

Religion and Community Development as Instruments of Peace in Chebunyo Ward, Bomet County, Kenya

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Abstract

Religion has played a powerful role in the development of many societies in the world. One impediment of human development has been ethnic animosity and violence. Poverty and struggle for limited resources have been blamed for ethnic violence in many communities in Africa. This paper investigated how Christian religion and community development initiatives, together worked to establish peace between the multi-ethnic population at Chebunyo ward, Bomet County, which has been at war with each other for a long time. A total of 114 pastors, chiefs, teachers and other community leaders, selected from those who attended training at World Vision Kenya, Bandaptai Area Development Program, were interviewed on the role Christian religion and community development initiatives by World Vision Kenya played in establishing peace and transformation. This study used survey and narrative method, to investigate what Christianity was doing in Chebunyo Ward, in Bomet, to establish peace between the Kipsigis people and their neighbours. This paper found that the church was successful in establishing sustainable peace by helping the people engage in entrepreneurship, create cooperatives and business network, and depend on one another in business; strategies that helped the people to work as a team, for mutual development, and in effect living peacefully with one another.

Key Words: Peace, Community Development, Religion, Violence, Environmental Sustainability

Introduction

This study was a result of my interest in the concepts of theology, environment, and development. Christianity is known throughout Kenya as being a powerful engine driving economy, health facilities, schools, and other institutions. It is in Kenya that the Church, and its many parachurch organizations, is known to take food to the victims of flood, political violence, or even people living with HIV and AIDS. The responses of the Church to HIV/AIDS pandemic has been stellar in many ways, dealing with attitudes, awareness, prevention and control. Christianity religions has also played roles in fighting poverty. The Church constructs homes for the homeless and orphans, contributes money to help disadvantaged children go to school, *et cetera* (Brown, 2006).

The Church motivated people to work hard, and encouraged integrity, and some have even gone further to train people on how they can work with their own talents to alleviate poverty. In other countries of the world, the Church and other Christian organizations have helped in the fight against social vices such as apartheid, black segregation in the West, and slave trade. These issues, which the church is struggling against, have often deterred people from having abundant lives.

Chebunyo Ward in Bomet County still suffer from poverty, ethnic-based prejudice, and retrogressive cultures, which together affect the peace in the region. For several decades the place has been marred with ethnic tension and animosity. The place is the border between three communities: The Maasai, the Kisii, and the Kipsigis. For a long time, these people groups have been meeting at Chebunyo market each week to trade their resources. Chebunyo shopping centre has become a centre, not just for trade, but also for competition.

Over time, the Kipsigis people feel edged out by the more aggressive Kisii community, and the more affluent Maasai. The Kipsigis have a growing resentment against these communities, who seem to benefit from a shopping centre that is within the land of the Kipsigis.

The problem has been compounded further by the unyielding poverty that remained prevalent among the Kipsigis homes, especially due to their lands becoming infertile, and the now frequent alternation between drought and flood, making life very difficult for the Kipsigis people. This feeling of dejection has translated to feeling of unfairness, inequality and injustice. The general climate at Chebunyo market has therefore been that of resentment and hate, which many people think that it is a time bomb, which could explode if efforts are not exerted to change the trajectory of events. (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), 2019).

Background Information

Chebunyo ward has nine communities namely: Chebunyo, Kamogiboi, Tilang'ok, Kaboson, Kataret, Cheboyo, Mogor, Riborwo and Nogirwet Sub–Locations of Bomet County (County Government of Bomet, 2015). According to Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Chebunyo ward represents all kinds of social weakness: it has the highest number of poor people, lowest number of educated people, least number of homes with piped water, highest number of people facing starvation, highest number of people facing threat of violence, lowest number of people participating in business activities, least number of people employed in the government, highest number of people affected by gender based violence, and least developed in terms of road infrastructure. The population of this county assembly ward is 34,994 people (approximate in 2015) and geographical area is 94.2 km². (County Government of Bomet, 2015).

Nogirwet sub-location for example is an area that can be classified as semi-arid. Most of the people living in this location are of Kipsigis ethnicity. The location has about 70 extended families, but around 200 households. Nearly all people living here are mixed farmers, trying both livestock and crop farming. Traditionally, maize has been the only crop grown in every homestead. Recently, some families have also begun trying vegetable and potato farming.

