



CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF NIGERIA

Plot 459, Cadastral Zone B2,
Southern Parkway, Durumi 1,

Telephone:
08171528716

E-mail:
cathsecabuja@yahoo.co.uk

Website:
<http://www.CBCN.org>

Postal Address:
P.O.Box 6523 Garki,
Abuja,
Nigeria.

Your Ref:

Our Ref:

WASTEFUL SPENDING ON FAMILY PLANNING “COMMODITIES”: REACTION OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF NIGERIA

A recent announcement by a senior official of the Federal Ministry of Health indicates that the Federal Government has approved the sum of 11.3 Million Dollars for the procurement of ‘family planning commodities.’ The new commitment of the Federal Government which was initially made at a family planning summit in London on July 11, 2012, was revealed to journalists in Nigeria on September 12, 2012, on the occasion of the 47th National Council Meeting of the Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria, which held in Abuja.

The new commitment of 11.3 million dollars which nearly quadruples the previous year’s commitment of 3 million dollars, demonstrates an unusual zeal and enthusiasm on the side of the Federal government towards the project of family planning and population control. This is evidence of the success of the aggressive campaign of a number of international agencies and interest groups to control population growth especially in poorer countries of the world. Sadly, it equally demonstrates the vulnerability and gullibility of the leadership of many developing countries including Nigeria, countries which are at the receiving end of a long-standing propaganda that tends to criminalise procreation, and pressurise governments into enforcing strict family planning and population control policies and programmes, including in a few cases actual legislation on the number of children to couples.

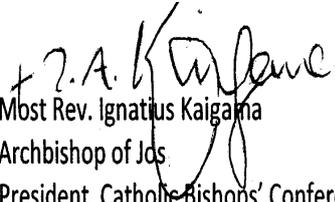
The Catholic Bishops Conference recognises the challenge of population growth and the pressure it bears on available resources and infrastructure in our country. Yet, we are appalled at what appears to be a shocking lack of critical thinking on the whole dynamics of population growth, technological development, social stability and the economic fortunes of a people. The challenge before us is much more than demographics and economics. What we are dealing with are human beings and the conduct of their family lives, not simply numbers and statistics. And human behaviour, especially with regard to choices in reproduction, is based on certain intrinsic values and principles. There are indeed spiritual, moral and cultural dimensions to the child spacing and population management (as opposed to population control) question, which no responsible government should trample upon, discountenance or jettison.

Related to the population management question is the challenge of global and national justice, resource management, equitable development, effective leadership, security and stability, as well as the struggle to overcome massive corruption and wastefulness in the economy. In Nigeria as elsewhere, the population growth question cannot be adequately or effectively resolved in isolation from these critical factors in a nation’s development. Under the right conditions, and especially with purposeful, visionary, and self-sacrificing leadership, the estimated population of 160 million Nigerians ought to be an asset, or a resource to be cultivated, rather than an undesirable burden to be lightened by any means, foul or fair.

Policies aimed at stemming population growth, which tend to isolate growth in numbers from the cultural, religious and moral orientations of the people, often turn out to be counter-productive and destructive of their social fabric. We the Catholic Bishops believe in, and do promote among our faithful and the generality of the public, the concept of Responsible Parenthood for child-spacing and the determination of family size, using the instrument of education and improved welfare, as well as the natural family planning mechanisms that include a diligent study and adequate understanding of each married woman's fertility rhythm and the discipline of periodic abstinence in conjugal life, rather than the ongoing aggressive campaign to propagate the use of contraceptives, and the resort to sterilisation and even procured abortion, all in the bid to forcefully stem population growth.

The heavy investment by the Federal Government in and widespread dissemination of what the report mentioned above called "reproductive commodities," amount to an affront on the religious and moral sensibilities of a cross-section of Nigerians whose family life conduct remains subject to their religious beliefs and ethos. What is more, it amounts to a gross misplacement of priorities and a waste of scarce resources, to direct such huge sums as 11.3 million dollars into the procurement and dissemination of family planning devices, in a society where health challenges requiring more urgent intervention, such as malaria, hepatitis, tuberculosis, diabetes, are poorly addressed.

We urge our governments at all levels to be more perceptive, and to be more responsive to the real needs of the people they govern, in the face of the well orchestrated global onslaught on population growth in developing countries. We call on representatives of the people in government to wake up to their responsibilities of protecting the people and defending their cherished values in policy formulation, in the midst of a world of conflicting ideologies and destructive orientations. Finally we urge the Nigerian people to hold on firmly to their treasured family values, and to reject what is clearly an anti-family and anti-people agenda being promoted worldwide by some powerful international interests, and to which the governments of many poor countries are today succumbing.


Most Rev. Ignatius Kaigama
Archbishop of Jos
President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN)


Most Rev. Alfred Adewale Martins
Archbishop of Lagos
Secretary, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria

)