

## BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR CHURCH INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA

### Authors

Peter Muriithi Wambugu <sup>(1)</sup>; Dickson Nkonge Kagema <sup>(2)</sup>; Stephen Micheni <sup>(3)</sup>

Main author's email: [pwambugurevd@yahoo.com](mailto:pwambugurevd@yahoo.com)

(1.2.3) Chuka University, Kenya.

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### Abstract

This study sought to establish the biblical and theological basis for Church's involvement in the Community Development (CD). The Anglican Development Services (ADS) of the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) was used as the case for this study. The study targeted four Anglican ADS regions, namely: Pwani, Eastern, Mount Kenya East and NAIKA (Nairobi, Kajiado and All Saints). The theory of Reconstruction Theology (RT) advanced by Jesse Mugambi based on the process of social reconstruction as a paradigm for CD was employed. A sample of 330 respondents gotten from a target population of 1,827 was used. A descriptive survey design was employed. Utilizing questionnaires, interviews, and Focus Group discussions, data was gathered. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 computer software was used to analyze the quantitative data using frequency and percentages, while thematic analysis was done on qualitative data in accordance with the study's objectives. The findings showed that the biblical and theological basis for the Church's involvement in CD was highly valued. To improve the sustainability of CD within targeted areas, it was recommended that the implementation of CD be based upon a strong biblical and theological basis as a demonstration of service to the vulnerable in the community.

**Key terms:** Community development, Anglican Church of Kenya, Anglican development services.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Church, as an integral part of missiology, is obligated to the development of the community; by providing social services like education, health care, agriculture, advocacy, clean water, capacity building, food, shelter, and sanitation, which have remained a mirage to many Kenyans. Collins English Dictionary (1999) defines development as a process of advancement, gradual growth or formation of new information. According to Constitutional Debate No.3 (1996), development is a multi-dimensional process involving the re-organization and re-orientation of socio-economic systems. Development connotes investing in people through education, health, nutrition, safe water, communication systems and freedom to effectively participate in community daily endeavours. United Nations (1963) defines CD as the process by which the efforts of the people are aligned with those of the state, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) and other pertinent CD partners to improve the local reconstructions of socio-economic and political realities. CD concerns awareness of the immediate needs of the people. In this study, CD points to self-realization, self-development, self-fulfillment and non-dependence on the community.

The role of the Church in development has generated debates in political, religious, cultural, environmental and socio-economic spheres. CD has been a critical discipline in the secular and religious fields locally and internationally, drawing considerable ecumenical interest since the World Conference on Church and Society held in Geneva in 1966 (Klaasen, 2019). The Church and CD both conterminously exist to address contextual realities in response to the poor, the marginalized, and the vulnerable found in every community globally. The Church deals with humanity's livelihood and exists in a Community with varied religious, cultural, socio-economic and political needs for their survival. A church that disregards service to the community loses the rationale of its very existence.

In terms of the biblical basis for church involvement in CD, God has been at work since creation, empowering the Community (John 5:17). Okullu (1983) traces CD in creation; when God said "... be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:27). Luke 4: 18-21 and Matthew 25:35-40 serves as a fulfilment of the *Evangelion* (good news) to the poor; the sick and liberation from oppressive forces (Lehman, 2018). Theologically, God is the source of life in the *cosmos* (all worlds) and is at the periphery of society (Webber, 2018). God's *anthropomorphism* (personalization) manifests protection, concern and *shalom* (holistic peace) in terms of abundance. The Old Testament (OT) affirms the dignity of humanity as created in the *imago Dei* (image of God) and likeness in Genesis 1:27-30. God places people in the community to reflect His character in co-creation in the midst of a fallen world. Pillay (2007) holds that Jesus' *kenosis* (incarnation) in the New Testament (NT) has relevance to socio-economic and political ideologies, as He and the Apostles spearheaded the good news within and without communities.

In Africa, CD pre-existed the coming of Arabs (600-1450 AD), a distinctive feature that religion was integrated into African society (Mbiti, 1969; Yusufu, 2016). Crooks (2009) states that the Methodist Church in Cambodia responded to Bible studies that offered communities knowledge and skills in farming, saving loans, and entrepreneurship. The ACK partners in CD include FBOs such as the Primates World Relief and Development Fund, which support the alleviation of hunger and food production (Diocese of Ruperts Land, 2020) and Bread for World of Germany, which empowers the poor and promotes justice (Anglican Aid-Let Grace Flow, 2020). All church funding bodies form a crucial basis for enhancing CD in Kenya. Klikberg (2003) rates FBOs highly in enhancing CD in Berlin, Southern Africa, and Malawi. Similarly, World