Many people in Chebunyo ward do not have formal jobs. In the entire ward, about 5 % people have formal jobs as teachers, police officers, and public servants in the government or working in the private sector. The rest of the people are not employed and are trying to eke out a living out of their tired farms. The housing in the ward could be termed as pathetic, as about 80% is grass thatched. The fate of these houses is not known, especially since the recent biting droughts and overgrazing have totally depleted grass cover in the area, with no foreseeable chance of regrowth.

For a long time, the economic activity has been pastoralism. The animals kept have been indigenous cows, goats, sheep and chicken. The average ownership of cows per family has been dwindling, and in 2013 stood at about 4. The average milk production per family is 1 litre, which could barely be sufficient for home consumption. The practice of cattle rustling, what was rampant in the past is slowly diminishing. There is one main murram road, connecting all the feeder roads that serve the nine sub-locations well.

However, in times of heavy rainfall, the road is muddy and slippery, making communication to and from this ward difficult. In 2014, there was no electricity in most of the Ward, but the government was making an effort to construct power lines. (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), 2019).

Poverty level in this community is high. Most of the population, mainly women, cross the river to work in European-owned plantation forms in Narok County, sometimes getting some extramarital conception in the process. River Amalo which is generally bridgeless, is crossed by hundreds of women every morning, and every evening; women who have to undress sometimes to pass through water.

In these farms, the women get paid a paltry Kenya shilling 130 (about 1¼ dollar) per day as wages; yet they must, for there is little else these women can do in their drought ridden farms. Nogirwet community men prefer to remain idle at home, instead of accompanying women to work at European-owned farms. In the process, they waste their time, and little money they make from sale of their animals, by engaging in luxurious recreational activities in local pubs. It is not uncommon to find men staying at *busaa* and *chang'aa* dens most of the day. (Interview with Ronald Yegon)

Education level is generally low, with about 70% of the people having had only primary education. And 25% having received secondary education, according to the census of 2009 report. According to Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics, this ward “has the lowest share of residents with a secondary level of education or above (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), 2019, p. 11)

Water in Chebunyo ward is scarce and unhealthy. The available water sources had been severely polluted or were always far away from people and required time and energy to fetch. The task of water collection in Chebunyo often was women's and girls', and they would be required to walk for several kilometres every day in search of this commodity. As this task is so time consuming, girls are often unable to finish their education, first because they use their time to fetch water, but secondly because they get abused along the way.

Adults take advantage of them, promising them marriage or other privileges. That explains the reason why there are many single mothers became pregnant first as teenagers. (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), 2019).

Due to human activities, there have been massive degradation of water sources. For example, deforestation activities have become rampant; yet reforestation efforts are not evident anywhere. The community at large is experiencing desert like conditions and there is reduction of water supply. River sources have been destroyed and drought has become persistent (Interview with Bernard Mainek).

The second community is Mogor. In this community, challenges of famine, drought, poverty, sickness, and diseases like malarial, Typhoid, amoebiasis, brucellosis, and cholera are rampant. This is caused more, by the use of dirty water in open pans. There is scarcity of rainfall most of the year. In 2016, the place received less than 10 days of rain in the whole year, and the only stream in the village was dry throughout. A sense of hopelessness is slowly building up, with people experiencing disappointments in harvest, source of water, and even in death of their cows for lack of water and pasture.

Since there is no permanent river in the entire Mogor community, people walk for more than 5 kilometres every day to look for water for domestic and for their livestock. In the recent decades, failing agriculture has become the norm, with food shortage being reported to be the common problem. Most of school age children have stopped going to school, because their parents cannot afford the money required by the school administration. Evidence of chronic deforestation is also there, with indigenous trees suffering collapse. Cases of cattle rustling are also reported, though with increased community economic development in Chebunyo ward, this activity is fizzling out (Interview with Alice Mutai).

There is serious upsurge in population at Chebunyo ward, with people getting married early, and producing more children than they can afford, based on the resources they have. The population increase is gradually straining available land, so that in each family, the land per person is now $\frac{1}{4}$ acre. With this increase of population, the place may soon become too crowded for development. In relation to this, some another emerging problem is that of single parenting, where most of the girls are impregnated by men who would not want to take responsibility.

