

## **African Pentecostalism and Sustainable Development: A Study On The Zimbabwe Assemblies Of God Africa, Forward In Faith Church**

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**ABSTRACT :** *The African continent continues to be at the spotlight of international relations. The study observes that a number of western nations, alongside some faith based Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), seldom off-load, for instance certain of their, weapons, clothes, food stuff and drugs as machinations to control and weaken the dynamics of African politics and economies. This is a process of globalisation and neo-colonialism. The study contends that these external machinations are done under the auspices of rendering humanitarian assistance. The paper posits that this gloomy picture that Africa continues to experiences can be equated to the Old Testament narratives, specifically that of Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25 vs.27.34). This is the story concerning the theft of a birth right which may explain the contemporary African context. The study argues that much of the external help usually rendered by the west and mostly through the NGOs has faltered to bring durable solutions to Africa's problems. The study challenges the NGOs and Churches in Africa to revisit their mandate to function as voice of the voiceless so that they become part of the solutions rather than part of the problems in Africa. The study draws its case study from the experiences of Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Forward in Faith Church (ZAOGA FIF) in relation to its commitment to developmental engagement that empowers the marginalised people in Zimbabwe. An analysis focuses on ZAOGA FIF's Founder, Archbishop Ezekiel Guti's Pentecostal theology and teachings which have been influential in the establishment of Church-related schools, hospitals, orphanages centre and the university in Zimbabwe. These institutions reflect a unique missiological vision as part of transformative packages guided by reconstruction theology. In this study, the writer is convinced that a theology of reconstruction is making ZAOGA FIF relevant and vibrant in the context of Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe.*

**KEY WORDS:** *African Pentecostalism, Empowerment, Reconstruction Theology, Sustainable Development, ZAOGA FIF*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The inter-face between religion and development continues to be a popular theme in African studies, especially in view of the marginalised status of most of African countries in the backdrop of contemporary tendencies of globalisation and neo-colonialism (Deneulin and Bano, 2009:1). On the onset, the study provides a scenario whereby a beggar wants a little money for a day's meal and one happens to have that little money. Nevertheless, a question can be raised thus: what will be the best use of that little money for the said beggar? Most of the people may probably think that the best use of that little money is to empower that beggar so that one can sustain oneself. On the contrary, the most constructive use of that little money is to channel it for a profit making project to make livelihood sustainable. The underlining assumption is that giving one some money for a day's meal does not solve the problem permanently. It is like someone is suffering from a chronic headache and is given pain killers for treatment. This prevents the problem for a short time but will not cure it as a long term solution. The study perceives that giving a beggar that little money is to make more beggars or strengthen that habit of begging. It must be noted that in general, the habit of begging creates poor image of the human self as it thrives on shame of oneself, lack of personal innovativeness, lose of one's identity and results in a deep sense of one's inferiority. This is the case with the African continent which could be likened to a beggar. Most African countries are generally regarded as 'failed States' begging from the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the faith-based Western NGOs (Bornstein 2005). Yet from a theological perspective Humanity was never created to beg but to control and subdue the earth (Genesis 1:26). Humanity was never given the spirit of fear, (2Timothy 1:7) and inferiority complex because humanity shares the full likeness of God (Genesis 1: 27). The paper argues that Africa is poor and economically crippled because of a number of factors among which the dependence mentality and policies that create and perpetuate dependency. Moreover, African governments are dependent on Western humanitarian support (Maposa, 2013b). It is regrettable to note that the Zimbabwean government which used to depend on the 'Look West Policy' has gravitated to the 'Look East Policy' and specifically on Chinese support.

The thrust of the paper is to show that, Africa stands at a landmark moment of decision. Whether it is the failed look West Policy or the current look East Policy, the reality is that an external approach at solving the domestic problems of any country is not the best paradigm. Rather, the paper posits that Africa has to mobilize its resources. It is this home-grown approach which carries the resources for regenerating and empowering the indigenes. The underlying conviction being that the external charity organizations do not target on eradicating poverty to its roots but they target on alleviating poverty at superficial level. In order to exemplify the foregoing insights, the paper makes reference to the experiences of African initiated Churches (AICs): a case study of Zimbabwe Assemblies of God, Forward in Faith Church (ZAOGA FIF) as a case study on how Pentecostalism can wrought sustainable development in the Zimbabwean context.

