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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to determine the contribution of the CoG-K teachings to people's participation in poverty alleviation in Emuhaya District, Western Kenya

Methodology: This study was a cross-sectional research that sought to give an examining and descriptive scrutiny of the CoG-K's activities in Emuhaya District of Western Kenya. This study sampled a total of 312 respondents (1 Bishop, 1 General Secretary, 1 General Assembly Trustee, 1 General Assembly Treasurer, 16 Directors, 282 Pastors, and 10 Elders) through purposive sampling method. Oral interviews, questionnaire methods and focus group discussion were used to collect data from the respondents. Observation method was used to validate the information obtained through oral interviews and questionnaires. Secondary data was sourced from published and unpublished literature. Data was analyzed using the theological method of induction (TMI).

Results: The findings of the study showed that the teachings of the CoG-K formed the basis by which social problems were viewed and addressed. This was revealed in the people's participations in religious, social and economic activities in Emuhaya District. Consequently, the research established that the CoG-K's teachings is a major force influencing efforts that promote religious values as an avenue for enhancing development at grassroots level where the majority of the poor live. Therefore, the contributions of the CoG-K's teachings to people's ideas about alleviation of poverty are closely connected to fundamental economic activities in Emuhaya District.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: It is recommended that if Emuhaya District is to develop, it has to place the CoG-K's teachings and theology of the option for the poor at the top of the agenda and to consider it as is so often the case, as adjunct to core of the work that is development.

Keywords: *CoG-K teachings, people's participation, poverty alleviation, Emuhaya District, Western Kenya*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The present economic situation of Africa in general and Kenya in particular appears to be characterized by poverty and suffering which form relatively high levels of material deprivation. Poverty is a state of human deprivation with regard to personal income, clothing, housing, health care, education, sanitary facilities and human rights (World Bank, 2001). Poverty or being poor in the church's understanding commonly means a state of or lack of what ought to be (Myers, 2000). In both the Bible's Old and New Testament, the poor are the oppressed by both socio-cultural and economic conditions. They are the deprived and the needy beggars. Thus, the theological basis for the option for the poor in the church is that the poor possess a sacramental function in the society (*Ibid.*).

In Kenya, the 2007 Human Development (HD) Survey showed that the people living in abject poverty constituted 56.3% of the Kenyan population, and that the situation was deteriorating further as it has continued to rise from 30% in early 1990's to 56% by 2007 (MDG Centre, 2009). Over 65% of the people living in Emuhaya District where the Church of God - Kenya herein referred to as CoG-K is the most dominant denomination, live below the poverty line and are food poor (ESDP, 2008). This means that more than a half of the population in Emuhaya District is in some state of poverty. Whereas poverty, religion and corruption may account for some of this plight, many of the poor are victims of natural disasters, famine or drought. Farmers on the other hand, often cannot make an adequate living from their small and infertile land. In addition to suffering, sheer lack of income, the poor are often uneducated and afflicted with physical sickness (*Ibid.*).

Furthermore, the Kenyan situation could rightly be cited as the best example of glaring disparity between the economically empowered on one side and the marginalized masses on the other. The wealthy have access and control of the market, whereas the poor remain at the mercy of the market dictates even where their own produce is concerned. A report by the Society for International Development (2004) revealed that only a tenth of the 30 million Kenyan controlled the nation's resources and income and that 42 percent of the total wealth of the country is concentrated in the hands of the 10 percent of the population (Galgalo, 2005). This implies that a tenth of the population is gobbling nearly half of the available resources.

In recent history, there has been an inclination to look at development almost entirely in economic terms (Ogot, 1999). Although very important, economics cannot be relegated to the deepest levels of life. The 2007 United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) report on Kenya shows that despite an economic growth rate of 5.8 percent, 50 percent of Kenyans lived below the poverty line (Zacharia, 2007). According to Zacharia (2007: 45):

Compared to the year 2004, human poverty has increased marginally in all provinces. 16 million Kenyans are living on less than a dollar a day, while 18.9 million can hardly afford a meal with more than a dollar at their disposal. The gap between the rich and the poor also continue to widen. Poorer people have little or no hope of bringing up a child to the age where they can benefit from free primary education introduced by the government in 2003, let alone taking them to secondary school.

As a result, these have continued to marginalize certain sectors of the society, especially the women, children and rural inhabitants. Compounding this enormous problem is the recent emergence of HIV/AIDS pandemic in virtually all African countries (Saitoti, 2002).

Until recently, it was believed that rising poverty could be tackled by increased economic growth that would lead to higher incomes. Growth was seen as a natural process which could be nourished through the application of correct and timely input. Likewise, it could be impeded through bad conditions, but once these constraints were removed the process would continue (Verhelst, 1990:56). Development was seen essentially as a question of increasing gross levels of savings and investment both internally and externally, private and state – until the economy reached a take-off point into self-sustaining development.

Development and economic growth was seen as a matter of applying appropriate levels of investments after taking into consideration the rate of population growth, the capita: output ratio and desired rate of growth (Burkey, 2000). A combination of domestic savings, the international investments and international aid would provide the fuel to drive the process through stages of growth which would ultimately bring the benefits of modernization to the entire population. However, it was found out that various traps and barriers to development were to be found in the traditional or primitive sectors. It then became necessary to reduce population growth, improve health, introduce new seed varieties and then growth and development would occur so long as investment was sufficient (Prandervand, 1990). This strategy has however, been limited in reducing poverty and it has been argued that growth alone may not be sufficient to reduce poverty. Accumulated information pointed towards a growing poverty complex: marginalization, mass unemployment and recurrent starvation crisis.