The problem is compounded further by the Kipsigis culture, where women are treated as inferior to men, and cannot question their actions, or decisions. Women are subservient, and sometimes do not make decisions related to their sexual lives. Men demand services of all kinds, and the culture dictates that in such circumstances, women can only submit. In the long run, women produce a lot of children, but are the only ones to fend for them.

When a man wakes up in the morning, a woman is not expected to know where her husband will spend his day. When he comes in the evening, the woman is expected to be having food ready for him to eat, and never ask him to account how he spent his time and money (Interview with Philip Kimeu, World Vision Kenya program officer).

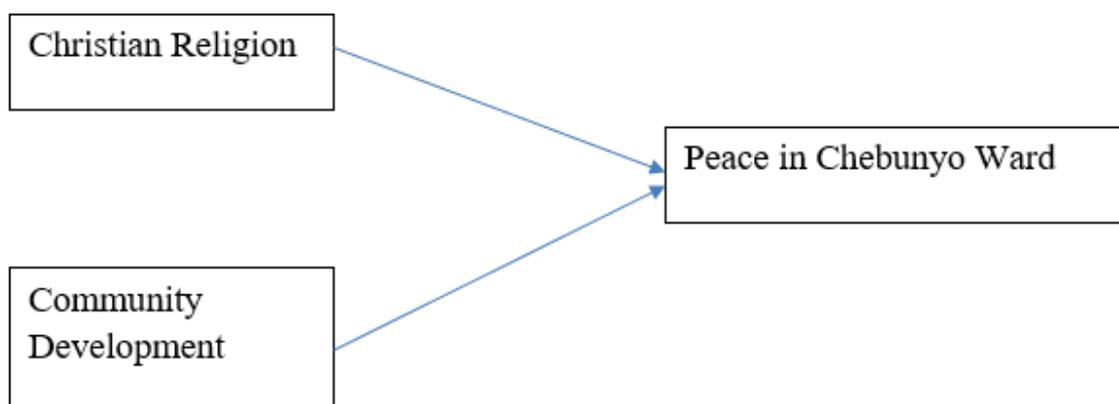
Statement of the Problem

A main cause of conflict in Africa is adversity and limited resources, which often cause competition and the “we-versus- them” struggle. Poverty has been blamed for domestic and inter-ethnic tension, and even full-blown violence (Lagat, 2018).

According to Masika (2016), many development organizations focus on giving food, medical, and shelter aids to poor people, helping them to recover from effects of violence, building their houses and repairing their schools.

Masika asserts that this method is not helpful, for it reduces people to dependency, creating a form of peace that is not sustainable. Chebunyo community, which has suffered from poverty, limited resources, ethnic animosity and violence, has gradually been reduced to uninhabitability, raising questions on the efficacy of various strategies being employed by churches, Christian development organizations and Christianity.

Conceptual Framework



This study sought to investigate how Christian religion in its own way, or in combination with community development would have impact on peace, in Chebunyo civic ward. Christian religion is an independent variable, and so is community development. Peace in Chebunyo ward is dependent variable.

Literature Review

The Lausanne covenant spells out that Christians should share God's concern for justice and development of the people in the society, to help set them free from the bondage of poverty, violence, and disease. In so doing, Christians will be participating with God in redeeming mankind, for redemption is not just a redemption of the heart (The Lausanne Covenant, 1974).

World Relief, Christian ministry cannot be divorced from express concern for the poor. Jesus will demand answers from Christians, about why they did not care for the poor, while at the same time rewarding very well those who showed concern (World Relief Corporation). Christian concern for the poor first comes as relief, but gradually must graduate to helping people know how to fish, so that they can have food for their lifetime.

The teaching of Jesus about Christians being the light and salt of the world (Matthew 5:13-16), could be applied on teachings on development. Christians are supposed to be role model in their communities, and lead lives that are desirable. As salt, they should become gradually permeate the society with their values, such as hard work and respect for God's environment, so that with time, the entire community is guided by Christian values.

In relation to the role of religion in community development and peace at Chebunyo, one central concept for our consideration is poverty, as understood in Christianity. Brayant L. Meyers (1997) avers that poverty is the lack of material things, a situation of want, so that life is not complete without those materials. It is the deficit; lacking resources, and lacking information.

