

DORA NKEM AKUNYILI (1954-2014): A PRINCIPLED ANTI-CORRUPTION WARRIOR

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that corruption remains one of the major social evils plaguing the Nigerian nation. The country faces also a range of other socio-economic and infrastructure problems which citizens complain about almost daily. However, the vice of corruption reigns supreme, jeopardising the very foundations of the state. Some ethicists argue that corruption has manifested itself as a universal phenomenon, one which stifles the economy and impedes Nigeria's progress towards attainment of the Millennium Developmental Goals, let alone the present Millennium Sustainable Goals. Nigeria's anti-corruption bodies seem incapable of stopping what many have described as the "Nigerian factor" or the "Nigerian way". This article submits that, notwithstanding this depressing state of affairs, there is a glimmer of hope that public trust is redeemable, especially when having regard to the ethical values that marked the public life of Dora Nkem Akunyili, the erstwhile Nigerian academic and civil servant. It analyses the role she played in the Federal Government of Nigeria, in particular from an ethical perspective. In spite of her human weaknesses, it lauds her exemplary conduct as a crusader to implement anti-corruption international best-practice in Nigeria.

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1 INTRODUCTION

When one reflects upon the opportunities for meeting global anti-corruption practices that successive Nigerian governments have squandered, one cannot but recall the persona of Dora Nkem Akunyili, an example of ethical rectitude, whose career ranged from being a university professor, a Director-General at the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), and a Minister of Information and Communications. While there are today many Nigerians who are actively combating corruption in the public interest, we have chosen to present in this paper the exemplary anti-corruption conduct of Dora Akunyili as evidence that there still flickers a glow of hope that corruption can be defeated.

This paper approaches Akunyili's anti-corruption successes from two sides: from the point of view of Akunyili, the anti-corruption Amazon at NAFDAC, and from the point of view of Akunyili, the upholder of the nation's scruples. Our intention is to present, to Nigerians in particular, a countrywoman who surmounted all possible national hurdles to carry the day against the seemingly intractable vice of corruption. We aim also to recognise certain elements or persons as examples of a generally acknowledged pattern of ethical conduct. In this context, Akunyili stands out as a towering anti-corruption figure, an ethical role model who confronted corruption head-on and won. Ethical codes and practices deriving from philosophies such as John Paul II's culture of life, the Aristotelian theory of teleology, and natural law as espoused by Aquinas, argue for mapping of events or persons deemed fit for emulation in the interests of a particular or common good of the individual or the state. This paper is not a plea for the canonisation of Akunyili, but an attempt to focus on the policies, principles, vision and ethos that shaped her life as a public servant. We argue that, if Nigerians were to adopt Akunyili's anti-corruption posture, the prospects of attaining the country's developmental goals would be enhanced very considerably.

2 CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW

2.1 The British colonial period and corruption in Nigeria

Recent Nigerian scholarship on corruption is replete with descriptions and analyses of the incidence of corruption in the country's colonial days. Several writers are of the view that the British colonial administrations "sowed" the seeds of corruption in Nigeria. Njoku quotes Oyovbaire who says that Nigeria "appears to be a mal-gotten child", a product of colonial manipulation aimed at "putting" Nigeria

together for the benefit of the colonisers.¹ According to Onyiloha, this manipulation occurred in 1914 when the northern and southern protectorates were amalgamated into the political entity we now call Nigeria.² In the words of Njoku:

Lord Lugard arbitrarily amalgamated the two protectorates, which is still known today as Nigeria. There was economic motif to the amalgamation. Financially, whereas the Southern protectorate was viable, the Northern was not; thus by the amalgamation, the financial burden in ruling the North by the British government was taken over by the South, which the British essentially mistrusted.³

Sagay corroborates the above view, though from another perspective. For him, the amalgamation sowed the seeds of deceit which culminated in a corrupt system of governance in the country.⁴

Grounds for accusing the British colonial administration of corrupt practices are based on British complicity in the “1931 Census” and the “1950 General Conference” in Ibadan, both of which were geared to benefit the north at the expense of the other parts of the country. The implication of the latter hypothesis is very clear: the involvement of the British government in subverting the wishes of the Nigerian people in favour of a section of the country sowed the seeds of corruption to some extent, and this unethical conduct has continued unabated to the present day.