The emerging crisis has prompted the continuing search for appropriate approach to, and strategies for solving the problem. Poverty alleviation has been the subject of subsequent National Development Plans, Session Papers, Presidential Commissions, Task Forces, and studies in Kenya. The large range of contributions reflects the pressure on the Government to find solutions to the persistence of poverty in Kenyan society. However the government of Kenya on its part has not sufficiently addressed these needs due to increasing national population growth and the concurrent costs (EDSP, 2008). This inadequacy has been greatly felt in Emuhaya District because of its high density as compared to other rural areas in Kenya (*Ibid.*). It is in this process of taking initiative in development that existing churches in Emuhaya District have played role in development.

Presently in Emuhaya District are a wide range of churches which are known to actively take part in human development through its agencies such as Compassion International, Youth Empowerment Programs and World Vision. These churches include the Anglican Church of Kenya, Church of God in Kenya, Pentecostal Assemblies of God, Coptic Church, Israeli Nineveh Church, African Interior Church, Salvation Army, Revival Church (CoG-K, 2007), just to mention a few. While acknowledging the role played by these churches in both spiritual and social-economic development, the present work delves its attention to the role played by the CoG-K in poverty alleviation to the populace in Emuhaya District. The Emuhaya District has a population of about 250,000 inhabitants according to the 2009 population's projections (EDP, 2010). Currently, the birth rate is estimated at 3.5% per annum (*Ibid.*). Nevertheless, poverty is a complex phenomenon that cannot be eradicated solely by politics, economic policies and financial investments. It is a social construct that

cannot be limited to mere economic growth. In order to be authentic, it must be integral; that is, it has to promote the good of each individual and the whole person. Material and spiritual values must be brought together (Pope Paul VI, 1967).

Accordingly, the existing challenges in relation to the various dimensions of poverty require an understanding that poverty can be fought from many fronts, which include using religion. We cannot ignore the fact that religion is an economic institution as it participates in the economy and is an economic 'force' as it influences various economic activities. Today, religion is believed to seep into all aspects of life in the society including economic aspects (Mbiti, 1969). It is viewed as the most effective stimulus for economic growth and social change in general. As stated, the economy is one of the society's most important institutions and religion is in a continuous reciprocal and interdependent relationship with the economy. Although religion is often viewed as a semi-autonomous social system paralleling other institutions, it is itself in various ways part of the inclusive economic system of the society.

Poverty is a major concern of the church, and countless poverty alleviation programs and campaigns have been developed over time, across the regions. Poverty is defined as having numerous manifestations and characteristics that include low and unreliable income, poor health, and low levels of education, insecurity, disempowerment and isolation from the mainstream of the economic development (Cavanaugh, 2008). These characteristics are also referred to as indicators of measuring poverty (*Ibid.*). The biblical word on the relation of the community of faith to poverty is clear and unambiguous because God identifies himself with the poor, so too the community of faith is called to special concern for these persons.

Historically, many scholars, policy makers, and practitioners working broadly in programs aimed at poverty alleviation are in agreement that development coincides with religious vision in viewing history as a process of salvation (Tarino, 2005; Bryant, 1999; Sinclair, 1980). Religions teach people to believe that happiness is either in the present or in the future and compels those who abide in it to act in a particular manner (*Ibid.*). In consequence religion performs the following role:

Contributes to the advancement of knowledge and commitment; such an influence is vital in fashioning values system. The spirit of commitment and creativity, as necessary components of wealth creation, arise from inside the person. Such convictions influence the material well being of individuals and communities. Economic prosperity cannot be achieved without taking into account the power of the human spirit and determination (Tarino, 2005:40).

One's belief makes a difference in the way of organizing one's life and in the perception of the good. Beliefs allow certain conditions and thinking under which the desired values could be unfolded and thereby effect action. Beliefs structure relationship between people and affect the destiny of human life (*Ibid.*). Within a religious culture, one finds that the way of life, the behavior patterns, the whole meaning of existence is knit together by reference to God, to the deity – to the 'Supreme Being'. Consequently, religion and life are intimately connected, and the proper action and behavior is that which is pleasing to God and what is commanded by God.

Evidently, the important place of spirituality in human development has been acknowledged (Gumo-Kurgat, 2004; Bryant, 1999; Nyaundi, 2003; Vinay, 2005). Secular groups involved in development are beginning to take seriously the religions of communities with whom they work. Scholars are seeking for ethics and morality in development strategies. Therefore, true development be it Christian or non-Christian, requires addressing the spiritual, because it is

not possible to alleviate poverty without the spiritual facet. It is in this regard that the church and Christian organizations have made concerted attempts towards answering the cries of the poor in the society. This contribution of the church in alleviating poverty is likely to be enhanced by the fact that Christianity in Africa is growing greatly. This study aims at assessing the role of the CoG-K in alleviating poverty in Emuhaya District of Western Kenya.

1.2 Problem Statement

Poverty is a widespread phenomenon that is of interest to all stakeholders of the development processes including the Church of God in Kenya (CoG-K). Documents of earlier studies have focused on the economic systems while underestimating the power and influence of religion in the eradication of poverty; thus, relegating religion to a matter of spiritual significance. Emuhaya District experiences very high poverty levels that stand at 65% of the total population of Kenya (GoK, 2010; KNBS, 2010; ESDP, 2008). Furthermore, 52.3% of the households in the district live below poverty levels. Thus, the district's contribution to national poverty is 3% (*Ibid.*). However, it is evident that economic systems alone to date have been inadequate and the growth of poverty has not been reversed (Speckman, 2001; Ogot, 1999; Nandy, 1998). People do not live by economics or science and technology alone. Thus, the role of religion in poverty eradication has not been studied yet human spirit and determination are cornerstone for poverty alleviation and wealth creation.