In the area of fighting hunger and poverty, the Church and other Christian organizations have offered relief food and medicine, and some have even gone further to train people on how they can work with their own talents to alleviate poverty. In other countries of the world, the Church and other Christian organizations have helped in the fight against social vices such as apartheid, black segregation in the West, and slave trade. These issues have often deterred people from having abundant lives. (Dawei, 2004)

Ilo (2011) gives a story where a girl, due to poverty, could not get a chance to worship God appropriately during Christmas in Canada, because her parents could not afford to buy clothes that were needed.

As a result, this girl, even with ability to act in the place of Mary in children's' concerts, could not perform. The feeling of dejection ate up all the confidence, and together with that, the opportunity to worship was altogether removed. Poverty thus, has the potential to reduce a community's potential to offer God worship, in a way that is appropriate to God and fulfilling to the people.

Community development happens only in an environment that is well managed. Amos, Rahman and Gathenya (2016) argue that the Kenyan changing and unpredictable climates and droughts, have stressed the demand for water, so that even the people in the highlands, for example Nairobi cannot access water for domestic use. They point out that (62%) of Kenya's people do not have reliable safe drinking water. It only remains as a goal that is hoped for in future (United Nations, 2015).

Concerning sustainability, the United Nations (1987) defined sustainable development as:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of "needs," in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs. (United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 1).

Sustainable development is thus linked with setting up systems that ensure productivity today and tomorrow, as noted by the report above. In relation to this, Bishop Titus Masika also adds:

Africa's problems amount to much more than the trillions of dollars, pumped into the continent as foreign aid, can solve. It is believed that in the last fifty years, Africa has received several trillion dollars in aid, yet there is little to show for it. These funds have gone into oiling corruption and undertaking facility-based development that has not led to expected human development. (Masika 2016, p. 29-30).

Donor funding according to Masika does not end up supporting the people but become enterprises for Non-governmental Organizations owners. Most of this donor funding usually is meant for the organizations that purport to do development.

According to Masika, in every 100 dollars, international organizations “spend 60 dollars purely on internal costs and only deliver 40 dollars to the community.” (Masika, 2016, p. 91) Of course, other organizations perform poorer. This explains why organizations spend a lot of money and time and have nothing to show in the long run. Their photographs of “evidence for change” are used over and over by several organizations, each purporting to have done the transformation.

The role of environment in supporting development is also important. United Nations Environmental Program (2012) stated that the situation in Africa could be as a result of many activities. In as much as Africa could be receiving damaging results as a result of activities all over the world, deforestation rate in the continent certainly has contributed. According to UNEP report, “forests cover about 22% of the region, but they are disappearing faster than anywhere else in the developing world.

During the 1980s Africa lost 10.5% of its forest.” (UNEP, 2012) Other research conducted during the following decade of the 1990s demonstrated that Africa lost an estimated 5 million hectares of forest each year. To further elaborate this, Craig Sorley observes that 70% of all Africans rely on wood, charcoal, or plant residues as their primary source of energy, and for many countries, that means that 75-90% or more of all energy consumed comes from wood. As populations grow the number of people depending on these fuels is increasing rapidly.

Craig Sorley (2009) discussed the environmental changes witnessed in Kenya in the recent decades. The inability of our soil to absorb and retain water is also as a result of destruction of water catchment areas due to deforestation.

Craig Sorley observes that “forest and forested landscapes play a critical role in absorbing rainfall, controlling runoff, and facilitating the infiltration of rainfall into the soil” (Ibid). This water becomes a source to rivers and springs, which then ensures that lakes are refilled and refreshed. Therefore, deforestation is the reason behind frequent alternation of drought and flood. In fact, as a result of incessant forest destruction in the Mau, Mara River dried completely, between January and March 2015, and when it rained in April 2015, the river received runoff rainwater, such that the resultant flood destroyed buildings and led to soil erosion. To sum it up, environmental crisis has emerged as a serious concern for the people of Kenya and which demands urgent attention and response. The future of the country’s water, agriculture, food, economy, all depend on the environment.

According to Brown (2006), the solution to the environmental crisis lies in the right approach. The approach that is sustainable should be theologically sound, scientifically informed and implemented by a community of redeemed people acting out of love for God and for each other. There are Christian organizations in Kenya already providing biblical-based awareness and education on the role of Christians in environmental conservation. Biblical-based awareness are teachings based on the Bible related to environmental conservation.

