

News and Events

NGOs and social justice: The case of Kenya's slums Joseph Thomas Mboya, SJ

According to the 2009 Population and Housing Census Results of Kenya that were made public on 31st August 2010ⁱ, Kenya's population is estimated to be increasing by one million people yearly. The report cites that: "...high rate of population growth has adverse effects on spending in infrastructure, health, education, environment, water and other social and economic sectors"ⁱⁱ. The estimates are that by the year 2025, the country's population will hit the fifty million mark. Given Kenya's Vision 2030 aims to raise the living standards of all its citizens by providing the basic necessities in life, much is needed in terms of housing, hospitals, jobs and a credible food policy that will ensure that Kenya as a nation will be able to feed its fast growing population.

Two sets of census figures caught my eye: The first is that the population of Migingo Island is a paltry 131 people. Migingo Island came into the limelight with Kenya and Uganda claiming it as part of their respective territories. What was worrying is that the people in this Island live in shacks and in abject poverty, with poor infrastructure, and virtually cut off from any benefit from the government. It was clear that the island is neglected regardless of the big fishing business that goes on around the Island that was the bone of contention between the partner states of East Africa Community. Is it not an injustice to abandon the island and its people in terms of government planning and spending?



Migingo Island in Lake Victoria

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EVENTS

The staff of Jesuit Hakimani Centre joined three youth groups from Korogocho, Mathare and Kibera during theatre in conflict transformation and peer mediation in their communities on 29th and 31st October and on 1st November 2010 respectively! (Full story on page 16)

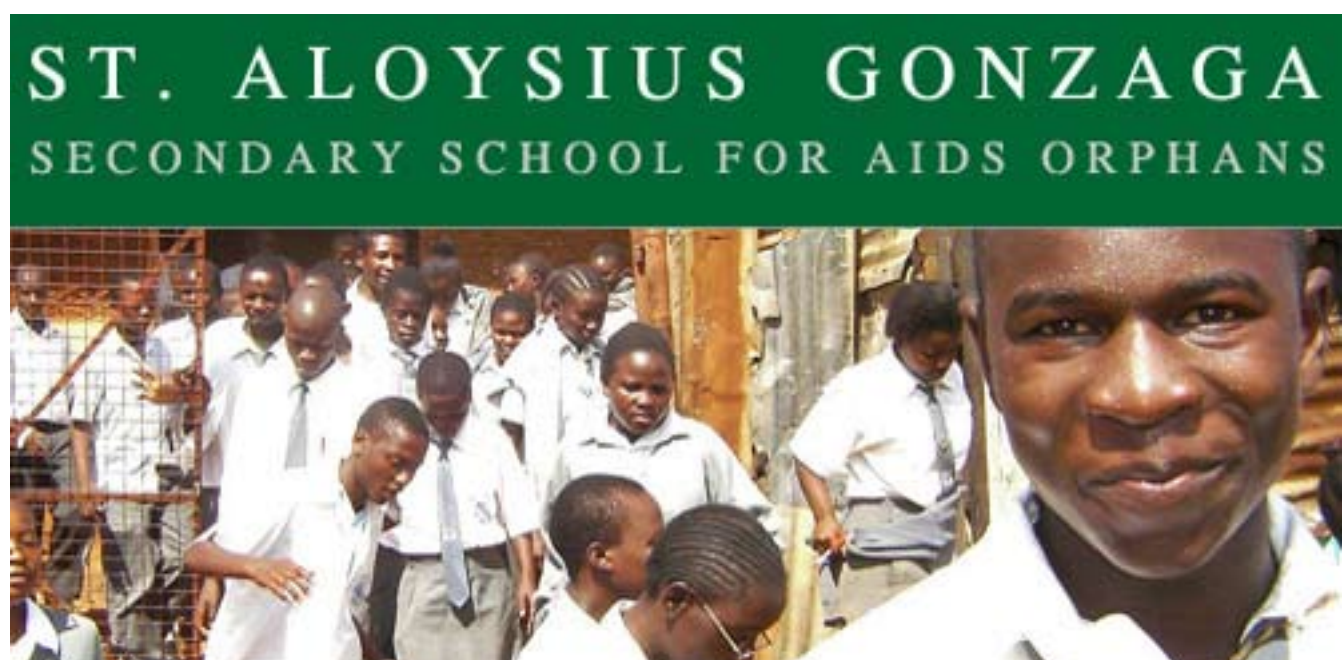
The second shocking statistics was that of Kibera slums. The census revealed that the population of Kibera is approximately 170,070 contrary to the popular myth that the population of Kibera is between a million and two million. It had been claimed that Kibera was the biggest slum in Africa and possibly one of the biggest slums in the world. The census, contrary to popular belief that many Kenyans live in slums, cites that the total number of Kenyans living in slums is less than one million. The revelations raise questions about the role of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in alleviating poverty and promoting social justice. To the landlords who own houses in slums and some NGOs, this remains the most 'profitable' property business in town. This makes slums like Kibera "a sociological paradox - a slum to the poor, a gold mine to the rich."ⁱⁱⁱ