2.2 The post-colonial Nigerian nation and corruption

In the view of some authors, corruption in post-colonial Nigeria is approached best by studying corruption among the political elite, who share the blame for its prevalence in the country today. This liability is not limited to the conduct of the early post-independence founding fathers, but includes also the present crop of Nigerian politicians. Ugo admonishes against applauding the nation’s founding fathers as if they were incorruptible when they were at the helm of state affairs.⁵ Achebe blames a rudderless leadership as one of the factors propelling corruption

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- 1 Njoku F (2011) “Corruption: The Bane of Nigeria’s Development” in Anowai EC (ed) *Pope John Paul II Annual Memorial Lecture Series* Awka: Demercury Bright Printing at 5, 16 & 22.
 - 2 Onyiloha CA (2014) *Corruption in Nigeria: An Ethical Appraisal* Nimo: Rex Charles & Patrick Publications at 24.
 - 3 Njoku (2011) at 34.
 - 4 Sagay I (25 May 2001) “Federalism, the Constitution and Resource Control” *The Guardian* at 7.
 - 5 Ugo U (2011) “Corruption in Nigeria: Roots, Branches and Fruits” in Anowai EC (ed) *Pope John Paul II Annual Memorial Lecture Series* Awka: Demercury Bright Printing (2011) at 227-224.

in Nigeria. This ineffectual prefectship, he says, has “a tendency to pious, materialistic wooliness and self-centred pedestrianism”.⁶ Curiously, military interventions that have taken place in the past have been blamed on corruption within the political class. But the military rulers who seized power in successive coups have themselves been accused of looting the national treasury. Examples include the Okigbo Report which indicted the administration of Ibrahim Babangida;⁷ the repatriation of some of the Sani Abacha loot from foreign countries to Nigeria;⁸ and the Oputa Panel which indicted some military rulers for corruption.⁹

Therefore, it is unsurprising that, given the high incidence of corruption within the Nigerian civil service, the public have coined slang sayings such as “Man knows man”, “My man”, “Chop make I chop” (meaning being complicit in crime), “Grease my hand” (giving or taking of a bribe), and “If you can’t beat them, join them” (the whole is corrupt, so join the trend).¹⁰ Corruption in Nigeria thus has become a social norm, a way of life.

3 DORA AKUNYILI: AN ANTI-CORRUPTION AMAZON

The appellation “Amazon” is understood universally to mean a fabulous woman warrior. Originally, the word Amazon referred to the Greek mythological woman-warrior or a member of a group of women warriors who lived in Scythia, the ancient name of a region in Eastern Europe and Western Asia inhabited by a nomadic race. An Amazon is considered to be a powerful woman, who is notably tall, physically tough and strong-willed.

That Dora Akunyili was an anti-corruption Amazon at the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) is incontrovertible, for she fought like an Amazon and conquered, receiving ovations and accolades from compatriots and foreigners alike. Akunyili took on corrupt food and drug dealers and prevailed, thus saving millions of people from premature death from the negative effects of adulterated food and drugs. Under the patriotic watch of Akunyili, NAFDAC became a national brand known for its transparency,

6 Achebe C (1985) *The Trouble with Nigeria* Enugu: Forth Dimension at 5.

7 “The Okigbo Panel Report Revealed!” (16 May 2005) *Star News*, available at <https://www.laits.utexas.edu/africa/ads/698.html> (visited 29 December 2017).

8 Jannah C (27 December 2017) “\$321 Abacha loot: How FG plans to spend recovered funds – Presidency” *Daily Post*, available at dailypost.ng/2017/12/17/321-abacha-loot-fg-plans-spend-recovered-fund-presidency/ (visited 29 December 2017).

9 *AfricaFocus* “Nigeria: Human Rights Report Released” at www.africanfocus.org/docs05/nig0501.php (visited 29 December 2017).

10 Onyiloha (2014) at 36-37.

accountability and integrity. Nigeria regained part of its lost glory through the numerous citations and awards for excellence in service bestowed upon Akunyili, the national anti-corruption icon.