In light of these considerations, the study shall examine the potential of the Church to influence Christian community to adopt sustainable development methods, and the potential of the Christian community to influence planning and implementation of public policy in support for sustainable development.

Concerning food, Martine Helms' article "Food sustainability, food security and the environment" is relevant to this study (Helms, 2004). Helms sets out in this article to show that both human and environmental health would benefit from a more vegetarian diet.

In order to come up with this conclusion, Helms discusses the concept of sustainability in respect to food production and consumption. According to him, there has been causality shift in the phenomenon of population growth, from availability of food, to economic development. He posits that:

In early times, agricultural food surpluses permitted population growth. The resulting increase in the numbers of human beings both enabled and demanded agricultural expansion and intensification. But present and future population growth is related to economic development, and therefore seemingly independent of the capacity of food production first comes the fact of population growth and afterwards the question of how to feed those people. This situation seems, if not impossible then at least inherently unsustainable, as will be discussed below, and not only from an ecological point of view. (Helms, 2004, p.380)

Helms thus perceives two dominant causes to population growth: food and economy. Economy according to him is not sustainable. Sustainability according to him should put into consideration the ecology, economy and society. Helms points out that "strong sustainability requires that neither natural capital nor human-made decline over time." (Ibid) The current behaviour of humanity, according to Helms is not sustainable. This is because people who are rich consume more. He observes that "For this group of people the direct and indirect consumption of grains may be as high as 800 kg per person per year. Moreover, affluent diets not only imply a high consumption of animal products, but also of other foodstuffs like oils, beverages and sweets." This is more than twice the amount of food required. He estimates that:-

Approximately 420 kg cereals/capita is necessary to provide both the present and the future population with an average daily supply of 2,900 kcal and 40 g animal proteins. This corresponds to a cereal production of 3,780 million Mt in 2050 to feed nine billion people, which is 1.86 times the global production in the year 2002 (Ibid).

The consumption level in the world is highly unsustainable. Furthermore, production of animal protein requires more cereals. For example, pigs require about 7 kg feed to produce 1 kg meat (Durning & Brough, 1991). The growing population will even worsen the situation, straining the environment even more. The world has to make a choice between degrading the environment and changing their diet system. In theory, Helms points out that “a reduction of animal proteins in these diets would reduce this inefficient cereal demand and the resources spared in the production of animal feeds could then be used for the production of food for the growing population or the conservation of natural resources”(Helms, 2004, p.381).

Sumanjeet Singh in his article "Global food crisis: magnitude, causes and policy measures" discusses causes of food insecurity in the world. According to him, “food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for a healthy and active life.” (Singh, 2009, 23) Singh observes that there has been a rise in food insecurity, demonstrated by recent food protests in many countries in the world. He discusses four possible causes of this crisis, three of which are environmental related: soaring food prices, diversion of food crops (maize in particular) for making biofuels, and climate change. Singh (2009, p.23) posits:

The crisis can be seen, in a sense, to dichotomize rich and poor nations, since, for example, filling a tank of an average car with biofuel, amounts to as much maize (Africa's principal food staple) as an African person consumes in an entire year.

According to Singh, the practices noted above have forced food prices to soar by 75%. This is because corn, soya beans wheat and other crops that used to provide food for human beings and animals have now been turned to production of fuel (Ibid).

Another relevant article to this study is by Rehber and Turhan (2002). "Prospects and challenges for developing countries in trade and production of organic food and fibers: The case of Turkey." Rehber and Turhan (2002) discuss the environmental advantage that organic agriculture provides, compared to conventional agriculture. They observe that mechanized agriculture after the Second World War was highly mechanized and chemicalized. This improved food production in the world, but led to environmental degradation, both directly due to the chemicals in the food, and indirectly due to damage caused to soil, water and air. As a result, there is growing demand for organic food in the world.

The developing countries have an advantage in this demand, since agricultural production in these countries is not extensively mechanized. The prices attached to organic farming has led to recent interest among citizens of developing nations to adopt it. Furthermore, food produced organically has a ready market, even in developing nations. This has helped reduce environmental degradation that would otherwise have continued to affect these nations (Ibid).

