



**Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust**  
**HART VISIT, NIGERIA, JUNE 18-26 2007**



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## **1. INTRODUCTION TO HART**

HART operates on the basis of 4 interrelated principles:

- aid
- advocacy
- authenticity
- accountability.

(i) Aid: assessing and providing the most appropriate type of relief.

HART focuses primarily on people in need who are not receiving adequate assistance from major organizations – often for security and/or political reasons. Large organizations are often constrained by due need to consider safety of expatriate personnel working on location. HART, being a small organization, committed to working with local partners, keeps no expatriate staff ‘on the ground’. We prefer to establish, support and evaluate projects on the basis of regular visits, giving our local partners the dignity of choice of priorities and the authority of leadership in their own communities. This policy enables HART to make a difference, even with relatively small budgets, in areas ‘off the radar screen’.

HART is non-denominational and will offer aid and advocacy to all in need, unconditionally.

(ii) Advocacy and (iii) Authenticity: making known the needs and concerns of those who are suffering. Most major aid organizations can only visit locations with the permission of the sovereign government, no matter how great the humanitarian needs. As many of our partners live in conditions of discrimination, oppression and persecution at the hands of their own governments, HART personnel make regular visits in order to obtain evidence of their situation and then to represent their concerns on the basis of first-hand experience, to wider communities, national and international.

(iv) Accountability: to those for whom HART speaks and to those who support our work. Ensuring our advocacy is accurate and sensitive to their situation; informing our supporters of what we have done with what they make possible.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE VISIT**

Aid: Based on the experience of several previous visits, HART has confidence in our partners in Jos and Kano and we have been pleased to provide financial support for projects in education and health care. Therefore, on this visit we sought

a) to follow up progress in projects with which we are involved:

- the construction of the building for the primary health care clinic in Bari, Kano State;
- the construction of new buildings, and provision of equipment, for St. Andrew’s School, Ganawuri, Plateau State;
- the development of the Christian Institute, Jos with particular emphasis on the provision of education for women;

b) to hand over donations of \$24,600 [c. £13,000];

- c) to explore opportunities for future projects – and future partners;
- d) to undertake assessment of any problems experienced by partners in the management of projects, particularly within the realm of accountability, and in communications.

Advocacy: To obtain first hand evidence of the present situation regarding: human rights, law and order, in the areas visited, including any changes since last year in the levels of community violence and of discrimination.

### **3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In the light of our findings, we decided:

- to continue our financial support for the projects with which we are already involved;
- to encourage potential partners in the UK and the USA to become involved in various ways, including support for running costs of the projects and educational visits;
- to request two or three further proposals in case future potential donors wish to provide assistance for northern Nigeria, including the groundbreaking HIV/AIDS programme being run in Jos;
- to investigate further the agricultural and credit work already being carried out by our partners, and to explore the possibility of linking them to additional support;
- to report on the continuing problems experienced by the people living in these – and other – States in the North and the Central belt.

We were given more evidence of systematic discrimination against non-Muslims (especially Christians) and we were concerned by the reports of recent acts of violence, including the brutal killing of Mrs Christina Oluwatoyin in Gombe State (see Appendix 5.).

Since this visit, a large group of militants attacked the home of Bishop Benjamin Kwashi. They assaulted one of his sons so severely that he had to be hospitalized. They took the Bishop outside to kill him but then took him back into the house to execute him in front of his family. As he was praying, waiting to be killed, the assailants changed their minds, ransacked the house and left.

### **4. DONATIONS.**

Donations of previous 12 months:

- a) £5,500 from the Trusthouse Charitable Foundation to the Bishop of Kano in 2006/7 for the establishment of a Primary Health Care Clinic in Bari, a remote rural area.
- b) £10,000 from Trusthouse Charitable Foundation.
- c) £2,000 from St Thomas of Canterbury, Northaw and Cuffley Parish Church.
- d) £1000 from Sir Andrew Green.
- e) £50 from Mr R. Buxton.
- f) £300 from Miss Sally Chard. For the purchase of a microscope for the laboratory technician at the Christian Institute, Jos.
- g) £500 from Provider Trust Nigeria.