Kibera and other slums have been homes to numerous NGOs over the years, yet apart from a few notable worthwhile projects, it is suspicious that some of these NGOs are in the slums to take advantage of the situation to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor. If this is the sad reality then the practice is a grave social injustice.

The paradox of Non Governmental Organizations

The term 'NGO' has lately become synonymous with big four-wheel drive, fuel guzzling vehicles and high salaries. Many people aspire to work with NGOs because they expect to benefit from the high income these organizations promise. A simple definition of non-governmental organization is that it is an independent organization that is not run or controlled by a government. Consequently, NGOs should be partial and part of the civic society rather than be a source of wealth made at the expense of the poor. Those working for NGOs should be driven by a passion to promote social justice and make a difference in the world. Some estimates put the numbers of community-based organizations working in Kibera alone at between 6,000 and 15,000, plus an additional estimated 2,000 governmental organizations.^{iv} This implies that billions of Kenya shillings are pumped into what is known by some as the biggest slum in Africa. The census dismisses this exaggeration of numbers that has, over the years, been used as ploy that has deceived many donors into pumping money into many projects in the slums. But how can the poor be protected from manipulation? How can the basic rights of the poor be safeguarded so that they can be spared the social ills and injustices that befall them?

Many Church based groups visibly carry out meaningful work in the slums which aims at uplifting the standards of life of the people. These efforts, however, should go hand-in-hand with the efforts of the government and other stakeholders. Such work should be driven by the goal of promoting basic human rights for all citizens. Church based groups, by carrying out joint programs and collaborating with the other charitable groups and NGOs, can act as a motivation and role models in the aims of promoting social justice.



St. Aloysius Gonzaga is a Jesuit-supported school in Kibera

The principle of the common good

The principles of the Church's Social Doctrine stipulate that everyone holds the responsibility for the common good.^v These involve, among other things, the provision of essential services to all, which constitute human rights: food, housing, work, education and access to culture, transportation, basic health care, the freedom of communication and expression, and the protection of religious freedom.^{vi} This should be the aim of NGOs in promoting social justice in all spheres of life.

The most important issue in terms of social justice for slum dwellers is that of decent housing. This is necessitated by the fact many poor people live in polluted suburbs of large cities, in make-shift residences or in huge complexes of crumbling and unsafe houses. Relocation may be considered as an option, but care must be taken not to heap suffering upon suffering.^{vii} To ensure this, adequate information needs to be provided with choices of decent housing offered and the very people directly involved as a part of the process out of necessity.

Kenya's Vision 2030, if it is to be achieved, will require goodwill from all stakeholders - from the echelons of government to the people living in the slums. During the celebration of the first Mashujaa Day (Heroes' Day) on October 20, 2010, President Mwai Kibaki outlined the government's vision for development. He stated the government's plans to transform the country into a middle income economy with high

quality life, subsequently eliminating slums by the year 2030.^{viii} Rather than keep shifting deadlines for meeting targets, NGOs can work hand in hand with the government in creating conducive environment for the promotion of human rights and social justice, of which the eradication of slums is a necessity since everyone is entitled to decent housing. "The demands of the common good are dependent on the social conditions of each historical period and are strictly connected to respect for and the integral promotion of the person and his or her fundamental rights."^{ix}

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Endnotes

ⁱ2009 POPULATION & HOUSING CENSUS RESULTS released by Hon. Wycliffe Ambetsa Oparanya Minister of State for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030 on 31st August, 2010.

ⁱⁱIbid. pg. 36

ⁱⁱⁱMuchiri Karanja. "Myth shattered: Kibera numbers fail to add up" *Daily Nation*, Posted Friday, September 3 2010 at 22:30

^{iv}Ibid.

^vCompendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 166

^{vi}Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Guadium et Spes*, 26: AAS 58 (1966), 104-1047

^{vii}Compendium, 482

^{viii}Fredrick Onyango, "Kenya to be slum-free by 2030, says Kibaki" *Daily Nation*, Posted Wednesday, October 20 2010 at 20:25

^{ix}Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1907

Slaying the dragon of corruption: A new dawn for better governance in Kenya? Paul Odhiambo

“Africa’s economic problems are compounded by the dishonesty of corrupt government leaders who, in connivance with domestic or foreign private interests, divert national resources for their own profit and transfer public funds to private accounts in foreign banks.” (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa, John Paul II, 1995)

In the last few weeks, anti-corruption wave has swept Kenya as the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC), the Parliament and other anti-graft watchdogs have been meticulously engaged in investigating corruption allegations in government ministries, departments and other public offices. The renewed vigour for the anti-corruption campaign has received considerable support from the Executive, civil society organizations and the public at large. The passing of the new constitution in August this year has also re-energized the support for the anti-graft crusade in the hope that the new supreme law will radically restructure institutions of governance and will promote the election or appointment of public officers who uphold integrity, selfless service, objectivity and impartiality in decision making, competence, accountability, discipline and commitment to the service of the people as stipulated in Article 73 of Chapter Six of the new constitution. It remains to be seen whether the anti-corruption momentum will be maintained or it will dissipate like a few years ago.



Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission director PLO Lumumba (right) gestures during a media briefing at Integrity Centre in July 2010

The sustained war against corruption has so far claimed high-ranking government officials including immediate former Minister for Higher Education, former Minister for Foreign Affairs, former Mayor of Nairobi City and other senior public servants. It is expected that more heads might roll soon as the government has announced that nobody would be spared if named in corruption scandals. The zeal and impetus to fight graft in recent times seems to have been emboldened by the political goodwill of the two principals in the grand coalition government.

What are some of the corruption allegations in recent times? The immediate former Minister for Higher Education and four other persons face fraud charges over the alleged sale of a piece of land (1.75 hectares)

in Ngong Forest to the Kenya Pipeline Company (KPC) Ltd for a total of Ksh 272 millions. The suspects were sued in 2004 for allegedly obtaining money from the KPC between August 6 and September 6, 2001. While the former Higher Education Minister had filed a constitutional application arguing that the prosecution was tantamount to violation of his fundamental rights, the High Court threw out the application claiming that the former Minister and other petitioners should make their defence in the trial court.

In another corruption charges, the immediate former Mayor of Nairobi is being charged with conspiracy to commit an offence under the Anti-Corruption and Economic Crimes Act and Public Officer and Ethics Act by acquiring Ksh283 million from the Ministry of Local Government to purchase cemetery land for the City Council between December 2008 and April 2009. An investigation by KACC found out that the Nairobi City Council bought a piece of land unsuitable for the purpose for which it was intended. Further, the controversial land did not meet all the requirements that had been set for the cemetery land. Moreover, the price of the land in Mavoko Municipality, Machakos County was far above the fair market value. It is alleged that the cost of the 120 acres of land was inflated by Ksh259 million since independent valuation had put the land's market value at Ksh24 million. There is suspicion that the procurement for the cemetery land was abused by middlemen working in cahoots with City Hall and government officials to swindle taxpayers' money.

The drama of stepping aside continued as Foreign Affairs Minister quit amidst corruption allegations under his docket towards the end of October. According to Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Foreign Relations' report, Kenya lost Ksh1.1 billion (\$14m) during a land deal in Japan. The foreign ministry is alleged to have refused an offer of land from the Japanese government in central Tokyo for a new embassy, opting instead for a building further away. It is claimed that the Tokyo property was grossly overvalued and its purchase highly irregular hence undermining the procurement procedures. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also accused of impropriety in the purchase and disposal of diplomatic properties in Brussels, Cairo, Islamabad and Lagos.



