

DEVELOPING A FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE
ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF OSONI, RIVERS STATE

A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE
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ABSTRACT

The title of this project is "Developing a Five-Year Strategic Plan for the Anglican Diocese of Ogoni, Rivers State". The purpose was to introduce the Anglican faithful in the Diocese of Ogoni in particular, and the ecclesiastical Province of the Niger Delta in general to the concept of strategic planning, which is a necessary aspect of church administration and Christian leadership not yet exploited in the area, by designing a strategic plan for the Diocese of Ogoni as a springboard. The instrument used for the project was a Strategic Planning Workshop organized in the diocese of Ogoni and comprising of key clerical and lay members of the diocese, and the format adopted was the 60-Minute Strategic Planning process designed by John Johnson and Anne Marie Smith. The outcome is a five-year plan that would lead the diocese into a greater height of financial strength and viability in the secretariat and general administration, investment in commercial ventures, education, training and staff development, and spiritual formation, among others. It identified the strengths and weaknesses of the diocese in several vital areas and developed strategies to minimize the obstacles and challenges being faced at the present time. It also devised a set of core values, vision and mission statements for the diocese, thereby giving the diocese a sense of identity, focus and direction. The study discovered that strategic planning started over two thousand years ago as a military concept and a strategy of war, before it was incorporated into public sector governance in the United States of America last century as a budgetary principle. It later found acceptance and wide usage in the organized private sector, public and private institutions, and in non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations including the church and other religious organizations and institutions. The study further discovered that whereas many religious organizations and churches in Nigeria have been involved in strategic planning for a long time, the Anglican church in Nigeria and especially the Niger Delta Province seems rather slow in embracing the subject, which is a vital ingredient of growth. The study also discovered that churches, organizations and institutions who practiced strategic planning tend to grow, while those who do not tend to have stunted growth. It therefore recommends that the dioceses, units, organs and institutions within the Anglican province of the Niger Delta in general, and the Diocese of Ogoni in particular take the issue of strategic planning seriously, and that a department of strategic planning be established in every diocese of the province to stimulate interest and action in the subject. It also recommends effective monitoring and evaluation of projects undertaken under strategic plans to ensure their proper implementation, and the active involvement of diocesan bishops as chief executives in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strategic plans for the attainment of desired results.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this researcher therefore is that every congregation, parish, archdeaconry, diocese, province, organ, unit, or institution in the Church of Nigeria needs a strategic plan whether or not they are currently facing serious threatening challenges. After all, there is nobody who does not have a problem and there is always need to sustain and improve. We cannot continue to shy away from confronting those problems. One will always think he is doing well until he has the opportunity to observe and compare with what is happening in his environment, especially, knowing what his rivals are doing.

No organization can grow without a conscious determination. No one can grow beyond his vision, and a compass to articulate the vision. No one plans to fail, but failing to plan is planning to fail. Every organization, including the church needs to articulate its core values, vision and mission, make assumptions of its circumstances, conduct an analysis of its current situation, devise strategies for confronting them, devise action plans and goals to deal with them, and put in place institutions and organs to monitor and implement them. Any organization that has not done this is neither conscious of its present, nor is prepared to confront the future. This carefree attitude is what the church can ill afford. The five-year strategic plan of the Anglican Diocese of Ogoni is therefore a timely project and will contribute enormously to the diocese and others in the province of the Niger Delta and the church of Nigeria that shall come to adopt the concept of strategic planning, following the success story of the Ogoni diocesan experiment.

Recommendations ... they still need

This researcher would therefore wishes to recommend as follows:

1. That there should be a strategic planning committee or a planning, research and statistics unit at every level of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) in general, and the Diocese of Ogoni in particular. Such a committee or unit should be able to conduct periodic research into the growth rate of the church in various segments and make recommendations to the authorities on the way forward for most issues. units and organs. It
2. That there should be a project monitoring and evaluation unit to ensure that the plans are duly implemented. It has been observed in the synod sessions of the Diocese of Ogoni that when reports from units and organs are presented, with problems areas highlighted and recommendations made, there is always no follow-up mechanism to ensure the situation gets rectified. It makes the synod reports an exercise in futility or a talk shop. Having a monitoring and evaluation unit will ensure adequate follow-up to every highlighted problem or viable recommendation.
3. That each strategic planning should be followed up with financial and operational plans for the detailed analyses of the issues raised in the strategic plan. This would ensure that the plan is not drawn and left to gather dust on office tables but actually re-visited on a daily basis as groups continue to work on aspects of the plan.
4. That the services of consultants and facilitators should be retained to serve as guides for the planning programmes. This makes for frankness, objectivity and professionalism in planning. Even where the planning team are adequately

mobilized in terms of training and experience, they still need an external facilitator and consultant so that participants can work without fear and intimidation from their boss on the planning committee. Planning requires openness, conscientiousness, and sincerity, and this is often denied when junior staff serve on committees with management. The presence of an external facilitator will decimate this.

5. And that chief executives should accept responsibility for the designing and implementation of strategic plans for their units and organs. It does not reduce anyone's influence if he sits with others to objectively evaluate, assess, and plan rather doing it alone. Such openness stimulates creativity and encourages the inflow of helpful opinion. The absence of it stifles creativity and inhibits healthful growth. No organization bargains for these.