Donations taken and given during the visit:

h) \$10,000 given to the Bishop of Kano, for the continuation of the development of the primary health care clinic in Bari.

i) \$14,600 to the Bishop of Jos.

Major donors include: King's Church, Eastbourne, and Fishponds Baptist Church, Bristol.

## **5. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:**

### **A) THE GENERAL SITUATION IN KANO AND PLATEAU STATES**

At present, in both States, according to our partners, there is a strong sense of there being a "lull" in the violence which is not expected to continue.

In northern Nigeria communities have been ravaged by conflict for many years, frequently associated with religious issues, particularly the imposition and implementation of Sharia law, creating conditions which tend to promote conflict and discrimination.

To date, 12 out of 36 States have either implemented Sharia or are in the process of so doing. More than 60,000 people have died in inter-communal conflict in the last two decades – the overwhelming majority being Christians or believers in traditional religions. And despite claims that the implementation of sharia would not affect non-Muslims, reality proves otherwise. Violence has also been accompanied by a general failure of federal and state governments to bring the perpetrators of the violence to account.

The imposition of Sharia, as well as being a means of obtaining financial resources as a reward from the "Arab world", is also a powerful weapon used by Muslims to legitimately discriminate against non-Muslims. Whereas both Christian and Muslim communities have suffered in the associated conflicts, the evidence shows that the great preponderance of victims have been Christians. It is also claimed that a Muslim who kills a Christian pastor can be offered a 'reward' of a sum equivalent to a month's average salary; and a lesser reward for an 'ordinary' Church member.

One Bishop, based on a diary he has kept of acts of violence, together with the weekly record kept by churches, estimates that between 60 and 70 thousand have died since 1987, the commencement of his record. Initially, he said, the killings had tended to be of individuals. By the year 2000 the killings, as well as the destruction of homes and church buildings, had become more large-scale, "the magnitude ever bigger, the viciousness worse". This intensification continues.

(For a fuller summary of events of recent years see Report of HART visit to Nigeria, June 2006.)

### Kano State.

It is estimated that well over 3,000 people were killed and property worth over 500 million naira destroyed. Most, if not all, Church buildings at Panshakara, Shagari quarters, Zango, Brigade, Namibia, Sheka, Challawa and some in Badawa were all burnt down.

Islamic aid organizations are available to provide relief for Muslims who have been affected by violence. In the northern states, governmental health and welfare services and post-conflict compensation are much more freely available for them than they are for non-Muslims. There is a dearth of Christian aid organizations and it is harder for Christians to obtain appropriate assistance for health care, education, aid for immediate response to violence in times of crisis, or in the longer-term, for reconstruction of devastated communities.

Discrimination against Christians is also evident in the difficulties encountered, firstly, in obtaining permission to buy land and, secondly, in building or improving facilities on land they already own. There is pressure brought upon Muslims not to sell to non-Muslims. However, Church leaders claim that the real problem presented by the State Governments is not that of purchasing land, no licence being needed for this, but of obtaining the licence to build a Church once the land is purchased. That permission can be given – then withdrawn - leaving them with useless land or half-built structures, and the resultant waste of the scarce financial resources of an already poor community.

It is also forbidden to build a church near a mosque as this is considered provocative to the Muslims – no exact distance or proximity being defined. On the other hand a large mosque has been built next to the Anglican Cathedral. There is concern that this might lead to a future demand to pull down the Cathedral – even though the Cathedral pre-dated the Mosque by many years.

As the Bishop of Kano said last year, “They do not make it easy for us to live with them.”

Other problems caused by discrimination persist – such as the refusal by the authorities to give permission for the rebuilding of places of worship destroyed in the violence or to complete buildings, such as the church where the foundation stone was laid in 1986 by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev'd, Robert Runcie.