Currently, there are also cases of corruption allegations in the Ministry of State for Immigration and Registration of Persons, Ministry of Water and Irrigation, Ministry of Industrialization, Ministry of Medical

Services, Ministry of Local Government, Department of Defence, Public Service Commission, several parastatals and Provincial Administration where funds for the Internally Displaced Persons were allegedly embezzled. The KACC has also promised to revive investigations into past corruption scandals such as the Goldenberg, Anglo-leasing and the like. The Goldenberg scam in which Kenya lost no less than Kshs. 5.6 billion took place in the early 1990s when former President Daniel Arap Moi was in power (Kagwanja, 2009). Anglo-Leasing scandal was the major corruption scam during the first term of President Kibaki (Kivuva and Odhiambo, 2010). Up to date, these mega corruption scandals have not been resolved.

The anti-corruption agencies seem to have a lot in their plates. The revelations on corruption today in government simply demonstrate how the vice has been entrenched in Kenya's governance systems since independence. Nevertheless, the citizens should support the fight against graft menace since reduction or elimination of corruption will benefit their common good. The little contribution from the people in tackling the vice can play a big role in enhancing good governance as the bishops aptly observed: "If all of us together refuse to pay bribes for services to which we have a right, refuse to pay exorbitant fares for transport at peak moments or grossly inflated prices for scarce goods, those who exploit us become helpless. We are blessed if we are willing to suffer something for the sake of justice." (*A Call for a Change of Heart*, Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops of Kenya, April 1995 No. 4)

The phenomenon of corruption can be manifested in different forms (Ruzindana, 1998: Chweya, 2005). It can be trivial or colossal. It can be misuse of simple procedures or of policy instruments. Corruption can involve threats, promises or both. It can be initiated by a public officer or by an ordinary citizen. Corruption can entail acts of omission or commission. It can be in the form of bribes, extortion, illegal use of public resources for personal gain, over-invoicing and under-invoicing, payment of salaries to non-existent workers (or ghost employees), payment for goods and services not supplied or rendered respectively, fraud, embezzlement, misappropriation of public assets, removal of documents from case files, disappearance of whole files or vital documents. Nepotism, tribalism and patronage are also forms of corruption especially when employment, business or any other opportunities are not offered on merit and experience but on other considerations that discriminate competent and qualified persons. There can also be corruption in allocation of national resources especially when those in power favour their region(s) and politically-correct constituencies at the expense of the rest of the country.

Corruption can impair social, political and economy development. In corrupt-infested countries, resources meant for social services, infrastructure development, community development and other sectors end up in individuals' pockets hence undermining human development of citizens. Corruption in developing countries has led to poor transport systems, inadequate medical services, poor education, delayed completion of projects, a reduction of production capacity in industry, agriculture and other sectors. In extreme situations, rampant corruption and outright looting can exacerbate social unrest and political instability.

Although corruption is found in all societies, developing countries have a Herculean task to fight graft so that development gains achieved under the Millennium Development Goals framework and other progressive development policies are not reversed. While Kenya government and anti-graft agencies have taken lead in the war against corruption, the public have a critical role to play for the anti-graft crusade to succeed. For this to happen, there is a need to have a change of attitude (*metanoia*) towards the public good or national resources. The Catholic leadership in Kenya rightly observed that: "Those who benefit from the system of corruption, greed, and mismanagement and those who remain silent about the terrible economic injustices around us MUST CHANGE" (*Economy of Kenya*: Pastoral Letter of Kenya Catholic Bishops, June 1999).

At the end of the Second African Synod, the Bishops of Africa had a powerful message to the people of God. They acknowledged the contributions of Africans who have done well in public service despite "dangers and uncertainties of politics." They further appreciated men and women who view their participation in public service as "an apostolate to promote the common good and God's kingdom of justice, love and peace in line with the teachings of the Church." The Church leaders further reiterated that: "Africa needs saints in high political office: saintly politicians who will clean the continent of corruption, work for the good of the

people, and know how to galvanize other men and women of good will from outside the Church to join hands against the common evils that beset our nations” (*Courage! Get on your Feet, Continent of Africa*, 2009, No. 23). Who are saintly politicians? Which values do they cherish? What is their attitude towards national resources? It remains to be seen whether the new generation of leaders will view leadership as a service rather than a position to accumulate obscene wealth at the expense of majority who barely afford basic needs of life.



Catholic bishops during the Second African Synod in Rome, 2009

The task of fighting corruption in Africa is overwhelming one but manageable if there is political goodwill from the top leadership in our countries. The anti-graft war needs to be strategic in its execution so that the suspects do not claim that they are being witch-hunted by their political rivals. Nevertheless, those who lead the war against corruption must be people of high integrity and are incorruptible. As Latin speakers say: “*Nemo dat quod non habet*” meaning “No one give what he/she does not have.” In other words, leaders who are corrupt cannot champion a genuine war against corruption!