Methods

This was a mixed method research study, concurrently using both survey and narrative method. A total of 112 pastors, chiefs, teacher, community leaders, and opinion leaders in Chebunyo ward were surveyed over a period of one year from January to December 2015. The pastors were selected from Africa Gospel Church, Africa Inland Church, Deliverance Church, Church of God, Seventh Day Adventist, and Church of Christ. Fourteen pastors were further selected as key participants, and in-depth interview was carried with them.

All study participants were selected through stratified random sampling of 10% of the total population that attended training at World Vision Kenya, Bandaptai ADP, between 2012-2015. In-depth interview was stopped after reaching what was considered saturation, with no new information being achieved after that.

Data was analysed concurrently, and the themes that emerged were categorized, and arranged in order to develop a narrative, of how religion influenced community development, and how community development provided for peace in the area. (Wadsworth, 1998)

Findings

Christianity as instrument of Development

Christian leaders have been deliberate and consistent with their support in this community. First, the contribution of World Vision Kenya in creating awareness on the role of the Christians has resulted in a spirit of excitement to help. World Vision Kenya established an Area Development Program (ADP) in 2012, with an objective of transforming the lives of the people of Chebunyo location and its environs, so that 'the child' in this place, can enjoy abundant living. Part of the transformation program was to train community leaders, teachers, pastors, and other key stakeholders on community Development strategies, to help the community to come out of poverty, and live a fulfilled life. It was envisaged that the training would open the eyes of the trainees on the resources at their disposal, and give them skills on how these resources could be utilized to generate wealth (Leonard, 2004).

The pastors have worked together to fight social vices such as alcoholism, prostitution, cattle rustling, gender-based violence, and female circumcision. Pastors have established several initiatives, which has made evangelism in Chebunyo ward to be an all-denominational agenda, not an inter denomination war.

Development as instrument of peace

Development and peace are the elements that are closely attached, but seldom understood in that perspective. Hansen (1987) argued that the dominant perceptions and practices of peace were not helpful to Africa, because they focused too much on violence, and how to procure

instruments of combating violence, when peace was just hiding under the cover of development. He asserts that the peace of Africa is not in machines that stop war, but within the state of development of the mind, body, soul, and resources. The following section shows how development was achieved.

Resources available

One of the milestone initiatives at Chebunyo Ward was the training organized by World Vision Kenya, together with Scott Christian University, and which gave the people in this location some skills to appreciate the resources available to them. That became a major impetus to a trajectory of development that would be realized later. First the people began to appreciate the existence of World Vision Kenya initiative, focusing on child development. There is also a good will from Bomet County government. Other organizations that have expressed intentions of working in the ward include: The Red Cross, the Equity Bank, Siongiroi FSA, and some church denominations. Bomet County government is recently invested in the construction of Kaboson-Nogirwet irrigation and water supply project. One of the projects of the county government is the establishment of the Nogirwet Farmers' Co-operative Society to help in motivating farmers and helping them to market their produces. The county is also supporting this society by funding some activities. The Red Cross, the World Vision Kenya have together made plans to provide people with clean drinking water, to improve sanitation, and provide general services in schools and at homes. The Red Cross came as an initiative of the County Government of Bomet, with a purpose of uplift the standard of the people living in the ward. The Equity bank have also invested in training the community on financial strategies, such as saving, borrowing loans, and making wise investments.

The bank has conducted several training seminars, as their corporate social responsibility, and are keen to develop some enterprises, which will benefit them also in the long run. They also give loan to farmers and assist them in how to repay their loan.

Chebunyo location has several water pans, commonly called *silanga*. These have been dug and have been used in the ward for a long time. The *silanga*'s provide the community with water for domestic use, especially being an agricultural zone, where their plants and especially animals need water every day. Although droughts have become persistent in the area, truth, is that water is available.

Nogirwet community for example has two rivers sandwiching the location: Amalo and Nyongores Rivers. Amalo Rivers borders Bomet County with the Narok County. The county government has established an irrigation scheme that runs for about 6.2 km. The county government have assisted to develop an irrigation system that used water flowing by gravity. This has directed benefited about 10% of the community. In the year 2014, the county government provided 10 irrigation drip kits to farmers with irrigation water, and plans were underway in 2015 to provide more. The county government also made plans to offer 100 farmers a type of tissue cultured bananas variety.

