

The Role of Caritas Nakuru in Poverty Alleviation in East Pokot Sub-County in Kenya.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of Caritas Nakuru in poverty alleviation in East Pokot Sub-County, Kenya. The study was guided by two theories of development: structural functionalism as discussed by Herbert Spencer and Robert Merton and Modernization theory Human needs theory advocated by Marquis de Condorcet and Emile Durkheim. This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. It was informed by the Ex-post Facto research design, which was considered appropriate because the study has a historical perspective. The study was conducted in Baringo County of Kenya but focused on East Pokot Sub County which comprises of Pokot, Tugen and Ilchamus communities. Data collection techniques and procedures included the use of interviews, focus group discussions and the administration of structured questionnaires. The quantitative techniques consisted of household surveys using questionnaires with both closed and open-ended questions. Focus group discussions (FGDs) was used to obtain qualitative data. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics by employing Statistical Package for Social Scientists and presented using percentages and information discussed thematically. This study found out that poverty alleviation activities lead to enormous economic costs incurred in the course of its programs which are higher than normal monthly expenditure of affected families. The study recommended that there is need to improve access to food, education, health care services, water and sanitation in East Pokot Sub-County.

Key Terms: Poverty alleviation, Caritas Nakuru, structural functionalism.

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Introduction

The critical challenge facing Kenya and, in particular, the people of East Pokot is to raise the rate of economic growth and minimise the suffering brought by poverty and consequently bring improvement in the standards of living among the peoples. This article examined the role of Caritas Nakuru in poverty alleviation in East Pokot Sub-County, Kenya. In the 1970s, Kenya's economic growth rate has dramatically declined from an average of 6.6 per cent to 4.2 per cent in the 1980s; in the 1990s, it declined to an average rate of 2.1 per cent. The vast majority of Kenyans living conditions is rapidly deteriorating. Like any other part in Kenya, in East Pokot, it is visible that the inability to access clean water, shelter, clothing, and education and health services has increased. Consequently, growing disparities in access to services have further undercut the living conditions of low-income households in the region. According to UNDP (2002), school enrolments, life expectancy and infant mortality have deteriorated. Kenya's economic objectives of growth, poverty reduction and improved resource utilization and access have remained essentially the same since independence. The quest for sustainable socio-economic development has, however, been a challenging endeavour; the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru (CDN) is influencing some policy shifts. Such strident call has basically centred on poverty reduction, the inclusion of those excluded from the enjoyment of the benefits of economic growth and the redistribution of productive resources. As a result of those efforts, much has been realized in matters of sustainable human development, focusing on improving the quality of life of the majority poor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rodima-Taylor (2011) did a close study to this one done among pastoralists of East Africa. The findings show that not everybody is poor in the same way. Spatially, several factors such as access to and control over resources and institutional linkages from individuals to the international

level affect poverty distribution. Even at the household level, poverty differs between men and women and age groups, yet data constraints impede systematic intra-household analysis. Next to this view is the understanding of poverty as a material concept. The protagonists of this view argue that there is poverty since people lack what they need, or because they do not access to resources they will use to get what they want. Furthermore, Baratz and Grigsby (1971) contends that the need is the understanding of poverty as a lack of necessary material goods or services. People 'need' things like such as food, clothing, fuel or shelter. Therefore, poverty as a severe lack of physical and mental well-being is closely associated with inadequate economic resources and consumption. Besides, the factors which go to make up well-being such as 'welfare' values, such as self-esteem, aspirations, and stigma and 'deference' values, like aspects of status and power. According to this study, these views stem from apparently opposed interpretations of the social construction of needs, and those of different definitions of poverty. But the researcher agrees that poverty is a lack of something, both from the source to the availability and the foundation of the attitude attached.

Accordingly, the images of poverty among the pastoralists both nomadic and agro-pastoralists have in the recent years become inextricably bound together in apocalyptic scenes of draught, famine and warfare. For instance, media representing swollen-bellied children, skeletal figures in draught stricken landscape and pitiful refugee camps are so powerful that, rather than stimulating critical examination of the complex causes of the crisis, they have circumvented it and urged upon the people of good will to provide the simplest way of diagnoses and cures. It is worth noting that, pastoralism is strategy of survival; it is a recipe for disaster and impoverishment. It must be changed 'something' that must be done. Pope Benedict XVI, while addressing Caritas in 2005 said that despite the urgent consensus on these matters, the 'something must

be done' remain far from clear. The Catholic Church is trying to do something in her effort to alleviate poverty and subsequently improve the livelihoods.