Bank (2008) indicates that FBOs facilitate 50% of health and education services in Africa. Equally, Obeng (1999) holds that Africa has benefited from education, medical care, and improved standards of living through FBOs. However, despite the FBOs' success stories in enhancing CD in Africa, Green (1991), Sakwa (2007), Tenai (2016), and Njogu (2013) annotate that Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced poverty in rural households. This implies that Kenya's development has been jeopardized due to poverty, inequality, climate change, and economic vulnerability. World Bank (2018) indicates that 82% of Africans in Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) and conflict areas experience food insecurity, unemployment, poor infrastructure, inequality, poverty, and lack of access to education, healthcare, and skills. World Bank (2019) forecasts that the rate of poverty in Africa is subject to increase from 55 % in 2015 to 90% in 2030, indicating a widespread adverse effect on community livelihood.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Biblical and Theological Basis for Church's Involvement in Community Development**

The Bible is the infallible word of God to the world. Theology is derived from Greek nouns *Theos* and *Logos*, the word of God. Pobe (1979) elucidates that theology is concerned with existential situations that humanity finds. The biblical and theological teachings propagated to communities for positive change are based on faith, industriousness, hope and fortitude that God provides to the oppressed through the community. The development work of ADS in Kenya draws its mandate from John 10:10b "... I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (Bwibo, 2014). However, despite the Church's use of the Bible and theology as the basis for CD, there are worrying poverty levels in certain areas across the country. The study findings uphold that there are adequate biblical and theological principles in CD that the Church and other institutions dealing with community work could employ to enhance CD work. The challenge is that too often; the people disregard or misapply the biblical and theological impetuses in CD.

### **Biblical Basis for Church's Involvement in Community Development**

The OT sets out that the Israelites were to be involved in CD as a personal responsibility, unlike in the modern dispensation when the community has turned to the government, NGOs and FBOs for aid. Bandow (1988) argues that the role of the state in charitable duties is evident in the OT. It is a human right for the citizenry to be provided by the state with basic needs like education, medical, water, food and security. This has a biblical basis as God judges a nation that overlooks the deprived (Psalm 9:18-19). This study found that there is a growing crisis caused by poverty, homelessness, poor health, joblessness, inequality, insecurity and criminal cases. This effect could result from the Church's concern over worship rather than *psychosomatic* (concern for body, mind, and heart) as the development of humanity. Okullu (1981) reinstates that the Church is engaged in the community by word and action. Here, the "word" implies scripture as a basis for church involvement in CD, while the action is the strategy to achieve the intended goal. Moreover, educational institutions, medical and social services, improvement of agricultural methods, and technology-all advance the gospel message more than evangelization. The study established that Christians all over the *cosmos* have a mandate of Matthew 25:35-46 to be involved in the plight of the deprived in terms of food, water, accommodation, freedom, clothing, security, and healing.

Thiong'o (2019) asserts that there is a demand for spiritual than the physical goal of the Church. Christians are demanded to give their resources to the church ministry, a hermeneutical problem in the prosperity gospel (Malachi 3:10) that renders the Church less functional as the poor are left with nothing or blamed for poverty. The *eschatological* (heaven-ward) gospel lazes personal and communal economic

development as Christians prepare for the heavenly Kingdom (1 Peter 2:11), which is detrimental to CD. Eschatological ideologies are subject to communities of faith struggling with the complexities of poverty. Colson and Pearcey (2001) note that the Bible was written in societies that practiced slavery, though scholars criticise the Bible for not challenging the practice. Despite the Church being a moral conscientisation of society, it has been censured for dysfunctions such as violence, wars, economic rationalization, and secularization for their adverse effects on CD. This study established that biblical teachings seem to lack a holistic model of CD, causing inadequate community livelihood. This study recommends that the Church has a civic obligation of active involvement in the CD. There is a need for a constructive biblical paradigm; as Bosch (1982) puts it that Christians are in the world for a moment and not forever. This means that the community has a task to share in God's creativity and stewardship of world resources to rebuild a better livelihood for all, as depicted in Genesis 1:27.

The OT biblical basis for church involvement in CD identifies with God's concern for justice and mercy (Proverbs 11:1; Amos 5:11). Bandow (1988) holds that God regulated the Israelites' economy to safeguard widows' garments (Exodus 22:26) and that no excessive interest charges were to be imposed on the poor (Exodus 18:17). Israel's sabbatical year restored land to the disadvantaged (Exodus 23: 10) and as Sider (1981) says, it led to release of the Israelites debts; spanning the rich and the poor gap (Exodus 23:10-11). As a CD strategy based on biblical and theological impetus, after every seven-year, the land was left uncultivated, debts to poor Israelites cancelled (Deuteronomy 15), and every *Yiddish* (fiftieth year), the land was redeemed by the original landlord (Leviticus 25). However, in spite of all the privileges, this study established that the community must work and not be passive recipients from the Church, FBOs, NGOs or states, to say the least. The community has to conscientiously be productive and self-reliant. Kibucwa (2012) calls it the theology of work that actively involves the community in productive works.