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The Post Secession Referendum Problems in Sudan: A Dilemma about the future ?

James Kanally, SJ

The future of Sudan is uncertain. What are the options for post referendum period? At present the international community, international organizations and the civil society organizations are more or less focused on stimulating the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and making sure that the referendum takes place on time. Consequently, little time is directed to the thinking strategically about the period after the January 2011 plebiscite. What will happen after the referendum? Sudan's unity perhaps could be at stake. The South will most likely opt for secession as all indicators demonstrate. The North is unstable and will be left with a vacuum the moment the interim constitution expires.

But in my introductory remarks I focus first on state building. In essence states are fragile entities especially when "state" structures lack the political will and capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of its people. In this respect, therefore international engagement will be concerted, sustained and focused on building the relationship between the state and society, through engagement in perhaps two areas. First, there should be support for the legitimacy and accountability of states by addressing issues of democratic governance, human rights, the civil society engagements and peace building. Second, a need for strengthening the capacity of states to fulfill their core functions is essential. Priority functions include: ensuring security and justice, mobilizing revenue, establishing an environment for basic service delivery, strong economic performance and employment generation. Support to these areas will in turn strengthen citizen's confidence, trust and engagement with state institutions and state building.



Sudanese youth in a demonstration in Sudan

With the above in mind, it is imperative to point out that whether the Sudan breaks up into two states or not after the referendum, it has to look at some of these issues in order for it to prioritise its action for purposes of reducing fragility and lowering the risk of conflict and other type of crises that will emerge in the post referendum era. Both local and international actors must be prepared to take a rapid action where the risk of conflict and instability is high. The object is to look beyond the quick

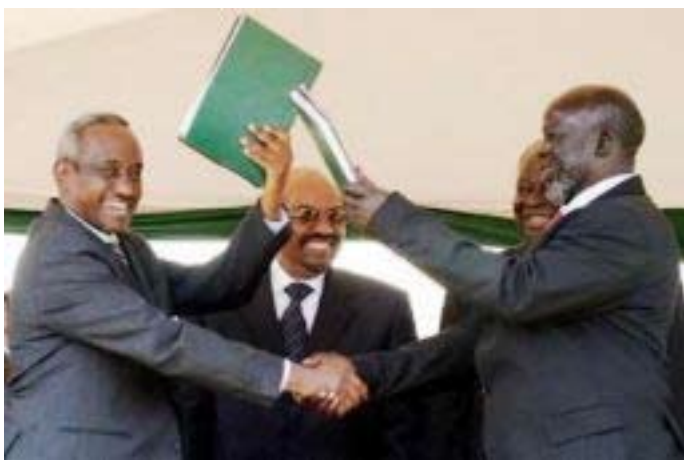
fix solution by addressing the root causes of the fragility. Having said these what are the prospects for the Sudan in the forthcoming referendum? In this paper I seek to address some of the prospective scenarios, possible interventions the challenges, criticisms and conclude by offering some alternatives.

In my estimation it is impossible to predict the future, but it is better to be prepared for it. We can only do that by developing a range of strategies. For instance, one in which war starts implies attempts can be made to pre-empt it from happening. Furthermore, by coming up with situational analysis, it is better utilized as a strategy for planning. Policies can be developed so that in 2011 everyone concerned is pre-pared for different outcomes. At the moment, much attention is focused at making sure that the referendum is held, if it takes place or not is another issue.

Thus, in the search to highlight some situations in this paper, perhaps they will act as a guide, and are not in themselves intended to be a comprehensive overview of the possible future, but rather to provoke thoughts and choices that cover a wider range of possible outcomes. It is after all very likely that none of the scenarios I present will come true, but elements of them are likely to be part of the future of Sudan- depending on the people of the Sudan. In this regard I will attempt to describe perhaps four scenarios for the future of Sudan with the parameters of two key uncertainties. First in 2011, will Sudan be united or will the North and the South have gone separate ways? Second, will there be a renewed war between the North and the South, or will there be no war between the two geo-political entities? The answer to the questions is a matter of probability.