### **1.1. Linking Pentecostalism and Development in the community**

Pentecostalism is a religious brand within Christianity that emerged in the dawn of the 20th century in America (Alexander, 2011). The term, Pentecost, is a Greek word prominent in the Old Testament to mean, Feast of Weeks. The Pentecost was a festival which occurred on the 50<sup>th</sup> day, some seven weeks after the Passover festival. In the New Testament, the Pentecost assumed a new dimension altogether. As Fr Ukpong (2008:3), has observed, Pentecost was celebrated in the church as the day on which the Holy Spirit descended (Acts 2) which manifested the fulfilment of the promise of Jesus (John 16:7-13). In fact, the designation, African Pentecostalism refers to the ‘spirit type’ churches, which derive their doctrine from Acts 2:1ff, which reads in part, thus: ‘And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord...all of a sudden there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind...And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance’. Accordingly, the doctrine of (glossolalia) which means the outpouring of the Holy Spirit expressed in speaking in other tongues, or also regarded as ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’, is an indispensable aspect of Pentecostalism (Alexander, 2011).

Pentecostalism continues to surge across the African countries with rapidity (Maxwell 2006). As a number of Pentecostal writers have shown, Pentecostal Christianity continues to be popular largely on account of its liveliness in the way it tries to mitigate a plethora of existential developmental realities which are aligned to transform humanity particularly in Africa as an example of the Third World continent. However, Pentecostalism as a new religious phenomenon has often been accused of not providing support to social functions like organising marriages, redressing of gender imbalance, neither providing assistance in terms of the economy and employment (Gifford 2004:8). It is against this milieu that the study seeks to examine the extent of the relevance of Pentecostal churches in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The study asserts that regardless of the accusations being levelled against Pentecostalism, the phenomenon has appealed to people of diverse generations due to its ability to address existential problems for people of all walks of life. The study noticed that Pentecostal churches attract adherents like a ‘hot potato’ and thereby become relevant in mitigating mundane problems of the ‘here and now’ today. This study tests ZAOGA FIF’s commitment in bringing sustainable development in areas of self propagating, self supporting and self reliance in Zimbabwe.

### **1.2. The nature of sustainable development**

In this study, an understanding for the nature of sustainable development has been influenced by the Brundtland Commission (1987) and Max-Neef (1991)’s definitions. Firstly, the Brundtland Commission (1987), sustainable development is the “capacity to make development sustainable-to certify that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The implication of this definition has led many scholars and practitioners of development to perceive the issue of sustainable development as having a major focus on peace, freedom, and equitable distribution of resources. Secondly, Max-Neef (1991:38) perceives sustainable development from the angle of the human factor capacity. He contends that “Development geared to the satisfaction of fundamental human needs cannot, by definition, be structured from the top downwards. It cannot either by law or decree. It can only originate directly from the actions and creative and critical awareness of the local themselves. Instead of being the traditional objects of development, local people/the affected people must take a leading role in development”.

Borrowing from the Brundtland Commission (1987) and Max-Neef(1991)’s definitions of sustainable development, African Societies should be seen following the same conceptual framework. This explains that for development to be sustainable, it must be a phenomenon that keeps going for a life time. For development to be fruitful it must be initiated by the locals for the locals themselves. Therefore, this corpus will demonstrate how African Initiated Churches grapple with the Brundtland Commission (1987) and Max-Neef’s definitions to sustainable development by empowering its members in both the material and spiritual terms. It is from this understanding of sustainable development which shapes the current understanding of how Pentecostal Christianity can be useful in the mitigation of several existential issues in contemporary society. Below is an exemplification of specific existential issues which are tackled by ZAOGAFIF as a representative of Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe.