Kinyua (1999)'s study on "*The Church against Poverty: An assessment of the work of the Christian Community Services (CCS) in Kirinyaga Anglican diocese in Kenya*" exhibited CPK interventions such as health, education, spiritual, social, family life, community empowerment, livelihood, and social services as interventions to reduce poverty. However, Kinyua's conclusion of development as a *bona fide* of the Church is far-fetched, for no church is capable of contributing to socio-economic and political developments on her own. Although Kinyua (1999) expounds on some biblical foundations for development, such as Exodus 5-12, Psalm 24:1, and Amos 5:11, he does not relate their practicability in the world of CD. This study advances the application of biblical basis for church involvement in CD as a tool for effective community life through inclusivity of the individual, Community, Church, FBOs, NGOs, County, and National Government. Lack of inclusivity was shown to be the reason for escalating poverty levels despite the existence of ADS in the ten regions in Kenya. The study established that biblical texts are meaningful when justice is made in terms of their exegesis and interrelation with theological exposition to derive contextual realities and CD priorities.

According to Owensby (1988), Daniel (2016), and Bandow (1988), Jeremiah, Zechariah and Ezekiel promoted community socio-economic and political developments to sustain community livelihood. The prophets challenged Israel's leaders for ignoring the widows, the orphans, and the poor, conceding violence, oppression, and exclusivity (Leviticus 25). This study established that none of the aforementioned CD scholars entailed the use of Apocryphal books to justify the Church's involvement in the CD. This advanced study application of the deuterocanonical books such as Tobit, second Ezra and Sirach for their

richness in socio-economic and political aspects. For instance, Tobit partly remarked that "Taking care of the poor is the kind of offering that pleases God in heaven" (Tobit 4:7-10). This study instigates that the Church has a duty to transform the community by use of the Bible's impetus not in selective forms but holistically. For instance, one might infer from Jesus' words, "You will always have the poor with you" (Mark 14:17, Deuteronomy 5:11) as debasing the plight of the poor; however, the truth is that Jesus and the poor in the community are inseparable. Jesus' concern for the miserly state of the marginalized, exploited, poor, sick and naked in Community (Luke 4:18-21) is a bet on "Whatever you did to the least of these, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). This has reference to Kibucwa (2022), which a theology that does not propagate holistic concerns; fail to meet the needs of the community. An authentic interpretation of the Bible and theology according to contexts is thus, valid and recommended.

The Church as *koinonia* of members with *charisma* and the NT concept of *shalom* relates to the abundance model to the world "Jesus went to all cities and villages, teaching, preaching and healing" (Matthew 6: 33; 9:35). Nkonge (2018)'s on community livelihood avers that Jesus on top of being a preacher was a carpenter (Mark 6:3), Paul was an Apostle and tent-maker (Acts 18:3) while most disciples of Jesus Christ were fishermen (Mark 1:14-19). Similarly, the choosing of deacons (Acts 6) marked social welfare ministry. As priesthood of all believers, Christians have a role to play in CD. This study established that the Church has been less proactive in disseminating teachings on CD. This calls for the clergy to be well informed to address the woes of tribalism, poverty, corruption and unjust economic structures as they are destructive. According to Ayiemba (1992) and Giles (1995), the Church is called to be involved in uplifting the socio-economic status of people. Early believers had all things in common with no needy among them (Luke 2:44-45). Nkonge (2016), acknowledging Christians in Eco-theology; considers them *Oikos* (house) and Community (Ephesians 2:19-22). The body as a church metaphor (1 Corinthians 12:14-27) serves as a new social order of inclusivity for Christ (Galatians 3:28). A study by Ayiemba, Mungai & Theuri (2015) shows that ACK has made progress in alleviating poverty, but it still persists in Maseno and Winam Divisions. The scholars fall short of the datum that the dynamics of the Church in enhancing CD provides the bedrock for progress in a society where justice, equity and participation are imperative, as this study did. This study established that Reconstruction theology informs service to the disadvantaged into a new social order of Jesus, including people as *Oikos* in the community.