The Process

The CPA states that the people of Southern Sudan should exercise their right to self determination through a referendum to settle their future status in accordance with the provisions of the Interim National Constitution of 2005 and the South Sudan Referendum Act of 2009. Despite the date drawing closer, there is fear that the CPA signatories have not prioritized this and that transparency and inclusiveness seem to lack. The following have not been done or are behind schedule: First, the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission has barely begun its work. Second, demarcation of the borders between North and South is yet to start. Third, regulations and procedures for the referendum have not been produced. Fourth, the establishment of referendum committees in states is not completed. Fifth, voter eligibility has not yet been clarified and registration has not yet begun. Sixth, registers and other referendum materials have not been provided and hence the current postponement. Seventh, voter awareness and education has barely commenced, and indeed cannot proceed without clarification of some of the above issues. Coupled with the above un-addressed issues, one is confronted with the unstable situation in the South that allows no development assistance to be effective in the region. The international community can do little more than react, try to restart a political process and provide humanitarian relief. The best one can do is to try and manage the conflict and prevent it from becoming worse.



From Left: 2nd VP Taha, El-Bashir and the late Garang: Map of the Republic of Sudan

In my estimation it would not suffice for the international community to heavily concentrate on the referendum. Of course as far as the referendum is concerned, the following views according to me hold. The separation of Southern Sudan from the North in January 2011 or even before is very likely – a transition that will probably not take place without violence. It must therefore be anticipated by a determined regional

and international peacemaking initiative in which the international community should play a proactive role. Immediate challenges, if not addressed, may otherwise have serious repercussions in Africa and the Middle East. The Middle East is strategic due to the energy resources and Africa is significant because of its mineral richness and human capital.

The government of Sudan and the Sudanese nationals must ensure that they have an inclusive, transparent, and comprehensive process. The referendum will be dealing with issues that are of vital consequence to the people of Sudan, including the division of national economic resources, the redefining of citizenship, and border demarcation. The process must be, above all, inclusive. However, there is increased anxiety. For instance, domestic Sudanese peace building dynamics are reaching their limits despite US mediation efforts. This is even more the case due to the fact that resistance from the Al-Bashir and National Congress Party-led regime to external pressure constrains the effectiveness of the continental organizations like the African Union (AU) or the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in exerting transformative policy influence over Khartoum. Immediate steps must therefore be taken to convince the NCP (National Congress Party) and the SPLM to agree on appropriate benchmarks and measures in such a way that the repeat of voter apathy of the recent concluded elections should not be the case with the upcoming referendum. The self-determination referendum in the South should not be viewed in the negative sense rather in the positive sense while not compromising the Darfur peace process.

Second, it is to be assumed that Southern Sudan is going to secede from the North after the 2011 referendum or even before and this requires planning from the international community and other actors in the region. Because the partition of Sudan will have consequences for regional and international security, more pro-activeness from global players is needed to deal with the post-2011 referendum. Third, the European Union (EU) and the US have a complementary political role to play by engaging Arab and African powers and international organizations in this process and provide their own expertise. The EU needs to pragmatically endorse the assumption of Southern secession and adopt a ‘peaceful coexistence strategy’ using all existing European instruments in a more coordinated manner. To attain this objective, EU member states need to mainstream their policies by maximising the role played by national envoys and create a single EU framework within which they can work. The EU could then advocate for a strong internationally backed-up dialogue promotion policy. Finally, in the long term, and despite Sudan’s good macroeconomic performance, prevention and mitigation of violent conflicts in the country will remain necessary for decades to come.

The above views rest on the premise that Sudan is a country perhaps with a generational stigma. It is a generational stigma as most Sudanese are presumed to harbour discord against each - meaning those in the north and the south - despite the CPA agreement. Although the CPA has provision for unity, the Khartoum government had not made unity attractive for Southerners. Thus far, with that unequal sharing of resources and the existence of the two National Assemblies both for the unity government in Khartoum and the parliamentary assembly for the Southerners, it seems that separation is a likely possibility.

According to Ommer El Garrari, there is controversy surrounding the referendum in 2011. For instance, “the laws are still the same after four years since the signing of the CPA. The CPA called for issuing the Party Law, the Election Law, establishing the council of parties, and the commission of elections all before January 2006”. The demand for amendments of these laws has been one of the basic claims of the declaration of the Juba Conference,ⁱⁱ which was signed by over thirty political parties and civil society organizations. Despite the signing, the National Congress Party (NCP) is putting one of the above debatable laws - the Law of National Security as an impediment to the realization of full cooperation of both the South and the North. SPLM/A is wary of these tactics. What the Law of national security stipulates is to allow the security apparatus to detain, arrest for months with no charges, and extract information by torture with comprehensive immunity of all its members against any court.