## II. PENTECOSTALISM AND EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Like in the foregoing section, the study seeing a close relation between education and role of the Pentecostal churches in bringing about development through building of schools. It is a well known fact, and is popularly written by a number of contemporary educationist and sociologists that development in society can only be realised if people are educated to some recognisable levels. (Haralambos,2008). Some contemporary theologians and some writers on community development tend to agree with the foregoing insight. In the Zimbabwe context, Chitando is one such contemporary scholar who has wrestled with a number of existential problems which bedevil several African societies. Some of the pressing problems are: civil woes, poverty, HIV and AIDS, corruption, rape, unequal distribution of resources and so on. Chitando (2009) laments thus “Africa has been raped, brutalized and marginalized in the global economic systems” ([www.dkagencies.com/doc/...](http://www.dkagencies.com/doc/...)) Chitando (2009) posited that the solutions to such challenges lie as Africa’s responsibility and capacity. The same view is affirmed by Martino (2005) who claims that nobody can save the African continent from obliteration without internal partnership of Africans themselves.

It is in public domain that the type of education inherited from the colonial masters has not empowered the locals in relation to sustainable development. Rather colonial education only produced caretakers of some other people’s property or goods given the fact that “colonial education had limitations inside other limitations” (Walter Rodney, 1972). It must be noted that sustainable development is prevalent in a situation where universal values like honest, integrity, respect, creativity are promoted and inculcated. Instead of developing academic hooligans, Pentecostals Schools develop curricula in such a way that education becomes a balanced product. Some of the courses like *Philosophy of Ubuntu and the Total Person* and *Christian Ethics* are streamlined and taught at Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University (ZEGU) which is a ZAOGAFIF related institution of higher learning. ZEGU has come up with curricula which balance both vocational courses and theoretical courses. Moreover, in terms of its niche and vision, the ZEGU strives to equip the ‘total person’ with pre-requisite skills so that one does not become a misfit in the society. Some qualified clientele are accommodated irrespective of Church affiliations, either as a student or lecturer. In addition, students still in primary and secondary schools administered by ZAOGA FIF are also taught the moral related course just like at university level. The fundamental reason is to inculcate the basic values of humanness. All this is inspired by the ZAOGA FIF principle ‘Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from (it) *the good moral path of living*. (Proverbs 22:6) In this case, old truism that ‘charity begins at home’, is relevant in shaping the thrust of education being implemented in school and university run by ZAOGA FIF. The ZAOGA FIF is one such indigenous church which has embarked on establishing a unique university in Zimbabwe.

It is out of this background that Chitando (2010) has postulated for the revisiting of local curricula so that education becomes relevant to societies rather than remaining in the abstract world of theorising. Accordingly, Chitando (2010) rightly argues that to be educated is one thing and to be relevant in society is the other thing. Therefore, in order for education in Africa to contribute meaningfully to the existential problems such as poverty, AIDS and unemployment, there is need to ensure that practical courses are included in the curriculum. There is the need to incorporate vocational disciplines like: *How to Start a Business, Entrepreneurship, and Business Idea Generation and Market Research*, rather than flooding the curriculum with theoretical courses. More practical subjects are needed so that graduates have pre-requisite tools for self-reliance which enhance sustainable development in their localities. The eradication of poverty, provision of good healthcare, economic empowerment and the right to property ownership can be a dream come true when both the church and government in African countries align their policies, curricula and doctrines in such a way that people benefit directly.

## III. PENTECOSTALISM AND HEALTH

World over, the issues on health and well-being are so critical in societies. The African understanding of the causes of sickness is in two fold. On one hand, illness can be caused by natural factors. On the other hand, it can also be caused by the evil spirits. Fabella and Surgitharjah (2000:189) claim that African spirituality should be understood as the “cry for life, the power to resist death and its argents”. Shoko (2007) also argues that health and well being of people is paramount. This issue of good health and well-being is central in Pentecostal Christianity. This insight is part and parcel of a theology of abundance (John 10:10; 3John1:2). In trying to address to the ambiguity of human sickness and disease, the ZAOGA FIF has worked to build a unique hospital that caters for both medical treatment(practical) and non medical treatment(spiritual).