## **Theological Basis for Church's involvement in Community Development**

Theology emanates from the Greek term '*theos*' (God) and *logia* (discourse), a systematic disclosure of God (Mugambi, 1989). This has reference to Villa Vicencio (1992) that theology which fails to address the most urgent questions asked by ordinary people, is not theology at all. Kobia (1985), and Ole Sapit (2019), draw the mission of CD as *Diakonia* or service to humanity regardless of gender, creed, race or religion. Okullu (1983), and Nthukah and Gathogo (2015), provide a theological basis for church involvement in CD as... "Be fruitful, fill the earth, subdue, till and keep the garden and that God is the Lord of all life and fruition" (Genesis. 1:22-29; Genesis, 1:28; 2:15, Psalms 21:1; Matthew. 6:25). This study found that the communities have the potential to revitalize economic and socio-political life through conscience. The Church, too, has to become more critical to issues challenging the community with the intention to improve their lives from scarcity to self-reliance by working and not naive reliance on God's providence as a misinterpretation of Matthew 6:25-34 that people should not worry about what to eat or drink. This study demonstrates how inadequate the situation is for the poor. As a catalyst for CD initiatives, the study suggests that a number of interventions, including *koinonia*, *Diakonia*, agri-mission, laity theology,

theology of work, theology of development, and incarnation, to address socio-economic and political woes.

Jesus asserted that a person's theological measure of their esteem for him was how they treated the impoverished (Matthew 25:31-46). Zacchaeus had to return four times to the defrauded (Exodus 22:1-2 and 2 Samuel 12:6). The rich man referring to Lazarus had repercussions of ignoring the poor, while Jesus defended the poor widow's cause (Mark 12:41-43). Although the latter verse is typically understood to mean Jesus commended the widow for giving her last coin to the temple, the context differs since he criticized temple leaders for devouring widow's homes, suggesting a varied meaning. The Church's interpretation of redemption as a spiritual concept rather than the *cosmos* in totality constitutes a larger problem as it has hitherto downplayed the significance of the gospel message for the present-day existence of humanity. According to Groningen (2000), the Church has a crucial role as a change agent and a witness to the community. In their 2015 study, Ayiamba et al. argued that the Church is responsible for eradicating poverty and achievement of equality, dignity, and freedom for all people, regardless of faith or nationality. According to the scholars' study findings, the Church had made some headway in its attempts to reduce poverty, but it also encountered myriad challenges.

The study by Bakker (2016) on *an Ethnography of Contingency and Ethics in a Cross-Cultural, Faith-based Aid Relationship* explores how faith affects the praxis of development hedged on religion, history, culture and economics in Zambia. Bakker (2016)'s findings demonstrate that theological views of the Church have a significant role in uplifting the welfare of communities in terms of multi-directional responses to the development approaches. In cognize of faith in the CD process, Bakker (2016) draws OT Laws on gleaning (Leviticus. 19:9-10), charging interest (Exodus 22:25-27) and Jubilee (I Kings 21:3). The study further shows that religious faith influences the spiritual and physical expectations of the community significantly. This may also imply that a lack of faith within the community affects productivity. Similarly, Ochanda (2012)'s study on *FBOs on Socio-Economic Welfare in Kenya* reveals religious actors in socio-economic challenges in health, education, agriculture and concern for the socially excluded. This implies that biblical and theological basis for church involvement in CD culminates in community with the capacity to agriculturally produce, care for the creatures, improve education and medical facilities, industrialize, embrace science, art, economic and political relations to do justice and serve people. This is backed by Bosch (1982), Mugambi (1995), and Pillay (2007), that the Church has a transforming effect and exists to improvise people's standards of living. This study found that people who are well acquitted biblically and theologically have a responsibility to industriously contribute to community livelihood. Further, the study established that for an enhanced CD, there is a need for complementary and supplementary effort from GoK, the public sector, NGOs, FBOs and *wanainchi* (citizen) to develop a laity theology as a tool for community life by assimilating models of development that reflect values, self-reliance, self-actualisation and self-fulfillment. A reconstructive approach that offers the capacity inculcates and develops Godly skills that foster a sustainable socio-economic and political environment for enhancing CD in Kenya is thus, imperative.

### 3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### **Biblical and Theological Basis for Church's Involvement in Community Development**

The study sought to establish the biblical and theological basis for church involvement in the CD. The clergy, ADS staff and community leaders were provided first with a set of 9 statements on a scale of 5

Likert statements. The section presents the findings and analysis of data drawn from the 330 respondents. Table 1 presents a summary of the responses.