With the above existing realities, Abdulbari Nasredeem in her unpublished article, titled “Citizenship Rules in Sudan and Post- Secession Problems”, argues that perhaps there might emerge four likely situations that need to be anticipated. The scenarios from her point of view are, the last war revis-

ited, second is the border wars and then secession, third, no war- united and lastly No war- secession.

The last war revisited

Though the National Congress party (NCP) won the April 2010 general elections, the internal divisions in the South meant that the SPLM did not win the landslide victory as was expected. Prior to the elections, several candidates withdrew from contesting the presidency claiming that the NCP of Al-Bashir had manipulated the electoral process in its favour. This further deteriorated relation between the North and the South and both sides began to make more and more threats to return to war. The border demarcation between the North and the South remains a bone of contention. The uncertainty of the referendum in the Abyei region makes the situation even harder. For instance, the existence of factionalism within SPLM with some factions arguing that the CPA is completely dead and would want to unilaterally declare independence. Relations between the NCP and the SPLM/A deteriorates day after day.

Transitional Areas

The saddest thing to note is that the government of Sudan, throughout the last two decades, has neglected the agricultural and industrial sectors and depended mainly on oil. And as such it is not going to let Darfur go away easily. Delaying the referendum may be a bad choice which the NCP is heading towards. Under these circumstances, the probability of unity is zero. What the CPA calls transitional areas – Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile – should practice what is called the "popular consultation" to decide whether they want unity or independence. Darfur, which had been an independent kingdom for a long time and only joined Sudan in 1917, will find itself more eligible for separation than the south and may claim secession soon after the new government of the south is announced. The expected scenarios of the future of Sudan are very gloomy.

The NCP has neither intention nor time to change laws or solve the Darfur problem. The African Union Panel on Darfur (AUPD), chaired by former South Africa President Thabo Mbeki, submitted its report to the African Union. The report urges the government of Sudan to establish a comprehensive, independent and integrated national criminal justice process which shall include investigations and re-in- vigation of all aspects of the Special Criminal Court on the Events in Darfur (SSCED). The national criminal justice system will act as the principal forum for delivering criminal justice for crimes relating to the conflict in Darfur. Second, a Hybrid Criminal Court, which shall exercise original and appellate jurisdiction over individuals who appear to bear particular responsibility for the gravest crimes committed during the conflict in Darfur, and to be constituted by judges of Sudanese and other nationalities. The United States of America also sets the peace in Darfur, the democratic transformation and implementation of the CPA as conditions for positive future relationship with the government of Sudan.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Future History and the Dilemmas of Separation

Relationship is built around mutual understanding of any given parties to any agreement. In this case the agreement was for the NCP and the SPLM on the future of Sudan. However by 2009 the relationship began deteriorating over among other issues, the results of the census and the ruling of the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal. In addition to this insecure situation, foreign investment was deterred by rampant corruption and lack of the rule of law. The response to the Abyei region has divided the SPLM internally. It is to be understood that Abyei is significantly rich in oil, natural gas, and water in about 25000 km. Although it is not more than 1 percent of the Sudan's total area, Abyei has about two-thirds of the country's oil fields says Sa-laheldin Abdelrahman Eldoma.^{iv}

The border demarcation between the North and the South has also been a cause of deteriorating relations and increased tensions. According to SPLM, the North has proven that it cannot be trusted and will never be willing to let the South secede peacefully. Though there has been a parallel view for unity, however the SPLM argues that the CPA gave the South its right to self-determination.^v The demand by Southerners for the right of self-determination could be attributed to two reasons. The first is colonial policies towards South Sudan and the second relates to the practices of the Sudanese central governments towards South Sudan since independence. It is known that the administration in South Sudan during the colonial era had passed through three stages. The stage of government stabilization (1899-1920) in which colonial administration depended on tribal chiefs in what was known as native administration. The second stage was the separate administra-

tion of South Sudan in the 1920s until the Second World War. Following the Second World War, the colonial power changed policy in favour of the unification of the two parts of the country. This policy started with the meetings of 1946, followed by the Juba conference in 1947.^{vi} Each of these three stages had its contribution in shaping the perceptions held by Southern citizens in regard to their rights. Under national governments, certain developments and practices strained relations between the South and the North. The South further argues that Khartoum has lost its right to have a say in the internal affairs of Southern Sudan. On the other hand, Khartoum government argues that since a proper referendum is not possible the South cannot secede.