The non-medical therapy is where sicknesses that are characterised to be a result of *mashave* or *madhimoni* (evil spirits) are dealt with. In the sphere of non medical therapy, the spiritual problems of the patient are normally dealt with through exorcism thus, *iwe mweya wakaipa, iwe shave buda ne zita raJesus*.(literally, you evil spirit, come out in the name of Jesus). This therapy is prominently engaged at Mbuya Dorcas

Hospital and many patients have attested being healed through this therapeutic process. The counselling sessions are then conducted to restore the emotional and psychological make-up of the healed patient. Evidently, this kind of therapy is done at a modern conventional hospital in Zimbabwe. The understanding is premised on the fact that there are some diseases which need medical treatment and whilst others require spiritual therapy or both. Accordingly, the ZAOGA FIF is particularly conscious that a healthy mind must be inside a healthy body. As a way of showing compassion for the health of people, ZAOGA FIF erected such a unique African Hospital that attends to African's understanding of causes and solutions to diseases. It is important to highlight that the hospital is an open centre for all people irrespective of church affiliation or social status in life. This shows that as an indigenous church ZAOGA FIF has shown awareness that sound health is important for sustainable development. On one hand, it is a known fact that only people, who are fit, in terms of health, stand a better chance of gainful employment and become productive in performing work. On the other hand, unhealthy workers constitute a liability at workplace and so become a burden in society. This insight continued to be true in the backdrop of so many AIDS sufferers in work places.

Yet, it is a paradox that some churches are pro active in mitigating issue of illness and well-being and yet others shun the mitigation of illness through western medication. For instance, one of my interviewees, who is a member of the Johanne Marange Pentecostal Church, reported that members of AICs are discouraged to use western medication but to rely on faith healing. On the contrary, ZAOGAFIF has engaged a paradigm shift in the area of health and well-being for it has proved to be the torch-bearer in showcasing to the world that sustainable development is feasible in the sphere of good health. Therefore, the ZAOGA FIF has outdone the myth that scientific medicine is not God's way of treatment. Whilst not wishing away the doctrine and practices of 'laying on of hands' on the patient as an effective therapy, the ZAOGA FIF adopts western medication through the establishment of Mbuya Dorcas Hospital. In fact, it is perceived that God grants humanity various methods of healing. This is how the ZAOGA FIF appreciates the clinical method of therapy. There is no doubt that the establishment of its medical institution in Harare becomes a window to evaluate the extent to which Pentecostal churches continue to be indispensable in the critical area of health and well being, especially in light of the deteriorating HIV and AIDS-related diseases faced by many people in Zimbabwe today.

#### **IV. PENTECOSTALISM AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

Women empowerment is a critical area where African Pentecostalism is central as a springboard of transforming society through the emancipation of women. By way of definition the term empowerment can be understood in several perspectives. One empowerment can also be seen as referring to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender, or economic strength of individuals and communities. Bush and Folger(1994) have defined empowerment as 'restoration to individual of a sense of his/her own value and strength of his/her own capacity to handle life's problem'. Both definitions are regarded with high esteem in this study in view of the status of women in Africa. In all patriarchal societies in Africa, women are deprived of several of their rights in different fields of existence. In fact, women's access to various form of development, alongside property rights, inheritance laws and higher level of education is still farfetched, (<http://gencen.isp.msu.edu>). In the Zimbabwe context, indigenous mostly in the rural areas, societies are much controlled by the various dynamics of patriarch, Chitando (2008). It must be noted that 80% of the people in Zimbabwe live in the rural areas and of these people, 52% are women.

Chitando (2008:17) argues that throughout history women have faced serious challenges under these oppressive hard patriarchal systems. To address these gender disparities, ZAOGA FIF founder, Archbishop Ezekiel Guti introduced the system of *matarendu* (School of Talents) in the 1970s. Guti underscored the importance of *matarendu* whilst he was in Dallas, USA, attending Bible School. It is told that Guti once met a certain white preacher who asked him to work under him in return for the offer of money and buses as reward. Guti refused this worldly form of acquiring wealth. A person must not work under someone in a master-servant relationship. Instead, Archbishop Guti has always emphasised that every person must come to realise one's special talent (practical skills) in order to survive here on earth and also to work for the kingdom of God. Accordingly, whilst back in Zimbabwe, Archbishop Guti advocated and trained women to work by using their own hands for the support of their own livelihood and material support of the church. Guti taught that, God has given us hands to use and be better people.