The Christian Association of Nigeria also expresses concern over bias against Christians in other areas, such as employment. A recent example includes the case of Dr Simon David, a consultant orthopaedic surgeon who had served for 14 years in the National Orthopaedic Hospital, Kano. He was summarily dismissed, accused of 'forcing a Bible' on an acquaintance who was admitted to the hospital. He was given no opportunity to appeal against his dismissal; he had to leave immediately and was given little time to vacate his home. (See Appendix 4.)

And, in the rural area we visited, the only jobs available, outside of farming, are in government employment. Christians, though a large part of the population there, indeed probably the majority, are virtually non-existent in these jobs.

The resulting poverty is acute and endemic, affecting other fundamental aspects of life. For example, Christians, though able to attend a health centre, are required to pay for prescribed medicines, unlike neighbouring Muslims. They may have to sell precious belongings, such as a goat, in order to buy treatment for a family member, thereby exacerbating their poverty and further destroying the opportunity to pay school fees or pay for the costs of additional health care. The cycle of deprivation is worsening. However, one reassuring development is the reduction in the 'hisba' – the unofficial 'religious police' who had been intimidating local civilians, including Muslims, by brutal 'punishments' for behaviour they deemed to be sacrilegious or inappropriate. We were advised that they are effectively disbanded, only appearing on special occasions for major Islamic events. We welcome this development as the practices of the 'hisba' had been a cause of grave concern last year. One factor contributing to this change of policy was allegedly the opposition by women to the restrictions imposed on them by the 'hisba' – such as the refusal to allow them to ride on motor cycles. This was particularly serious as these are the general form of "taxi" available,

However, the situation remains very tense, discrimination remains endemic and widespread. As the Bishop of Kano remarked, in words echoing his comments last year: 'We live in a very hostile environment'.

In conclusion, we believe that there is evidence of systematic discrimination against non-Muslims in the areas identified above, and that there is justification for the claim of "systematic persecution", to use the written words of the "Christian Association of Nigeria" ("Kano State Chapter"), the official organisation representing all the main Christian denominations. (See Appendix 4.)

#### Plateau State.

(Again, for much of background see Report of HART Visit to Nigeria June 2006.)

Since 2000, violence has erupted in Plateau State on many occasions, usually associated with religious conflict. For example, we refer again to just one incident described in last years' Report: In April 18, 2006, a serious outbreak of violence erupted in Namu, triggered by an incident in which a Christian boy was killed.

We were pleased to find that, at the time of this visit, the situation was relatively calm. Local leaders characterised this as a 'lull in the conflict' and are using the peace to invest in programmes designed to build foundations for education and health care.

However, beneath the uneasy peace lie constant anxiety and tension. Local leaders fear that it is only a matter of time before conflict erupts again. They argue that both state and federal government have been appeasing the militants who are also using the peace to further their own agendas: building more resources for conflict and using diverse means to achieve more converts to Islam. They also claim that,

on those occasions when Christians have defended themselves against militant Muslims, police arrest the Christians and blame them for being the aggressors.

In conclusion: although the current calm was welcomed and appreciated, there is constant concern over the possibility of renewed violence. It was only last year that militants went to Bishop Benjamin Kwashi's home to kill him – and, as he was away, they beat two of his sons and the brutally assaulted and tortured his wife Gloria, before forcing her to walk to the Diocesan offices, where they assaulted Deaconess Susan Essam and stole Diocesan funds. Violence is always on the horizon of space and time. It was only 3 months ago when a school teacher in Gombe State, Mrs Christiana Oluwatoyin was killed by Muslims, who assaulted her, stabbed her to death, and set her body alight. (See Appendix 5). . And, as reported above, in August 2007, there was another brutal attack on the Bishop and his family.

## **B) AID**

In Kano we have previously supported the Anglican Bishop, the Rt. Reverend Bishop Zakka L. Nyam with a donation of £5,000 pounds sterling as a contribution towards the construction of a primary health care clinic in a remote rural area. On this occasion, we visited the location to assess progress of the Primary Health Care Clinic, Bari, Kano State. The Christian community living in this remote location, about 2 hours' drive south of the city of Kano, suffers multiple deprivation. Discrimination in employment results in very high levels of unemployment and severe poverty.

