The Role of the Roman Catholic Church in Addressing Poverty within the Diocese of Lindi in Southern Tanzania, East Africa

Rev. Dr. John F. Kamwendo
St. Pius X Parish, Archdiocese of Indianapolis
Email: john_kamwendo@hotmail.com
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My Background

- Born in Tanzania.
- Colleges and Universities 2000-2013.
- Ordination to the Priesthood 2013.
Historical Background of Tanzania

- Arabs were influential on the Coast of East Africa for approx. 500 years (800-1300).
- Tanganyika was colonized by:
  - The Portuguese until 1729
  - The Germans 1885 – 1918
  - The British 1918 – 1961
- Tanganyika received its independence in 1961.
- Tanganyika and Zanzibar united in 1964 to become the United Republic of Tanzania.
History of the Church in Tanzania

- Portuguese Franciscan missionaries 1503-1513. This was the first successful Catholic evangelization in Tanzania.
- Slave trade and British explorers accelerated the missionary endeavor.
- Additional Missionaries arrived in the 1860s.
- Christianity became influential through social services (Hospitals & Schools) during the missionary period which lasted from the 1860s to 1980s.
The Roman Catholic Church in Tanzania

- Successful Catholic Evangelizations also took place during the 19th Century:
  - The Holy Ghost Fathers -1863 (Zanzibar and North East),
  - The White Fathers -1878 (North, Central and West),
  - The Benedictine Monks -1887 (South – Ndanda and Peramiho were centers of development and modern).
  - Most Roman Catholic Dioceses have celebrated their 100 yrs Jubilee.
The Roman Catholic Diocese of Lindi
Development of Theoretical Framework

- Researcher is a Christian steeped in the Roman Catholic Church tradition.
- Previous studies of Theology and Community Development.
- Biblical Command, Catholic Social Teaching, and Bryant Myers’ framework of Transformational Development.
1. Diakonia

- Diakonia is in agreement with the Holy Scripture and its application as “ministry” and “service” to the human race (Collins 1990).

- Diakonia has to do “with church’s fight against poverty, sickness, and every kind of earthly needs” (Collins 1990:10).

- Diakonia, is the “effort to advance human well being and the practice of showing love to the human person” (Orthodox Diakonia 2009:13).

- It is a mandated principal responsibilities of the church to minister to the poor in deed and word, guided by Christian love (Pieterse 2001).
2. Catholic Social Teaching

- The substantial body of writings that the Roman Catholic Church espouses and teaches concerning important social, economic, and political issues.

- The writings are found in Holy Scripture, Early Church Fathers, Popes and Bishops’ conferences, both on the national and international levels (Zalot and Guevin 2008).

- The principles are: human dignity; community and common good; participation and subsidiary; preferential option for the poor; as well as stewardship and solidarity.
3. Myers’ Transformational Development

- Bryant Myers formulates the components of Transformational Development by asking the questions and posing answers within the Biblical narrative.
- Framework of Transformational Development created by Christians intends to answer questions such as: “What are the goals of transformation? What is the process of change? What is sustainability? And, what ways do we think holistically?”
Diakonia, Catholic Social Teaching and Transformational Development
Catholic Social Teaching, Diakonia, and Myers’ Transformational Development
Research Question

🌟 Is the Roman Catholic Church in the Diocese of Lindi fulfilling its mandated role of *Diakonia*?
Despite having celebrated a 100 years Jubilee, the Diocese of Lindi continues to suffer from poverty.

The Diocese began to show a gradual increase in the involvement in Community Development after the Missionary era in the 1990s.

The Roman Catholic Church is the critical subsystem in most of the communities.
Research Design and Methodology

- Qualitative research design
  - In-depth interviews (recorded and written)
  - Focus groups (2)
  - Observation: life style, living standards, etc.

- Grounded theory
  - Generation of a model closely related to the context of the phenomenon of poverty.