Christians believe that the religious perspective in development has to be prominent in dealing with human beings, especially in an attempt to improve the quality of the human life. This view is not only based on the belief that human beings are created in God's "image and likeness" (Genesis 1:2) but also on the theological view, that religion creates a symbolic universe that legitimizes earthly structures, thereby giving people the will to live. Thus, people have concepts, beliefs and value systems which engage the priorities and qualities of the social relations. Consequently, this study seeks to examine the role of religion in addressing the phenomenon of poverty. In particular the study seeks to determine the contributions of the CoG-K teachings to people's participation in poverty alleviation in Emuhaya District, Western Kenya. At the moment, CoG-K has gained a wide acceptance among the people of Emuhaya District of Western Kenya and also influenced their way of life.

1.3 Objectives of the Research

To determine the contribution of the CoG-Kenya teachings to people's participation in poverty alleviation in Emuhaya District, Western Kenya

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Empirical Review

In any culture, in every way of life, there is a whole set of meanings and values that influence the way of life, of thinking and acting amongst the people. Many cultures, particularly African culture, are profoundly religious. Within a religious culture, one finds that the way of life, the behavior patterns, the whole meaning of existence is knit together by reference to God, to the deity – to the 'Supreme Being'. At this point in Africa, religion and life are intimately connected, and the proper action and behavior is that which is pleasing to God and what is commanded by God. In analyzing the development in Africa, scholars of religion

have the sole purpose of examining the nature of God and the behavior that claim to be in accordance with the will of God: the God who is just and fair in giving each individual his or her daily bread. Thus, there is the need for religion to bring some legitimization into the society and give some explanation for the society, even where this society is very small and enclosed in poverty and insufficient basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing of which this study addresses.

The rights of the poor are delineated most clearly in the law codes of the Old Testament; here concern for the poor is taken out of the realm of voluntary charity. For instance in Deuteronomy 15 it is written:

There will be no poor among you. If only you will obey the voice of the Lord your God. . . . If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren, in any of your towns within your land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need. . . . You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging. . . . For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore, I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor . . .

This passage suggests that if the demands of the covenant were fully embodied there would be no poverty in the community. Christians have assumed that this obedience would lead to the transformation of their physical and social as well as their spiritual lives. Missionaries on the other hand have also implicitly assumed that the reception and living out of the gospel would begin to transform both individual and community life. And more often than not, specific steps were taken and institutions or program were established to aid this process (Elliston, 1989). There are critical contributions to development that only the church can provide (Myres, 1999). The role of the church in development is to be the servant and a source of encouragement, not a commander or judge (*Ibid.*). The Church therefore must play the following role:

Servant of its community, harnessing the wind and wood and water into technologies that make the world a little more habitable, or singing with the rest of the creation the wonder of existence, or working side by side with all people of good will towards a better social order. If the church is to lead at all, it is in serving; in applying the creative energies released in Christ towards the stewardship of creation and the bringing of the fallen structure closer to God's original purpose (Magga, 1994:45).

As the above quote stipulates, even though Magga does not specifically address the CoG-K's endeavors yet the CoG-K can be and must be the source of value formation within the community. When the church is at its best, it is a sign of the values of the kingdom and is contributing to the community's well-being. The church is more important as a source of people than as a source of instruction of prophetic word. Newbigin (1989) agrees with Maggay (1995) by observing that the major role of the church in relation to the great issues of justice and peace will not be in its formal pronouncements, but in its continually nourishing and sustaining men and women who will act responsibly as believers in the course of their secular duties as citizens. Therefore, this study has considered the literature as one of the guiding reference in describing some teachings applicable to the CoG-K.

According to O'Brien (1992), the role of the church as a community is not reducible to morality, but it must be involved in overcoming the problem of poverty concretely and historically. The theological basis for the option for the poor is that the poor possesses a sacramental purpose; in them the church meets the Lord in a privileged way. Consequently, the question of the specific function of the church of which the CoG-K is part can only be answered in terms of a fundamental option for the poor.

With specific reference to religion, Boff (1980) suggests that the option for the poor can be concretized in three ways: to live for the poor by assuming their cause and their optic; by changing one's social position and participating directly in the concretizing and liberating process; and by living as one of the poor, sharing the burden of oppression. In a later development of this idea he seeks to root spirituality in general in a retrieval of what he terms "essential poverty". By this he means the ontological-created status of the person before God. It is, he argues, the devaluation of this that created the tendencies that are concretized in the structure of the oppressed. He does not refer specifically to the theologian in this division, nor does he discuss how each of the levels might interpret the others.

Some of the hermeneutical aspects of a theology articulated from the option of the poor are evident in Boff's (1980) ecclesiology. He does not make an exclusivist claim for this theology, admitting that no tendency can claim a monopoly and each recognize its limitations. With a certain degree of pragmatism, he suggests that the determining factor is which theology is necessary here and now. In outlining the parameters of the contemporary theological method, he implies some development in his methodology.