There is no effective provision of health care for the Christian community. Although there is a nearby Government Clinic which Christians can attend for diagnoses and prescription, they are then given a prescription to take to buy medicine – which they cannot afford. In the 1990s a Welsh nurse practitioner started to build a clinic, but had to leave when violent conflict erupted in which many hundreds of civilians perished. Subsequently, only the foundations of the clinic have remained. There is an urgent need to complete and to equip the building in order to start to provide some health care for those currently receiving none.

The £5,500 given through HART by Trusthouse Charitable Foundation has been well used to build the walls and roof of the clinic (Photo) which should be completed in the next 2 weeks. We donated a further \$10,000 (c. £5,100) for the work now needed now to provide windows, doors and the interior of the building. When all is ready, we hope to be able to provide resources for equipment, staffing and medical supplies.

Although there is a Church-sponsored school building, most local people cannot afford fees: only 4 children attend the school; the rest of the Christian children receive no education whatsoever. Previously, there had been enough children to merit the building and running of the school, but subsequently, the Government established an alternative school nearby. Muslims do not have to pay fees, but if Christians wish to attend, they have to pay – or to convert. The education provided is an Islamic, Koranic curriculum.

Therefore, we hope that it may be possible to find sponsors for the local Christian school. The cost of a teacher's salary for a year is approximately \$10,000 (c. £5,100 pounds). There would need to be provision towards the cost of accommodation, food and other essentials – but the overall sum would not be very large and the renewal of the school would enable children currently receiving NO schooling to receive at least an essential primary education.

In Jos, Plateau State, having worked previously with the Bishop and staff of the Anglican Diocese of Jos, we have evidence of their commitment to fulfilling all the criteria of accountability. We are also deeply impressed by their ability to use limited funds with great creativity, making excellent use of local personnel, skills and resources to maximize the use of money donated by HART. (See reports of visits, June 2005 and 2006). We were therefore confident that the Jos Diocesan Relief and Welfare Committee is a reliable, fully accountable and highly efficient partner for HART.

On this occasion, we visited 2 of the projects supported by HART: St. Andrew's School and the Christian Institute. While at St. Andrew's Secondary School, we were given a demonstration of the need for a new roof which was powerfully compelling! Being the rainy season, we were not surprised by wet weather. But nothing prepared us for the ferocity of the deluge which hit us while in a classroom of the current school: the rain slammed through the roof, pouring into the classroom and drenching everybody inside. We were therefore very pleased to see the good quality, well built new school which HART's funds have helped to support [photos to come]. Not only are the main classrooms very well built; there is also comfortable residential accommodation for the pupils, with girls' and boys' dormitories and dining facilities. It is intended that St. Andrew's school will become a centre of excellence, helping to prepare young people to enter a variety of professional careers, enabled to make distinctive contributions to the development of Nigeria.

HART has also supported the development of the Christian Institute in Jos where students are not only trained for ministry in the church, but courses are also available specifically for women and for health care students. During this visit, we saw significant progress in the extension of building and in the number of students benefiting from the high quality education provided by the Institute.

We were pleased to present another donation, given to HART by King's Church in Eastbourne (UK), of \$11,000 for our partners in Jos to use in ways which meet their priorities. We look forward to our next visit when we are sure we will be as impressed as we always have been, by the way our friends multiply the relatively small donations we can offer, in ways beyond anything we could anticipate.

### **C) ADVOCACY**

This aspect of HART's work may be especially timely, as reports became available which suggest that certain people in very influential places are making great efforts to convey the impression that there is no systematic discrimination against, or victimization of, Christians in northern Nigeria. But the overwhelming impression we received, ranging from first-hand evidence to reliable reports from well-respected sources,

convinces us that there is indeed widespread systematic discrimination and victimization of the non-Muslim minorities – and particularly of Christians – in northern Nigeria, especially in the States which have adopted sharia. As the General Secretary of the Kano State Chapter of CAN wrote in the letter to the National President of CAN (Appendix 4),

‘This is to seek your urgent intervention to the latest event, in a series of strategic schemes to subjugate and strangulate Christians in Kano State government service and even in the Federal government establishment like the National Orthopaedic Hospital, Kano. The latest of this systematic persecution is the one meted to D Simon David....’