**Table 1: Biblical Basis for Church's Involvement in Community Development**

Statement	SD	D	NO	A	SA	Total
The creation of man in God's image (Genesis 1:26-28) is a basis for development.	1.8 5	0.3 1	0.3 1	17.0 49	80.6 232	100.0 288
Psalms 9:18-19 (God's judgment upon a nation that forgets the disadvantaged) stirs the Church to be involved in the development	1.4 4	1.0 3	3.1 9	18.8 54	75.7 218	100.0 288
Nehemiah 2:18 (Let's us arise and build) motivates the Church to participate in the development	1.4 4	1.4 4	0.3 1	17.7 51	79.2 228	100.0 288
Tobit 4:7-10 (Taking care of the poor as an offering that pleases God in heaven) inspires the Church to participate in the development	1.7 5	1.4 4	15.6 45	39.2 113	42.0 121	100.0 288
Jesus's Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-21 inspires the Church to participate in the development	1.4 4	1.7 5	0.7 2	23.6 68	72.6 209	100.0 288
The Church's involvement in development is based on Christ's command of loving God and neighbour (Luke 10:27-29)	1.4 4	1.0 3	1.4 4	23.3 67	72.9 210	100.0 288
Luke 4:18-19 (Jesus' concern to the world in socio-economic and political matters) calls upon the Church to participate in the development	1.4 4	1.0 3	0.3 1	21.5 62	75.7 218	100.0 288
Abundant life taught in John 10:10 inspires the Church to participate in the development	1.4 4	1.7 5	1.0 3	16.7 48	79.2 228	100.0 288
The economic sharing of Christians by St. Paul in Romans 15:25-27 serves as a motivation for the development	1.4 4	1.0 3	1.4 4	34.7 100	61.5 177	100.0 288

Data obtained illustrated that the majority of the respondents, 281(97.6%), acknowledged that the creation of man in God's image (Genesis 1:26-28) is a basis of CD, that God's judgment upon a nation that forgets the disadvantaged (Psalm 9:18-19), stirs the Church to be involved in CD, 272 (94.5%), and that the statement drawn from the book of Nehemiah 2:18 "Let's us arise and build" motivates the Church to participate in CD, 279 (96.9%). Similarly, a significant proportion of the respondents, 234 (81.2%), maintained that "Taking care of the poor as an offering that pleases God in heaven" (Tobit 4:7-10) inspires the Church to participate in CD, and a great proportion 277(96.2%), indicated that Jesus' Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-21, inspires the Church to participate in CD and that the church involvement in CD is based on Christ's command of loving God and neighbours drawn from the gospel of Luke 10:27-29 by 277(96.2%). The majority of the respondents, 280 (97.2%), believed that Jesus' concern for the world in socio-economic and political matters calls upon the Church to participate in CD (Luke 4:18-19). A significant proportion of the respondents, 276 (95.9%), maintained that the assertion that abundant life taught in John 10:10 inspires the Church to participate in CD and that the economic sharing of Christians as espoused by St. Paul in Romans 15:25-27 serves as a motivation to CD by 277 (96.2%). In

general, respondents scored highly on a biblical basis for church involvement in CD, the variable obtaining a mean rating of 93.54%.

Quantitative data illustrated a high rating for church involvement in CD based on a biblical basis, the variable attaining an average rating of 93.5%. Data obtained illustrated that almost all the respondents believe the creation of man in God's image (Genesis 1:26-28) is a basis of CD, 281 (97.6%), Jesus's Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-21, inspires the Church to participate in CD by 277 (96.2%), the church involvement in CD is based on Christ's command of loving God and neighbours drawn from the gospel of Luke 10:27-29 by 277 (96.2%) and Jesus concern to the world in socio-economic and political matters calls upon the Church to participate in CD (Luke 4:18-19) by 279 (97.2%). These findings confirm that Church involvement in CD has a biblical basis. The findings are consistent with observations by Maggay (1994) that the NT speaks of the existential development relationship of God's creation with humanity since creation. Similarly, Bosch (1977) asserts that Christians have a biblical mandate to be involved in the development of humanity not in doctrine but in social justice (Matthew 25:35-43). Jesus destroyed the fabrics of uncivilized communities by feeding over 5,000 men (Mark 8:1-21) as an indication of a church in the world but not of the world to propagate development. This confirms the presence of a biblical basis for church involvement in the CD. The use of deuterocanonical books such as Tobit, second Ezra and Sirach advances this study for their richness in socio-economic and political aspects, unlike other related studies that hardly consider Apocrypha.

## Theological Basis for Church's Involvement in Community Development

The study also intended to establish the theological basis for church involvement in the CD. To achieve this, respondents were provided with a set of six Likert-type statements. Their responses are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Theological Basis for Church's Involvement in Community Development**

Statement	SD	D	NO	A	SA	Total
The concept of <i>Shalom</i> (Peace), which means right relation with God, humanity and creation, is crucial in enhancing development.	1.7 5	0.7 2	3.1 9	43.4 125	51.0 147	100.0 288
Evangelization as the identifying feature of the Church involves taking care of the poor, the marginalized and the vulnerable	1.7 5	0.7 2	3.1 9	47.6 137	46.9 135	100.0 288
Reconstruction Theology informs the Church's involvement in the development	1.4 4	0.7 2	8.7 25	61.1 176	28.1 81	100.0 288
The Church responds to peoples' socio-economic and political needs by empowering the community in the area of development	1.7 5	0.3 1	3.1 9	42.7 123	52.1 150	100.0 288
Since creation, God has been transforming communities in development through His involvement in their daily affairs	1.4 4	1.4 4	1.4 4	36.5 105	59.4 171	100.0 288
Green Theology, Laity Theology, Eco-Theology, <i>Oikos</i> Theology, <i>Koinonia</i> , <i>Incarnation</i> , <i>Harambee</i> and	1.4 4	1.4 4	9.4 27	60.4 174	27.4 79	100.0 288