After Marx, theology could no longer put into parenthesis the material conditions of life without the change of mystifying the reality of iniquitous conditions. Theological word concerning the social realm has credibility only as second word, i.e., after having done justice to the above situations. Against both theological pragmatism and epistemological idealism, one must recognize that the practice of theology implies two separate and distinct areas: internal and external. The first is defined by the authority of theory where rules must be respected. The second corresponds to theology's dependence of social goods, over which the theologian is called to exercise a constant ideo-political watch (O'Brien; 1992:76).

The distinction between the internal and external areas of theology also figures in the epilogue to his Christology. Commitment of itself will not guarantee the intrinsic quality of a theology.

This ecclesiological critique that the exercise of power and the various processes in the church can only be understood by viewing the church as it is socially organized in the world. Thus, sensing an ecclesiastical analogy to the worldly expropriation of the means of production, Boff (1980) observes that the religious-ecclesiastical realm has been adjusted to the interest of its ruling class. As with ideology in society, theology can too be allowed a solely legitimating function: namely, the confrontation of the social contradictions by believing communities of the poor people in the light of the gospel. The option for the poor repeats the divine option; the rights of the poor are the rights of God. This option is for the poor and against their poverty. It involves moving from an elitist position of working for the poor to mobilizing their 'historic power' in becoming a church of the poor. He explains what it means by terming it a "preferential" option:

Preferential is not a synonym for 'more' or 'special'. The meaning here is more radical and is apparent when one analyses the causes which generate social poverty. The poor person does not stand alone: he stands in relation to the rich person who exploits him and with his allies forms the other classes who support him in his struggle. Therefore to opt preferentially for the poor means: to love first, as Jesus did, then starting from the poor to love all others, inviting them to liberate themselves from the mechanism of the production of riches on one hand and poverty on the other..... the church loves the poor inasmuch as she combats, not rich persons, but the social-economic mechanism which make them rich at the cost of the poor (Boff, 1980:76).

Thus, the option is not an exclusive sectarian but a way of expressing the faith. Boff (1980) repeats the criticism, common to all the authors under discussion in this chapter, which even, while acknowledging inequality and denouncing it, did not examine its structural causes. This is where this study will fill the lacuna of knowledge.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a cross-sectional research that sought to give an examining and descriptive scrutiny of the CoG-K's activities in Emuhaya District. This study was carried out in Emuhaya District of Vihiga County. The district borders Vihiga District to the West, Kakamega South District to the north, Siaya District to the east, and Kisumu West District to the south. This study targeted Emuhaya District which has a population of 180,000 people who are members of the CoG-K (CoG-K Assembly, 2007). These were represented in all the 141 CoG-K congregations in Emuhaya District. Other participants who were thought to have important information for the research were the CoG-K leaders, directors and the church elders who were purposively sampled as discussed under sampling procedures. Within the CoG-K's population, a sample size of 312 respondents was sampled for oral interviews, administering the questionnaire and focus group discussions. Saturated sampling technique was used to opt for the 4 administrative heads of the CoG-K namely the Bishop, the General Secretary, CoG-K Treasurer, CoG-K trustee and the 16 heads of departments for in-depth interviews. To obtain data for analysis, qualitative methods of data collection, which include in-depth oral interviews, focus group discussion, observation and documentary analysis, were employed. Data collected through the questionnaires, personal interviews, focus group discussions and observation was synthesized systematically and logically compiled to determine the role of CoG-K in alleviating poverty in Emuhaya District. Data was coded manually and organized under different themes. Data was then synthesized systematically and logically compiled and presented descriptively through use of narratives and frequency tables. Conclusions were made according to the findings of the study in light of the research questions, objectives and theoretical framework.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 The CoG-K Teachings and Poverty Alleviation

The theology of the church of God in Kenya (CoG-K) forms the basis by which social problems are viewed and addressed. Poverty is one of the major social issues of the society and the church in general. It has ramifications that are social, economic and spiritual. The problems of the poor are multiple, practical, and interrelated. The biblical interpretation of the CoG-K adherents has continued to play a major role in social action (Amaya: OI, 11/11/2008). Thus, law governing the lives of the members and the church polity is grounded in the bible. Admittedly, it is the poor people who draw inspiration from the bible in the absence of other forms of material and spiritual support (Ondeko: OI, 11/11/2008). Poor people need an awareness of God's presence and His care. Oral interviews showed that some of the adherents felt that the CoG-K needs a re-evaluation of its theology of poverty, which will hence re-address the needs of the poor in the church at large.

According to Sangolo, "we cannot have a theology of the poor without a re-interpretation of its source – the origin of this theology which is the bible must be contextualised to address the plight of the suffering" (OI, 12/11/2008). This view is supported by Obed Ochwany, who

stated that the church for which the Bible is foundational is perceived as an institution that has much credibility among the ‘underdeveloped’ people (Ochwanyi: 08/11/2008). Fern (1989:45) observes: “Christianity is not only a supernatural and spiritual force, but it is also force for change. By its very nature, vital Christianity is an active social agent”.

The CoG-K members believe that a theological perspective has to be prominent in any dealing with human beings, especially in attempts to improve the quality of human life. This view is not only based on the belief that human beings are created in God’s “image and likeness” (Genesis, 1:26), but also on the sociological view that religion creates a symbolic inverse that legitimates earthly structures, thereby giving people the will to live. A ‘committed reading’ of the Bible becomes a point of convergence for the CoG-K adherents and social action, in this case, development. It was observed by Okama (OI, 10/08/2008) that the scripture does not contain blue print for what could be called a “biblical” or “Christian” economic system. Okama remarks that the bible makes no reference to anything that remotely resembles the kind of capitalistic economic system of our day (*Ibid.*). However, it lays sufficient basis for moral judgment, business ethics and just structures and parity. Despite the fact that the bible could be a valuable resource for providing guiding economic principles, the Christians especially in the CoG-K are faced with formidable challenges from the realities of the present day marketplace.