NAFDAC was not founded by Akunyili. Many Nigerians had preceded her at the agency since it was established in 1994. FP Nwosu describes the situation at NAFDAC prior to Akunyili's arrival as follows:

NAFDAC was a failed agency before Dora (Akunyili) came on board as its Director General. The level of moral and infrastructural decay in the Agency was what enhanced the presence of fake, adulterated, cloned, counterfeit, substandard and unwholesome drugs in circulation in Nigeria which became alarming and got to crises situation in April, 2001. A situation where there is massive copying of original brands of drugs and other regulated products with consumers unable to identify the original brand was totally worrisome.¹¹

Commenting further on the physical state of the NAFDAC's utilities before the appointment of Akunyili, he writes that:

Before her appointment as NAFDAC Director-General on April 11, 2011, NAFDAC Corporate Headquarters occupied a dilapidated rented old three story building located in a residential area in Abuja. All the offices of the Agency across the country were in a sorry state. The offices were poorly equipped without modern furniture. Laboratory equipments were either dilapidated or outdated. NAFDAC had offices in only twenty-four states out of the thirty-six (36) states of the federation.¹²

The portrayal above typifies most Nigerian state institutions. For the average person or state official, business or duty in government is usually comprehended as "nobody's business", but where benefit accrues to the state the gain becomes "everybody's national cake". The situation in NAFDAC, as described above, is a true reflection of the corruption and indiscipline plaguing the country.

Any corrupt system can be changed by a person who is passionate about changing things and who has an ethical work paradigm. Dora Akunyili brought exactly this to NAFDAC, keeping Nigerians wondering what secret formulae she was using to get the better of corruption. Professor ABC Nwosu had this to say about her:

Nobody discovered Dora (Akunyili). The woman, by nature and destiny, was made for NAFDAC. That is how I would like to look at it. When it was time and I became minister and the position of DG (Director General)

11 Nwosu FP (2014) *Dora Nkem Akunyili: An Icon of Hope for a New Nigeria* Onitsha: Emegawaves Communications at 41.

12 Nwosu (2014) at 47.

NAFDAC became vacant it is by law that the minister has to recommend and I recommended her ... She was public-spirited, a woman who had passion for her fellow citizens. These qualities found expression in NAFDAC and they were best suited for NAFDAC. A person imbued with those qualities does not expire. You cannot finish doing what she did in NAFDAC and your spirit of service will go.¹³

Dora Akunyili remained and continues to be an example of a public servant instilled with honesty and integrity. Dan Ogbuefi, an Agulu chief — Agulu being Akunyili's home — confirms that:

[W]hen names were coming and Dora's (Akunyili) name also came, Obasanjo was so impressed with her records. In fact, the day Obasanjo was opening the NAFDAC head office in Abuja, he said Dora got that appointment because of her honesty of returning 12 000 pounds. It was unheard of in the country.¹⁴

The testimonies quoted above show that Dora Akunyili transformed the function and role of Director General of NAFDAC. She resolved through an ethically-oriented theory and practice to elevate Nigeria to a higher level of best practices as regards food and drug administration. Her noble efforts saved lives, notwithstanding the serial threats to her own life originating from corrupt people involved in marketing counterfeit products.

Following her untimely death on 7 June 2014, Onyiloha paid tribute to her in the following terms:

Our departed Professor Dora Akunyili is the good conscience of the Nigerian nation. She came into the national limelight through her dedication to national service. Being a good conscience of the nation, Akunyili served her fatherland at NAFDAC with an altruistic disposition so close to shedding her blood, especially the attempts of assassination on her dear life. She was not deterred by such threats.¹⁵

Men and women in Nigeria ought to imitate Dora Akunyili's ethic of selfless service to humanity, as evidenced by her countless achievements at NAFDAC. Whereas anti-corruption campaigners, like prophets, often are not recognised at home, the same does not hold true for Akunyili, who was and continues to be showered with national accolades. The following extract from a Nigerian newspaper article titled "Making of an Amazon: the Dora Akunyili Story" is representative of her standing in Nigeria:

13 Nwosu ABC (28 August 2014) "Why I Nominated Akunyili for NAFDAC Job" *Daily Sun* at 32.

14 Ogbuefi D (28 August 2014) "Interview" *Daily Sun* at 34.

15 Onyiloha CA (28 August 2014) "Her Good Conscience Saved the Nation from Time Bomb, Dora Akunyili: Our Testimonies" *Daily Sun* at 47.