<i>Diakonia</i> are integral interventions in enhancing development						
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Information obtained from the respondents indicates that the majority, 272 (94.4%), believe that the concept of *Shalom* is crucial in enhancing CD; a similar proportion, 272 (94.4%), maintained that evangelization as the identifying feature of the Church, involves taking care of the poor, the marginalized and the vulnerable and that RT informs the church involvement in CD by 256 (89.2%). A significant proportion, 273 (94.8%), indicated the Church should respond to peoples' socio-economic and political needs by empowering community in the area of CD; the majority believe that since creation, God has been transforming communities in CD through His involvement in their daily affairs by 276 (95.9%) and that Green Theology, Laity Theology, Eco-Theology, *Oikos* Theology, *Koinonia*, *Incarnation*, *Harambee* and *Diakonia* are integral interventions in enhancing CD by 253 (87.8%). Findings thus illustrated a 92.8% mean rating for the theological basis for church involvement in the CD. Contemporary and pragmatic theologies such as RT challenges the church and development institutions such as ADS to demonstrate leadership in effective land utilization, employment of efficient agricultural methods and principles of community self-reliance.

The results of the study on the theological basis for church involvement in CD showed a mean rating of 92.8 %, indicating a high degree of agreement by the majority of respondents. Specifically, the majority, 271 (94.4%), believed that the concept of *Shalom* is crucial in enhancing CD; a significant proportion, 272 (94.5%), maintained that evangelization as the identifying feature of the Church, involves taking care of the poor, the marginalized and the vulnerable and that RT informs the church involvement in CD by 256 (89.2%). A significant proportion of the respondents, 273(94.8%), indicated that the Church should respond to peoples' socio-economic and political needs by empowering communities in the area of CD; the majority believe that since creation, God has been transforming communities in CD through His involvement in their daily affairs, 276 (95.9%) and that Green Theology, Laity Theology, Eco-Theology, *Oikos* Theology, *Koinonia*, *Incarnation*, *Harambee* and *Diakonia* are integral interventions in enhancing CD (87.8%). These findings imply that the Church's contextual theologies justify her involvement in the CD. This has reference to Villa Vicencio (1992), Nkonge (2008), and Magesa (1976), that community involvement in CD is an essential component of missiology. Mugambi (1995) also avers that Christian theology has a role to play in the socio-economic transformation of Africa *via* reconstruction on three levels: individual, cultural, and religious.

### Extent to which the Church Disseminates Teachings on Community Development

To establish the extent to which the Church disseminates teachings on CD. Table 3 presents a summary of the findings.

**Table 3: Church's Dissemination of Teachings on Community Development in the Community**

Statement	NE	LE	AE	GE	VGE	Total
The Church teaches about good agricultural practices to improve productivity.	1.4 4	17.0 49	65.6 189	13.5 39	2.4 7	100.0 288
The Church teaches about clean water and sanitation to enhance the quality of life	1.0 3	16.7 48	64.9 187	13.9 40	3.5 10	100.0 288

The Church promotes developmental education to reduce illiteracy and poverty	0.7 2	13.9 40	54.5 157	26.0 75	4.9 14	100.0 288
The Church promotes justice and peace towards a conducive environment for development	0.3 1	12.1 35	53.5 154	27.8 80	6.3 18	100.0 288
The Church propagates children, gender and human rights issues to enhance the quality of human life	1.0 3	22.9 66	60.4 174	10.8 31	4.9 14	100.0 288
The Church promotes health care in the community towards enhancing the quality of human life	- 19	6.6 19	38.2 110	38.5 111	16.7 48	100.0 288
The Church calls upon the community to offer relief to needy people in line with Christ's command to love and share	2.4 7	28.8 83	42.7 123	18.4 53	7.6 22	100.0 288
The Church offers employment to the youth by providing micro-finance for self-reliance	2.8 8	25.0 72	51.0 147	15.6 45	5.6 16	100.0 288
The church assists persons living with disabilities by providing self-reliance skills	3.5 10	39.9 115	41.0 118	12.5 36	3.1 9	100.0 288
The Church gives HIV and AIDS awareness and care to the community for the promotion of holistic life	1.0 3	6.6 19	32.6 94	38.9 112	20.8 60	100.0 288
As a steward of God's creation, the Church teaches the community about environmental preservation and conservation	0.7 2	5.9 17	31.3 90	30.6 88	31.6 91	100.0 288