The CoG-K adherents are participants or members of a market society where the market forces ensure the competition does not always adhere to the principle of fair play (Ochola: OI, 24/03/2008). The researcher asked the respondents: if there any theological or biblical principle which a CoG-K adherent can apply to this situation of poverty. One such principle which the respondents identified is a “theology of equipoise”. The respondents identified this theology as having two aspects: first is what the study calls resisting the spirit of negative desire. Otemba (OI, 1/04/2008) claims, it is that which ‘seems to combine the idea of vaunting ambition and of unjust or fraudulent means’. The unjust acquiring of property is characterized by an insatiable spirit or excessive greed for more. Prophet Jeremiah in chapter 22:13-17 is one good example of the Old Testament reference that describes and condemns it:

Doomed is the man who builds his house by unjust and enlarges it by dishonesty; who makes his countrymen work for nothing and does not pay wages. Doomed is the man who says, ‘I will build myself a mansion with spacious room upstairs.’ So he puts it red. Does it make you a better king if you build house of cedar, finer than those of others?

The Old Testament warns of the evil result of negative desire especially that of greed. The CoG-K adherents in Emuhaya District identified a culture that has multiplied in the following areas: the grabbing of public utility land, hoarding sugar to hike prices in order to make maximum profit, travel or medical claims, use of faulty measuring scales, outright cheating such as small traders selling bags of charcoal half filled with dust and adulterated fuel or milk – all these because of the present day market capitalism and materialism have in cultured a spirit of negative desires. Like the Old Testament, the New Testament equally condemns the spirit of greed and excess (Makokha: OI, 11/11/2008). The Christian is warned against this sin and exhorted to embrace moderation. The best example which the CoG-K members quote is expressed in Luke 12:15 which says, “Watch out and guard yourself from every kind of greed; because a person’s true life is not made up of the things he owns, no matter how rich he may be”.

The second aspect of a theology of equipoise in the CoG-K is what Ochwanyi (OI, 1/04/2008) calls creating shalom where equitable distribution guards against violent conflict that is always primarily caused by control of resources. This is a tall order especially considering that the CoG-K members often have no control over the market forces, and are like everybody else, participants in a competition that does not often respect fair play. However, the CoG-K members are called upon to be the salt and light of the world (Matthew, 5:13) and this calls for positive influence that can transform the market values and not just conform to the prevailing value system (Ondeko: OI, 11/11/2008).

According to Ndale (OI, 12/08/2008), the CoG-K members ought to resist any blind conformity to the systems and norms of this world, including the market. The believer ought to be transformed by renewing of the mind so that they prove what the will of God is, what is good, and what is acceptable and perfect. To reject conformity to the order of this world thus means ‘coming into conflict with the prevailing order, confronting unjust structures and social groups that control them’ (*Ibid.*) Such was the Jesus’ mission of transforming society; where the good news is preached to the poor – this is the reign of God on earth, it is “the Kingdom come that God’s will may be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mark 5).

It is a fact that the CoG-K members have no choice but to be in this world, but at the same time, the Christian must never lose sight of the fact that the believer is not of this world. A balance between the two must be struck, however difficult such a task may be. It is here on earth that the values of the Kingdom must be planted and seen to permeate the secular society for the realization of the vision of the Kingdom of God. This is what God intends, and what, therefore the CoG-K believer must strive after in the hope of bringing about a more humane, equipoise society (Okech: OI, 11/11/2008).

The CoG-K is a witness and a place where the visible manifestation of the kingdom can be experienced. Thus, reflecting the twofold reality of the kingdom of God. David Bosch (1980) expresses this attitude as follows:

The church is a foreign body in the world. She lives in a double relationship: to the world, for she is part of the world and of the secular history; to God, as expression of his saving love reaching towards a perishing world. These two relationships are interdependent. Without a faithful and a sustained contact with God the church loses her transcendence. With a true solidarity with the world she loses her relevance.

The church is the community of believers, gathered by divine election, calling, and new birth which lives in communion with the triune God, is granted the forgiveness of sins and sent to serve the world in solidarity with all humanity.

This service must without exemption, extend to all sections of life including the market place. In practical terms, this could include the church’s role to influence positively the market dynamics, that the market may incorporate the kingdom’s values and vision, and that the gospel of the Kingdom of God rightly provides the basis for human relationship. The church must preach against unjust commercial practices, and show the way in saying “no” to a system, which takes away from the poor to subsidize the rich (Okech: OI, 27/O2/2008).

The church must fight for realization of a just, equipoise society (Litunya: OI, 28/12/2008). To do this; the role of the CoG-K is to act as stimulus in the economic growth, management of the natural resources, conflict prevention, peace building, health and education. The theology of the CoG-K is the central driving force for change because it permeates into the

economics of the residents of Emuhaya District. The following descriptions are perceived to have an effect on the CoG-K's social concerns in the context of Emuhaya District.