We hope that the full reality of the grave situation in northern Nigeria will be acknowledged. The situation is complex – and if there are different definitions of the situation being represented, then we hope that all viewpoints and evidence will be taken into account before inaccurate conclusions are promulgated. Denial of painful realities of victimization and discrimination will only encourage further victimization. This will not only exacerbate the suffering of the victims; it could also encourage the perpetrators to continue their policies of injustice – in the same way as every genocide condoned or unrecognized is a potential encouragement for another genocide – and for the victims to resort to politics of desperation, which could have very detrimental effects for the stability of Nigeria and the preservation of its democracy.

It seems an unsubstantiated leap of logic to blame the division and violence on ethnic/ tribal divisions, coupled with economic envy of one group by another, and failing or refusing to recognize, the usefulness of such divisions and envy to those desirous of deliberately – even systematically – planning and carrying out such violence and discrimination for different reasons, such as ideological and religious motivation.

## **6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

HART is very grateful to all who welcomed the delegation and who gave generously of their resources of all kinds to host us and to ensure the effective completion of our programme. It is impossible to mention everyone; however, all involved know their contribution to our visit and we wish to assure each and every one that their generosity in time and many other ways is greatly valued. In particular, we wish once again to thank the Rt. Rev'd Bishop Zakka L. Nyam, Anglican Bishop of Kano for his generous hospitality and assistance with our programme in Kano and the Rt. Rev'd Bishop Benjamin Kwashi for hosting us, graciously and generously, in many ways. We owe a debt of deep gratitude to the Rev'd Canon Mark Mukan, Diocesan Protocol Officer and the Rev'd Matthew Fanto of the Diocese of Jos, for their unfailing and untiring (so it seemed to us!) care and hospitality from the moment of our arrival in Abuja to the moment of departure. They provided for our every need, with great thoughtfulness, worked very hard to ensure that our programme, with all its complexities, was fulfilled – and, despite the fuel strike; they drove for many hours over vast distances, suffering sleep deprivation – all uncomplainingly, graciously, cheerfully, efficiently and professionally. We gratefully record our deep appreciation.

Caroline Cox, CEO and David Thomas, Project Logistics

## **APPENDICES**

### APPENDIX 1. Personnel and Itinerary

#### a) Personnel:

The Rev'd David Thomas, HART Projects Co-Ordinator; Caroline Cox, HART CEO; Andrew and Rachel Wilson and Laura Heaps from King's Church, Eastbourne; Nigel Eaton, Fishponds Baptist Church; Colin Brough, 'Light the World'; Kerry Doherty, Pepperdine University, USA; Tim Faulkner, King's College, University of London.

#### b) Itinerary:

June 19 Arrive Abuja; travel to Kano for meetings with the Anglican Bishop of Kano, the Rt. Rev'd Zakka Lalle Nyam;

June 20. Kano: Visit Bari, to see the progress in the building of the Primary Health Care Clinic.

June 21. Visit more sites affected by crises in Kano;

June 22. Travel to Jos: visit St. Andrew's High School, where HART money contributed towards the cost of new school buildings, which are replacing the present, storm-damaged accommodation; meet staff from GHADS (Gospel Health and Development Society) to discuss the general humanitarian situation and their work, with particular reference to treatment for AIDS/HIV problems, which they make freely and unconditionally available to all in need, regardless of religious affiliation.

June 23. Visit Yelwa to see evidence of the devastation caused by conflict

June 24. Attend services at St Luke's Cathedral, St John's Church and St Piran's Church, Jos.

June 25 Travel to Abuja. Meeting with the High Commissioner, Richard Grozney

June 26. Return to London.