Data obtained show that among the respondents who believed that the Church teaches good agricultural practices to improve productivity to a great extent, 45 (15.9%) were in the minority. Similarly, those who believed that the Church teaches about clean water and sanitation to enhance the quality of life were 50 (17.4%), and about a third, 88 (30.9%), indicated that Church promotes developmental education to reduce illiteracy and poverty and slightly more than a third, 98(34.1%), observed that the Church promotes justice and peace towards a conducive environment for CD. At the same time, respondents who thought that the Church propagates children, gender and human rights issues to enhance the quality of human life were 45 (15.7%), and those who acknowledged that the Church calls upon the community to offer relief to needy people in line with Christ's command to love and share were 74(26.0%), those who indicated that the Church offers employment to the youth by providing micro-finance for self-reliance were 61(21.2%) and those who believed that the church assists persons living with disabilities by providing self-reliance skills were 44 (15.6%), thus fewer than those who thought to the contrary. The proportion of the respondents who indicated that the Church promotes health care in the community towards enhancing the quality of human life was 158 (55.2%), and those who felt that the Church offers HIV and AIDS awareness and care to the community for the promotion of holistic life were 171 (59.7%) and those who believed that a steward of God's creation, the Church teaches the community about environmental preservation and conservation were 179 (62.2%), thus more than those who thought to the contrary. The findings depict the fact that whereas the Church could be perceived to minimally disseminate information on general CD issues, it has isolated and spent considerable effort in the three main areas; health care, HIV and AIDS awareness, as well as environmental preservation and conservation.

An inquiry was made to ACK Bishops and ADS' top management. The question posed was: What are the emerging biblical and theological issues in the world of community development? In response, Baya (2021) observed that:

The Church is informed by the holistic gospel of Jesus Christ in John 10:10 that 'I have come so that you may have life and have it in abundance. This entails finding love, health and life in the present world. The philosophy of development is valuable in uplifting the livelihood of the community. In the modern world of community development, the Church could employ the concept of Agri-mission, which means using agriculture as a tool for the mission to address high poverty prevalence. The Church should execute its mandate by employing approaches such as non-discriminatory, humanitarian and missionary that considers value for people as created in the image of God and reaches to all people without discrimination on religious orientations. The Church has to develop biblical and theological motifs that express itself in the community.

According to Kibucwa (OI.2022):

All theologies inform CD. A theology that does not propagate holistic concerns fails to meet the needs of the community. The Church is a community itself, and the Church is at the grassroots. CD involves adopting new farming methods from the ground root to where people are. The Church is about: people, survival, food, hygiene, food, going to school, learning well, it is about living well. You cannot remove the Church from development in any way; the Church must be and remain involved in matters of CD. The Church is mandated to ensure that development is done in a systematic way to ensure the community benefits. A church, not concerned with challenges affecting the community, is not a church but a fake one. CD is the work of the Church, and work must be seen done. CD ensures people are: enjoying life in wholeness, are healthy, have money, the road to use, and decent houses. There is no good news if people are not living well.

According to Mutua (OI.2022):

The Church must consider contextual reality to cater for the physical and spiritual needs of the community. Oluoch (OI. 2022) asserts that the Church calls for a humanitarian approach to motivate participation in community development.

According to Mugo (OI.2022):

Biblical and theological emerging issues in the world of CD include intrinsic biblical and psychological social needs affecting the community such as sexuality, ethical issues, technology, cash transfers, health issues in relation to the genetically modified organism, legal aspects, Global warming, urbanization, environmental and climate change, trends in the world. The Church's consciousness in addressing the socio-economic challenges by putting into consideration the current scenarios in CD is critical.

Mwadziwe (OI.2021), responded that:

The poor exist in every Community (Deuteronomy 15:11), humanity has been given the sacred mandate to subdue earth by being good stewards, work is a responsibility from God to human beings, God demands restoration of the creation, and the Church has to advocate for the voice of the voiceless and Church has a responsibility to empower the community.

This study established that there are emerging biblical and theological trends in the world of CD. Traditionally, this may seem unnatural due to the skeptical perception of the Church on CD. The current trends point to an active church that participates in the socio-economic and political realities. Personalized belief on church ministry without socio-mission enhancements is biblically biasing, thus inept to deal with

poverty and shanty communities filled with wretchedly poor. Similarly, Kinoti (1994) reports that one out of every three Africans does not get enough to eat. This kind of lack situation has dire consequences because of the direct relationship between under-development, poor health, criminology, death and psychological consequences. Matthew 19:21 on supporting the poor is critical in empowering Christians to serve individuals even in the most extreme situations. This finding agrees with Mofikeng (1990) that the liberating messages of God demand release from all that is exploitive.