4.2 People's Participation in Poverty Alleviation in Emuhaya District

The CoG-K adherents in Emuhaya District are engaged in a variety of economic activities in order to earn a living. The adherents of the CoG-Ks participation in activities meant to alleviate poverty have been influenced by the teachings of the CoG-K. The prominent activities of the CoG-K adherents in economic activities comprise of agriculture and non-farm small scale enterprises. In the majority of the CoG-K communities, land is sacred; Emuhaya District is not an exception (Okwete: OI, 23/12/2008). The land belongs to God, the living community and the generation to come. Land therefore is essential for ensuring livelihood of the people. Today, land is still given the first priority by individuals and the community and is also seen as a sign of wealth among the CoG-K members.

The CoG-K,'s key- respondents in Emuhaya District identified non-farm small scale enterprises and daily farming as the main economic activities. Agriculture contributes over 75 percent and 60 percent of the employment and income respectively to the CoG-K residents of Emuhaya District (Bundotich: OI, 01/01/2009). This implies that land is one of the most crucial resources in agricultural production where discussions ought to start. In Emuhaya land is owned in personal small holdings which vary in size depending on the population density of the area.

Table 1 below shows the distribution of land in Emuhaya District among the CoG-K adherents.

Table 1: Land Ownership

Acre of Land	Frequency	Percentage
0	60	17.0
0.25 – 1.4	45	12.8
1.5 – 3.4	115	32.8
3.5 – 6.0	49	14.0

4.6 – 6.0	60	17
6.1 – 8.0	9	2.7
8.1 – 10	8	2.3
10.1 – 15	3	0.3
Over 20	1	0.3

Source: Field Data

The foregoing record from the field data indicates that the average per holding in the densely populated district of Emuhaya is 0.25 acres. This pattern of land distribution comes out clearly in the interview for the study. Respondents reported ownership of different sizes of land. Data show that amongst the respondents 71.1 percent own land less than 2.5 acres, while 17 percent of the respondents do not own land, some of whom are mainly the youth who are still living in their parents land. The implication of this is the fact that this land will again be sub-divided to accommodate the youth. Subdividing of land which is considered ancestral inheritance is meant to satisfy both religious and economic quest for the CoG-K adherents. Therefore, the wealth that parents bestow upon the children is land so that they are not considered poor or landless (Ochilo: OI, 12/11/2008).

It is evident that land ownership is a decisive factor in the lives of individuals in Emuhaya District. In fact, there was evidence on the part of some fathers to hand over land to their sons. The family system had become nuclear to the degree that parents began to doubt that their children would support them if they face some hardship when ageing. The custom had been for fathers to hand over, while still alive, at least their eldest sons' part of the inheritance. But with the increasing commodity prices, the threat of poor crops and low market prices of maize, the elderly CoG-K adherents were afraid to part with their own security.

On the other hand, there were cases in which the youngest son was hesitant to leave the inherited homestead, even when he was living in conditions of hardship. The duty of the youngest son to remain in the homestead was emphasized over and over again. The previously described parental curse and fear of misfortune that might befall a son neglecting his duty still acted as a powerful sanction. A man working away from home might even keep his wife at home because he could not break with the obligation placed on him by the custom to keep the lineage inheritance in his possession and care for it (Akwale: OI, 15/08/2008). Family property especially in terms of land is thus a form of wealth with which one may define his destiny. Thus according to Oketch (OI, 11/11/2008) in his definition of the poor:

The poor are the landless, but sometimes have pieces of land with mud walled houses; they cannot afford even the basic education or medical cover thus relying on traditional herbs. They have a few clothes that are either second hand or torn. They don't use modern methods of agriculture or input.

There is less farming activity at Emmusta, Musikhoni, Ebusiraro, Emmasti and Emmunua where land has a lot of rocks. The CoG-K has encouraged the residents not to be idle but be engaged in hewing rocks for ballast and making of rock blocks for building houses so that they can make a living by selling them. Thus, the rock which is a natural material has provided a source of income thus raising the living standards of the people. Consequently, land even if it has rocks is still viewed as a source of livelihood.

According to Siaunya (OI, 11/11/2008), the poor lack basic needs and they struggle to get them. While on the other side, the rich have enough resources. Evidently, the poor are not a single people with only a single problem of lack of money. It is evident that people view and experience poverty in different ways. For example, in Emuhaya, women have much weaker access to, and control over, capital assets such as land. It is on land that agricultural productions like livestock takes place. Despite the small land distribution, livestock farming is also significant. It was established from the interviews, that proportions of respondents are involved in livestock farming.

Table 2: Types Of Cattle Kept by the Cog-K's Adherents

Number	Exotic Cattle		Local Cattle	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
0	243	81	99	33.0
1 – 4	54	18	150	50.0
5 – 9	3	1	39	13.0
10 – 14	-	0	9	3.0
15 – 19	-	0	5	1.6
20 – 24	-	0	2	0.6
Over 25	-	0	1	0.3

Source: Field data

As indicated in Table 2, the data from the field research show that up to 67 percent of the residents of Emuhaya keep local cattle as compared to the exotic breed. Livestock plays a central role among the members of the CoG-K of Emuhaya District in their social and religious life. The importance of livestock lies in the fact that the adherents depend on them for survival thus they assist to reduce poverty (Asiachi: OI, 15/08/2008). The products of the livestock like milk and meat for example are used for food, the skin and the horn as religious sacred containers; the dung for manure and smearing the houses (Sikinyi: OI, 23/12/2007). Most important, the livestock is used to pay dowry. For this reason, God is always petitioned in the church to grant more cattle and to protect the animals from diseases and theft (Mulima: OI, 29/02/2008).