Songs are composed such as "*kugarira maoko kwakashata, kuga maoko kwakashata, usagarire maoko aizi cheya*" literally translated as "do not sit on your hands; your hands are not chairs". This teaching is informed by the spirit of pragmatic philosophy which emphasises on entrepreneurship skills that are relevant for survival, (J.Dewey 1916). Originally, *matarendu* were made to uplift the status of women through engaging in self reliance jobs. It must be noted that in the colonial era the majority of women were not gainfully employed due to systematic oppression. The founder of ZAOGA FIF wanted to fill in that gap by encouraging the working

of *matarendu* in order to uplift the status of women in society. The school of talents teaches people to be industrious, accountable and co-operate as a group of people in society. The women are taught to initiate various income generating projects. Some of the viable projects include, dress making, cross-border trading and vending. To a large extent, the study shows that many beneficiaries of the project have improved their lives, as individuals, families and societies at large. Today, for instance, most women in ZAOGA FIF driving their own brand new cars, they own magnificent houses, and they live modestly. This is sustainable development, when locals are economically empowered with pre-requisite tools for better life.

It must be noted that in Jesus 'own ministry talents are given prominence for instance the parable of talents (Mt 25: 13). The gist of the message is that people must use their hands to sustain lives. This is the context under which ZAOGA FIF is taking the role of talents seriously to empower women and to transform society. Put in terms of a pastoral undertaking, the working of *matarendu* should be understood as the niche in ZAOGA FIF and it constitute an major reason why this church continues to be one of the most popular indigenous church in country. In addition, it is out of this *matarendu* that has made the Archbishop Guti to be regarded as the most popular religious personality in Zimbabwe if not in the world. It is interesting to note that ZAOGA FIFs stance on *matarendu* resonates with government policy or national development in general, and the empowerment of women in particular. Therefore, the practise of *matarendu* has empowered an African woman so much that one breaks all negative cultural boundaries. This is a fact which makes the ZAOGAs relations with the State cordial in the Zimbabwean context.

## V. PENTECOSTALISM AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development is yet another aspect to demonstrate the extent to which African Pentecostalism is vital in the Zimbabwean context. The continuing imprint of African Pentecostalism on community development is evident in all the facets of human life. The ZAOGA FIF has made enormous contributions in community development across the country. The ministry of Orphanage and Destitute care (ODC) was founded in 1975, with few identified disadvantaged children and now there is a big orphanage centre in Mutare with many children in the care of the ZAOGA FIF. The central vision of such rehabilitation is to support human life as an expression of the total gospel Jesus preached which intends to take care of those who are disadvantaged and make their life bearable as children of God. Jesus said, "For I was hungered, and you gave me no meat, I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink..." (Matthew 25: 43). This has seen the ZAOGA FIF building an orphanage centre for disadvantaged children some due to HIV and AIDS and others because of unwanted pregnancies. A number of these children have graduated from universities through what is known in the ZAOGA FIF as *Church magaba* (Tin Mission Fund). This is a fund raising approach to inculcate the values of responsibility and agape in children as a way to look after orphans. In general, the approach called children to help orphans in form of cash or kind. The children under Child Evangelism ministry of ZAOGA FIF are taught to support the disadvantaged children through an organised system of putting money in a *gaba* (small tin). This *gaba* will then be handed on to the Sunday school teacher every Sunday to do proper accounting. This money will be used to pay, for instance; fees, accommodation, clothes and food for orphans. Therefore, the doctrine of ZAOGA FIF is relevant to demonstrate the extent to which Pentecostal Christianity is appealing to the people irrespective of age, class and level of education. It must also be noted that community development which is wrought by ZAOGA FIF is modelled on the ministry of Jesus Christ which was characterised by the virtues of compassionate and love for the less privileged members of society (John 5:2-9, John6:1-13). One important manifestation of Pentecostal imprint is seen through the establishment of orphanages in Zimbabwe. The primary objective for establishing these orphanage centres is to cater for the down trodden in Zimbabwe. In this regard, Archbishop Ezekiel Guti has shown that Pentecostal theology if accurately applied can affect the community around not just in word but also in deed (James 2:14-26) In addition, Paul also links this community development to what he says, thus: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is that to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1: 27). This scripture is cited to show that useful religion is relevant when it is practiced to help others in dire need.