Available large plantations owned by farmers from Europe, which are across the river in Narok Country have become source of employment for the people living in Chebunyo Ward. Most of the people, young men and women worked as labourers in the neighbouring. Furthermore, fertile soils along the river valleys can be a great advantage to crop farming. The valleys are very fertile, making farming potentially a very promising business. Animal husbandry in the ward has also enabled the people to have manure to improve their soils. The challenge is that the people main crop in the area is maize, which apart from subsistence, has not demonstrated that it can be used for wealth generation.

Public Institutions coming up in the area have created good market for farm produce in area. These institutions are secondary schools like: Kapkulumben Day Secondary school, Kaboson Day Secondary School, Chepalungu Boys Secondary School, Kaboson Girls Secondary School, Kaboson Pastors School, Kaboson Polytechnic and Nogirwet Dispensary. Other available resources include stones and good climate. There are available quality hard stones in the ward, which are being used by the county government to make roads. Climatic conditions in the area favour horticulture farming, such as tomatoes, onions, watermelons, passion fruits, avocados, mangoes and similar other fruits and vegetables.

Transforming the land activities

Transformation activities at Chebunyo have been done with an awareness that the environment is a factor of production. If the land is good and fertile, if the environment is healthy, the people will have a higher chance of becoming developed, and leading fulfilled lives. The current environmental crisis in Chebunyo was caused by wanton destruction of natural resources over a very long time. The absence of sustainable development also the explanation why there is inverse relationship between environmental degradation and development in many countries. In many countries, especially in Africa, development activities, such as farming, or infrastructural development usually result in wanton deforestation.

Transforming the people through wealth generation activities

Wealth generation initiatives at Chebunyo ward include farming, trade, and investments. The community have been nurtured on the advantage of using organic farming for the purpose of profitability, sustainability, and production of healthy food.

People in Chebunyo ward are also very receptive to change. The adversity experienced for many years, together with the feeling of dejection for being seen to be inferior compared to their neighbours, has had positive effect in making them receptive. When Non-governmental organizations like World Vision Kenya began training people and facilitating some group activities, many people joined the groups, and began to live productively. Some women are now involved in social groups such as table-banking. Some men also have initiated group activities where they loan money to each other and motivate themselves for growth. The county government are using such groups to relay some funds to reinforce them, and to build the team spirit. The groups have also helped them in creating networks, and in reaching other similar groups in other counties.

The networking system is also working to strengthen their businesses, because they now can market their produces even to people that are far. The emergence of social media and mobile technology is boosting their activities. People in groups have created WhatsApp groups, and are getting information concerning training, new innovations being implement, and answers concerning their businesses and farming activities.

Community Development activities at Chebunyo Ward has resulted in wealth creation activities. Wealth creation success has catapulted by organized monitoring and evaluation initiatives.

Monitoring initiatives in Chebunyo ward are being carried out by highly rated county government officials, the Red Cross, national government officials, and World Vision Kenya staff. Dawei (2013) define monitoring as a systematic and continuous process that allows us to critically observe events related to our work and to track indictors, thereby enabling us to check the project's progress. Through monitoring we are also able to document our activities and also to adapt these activities to ever changing conditions.

Motivation and support programs by the government agencies help in reinforcing skills and ensuring that the people successfully implement the initiatives are offered.

All members in Nogirwet community have been encouraged to join Nogirwet rural co-operative society. This enabled farmers to borrow loans to finance their farming and trading activities. It also provided monitoring forums, where members were constantly supported to produce; and when faced with challenges, it became easy to provide solutions. Farmers working in groups also ensured accountability sessions were implemented, and this gave farmers motivation to work harder.

Another activity that has been done in the area is poultry keeping. This has had a transformative effect in Chebunyo, because the most hardworking people are the unemployed mothers in the community, both married and single. The culture dictates that women cannot own the land, and cannot own cows, donkeys, goats and sheep. Even when they buy, the animals will belong to their husbands. The culture also dictates that men cannot interfere with poultry, as that is a women affair. The good thing, for the women, is that demand for poultry and poultry products has recently gone up, yet the poultry do not require pasture or lots of water.