Livestock is also used to reward the clergy for their good work in the church and also those who have excelled in good behaviour (Ochango: OI, 13/02/2008). Ochieng (OI, 17/11/2008) on the other hand complains about the use of rewards to the CoG-K clergy:

The elite CoG-K clergy can hardly be poor. The majority live in luxurious environment not comparable at all with the situations of the members of the congregations find themselves. Although I am not advocating that the clergy should live in situations similar to the poor people they preach to, they should help create programs that help to liberate the poor from the suffering. Today the clergy spend very little time with the both the spiritually and the materially poor. The clergy must emulate the way Christ conducted his affairs with the poor (Ibid.).

Land and livestock therefore continue to be important measures of wealth among the members of the CoG-K in Emuhaya District. It is also on land that infrastructural development takes place (*Ibid.*). For instance, the development process of any community particularly in the rural areas is to a large extent influenced by the infrastructure. The transportation and communication network, educational facilities, health facilities, water sources, energy supply among others greatly affects the development of a particular community (Akhaenda: OI, 19/12/2008).

The road transport is predominated by earth roads which are considered poor. Most of the roads in Emuhaya are impassable during the rainy seasons thus rendering business to market areas like Luanda, Mwichio, Esibuye, Mahanga and Emakakha impossible. Sometimes some goods reach the destination as spoils. Transport, or rather lack of it was an important issue for the people in Emuhaya. The *murrum* (dirt) road that connects Luanda to Emusire was being repaired as part of the development projects in Emuhaya District, after the CoG-K petitioned the Luanda town council to help so that people's way of life can be improved thus alleviating poverty. However, potholes, muddy and stony stretches seemed to be the destiny of the road, and it still had to be negotiated carefully on bicycle (*bodaboda*) or vehicles (*matatu*). Footpaths run through the hilly landscape and connect Kima to Emmatsi and other villages of Emmunua. There was no bus service from Ekwanda to Emaloba, Luanda to Esirulo, Ebuyangu to Hobuyaya, khwipanga to Emukunzi, Epanga to Ebusiraro, Ebuyangu to Ebukolo and Esiandumba to Ebusubi People transport each other and goods on foot or on bicycle. Occasionally, visitors arrived on hired taxis in the area. Children would then get up from their seats in the school and even in homes and run towards the road shouting "*motokaa, motokaa*", meaning vehicle.

The unpredictability of the weather and the prolonged dry season had resulted, not only in hunger, but also in feelings of deep uncertainty and frustration. "These things (poverty and frustration) come together, and that is why some CoG-K adherents turn to drinking of *chang'aa* in Emuhaya District (Siberenje: OI, 26/02/2008). When a man earns 1500 shillings in a month and knows that he cannot fulfil the family's needs of feeding, clothing, school fees and other necessities, he becomes so frustrated and goes to get a drink or two to feel a bit happy and forget the whole thing" (Andabwa: OI, 18/11/2008). Men and women, teachers, nurses and children mentioned poverty and alcohol as the main problem facing them and their community. There is some irony in the fact that some women in the area survived and paid for their children's school fees by brewing *chang'aa* and selling it in local bars, mainly to men. The study observes that the majority of the CoG-K members in Emuhaya District are poor. According to Ochieng (OI, 11/11/2008), the majority of the CoG-K residents of Emuhaya District are leaving in

abject poverty.

4.2.1 The Women

Table 2 indicates both the challenges and the distribution of support units for the women by the CoG-K in order to alleviate poverty amongst the women of the church, thus emancipating them economically.

Table 3: Cog-K's Empowerment of the Women Adherents

Empowerment	Respondents	Percentage
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Charity for the Widows in the Individual Congregations	41	14.0
Raise fund to building shelter for the widows	29	10.4
CoG-K micro finance loans to support women's business	58	20.7
Fund raising at congregational level to support children of poor women	67	23.9
Scholarships for training single mothers at KIST	23	10.0
CoG-K women groups to help at farm work for the unable or sick women	32	11.4
Help raise funds at congregational level to support the hospitalized women	9	3.2
Provision of blankets and house supply by the church from donations	10	3.6
Provision of clothing by the church from donation	3	1.1
Others	9	3.2
Total	281	100

Source: Field data

4.2.2 The Youth

The CoG-K can rightly be referred to as a "church of the poor" because most of its adherents are the youth who are poor. Africa can claim to have been blessed with young people who constitute the bulk of her population. But on the other hand, she has not been able to adequately meet the fulfillment of her youth who are crying for social, economic, cultural, and spiritual needs (Tsuma: OI, 24/11/2008). However, the CoG-K has programs that she uses to help alleviate poverty amongst the youth in Emuhaya District through the Youth Department of the CoG-K. Table 4.6 indicates the programs put in place by the CoG-K in Emuhaya District.

Table 4: Programs for the Cog-K Youth in Emuhaya District

Programs	Respondents	Percentage
Raise fund for school fees at the congregational level	41	14.0
Provision of scholarships to attend KIST and Ibeno college	29	10.4

Books for the youth	58	20.7
Cell Life church Program	67	23.9
Counseling for youth ready for marriage and how to support family	23	10.0
CoG-K Accountability Group	32	11.4
Loans to begin projects	9	3.2
Attaching the saved youth to families in West countries to receive donations and help	10	3.6
National Youth Convention	3	1.1
Others	9	3.2
Total	281	100

Source: Field data

4.2.3 Children

The CoG-K portrays children as a gift and blessing from God. A family with several children considers itself blessed for it has an assurance of continuity (Alembi: OI, 26/08/2008). Most of the prayers in the CoG-K congregations in Emuhaya District focused on children, wealth and long life.