On the basis of above analysis, the concerns of poverty alleviation are of a universal character and nature. Poverty has various manifestations, for example, homelessness and inadequate housing as mentioned earlier. Firstly, alleviation of poverty requires, sound policies aimed at creating employment opportunities, equal and universal access to economic opportunities. Secondly, it requires education and training that will promote sustainable livelihoods through freely chosen productive employment and work. Thirdly, it requires improved basic social services such as health facilities. However, there are no universal solutions that one can apply or be fairly applied. The church has a divine role in human history which is seen in the God's act of creation. Genesis stories of creation place man and woman as the climax of the creation. The first account of creation mentions Adam and Eve (Male and Female) as creature made in likeness and image of God (Gen 1:26-27). The second account of creation shows God mouldings the first human out of the earth, breathing life into him, and finally settling him and his wife in the garden to live in dignity and love.

This theological reflection of human dignity is carried by the Catholic Church worldwide. In the New Testament Jesus fulfils this tradition in his teaching and actions. He gave three great parables on issues of justice and the poor. Pope Benedict XVI, (2005) argues that these parables are the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, and the dramatic judgment scene in Matthew 25. In this judgment drama I was hungry you gave me food; I was thirsty you gave me drink; I was a stranger you made me welcome; I was naked and you provided clothes for me; I was sick and you paid visit me; in jailed and you came to the prison to see me (Mt 25:31-46). This theological reflection of human dignity is carried out by the church

through the Caritas in love and charity. According to Compendium of the catholic social teaching par, the poor should be seen "not as a problem, but as people who can become the principal builders of a new and more human future for everyone".

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study recruited 400 respondents of which 53 per cent were males and 48 per cent females. In terms of marital status, 64 per cent were married, 16 per cent were widowed, 11 per cent were single and 9 per cent were divorced.

Majority of households' expenditure per month was between Kenya Shillings 2000. This income expenditure is less than a dollar per day. On the other hand, the current study showed that medical expenses and education and transportation due to poor infrastructures in East Pokot Sub County were very high in most of households. This is way up the affordability of most of the residents. The estimate of the costs incurred by the household per each case of poverty level was higher than the estimates given by other researchers which vary from other studies in other regions.

Poverty has rich vocabulary in all cultures and throughout history. According to Maxwell (2004), the terms such as income or consumption poverty; human underdevelopment; social exclusion; ill-being; lack of capability and functioning; vulnerability; livelihood unsustainability; lack of basic needs and relative deprivation, are relatively used to define what poverty is. This rich vocabulary indicates that the definition of poverty world-over has evolved over time and that it is the state of the majority of the world's people and nations. Sifelani (2010) argues that these periodic changes in the definition can be attributed to the variation, both across time and space in the description of what constitutes socio-economic well-being of a given culture. The given definitions infer that

poverty refers to a condition in which an individual or a society is deprived of, or lacks the necessity for a low standard of life and well-being. Poverty is multidimensional and its persistence is linked to interlocking multidimensionality. It is dynamic, complex, institutionally embedded, and a gender and location specific phenomenon. World Bank report, of 2012 poses that the pattern and shapes of poverty vary by social group, season, location and country.

Occasionally the region experiences heavy rainfall in mountainous regions that causes massive flooding in the lowlands regions in the study area. During such natural phenomenon roads, schools, bridges and other infrastructure were destroyed, it was reported that thousands of livestock were swept away. Crops damaged despite the fact that the impact is difficult to be ascertained. In the report found in the CDN, at the time of writing this article, the death cases reported as a result of flood was 48. The church reported that there was outbreak of diseases from the onset of these rains, and that these diseases mostly are water-borne like cholera and Malaria which aggravate the effects of poverty. The findings revealed that seasonal flooding is the most significant, chronic issue in the sub county; health, access to water and food security were consistently raised as priorities by all stakeholders.

In discussions with the entire informants, food insecurity emerged as the priority issue in East Pokot, this is primarily due to soil conditions and harsh climatic. The loss of livestock in the drought and floods has led to people change to dangerous strategies to cope up Women outlines the way their families fed on animal remains, wild fruits which has to be boiled a day prior so as to be edible and porridge if they can afford after selling a goat to purchase flour, or when there is relieve food and they luckily receive one.

Being mainly an arid region, the community practices pastoralism and predominantly depends on cattle, sheep, goats, and various wild fruits; but when conditions are favourable, some farming is done in Churo Division. The church has initiated programs to help harvest water from the seasonal rains and digging some boreholes. In East Pokot, the main option on livelihood relate is bee-keeping and livestock; farming practises is only done in Churo Division, although in recent years harvest have been poor due to drought. Honey production is gaining importance; there has been increase in market demand for honey (the market day for honey is usually Saturday); during dry season, honey prices usually surpasses that of goats. A report by Caritas staff indicated that most families source of cash through selling honey and goats in Nginyang Division where the accessibility to markets, and that shops outside of Nginyang Division do not sustain themselves.

