Libya, and now to (Syria) -the Middle East. With reference to the case study, Nigeria is the most populated black nation with over half (78million²³) of its population as Muslims. Linden and Clarks (1984) observed that there were Muslims in parts of what is today northern Nigeria, for example in Borno, since the second half of the eleventh century. Additionally, Paden (2008) argues that Nigeria is the sixth largest number of Muslims in the world and is probably the least well known of the world's

pivotal states. He further asserts that its role as the dominant African state, its extraordinary influence in West Africa, its significance as a major world oil producer, and its experience with democratic rule since 1999 make the country a critical country especially in its relations with the United States. That means neglecting systematic study of religious organizations in such countries is a neglect of potential for researchers in religion, social movements, globalization, and politics.

Lastly, Clerk (2007) identified some of the major challenges to the pursuit of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) especially by international donors like the Department for International Development (DFID). He argues that to systematically ignore the role of faith as an analytical lens through which social problems like poverty could be dealt with or to engage with narrow range of faith-based organizations, mainly specialized development organizations associated with the mainstream Christian churches like the Catholic and Protestants is a setback. Clerk argues that discourses and organizations from other religious traditions like Islamic should be integrated. He concludes that for DFID to achieve the MDGs and become an agent of transformation suitable for purpose in a new millennium, it should conceptually revise its secular and technocratic vision of development, overcome analytical blind-spots, and explore practical overlaps between the previously separated worlds of faith and development. Operationally, DFID must develop a more coherent corporate position on faith and development, adjust its funding modalities to better accommodate FBOs, and diversify its engagement with FBOs beyond the mainstream Christian churches²⁴. This is a clear

²² Here I am limiting my reference to Christianity and Islam

²³ This is an estimate by the World facts book (2011) and the estimate of the National Population Commission (2010) is about 82million.

²⁴ Findings of the US Report of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project (2007) also support this position as it identified critical

indication that there is the need to systematically study FBOs in developing nations for policy formulation and development agendas.

Conclusion

Religious Non-Governmental Organizations (RNGOs) are an array of “faith-related” associations that contribute to the wellbeing of the public in specific ways –being provision of welfare services, socio-economic activities, health care, education, response to crisis during disaster as relief, interfaith dialogue and democratic participation. There are many terms and connotations associated with RNGOs or faith-related agencies and the range of services they provide cut across local, national, and international levels with various missions, structures, sources of funds, services, and geographic reach. Despite these variations, RNGOs have certain attributes that differentiate them from secular NGOs. There is no agreeable consensus among scholars about the specific names and characteristics of such faith-based associations. But most strikingly, faith-related associations have achieved tremendous success nationwide, especially in developing nations, where lack of confidence in the governments due to corruption, insecurity, and unrealistic social and economic policies hinder effective social services delivery. Despite the huge successes that RNGOs have recorded on the African continent, there are a lot that need to be explored. In line with this, McPhail (2009) argues that non-governmental organizations in Africa may have good intentions but there are some controversies associated with their activities, sources of funds, spending,

ideologies for which they are established, structural biases, unhealthy rivalry and competition among sister associations, etc.

After reviewing some of the sets of assumptions about faith-related associations, this paper adopted Jeavons’ (1998) model to examine the Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations of Nigeria (FOMWAN). I made an implicit comparison and conclude that there are distinctive differences in the conceptual set of assumptions about RNGOs –their characteristics, missions and services from what the literature tells us in the West. The differences emanated from many reasons including historical, cultural, structural and organizational variations. This reinforces the fact that when it comes to religion, there is no global rule. Against this background, it will be interesting to conduct a sociological study of faith-based organizations in a non-western setting with distinctive features from those that have already been documented. This raises certain questions about the main variations in the missions and services of specific RNGO in question. Much of the previous studies dwelled so much on religious non-governmental organizations or faith-related NGOs in America and Europe. As such, future researchers should explore the following areas:

- 1) With the revisit²⁵ of its mission to include “other secular” aspects of life, does FOMWAN’s focus or stance shift towards secularization or is it simply a shift in service provision?
- 2) What will be the aftermath of the “shift” in terms of a) self-identity and participants, b) participants, c)

gaps from the Nigerian case because “outreach to the predominantly Muslim North was extremely limited and that a minimal foreign assistance budget had little funding for religion-related programming.

²⁵ FOMWAN recently reviewed and adopted a new strategic plan that redefines its vision, mission, value statements, goal and strategic objectives. See the official website of FOMWAN: <http://www.fomwan.org/>.

- patterns of leadership, d) structures, e) material resources, and f) organizational culture?
- 3) What roles can FOMWAN play in Nigeria's politics considering the patriarchal²⁶ nature of the society?
- 4) What determines the relative stability or shift in the missions and services of the organization? This is because as Ammerman²⁷ argues, faced with institutional and cultural pluralism, modern social actors use religious identities to make sense of everything.
- 5) What is the relationship between what FOMWAN teaches about women and men and how is gender a factor in the structure and operation of the organization?

²⁶ Callaway and Creevey (1994) provide an interesting account of FOMWAN's role in Nigerian politics and how it relates with the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (predominantly male-dominated) to influence reform that affirms rather than challenge Islamic dictates.

²⁷ See Ammerman's (2007) *Everyday Religion*

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