- Triangulation
  - The use of more than one approach to the investigation of the research question (Merriam 1988).
Research sites and Participants

Four Parishes:
- St. Francis Xavier, Nyangao, Chinongwe and Nachingwea

Participants:
18 Participants (14 males and 4 females)
Data Collection – Interview Questions

- Personal Data

- Interview questions grouped according to the following eight categories:

1. Reality of Poverty experienced by participants.
2. Main features of Poverty.
3. Perceptions of living conditions and Poverty.
4. Understanding of Poverty.
5. Main causes of Poverty in the Diocese of Lindi.


7. Institutions involved in Community Development in Lindi.

8. The Role of the Roman Catholic Church in Addressing Poverty.
Demographic Profile of Participants:

– 18 Participants:
  • 77.8% were males age 25-55 and 55.5% were married.
– 10 Participants have attained primary school.
– 6 Completed secondary education.
– 2 Completed post-secondary education.
– Participants were both lay leaders and clergy.
The Summary of Findings Based on Participants’ Responses
1. Participants’ Experience with the Reality of Poverty

A majority (16) of participants who were interviewed indicated that they have known generational poverty and that their children will likely continue to be poor.

Poverty has been a reality to most of them - from their birth to the present.
2. Main Features of Poverty

Participants listed the following as attributes of poverty: Lack of food, clothing, health care services, school fees, decent housing and low income.
3. Perceptions of respondents of their living conditions

- 9 Participants acknowledge that they are poor.
- 7 Participants claim to be in the middle between rich and poor and 2 deny being poor.
4. Participants’ Understanding of Poverty

Based upon the findings of this research study, participants understand poverty as the inability to provide basic needs for one’s family.

From the definitions enumerated by the participants in this study, one could conclude that a general definition of poverty might be as follows:

“Poverty is a condition in which an individual or family is unable to afford basic needs such as nutritious food, safe drinking water, cloth, decent shelter, electricity, medical care, and education.”
5. The main causes of Poverty in the Diocese of Lindi

Participants indicated that the main causes of poverty in the Diocese of Lindi are:

- Lack of education,
- Failure of the government,
- Poor administration of the business projects of the Diocese, and
- Laziness of some individuals.
6. The Current Economic Condition in the Diocese of Lindi

- 18 Participants indicated that the Diocese of Lindi is low in economic development and majority are poor, except few individuals in towns.

- Low market prices for the export crops (e.g. cashew nuts)
  
  1 US $ = 1600 Tshs; 1000gm = 600 Tshs; 250 gm = 7 US $
7. Institutions involved in Community Development in Lindi

- 4 Participants said they have not known any institutions which support development of the people.
- 7 Participants mentioned NGOs in their area: FAO, Aga Khan, TASAF.
- 7 Participants described Roman Catholic Church as the institution that provides social services like health care, schools, etc.; but those services are not found in each parish/community.
8. The Role of the Roman Catholic Church in Addressing Poverty in the Diocese of Lindi

16 Participants indicated that the Roman Catholic Church in the Diocese needs to improve:

- Educational projects,
- Poverty alleviation projects,
- Advocacy role to pressure the government and businessmen to increase the prices of crops,
- Address the problems associated with poverty.
As a result of the research findings, this researcher suggests a model of Diakonia which is contextual, relevant and liberating.

This model of Diakonia would focus on service, philanthropy and the empowerment of the poor.

This model would also include the process of transformational development, where people are empowered and become active participants rather than passive recipients.

This model of Diakonia would include the attributes and characteristics associated with current thought and research on Diakonia, Catholic Social Teaching and Myers’ Transformational Development. Each of these are vitally important in reaching out to the community in terms of social action and evangelism.
Recommendations for Further Research

- Magisterium should consider conducting further research concerning actual practices of Diakonia and Transformational Development.
- Further research should be undertaken to compare and contrast the responses of clergy concerning practices of Diakonia.
- Additional Research regarding Roman Catholic Church’s mandate concerning Diakonia and its implementation or lack thereof, in other dioceses in Tanzania and the world.
- Future research should focus on the role of the clergy and laity in Transformational Development.