According to one of the research participants, poultry keeping for her was something easy to carry out and affordable to manage. It only requires positive attitude, and an understanding of what works best between the indigenous chicken management, and grade chicken husbandry. The women at Chebunyo prefer keeping the indigenous chicken because according to them, they require little investment. Furthermore, available veterinary personnel in the area, employed by the county government of Bomet, have declared their availability to help on a call-on-demand basis.

The third activity relates to water. According to the observation of one of the research participants, poverty in Chebunyo was directly associated with water scarcity. Several organizations have made plans to help the communities make clean water available at home.

The water projects include procuring water tanks, piping water from the rivers to homes, drilling water wells, and expanding existing dams, for agriculture. It is envisaged that by having water available, the women and girls will not have to travel for hours to collect the water needed to support their families. They will then have more time to work and to go to school.

The fourth activity relates to education initiative, especially targeting the girl child. Education allows women to improve their future and the future of the communities. According to the World Bank, girls' education is essential in the reduction of child and maternal mortality, improvement of child nutrition and health. It enhances women domestic role and improvement of the economic productivity and growth. Many girls do not have time for their education because they are needed to collect water daily for their family's everyday needs. Having a close water supply allows these girls to save hours of time with which they can work on their education.

Religion and Development

The Church in Chebunyo Ward, through initiatives from World Vision Kenya was able to get enjoined in the community development initiatives in the area. Values such as hard work, accountability, and integrity were nurtured. Laziness was loathed and associated with the Devil, this encouraging Christians to seek fulfilment in working.

The church has also initiated accountability session that is working very well in this community.

Christians have made plans where farmer groups hold thanksgiving ceremonies during harvest in selected churches. During this time, discussion on profits, losses, what worked, and what did not work is discussed. At the end, the people that did not work well are encouraged to make improvement, while those that made significant contribution being praised and given chances to share their testimonies. While this was not initially popular among the non-Christian members of the farmer groups, the objective gradually became accepted, as people began to appreciate the value of accounting for their use of skills given, and resources at one's disposal.

Peace in the Making

The contribution of economic development in the establishment of peace in Chebunyo ward, is work in progress. So far, the community has been able to overcome cattle rustling behaviour.

It is envisaged that as more and more people begin to engage in crop farming, the time spent interacting with people from other ethnic community in the shopping centres would reduce, and over time, the feeling of jealousy and unfairness would be overcome. The group activities have also created a feeling of dependence, where a member of the team is viewed as an asset, and the larger the team the better for business. In so doing, the feeling of the 'we' verses 'they' has been forgotten. People are cultivating love for people of other ethnicities, for these 'other' people could become business clients, and network agents.

The constant implementation of farming initiatives is also reducing the demand and the people that engage in brewing and consumption of illegal alcohol: *busaa* and *chang'aa*. It is envisaged that with time, conflicts that are traditionally associated with this binge, such as domestic violence, idle talk, prostitution et cetera, would fizzle out, and the people would become more responsible with their lives.

There is very high expectations that the groups working in the community, the various development projects that have been initiated, and the marketing strategies that have been put in place, would increase business, reduce hate, tension and suspicion of who is not getting justice, a situation that will make violence to become a thing of the past. In 2015 December, all pastors from all ethnic communities represented, and from all denomination in Chebunyo, organized a major public gathering, which was attended by Christians and non-Christians, to talk about God, but also to talk about the value of diversity.

Conclusion

It is concluded in this paper that religion, working with other relevant stakeholders, has a high chance of transforming a community, because many people in Kenya are religious. Furthermore, since these religious people attend places of worship every week, it is concluded in this paper that equipping clergy to lead transformation of their communities has a significant chance of acceptance, because people generally trust their ministers.

When people understand that their spiritual roles involves how they use their resources such as time and money, these people are likely going to become responsible, a situation that would promote economic development. Religion has a way of causing people to behave responsibly and to be accountable about what they do. Finally, it is concluded in this paper that when people are transformed in their minds and hearts, and when they become busy in community development activities, creating wealth for their families, these people become less violent and more peaceful.

The best theory of peace is thus to help people in development; to transform their souls, their land, and finally their wealth creation opportunities, then they will become peaceful; peaceful in their hearts, and peaceful in the community. Any other peace is a forced peace.

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