The qualitative results from the FGDs with Christian lay leaders showed that: biblical and theological basis enhanced social actions as well as ensured community participation as salt and light of the world. God is pleased with theology for life that connects the Church to the underprivileged in the community. As Jesus developed intellectually, physically, socially, and spiritually (Luke 2:52), so the community ought to do. Theologically, the emphasis on humankind's solidarity with creation as part of God's divine mandate in Genesis 2 is key in enhancing CD. The three servants and talents call for an economic model in Matthew 25:13-30, and the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) shows concern for the vulnerable in the community. The rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19) emphasize the plight of the poor. 2 Timothy 2:15 calls for commitment to God's and humanity's service. Additionally, Christians are to eat from their labour (Psalm 128:2), a call for creative human stewardship (Ephesians 4:24), share things in common (Acts 2:42), and enjoy good health in 3 John 1:12 as well defending the weak and fatherless (Psalms 140:12).

On enumerating the other biblical and theological basis for Church's involvement in CD, qualitative responses from the questionnaire open-ended questions indicated thus: on agriculture, Jeremiah elucidates on trees planted by the waterside implying environmental conservation and management, the Jewish calendar on agricultural work, Psalm 125 on the mountains that surround Jerusalem signifies promotion of natural resources; productive land requires proper preparation as depicted in Isaiah 5, Jesus, as the branch produces fruits, informs CD in John 15:1-8, the Magi in Matthew 2:11 symbolized abundance of the earth. In terms of physical wellness, Jesus went to communities doing good (Acts 10:38), while Matthew 25:40 signifies the plight of the poor and love for God; whatever you do to the needy, you do it to me. In terms of industriousness, James 2:14-28 demands faith and action, Joseph's steadfastness in food economy and security in Genesis 41:41-46, and feeding of the 5000 demonstrates service to humanity (Matthew 14:13-21).

These findings indicate that majority of the respondents, 183 (62.5%), answered the open ended-question on other biblical and theological basis for church involvement in the CD. The most quoted biblical basis by the majority was placed using eight thematic areas, namely: Matthew 14:13-21 on feeding the 5000 people as a demonstration of service to humanity quoted by 48 (26.2%), Joseph's story in Genesis 41:41-46 by 46 (25.1%), Jesus grew in wisdom, stature and in favour with God and humanity in Luke 2:52 by 21 (11.4%), the three servants given talents in Matthew 25:13-30 by 16 (8.7%), faith without action is dead in James 2:26 by 14 (7.6%), taking care of the land in Genesis 2:15 by 13 (7.1%); James 1:25 on good health by 13 (7.1%), and communal responsibility to the poor in Acts 2:37-47 by 12 (6.5%). The findings indicated that the feeding of the 5000 men by Jesus in Matthew and the story of Joseph as the Egyptian economist in Genesis were the most preferred scriptural basis for church involvement in the CD.

The results are an indication that CD to the deserving community *Diakonia* (service) is critical. The findings are consistent with Groningen (2000)'s claims that the Church has a vital role in witnessing the power of

the gospel and is an agent of change in the world. Alawode (2016) avers similar perspectives that the Church's role is not solely to preach and spread evangelism but also inclusivity in progressive community development. According to Nkonge (2019), a wholesome ministry for a wholesome nation will be enhanced by a 'wholesome' set of clergy who are well prepared for the challenges facing the county in this decade. Ayiemba et al. (1992) and Giles (1995) hold that the Church has been involved in uplifting the socio-economic status of people by building a caring and mutual dependence, just as the early believers had all things in common with no needy among them (Luke 2:44-45). Others in support of the Church's involvement in CD include Mosse (2002), Mbogo (2019), and Omanyo (2014), who claims that for the proclamation of the gospel to be credible, the Church in mission has to transform society by providing social services such as education, health and socio-economic and political impetus. Gitari (1996) asserts that taking care of creation and executing God-given responsibilities liberates nature and humanity. This kind of understanding, as elucidated from the biblical and theological basis of the Church's involvement in CD, is necessary for enhancing CD as well as addressing emerging trends within the health sector, research, technology, sexuality, modified elements, COVID 19, lifestyle diseases as well as the worrying poverty levels.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Conclusions:** The biblical and theological basis for church involvement in CD serves as a strong demonstration of service to the poor, the marginalized and the vulnerable in the community. This is despite community development being perceived as secular and alien to the ministry and mission of the Church. The study's findings confirm that implementing CD by the Church is based upon a strong biblical and theological basis to positively influence the livelihood of the community. The Church, as an institution in the life stream of the community, exerts influence on people's livelihood. Theologically, the source of life is God's work in creation that is continued to find sense in uplifting community living standards and self-reliance for the current and future generations.

**Recommendations:** To improve the sustainability of CD within targeted areas, it was recommended that the implementation of CD be based upon a strong biblical and theological basis as a demonstration of service to the vulnerable in the community.

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