Dora Akunyili recorded outstanding success in steering the affairs of NAFDAC. She brought in a new culture of excellence and honesty into NAFDAC and this positively impacted on the entire Nigerian public service and the regulated industry. As a commentator wrote, 'The NAFDAC Director General is a revolutionary. She has not only changed NAFDAC, she has also changed the pharmaceutical industry in the country.' Her activities resulted in a significant drop in the level of fake and counterfeit drugs in circulation. Her efforts put NAFDAC among the top 10 food and drug regulatory agencies in the world, thereby bringing pride and international glory to our beloved country.¹⁶

All in all, Dora Akunyili is said to have received over 600 national and international awards and recognitions. She was honoured because of her "iconic strides laced with commitment to the values of honesty and transparency".¹⁷

From an ethical perspective, human conduct involves a correspondence between intention and the actual act. Akunyili's anti-corruption model will help the country if her compatriots are to take their cue from her by marrying their good intentions to their acts. Indeed, if Akunyili, a Nigerian, could win the fight against corruption, there is no reason why her fellow citizens cannot follow suit. To be sure, Nigeria is in dire need of men and women who can channel their energies into the fight against corruption.

3.1 Dora Akunyili: the good conscience of Nigeria

The word "conscience" comes from the Latin root *conscientia* (consciousness), meaning "to be conscious" and "to know consciously". Thus, conscience traverses all segments of human society, and it remains the source of moral authority for all people, irrespective of their social, cultural or political orientations. This faculty of the mind is regarded also as the sense of right and wrong, and it governs people's thoughts and actions, urging them to do the right thing and to refrain from doing wrong.

The foregoing standards comprise some of the salient considerations applicable to a description of the persona and ethic of Dora Akunyili. In her fight against corruption, she represented the good conscience of the nation in contrast to the bad. She seemed to have understood, as we all should understand, that anti-corrupt conduct derives from the following components of conscience:

16 *Daily Sun* (28 August 2014) "Making of an Amazon: the Dora Akunyili Story" at 17.

17 *Daily Sun* (28 August 2014) "Making of an Amazon: the Dora Akunyili Story" at 18.

- (a) Obedience to conscience implies applying one's conduct according to what one's sense of right and wrong tells one is right. This idea is expressed commonly by those campaigning in support of prisoners of conscience.
- (b) Shared moral opinion involves a collective reasoning based on concern for moral issues affecting society. This is often referred to as a social conscience.
- (c) In psychoanalysis, conscience is perceived as that part of the superego which passes judgment on thought and action on the self.
- (d) In the Christian tradition, especially as regards ethics and morals, the word for conscience is *syneidesis*, which refers to the pain suffered by one who contravenes his or her moral values, and positively having a "good conscience" before God (the Supreme Being). The voice of reason resides in our hearts and it ought to be obeyed since it is also naturally compliant with law.¹⁸ In other words, Christians regard conscience as the "voice of God within the soul".¹⁹ Therefore, given that whoever goes against his or her conscience is considered to have committed a sin, conscience for Christians is the product of revelation rather than reason. "Although reason may subsequently justify moral actions that have been prompted by conscience, the prompting itself comes from God."²⁰
- (e) According to the principle of rationality, every rational person (without any impediments to sanity) ought to discover intelligence in nature, including the possession of conscience which can respond, even if unconsciously, to the demands of the divine law (God-given law). Invariably, conscience is seen also as part of the natural law. Everybody has the capacity to discover elementary religious and moral rules of life and those principles are built-in features of the universe and human nature.
- (f) In his *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas discusses the interface between the conscience and moral arguments. A moral argument is the rational examination, analysis and evaluation of issues that touch on right and wrong. In his examination of the relationship between conscience and morality, Aquinas postulates that there are two ways of doing wrong: firstly, to do what is known to be wrong; and, secondly, to go against one's own conscience. Customarily, everyone should know that it is not just rationalisation of purpose or issue that determines morality, but also an intuition of right and wrong.
- (g) Within the secular context or situation, conscience depends on two elements, namely, freedom and knowledge of the good. In the absence of

18 Paul's Letter to the Romans 2: 15.

19 Thompson M (1999) *Ethical Theory* London: Hodder & Stoughton at 125.

20 Thompson (1999) at 126.

freedom, all discourses on conscience make no sense and hold no grounds. The ability to possess an inner conviction or decision is dependent on the logic that conscience entails some innate knowledge of “the good”. Without this, conscience could prompt no specific action.

- (h) In order to become a good person, one will have to work towards a conscious and constant correspondence between one’s good intention and good act. It is also expected that a person will not achieve this condition in the absence of all known ethics and morals.

The above considerations help one to understand one’s conscience and appreciate its role in all matters relating to the problem of corruption in society. For someone to wage a sincere fight against a social problem such as corruption, the person concerned must be a man or woman of good conscience. Good conscience brings forth good intention and good action. Dora Akunyili garnered local and international awards because she was undoubtedly a conscientious woman who matched her good thoughts with the right actions. The latter is illustrated by her coinage of the slogan “Nigeria, Good people, Great Nation” and her memorandum to the Federal Executive Council titled *Let’s Save Ourselves from Shame*. These are manifestations of principles rooted and built up in virtue ethics, the culture of life and teleology.