Children are participants in the community of believers in the CoG-K. As a result, they are socialized into a vision of the present Kingdom of God on earth. In this study, the view of religious socialization implies an exploration of wide range of options to answer life's basic questions. This study also perceived the problem of poverty among the children of the CoG-K in Emuhaya district in relation to poverty and wealth as emphasised in the bible. Poverty is considered a causal factor that has led to suffering of the children (Wekesa: OI, 28/11/2008).

For the children, the image of God is generally considered to be anthropomorphic (Goldman: 1964); the child conceives God as being manlike, with human action and physical limitations. He lives in a definite, though usually distant place called heaven. According to Munala (OI, 11/11/2008), this concept is not merely the result of concrete thinking; the child's image of God is clearly related to his closest and earliest human relations at home. The child's first impression of God reflects the experience he or she has had with other humans, particularly the mother and father, a tendency accentuated by reference to God such as "heavenly Father" (*Ibid.*).

Jesus Christ was himself poor (2 Cor., 8:9), and his ministry in Galilee was aimed at liberating the dispossessed and the outcast. The ministry of Jesus Christ was thus with the sick, those branded as 'sinners' and the communally rejected persons. At the same time as the poor experience the good news of the kingdom of God, the real nature of the gospel becomes evident to others. The New Testament pays special attention to what that means in relation to children, the social outcasts and the sick or generally the "*kondoo wa bwana ambao wamepotea*" (the lost sheep that belong to the Lord). Field data analysis of the six

compassion stations in Emuhaya District on Table 4.7 showed that the respondents identify the following problems as the results of poverty among the children.

Table 5: Marks of Poverty among Children of Cog-K Adherents

Predicament	Respondents	Percentage
Lack of education	42	14.0
Hunger and Malnutrition	32	10.7
Poor clothing	57	19.0
Neglected children	72	24.0
Street children	28	9.4
Child labor	31	10.4
Alcohol and drug taking	14	4.7
Poor health	13	4.4
Crime	9	3.0
Incest	2	0.7
Total	300	100

Source: Field data

The interpretation of table 4 indicates that the ramifications of poverty among children can be attributed to the number of neglected children in the community. 24% of the respondents indicated that neglected children have become the major cause of suffering among the children. To alleviate this problem, the CoG-K put in place a mechanism of recruiting them into the child development centre and Kima Integrated Community Initiative Program, through its local congregations. Other indicators among the children include poor clothing, lack of education and child labour in a descending order in the foregoing table. Most of the children in these institutions were under 15 years with the majority being boys (Ombima: OI, 12/12/2008). For instance, the Kima Integrated Community initiative Program centre has a total of 1236 children, of these, 820 are boys (KICIP Records, 2008). As much as KICIP which is a faith-based organization of the CoG-K has supported and helped to alleviate poverty among the children, the study revealed that there was lack of adequate facilities to support the increasing number of poor children in Emuhaya District.

5.0 DISCUSSION CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Discussion

Religion is of great importance in Africa and Kenya in particular in that most people engage in some form of religious practice from time to time; and many are members of some form of religious organization. Many Kenyans voluntarily associate themselves with religious networks, which they use for a variety of purposes both social and economic. But what does

the church mean in the context of Kenya and Emuhaya in particular? The evidence showed that most of the Emuhaya people are religious inasmuch as they believe in the existence of invisible world, that is inhabited by spiritual beings or force with which they can communicate and which they perceive to have influence on their daily lives. Religious ideas typically govern relationships of the people with the perceived spiritual world. In effect, this governs relationship of one person to another or of person to a community, but also of people to their land in which they cultivate and their economic activities.

The study established that despite the planning and implementation efforts made to address national poverty and other social development issues over the last 35 years, poverty has remained a key problem. The government recognizes that the challenge for sustainable development in Kenya is the eradication of poverty and the achievement of sustained broad based economic growth. In this study, poverty eradication is viewed not only as a political necessity and a moral obligation but also as a spiritual imperative that is community driven. One of the central tenets of eradicating poverty should be people driven especially in the activities that secure their livelihood.

The study found out that the CoG-K had established programmes that are used as service delivery to the community. For instance, the Kima integrated Community initiative Program, Cell Life Church Program and the Sisi Kwa Sisi Initiative which were initiated to offer credit to the CoG-K adherents living with HIV, and also to help in sanitation by building boreholes. In order to offer credit to the rural enterprise, the faith factor was especially emphasized as a prerequisite to receiving help. These programmes by implication were used as a mechanism to reaching the hearts of the CoG-K members, thus benefiting them both spiritually and physically.

5.2 Conclusions

The study concludes that the CoG-K's teachings are largely pertinent in the development of CoG-K members and their participation in activities that are designed along people's development needs. They have subsequently been essential in terms of local people's accessing resources for improving their livelihood. However, the paucity of resources has aggravated a dependency syndrome in the CoG-K programs, which has left most activities of the programs not self-sustaining.

5.3 Recommendations

This research recommends that if Emuhaya District is to develop, it has to place the CoG-K teachings and theology of option for the poor at the top of the agenda and to consider it as is so often the case, as adjunct to the real core of the work that is, development. The study proposes that for the CoG-K to improve her input in social concerns of the people, it should reshape its theology of development so that it can fully address the plight of the poor. This study also recommends that studies be done to establish the impact of specific doctrines of the CoG-K that have an effect on the economic growth.

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