Another key Pentecostal aspect of community development is that ZAOGA FIF has built a rehabilitation centre for the disabled persons. Here, the disabled persons receive professional and vocational training on how to survive in a harsh economic situation. The establishment of the rehabilitation centre in 1989 at Murambinda Growth Point in Manicaland province came as a result of the teaching of the Archbishop Guti's

Pentecostal theology. The main purpose was to integrate the disadvantaged people in the mainstream community by teaching people not to borrow and not to beg in anyway. It must be noted that the old English saying, 'disability is not inability' continues to guide ZAOGA FIF's work in community development because the church engages a theology which does justice to gender relations and respects the sanctity of human equality and which affirms the doctrine of original creation. To cut the Ockham's razor, it must be noted that community development as understood in ZAOGA FIF is a programme of societal transformation and which ultimately leads to the development of 'total person'. A total person is a human being who is balanced in all areas of one's existentiality whether emotional, psychological and spiritual. This is how Pentecostal theology becomes relevant in contemporary society in Zimbabwe.

## **VI. PENTECOSTALISM AND HIV AND AIDS**

The prevalence of HIV and AIDS is a bone of contention throughout the world today. Universally, no other calamity since the horrendous Budonic plague (Black death) of the Middle Ages in Europe and slave trade in Africa have depopulated societies at the rate that the HIV and AIDS epidemic is doing today (Jackson, 1992,2002). Africa is a continent in crisis due the epidemic which emerged in the 1980s, (Musa, 2002:40). According to Maposa and Humbe (2012:22), "Zimbabwe is a country that is severely plagued by the HIV and AIDS and only ranked after Botswana, South Africa and Lesotho in the southern African region". Many stake holders are trying to assist on how to mitigate the pandemic. As a result we have so many organizations on board working with the governments to make Zimbabwe free from HIV and AIDS.

The churches constitute key stakeholders in the attempt to mitigate HIV and AIDS. Nevertheless, some African Initiated churches are usually accused of being fertile grounds for the spreading of HIV and AIDS mostly for their members. For instance they are widely known for discouraging the use of condoms and as a result many people who are promiscuous get affected and infected by the AIDS virus. However, in the Zimbabwean context spreading of the AIDS is accounted for by several loop holes that create an environment conducive for the spread of the virus. For example, the youths are being exposed to pre- marital sex, lack of paternal advice and counselling. Much of the advice on the youth is coming from sheer peers and as result they are vulnerable to the HIV and AIDS pandemic, a scenario which manifest the loose moral fabric in the society. Due to these gaps, the churches are part of the problem solving agents for example in the ZAOGA FIF there is the system of the 'Sofa Conference'. This is the teaching in ZAOGA FIF that discourages young boys and girls to do dating. If a young man intends to marry he should go through the church Elders so as to receive counselling and given proper procedures to that effect. The ZAOGA FIF as the church has assumed the role of what the indigenous Shona people call *vatete* that is the paternal aunt because the Sofa Conference is whereby a young man informs the church Elder that he is attracted by a particular girl. What normally happens is that the church Elder will then create an environment for the two would-be lovers to meet and exchange words of love for each other in their presence. This process is what is called the sofa conference in the ZAOGAFIF church. It is so because the two would-be lovers are encouraged to express their intimate feelings in the living room of the Elders whilst the Elders take a walk or they will be outside. The theological justification of the sofa conference is that this approach to marriage manifest the deep expression/ of agape (the true love inspired by the spirit of God). This type of love is radically different for filial love (superficial love motivated by carnal minds). As a matter of fact the latter filial approach is a recipe for social disasters in families and is associated with simplistic love that takes place at the market place, adultery, fornication, promiscuity rape, forced marriages or early marriages. Evidently the foregoing factors provide the social environment in the spread of HIV and AIDS. In fact it is under the inspiration of this agape that makes the two would-be lovers to discuss the possibility of HIV and AIDS testing or STI testing. The essence of testing demonstrates the new spiritual perspective of love. Whereas in circular society love is measure by the eye of the beholder but the sofa conference demonstrates that love is in the purity of the blood. And it is the purity of the blood that sustains the perfection of the perceived marriage within the ZOAGA FIF fraternity. Therefore, the thrust of the sofa conference is vital in augmenting the social and moral fabric in the community. The sofa conference discourage extra marital affair and encourages genuine fidelity for married people. It is this particular ingredient which provides a practical approach in mitigating the spread of HIV and AIDS. Thus ZAOGA FIF is an example of a church that is user friendly encouraging zero tolerance in the levels or rate of AIDS infection or affection.