3.2 Dora Akunyili’s memorandum to the Federal Executive Council

To seek electoral office in Nigeria or to be appointed to any government position is generally perceived by the people as an opportunity to serve the homeland. Many politicians and their cohorts see politics as a “do-or-die” agenda, and some will stop at nothing to win an election, or at least be appointed to office in a ministry, state department or agency.

Given her background, Dora Akunyili was appointed Minister of Information and Communications in December 2008 by the then President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua. She also was appointed to the Federal Executive Council (FEC) because of her laudable achievements as the former Director-General of NAFDAC. She brought to the Ministry the same frame of mind and forthrightness which she had shown when she was at the helm of NAFDAC. Being someone who was determined to obey her good conscience, she put aside her personal interests as a Minister and prevailed upon her colleagues at the FEC to do the right thing in order to move Nigeria forward. Akunyili defied what is known colloquially as the political “banana peel”, meaning a sudden termination of one’s appointment for doing what is right by indicting a state authority. She presented to the FEC a memorandum, titled *Let’s*

Save Ourselves from Shame,²¹ in which she urged her colleagues to do the right thing and to take the country out of the political logjam caused by the illness of the then President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. She reasoned that, since the president had not devolved power to the vice-president, Goodluck Azikiwe Jonathan, the vacuum in the presidency ought to be filled by applying existing laws, or by "creating" the necessary legislation, in line with the doctrine of necessity, to enable the vice-president to become acting president.

Many of Akunyili's colleagues at the FEC, including some members of the National Assembly, frowned upon her perceived "madness". Some thought Akunyili was insane; others wondered why she would want to "bite" the hand of Yar'Adua that fed her. In spite of these derisive attacks upon her, Dora Akunyili remained resolute in good intention and good action, which are rare patriotic attributes.

In *Let's Save Ourselves from Shame*, Akunyili confronts the problem of leadership and corruption in the following terms:

What went wrong? We love our president but we should remember that he is not infallible. Before he left Nigeria he had a moral and constitutional obligation to officially inform the Senate and hand over the mantle of leadership to the vice-president pending his return and recovery. That did not happen. Yes, a mistake has been made by our boss and our brother. Mr. President is ill and did not choose to be sick. But while we continue to pray for his recovery, we should try to right the wrong.

This excerpt manifests a mind that is rooted in the sense of doing the right thing at all times and in all places. That is what the country demands of its citizens. For Nigeria to win the war on corruption and comply with global anti-corruption best practices, both the government and the people must do the right thing, and all should become the good conscience of the nation. In reflecting on that memorandum, one ethicist affirms thus:

Professor Akunyili, as a lioness, fought not with [a] modern arsenal, but with a good conscience. At last, she won that war. "Let's do the right thing" was one of the arguments contained in her memo to the members of the Federal Executive Council (FEC), urging her colleagues to be patriotic in tackling the logjam occasioned by the sickness and eventual death of former president Musa Yar'Adua. That memo provided a reasonable and proactive path to the ascent of President Goodluck Jonathan to the office of acting and later substantive president of Nigeria. She informed the nation that she wrote that memo out of her good conscience, as a good Catholic and also as a good Christian.²²

21 Published in *NewsWatch* (15 February 2009) at 14-15.

22 Onyiloha CA (28 August 2014) at 47.

It follows, therefore, that Christians, Muslims and African traditional religious practitioners should profess their faith systems in a way or manner suggestive of men and women desirous of doing the right thing. Faith leaders, civic leaders and their respective followers should lead by example and allow their good deeds to speak louder than homilies or instructions. At the same time, politicians should be statesmen and stateswomen inspired by a vision and mission to make the country a place where ethics and values reign supreme. In a word, Nigeria, and in indeed other countries, are in need of Dora Akunyili's ethical paradigm, especially in the area of selfless public service.