Traditionally, people in this region eat meat, blood, and milk. However, families resorted to dangerous coping strategies due to the loss of livestock as a result of flooding and drought. Women report that situation has forced their families to feed animal remains, wild fruits which has to be boiled a day prior for it to be edible and porridge if they purchase a flour after they sell a goat, as well as relief food they receive it. Families also purchases food on credit from shops and markets. The CDN does some food distribution and runs a school feeding program to keep the children in school. Beekeeping, drought resistant animals, agricultural programs through irrigation, and encouraging village banking and investment are the measures and the church is taking to alleviate poverty. Action: Save the Children to send a copy of this report to WFP and follow up with a meeting. On the other hand, malnutrition in young children was reported during the study. This was a major concern number of stakeholders including the Deputy Count Commissioner, the Kenya Red Cross Society and the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru. The caritas Nakuru look

nutrition as a matter of urgency, in order to save children and future generations.

Health issues such as communicable disease like Cholera, as well as malnutrition in young children were also raised consistently to the researcher as some of the most serious pressing problems faced by communities. Furthermore, lack of awareness within the community on many issues including and not limited to health, hygiene and sanitation were prevalent as a result of very low literacy levels. This has according to the study had impacted on child survival, and also disaster preparedness.

The CDN is addressing these health risks through communicable disease surveillance, prevention and control as matters of priority. All relevant health services providers are involved in strengthening and building the capacity of the sub-county health management team through adequate staffing, trainings, construction of health centres and dispensaries as well as supplying drugs and medical equipment. Government needs to complement the church in improving regular health campaigns and routine immunization for children living in outlying areas, additionally, in order to improve sanitation and hygiene services and practices, public health promotion work should be employed in the district. The CDN implements the Community Strategy in East Pokot in order to reach remote communities with primary healthcare through use of mobile clinics. Given the minimal presence of public health actors in the region, national and international non-governmental organisations should partner with CDN to support the implementation of the improved livelihood of the people. In particular they should integrate basic health interventions with emergency nutrition programs to the children and the vulnerable.

East Pokot region has perennial scarcity of water at most times of the year. The much anticipated rainfall is not sufficient in replenishing supplies beyond the very short

period of time, and the inadequate water trucking undertaken by the government does not reach the more remote areas. There is scarcity in water sources; the major sources being surface water or seasonal rivers and limited boreholes. Woman usually walk for an estimated distance of 8-12 kilometres to collect water. In addition the local water management committees oversee the use of the little that is available from the rivers- they allocate specific days for livestock and human consumption; bathing is restricted fortnightly for both men and women. According to the study, many cases of disease in East Pokot are related to environmental sanitation, and water shortages. For example, the only available sanitation facilities in East Pokot were seen to be those located in the district administration offices, schools, restaurants and health facilities.

On the other hand, low exposure to other ways of life, high illiteracy and the nomadic lifestyle contributes to the unavailability of facilities like toilets; one respondent in Kapedo East (Natan) acknowledged advice from Caritas Nakuru on the need for such facilities but told the researcher that, if there is need for toilets by people coming from outside, the community is ready to build for our use during such visits. This means that the people in Kapedo and other remote areas openly expressed preference for open air defecation.

On the whole, the study established that burial of the dead is not practiced in some parts of the region. The community relocates in case death is reported on the way to hospital or in the homestead, the corpse is left un-touched. Other reports reveals that some graves are covered with stones when the shallow graves are used in burying the dead. Poor roads severely hampers provision of basic services rendering most areas inaccessible. The CDN through caritas has protested to the local administration threatening withdraw from certain areas since the government fails to open up the road and make them passable therefore

opening up to the remote places. Those Sister in-charge of health services, says that the mission has funds for providing medical service and drilling some boreholes, but the inaccessibility paralyzes these projects.

Focus has shifted to CDN, government and other development partners in ensuring increase access to clean water, improve the quality of water and protect the water points for consumption of both human and animal. This will ensure community sensitization on hygiene and sanitation needed as well as treatment of household and community water sources. Child protection trainings, based on the Catholic social teachings, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, are taking place for community members, children, partner agencies and government representatives. In addition, the church is creating community based protection structures to boost protection efforts

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion: This study found out that poverty alleviation activities lead to enormous economic costs incurred in the course of its programs which are higher than normal monthly expenditure of affected families. Negative social impact such as suffering, stigma and discrimination on the infected households have caused fear, conflicts and suspicion in this region, and therefore enhances the suffering caused by poverty.

Recommendation: There is therefore need to improve access to food, education, health care services, water and sanitation in east Pokot sub county. Through better coordination of available resources provided by the catholic diocese of Nakuru poverty alleviation programs have been intensified and made preferential aspect in evangelisation in the region. Through Caritas Nakuru Poverty can be alleviated if water for consumption at home and irrigation is made available, many households are empowered to produce their own food, children are made to access education, health care services are available and affordable and all people have been guaranteed of safety and security in fostering peace.

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