## **VII. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION**

The study on Pentecostalism and Development in Africa evoked strong theological reflections. Perhaps, the relevant questions that could be asked are: what has Christianity to do with development? What has Christianity to do with the empowerment of women in the light of the quest of gender relations today? These

questions have raised a theological debate in the wider context of configuring the role of Pentecostal Christianity in the Zimbabwean society. Out of this study, it was made evident that ZAOGA FIF represents an archetypal church that envisions the humanity of women to the centre of the theology of original creation rather than condemning them into the 'feminisation of poverty. Accordingly, ZAOGA FIFs engagement developmental initiatives could be understood as an attempt to address and redress gender relations within this spirit of the theology of original creation. In addition ZAOGA FIF, through the vision of the program of *matarendu*, is attempting to break with the old stereo-type of the social ideology of patriarchy which sacrifices women at the altar of marginalisation and make them mere recipients of developments (Datta, 1995:15). Rather, the essence of the talents attempt to readdress women's contribution in development packages as people who share joint son-ship of Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26),(Romans 8:14-17) in order to enjoy full life in abundance.( John 10:10 Moreover the deadly HIV and AIDS disease creates a situation which, in theological terms, is known as the Kairos moment for the Christian Church of God. This Kairos provide a moment of dilemma for the Christian Church for God where this Church must clearly stand up for the truth and condemn the injustice which ultimately represents sin and ungodliness (The kairos document 1995). Therefore, it is without reasonable doubt that Pentecostal theology is a relevant reconstructionist paradigm in mitigating the woes like HIV and AIDS disease, poverty and oppression that bedevil in society. Perhaps, this is why Pentecostal Christianity continues to be popular in Zimbabwe because it tries to respond to the basic needs and aspirations of the people in Zimbabwe. The Church should continue to be inspired by the Lord's Prayer in which Jesus manifests as a model of love for humanity (Mt 6:33). This insight is significant in shaping the relevance of contemporary African Christianity in Africa, (Maposa 2012).

### **VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The discourses on sustainable development in the African context continued to surge on. The study raised fundamental issues on development which are consistent with the vision of 'New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).Its vision was Pan Africanist in essence as it intended to engage indigenous approaches towards solving African challenges. Simplistically stated the study noted and appreciated the very afro centric or rather pan Africanist approach on how contemporary problems can be solved in Africa. Far from looking outside for help, the study was very instructive in pointing out the vitality of engaging indigenous approaches towards solving Africa's woes. The main objectives of NEPAD were, to harness Africa's own resources for socio-economic development, to move seriously toward regional integration in order to: attain rapid growth and sustainable development; eradicate wide-spread abject poverty; and inhibit the marginalization of the continent in the globalisation process and to de-emphasise aid in favor of trade and investment. Nevertheless, some scholars criticised NEPAD, as an Africa initiative, argued from two vantage points that, the NEPAD had some flaws given that African leaders lack political goodwill and are pervasively corrupt. Yet within the spirit of the original vision of NEPAD, the researcher revealed that African problems call for home grown initiatives to mitigate domestic woes in quest for sustainable development. It was underscored that there should be partnership between the State and the church in bringing sustainable development in society. It is prudent to point out that another study on Church-State relations in the Zimbabwean context warrant further investigations. The study made it laud in claim that the indigenous Christian Church in Africa should continue to evoke its historical mandate in making meaningful contributions in the search for justice, accountability, dialogue and sustainable development .The study concludes this discourse by suggesting two significant recommendations that: policy makers and Politicians in Africa are encouraged to formulate home grown initiatives as an approach to tackle challenges facing domestic challenges. Two the Church and the state are encouraged to collaborate in transforming society as both institutions exist for the service of humanity in the common contested space.

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