The current countrywide attempt by different interest groups to persuade the president and other politicians to run for political office in 2019, calls for sober reflection, especially against the background of similar appeals during the military governments of Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha. For either pecuniary or political reasons, many people championed bizarre self-succession bids or even a third terms of office during the Olusegun Obasanjo administration. The fact of the matter is that politicians need to be men and women imbued with a sense of right and wrong. Indeed, it is no secret that the current clamour at political rallies rests on the desire to loot state coffers and to win the people over to supporting unpopular political movements or crusades, to the detriment of the welfare of the citizenry. At present, what the country needs is a critical assessment of the government's targets for providing electricity, primary healthcare, housing, potable water and security. Such benchmarks are necessary to establish what impact they have on the quality of life of the citizenry. The money used to fund political rallies could have been used instead to ameliorate the hunger of the poor or to support the anti-corruption agencies²³ in adhering to best global anti-corruption practices.

Democratic culture involves discipline, statesmanship and altruism. Nigerian politicians and the Nigerian nation must approach governance with the required mindset and principles that promote the common good.

3.3 Dora Akunyili's ethics and values: "Nigeria: Good people, Great nation"

The Nigerian nation prides itself on being the "giant of Africa". Nigeria has the largest population of any country in Africa, but cannot claim the most intact ethical values in Africa. There is something in a name, for a name denotes two attributes that attach to the person who carries it: identity and memory. There is therefore nothing wrong in calling Nigeria the "giant of Africa". However, one is troubled by

23 Two such agencies are the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Crimes Commission (ICPC).

the country's identity and memory — given the incidence of corrupt practices in Nigeria as compared to other African countries. The “giant of Africa” thus is crippled by a diminished quality of life as a result of corruption. Sadly, and in the assessment of many people, Nigeria is looked upon as a giant weakened by corruption.

The fight against corruption in Nigeria involves a number of moral and ethical principles and practices. Ideas rule the world, but ideas that are meant to do so should be subjected to ethical tests so as to ascertain their inherent value for a particular society. And it is this morality that moved Dora Akunyili to re-calibrate the national ethic in terms of the dictum “Nigeria: Good people, Great nation”. No nation achieves greatness if its people fail to embrace goodness. Good people approach duty responsibly, for this promotes self-esteem, honesty and transparency. The goodness of the people assures their greatness among other nations. It follows, therefore, that Nigerians ought to be good nationals in order for their country to achieve greatness in the management of human and natural resources.

Good citizens shun corruption and other unethical practices. Akunyili reasoned that what Nigeria needs is good and great people instead of giants in immorality of corruption. Her dictum was conceived as a homemade rallying point for a process that would deal with Nigeria's negative image both at home and abroad. For Akunyili, goodness connoted an action or a pattern of conduct drawn from the Christian pedagogy of godliness in creation, as recorded in the book of Genesis,²⁴ where God saw all that He created as being good. Again, the idea greatness in reference to Nigerians appeals to citizens to apply their ethics and values to all their thoughts and actions. The Nigerian government needs to continue to spread the philosophy embedded in “Nigeria: Good people, Great nation”, as part of a pro-active plan to help the people look inwards and discover their duties to the motherland. Both the private and public spheres of civic life in Nigeria need to be infused with this guiding philosophy, as typified by Dora Akunyili.

4 CONCLUSION

Corruption has remained a major problem in Nigeria and the citizens are very worried about the scourge. At all levels, Nigerians are suffering the consequences of corruption. This paper has argued that the national developmental benchmarks have not been met owing to the endemic prevalence of corruption in the country. The

24 Genesis 1: 31.

virus of corruption practically has devoured and continues to deplete the nation's plentiful riches. Past and present efforts aimed at combating corruption have been ineffective because they have not been informed by ethical fundamentals.

Dora Akunyili's triumphant anti-corruption crusade, especially her track record at both NAFDAC and the Information and Communication Ministry, constitutes persuasive evidence of her ethical approach to her work and her accountability to the public whom she served. Mindful of the true meaning of principle, value and self-esteem, Akunyili fought corruption and accomplished what she set out to do. The ethical standard which she set for herself needs to be embraced by ordinary people in their own anti-corruption crusades.

Dora Akunyili's life and work fit the pattern of conduct expected of a citizenry involved in nation-building and in delineating the path along which national development ought to be tailored. Nigerian leaders need to emulate Akunyili's ethical model in all aspects of their public life in order to ensure that the country attains its developmental and millennium goals. These are ethical issues because they concern human choices, such as what has to be done and what not, and what is good and what is evil. Complacency, selfishness, lawlessness and impunity are antithetical to national development. Dora Akunyili has shown, through her moral rectitude and unwavering anti-corruption commitment, that ethical behaviour can be the road to rescuing Nigeria from the morass of corruption.