If we examine the possible war in post January 2011 referendum, this war might be similar to and different from the previous war. Different in the sense that the Sudanese Armed Force has no strongholds in the South, but as before the North fights the war of proxies. Perhaps the NCP might attempt to use the lack of unity in the South and divisions in the SPLM/A to divide and rule. In addition Khartoum might aid the Lord's Resistance Army to terrorize the Equatorial region. Similarly the SPLM might follow the same strategy in the North by supporting the Darfurian rebels and movements in the North and East of Sudan. The NCP government might stay strongly in power; eventually the SPLA soldiers of the Khartoum Brigade stationed in Khartoum as a result of the CPA might be disarmed and violently killed. In the long run the country might also experience conflicts pitting north and east and hence increasing social unrest. We have to bear in mind that the war in Darfur could eventually escalate with a renewed offensive on Khartoum by Justice and Equality Movement (JEM).

Based on some of these perceived issues, my argument is that, while the peace agreement rightly sought to protect the basic rights of the people of the South by providing them with a measure of autonomy and self-governance, it severely threatens the sovereignty of Sudan and jeopardizes its territorial integrity. By creating separate institutions, laws, financial systems, and more importantly, separate military bodies for the South, the agreement creates a "state within a state" and paves the way for a subsequent Southern secession. It also calls into question what it means to be a citizen of Sudan, legitimizing and further exacerbating already-existing tribal, ethnic, religious, and kin-based trends, and gradually eroding any unified Sudanese identity.

According to Hassan Abu Taleb, writing in "Al-Ahram weekly," :

If a separate state is established in the South after the interim period, a further element of instability will be added to the already volatile situation in the region. Egypt has extensive interests in Sudan, and many officials in Cairo have voiced concerns over the fact that the protocols laid the foundation for an independent Southern Sudan; an outcome which would stand in stark contrast to Egypt's interests in a unified Sudan under Khartoum's control. Many Egyptian observers felt that the US-sponsored peace process bypassed the 1999 Egyptian-Libyan Initiative and failed to guarantee Egypt's national interests: Sudanese national unity and the unhindered supply of Nile water.^{vii}

Regional and International Dimension

Despite its seemingly historical and religious nature, the conflict in Sudan is rooted in many economic, territorial, and natural resource-based issues. The politics of oil and water are increasingly important, as they are both vital resources for both the warring parties and regional and international actors. Consequently, by not regulating the use of oil wealth and allowing both sides to purchase weapons with the oil revenues at their disposal, the combatants can quickly expand their military capabilities and reignite the conflict anytime. Some of the SPLA's first armed activities were targeted at employees of the oil company Chevron, which planned to construct an oil pipeline running from the oil fields of the South to the refineries located in the northern harbor of Port Sudan.^{viii} On the other side, the government is accused of displacing large numbers of local inhabitants to protect oil operations by foreign companies. All those measures indicate efforts by both opposition and government forces to either control, protect, or destroy oil production capacity. More specifically oil is a symbol of the Sudanese problem: Sudan's recent history of decolonization, failed nation-building and its continuing political affairs are reflected in the story of oil. Economic factors, such as oil exploration and extraction, show not only that considerations of the global economy dominate political decision-making but also clearly indicate the underlying sources of conflict in Sudan.^{ix} China and the United States are already engaged in fierce competition over oil interests in Sudan. The National Petroleum Corporation (NPC)—which is wholly owned by China—already has a 40% share in oil extraction operations in Sudan.

Stability and harmony or Piece-by-Piece?

The conflict in Sudan represents a multitude of interconnected dilemmas for all the actors involved. On one hand, the Khartoum government has demonstrated its inability to handle cultural diversity, build a solid national identity, or respect minority rights. As a result, primordial tendencies such as tribal, ethnic, sectarian, or clan-based loyalties have transcended any unified Sudanese identity. On the other hand, opportunistic foreign intervention has further inflamed the crisis and has made it more intractable. The politics of oil and water have further deepened Sudan's crisis and turned the country into a strategically-contested location. Historically, foreign intervention in Sudan's civil war, particularly through the supply of arms and money to Christian and animist rebels, has prolonged the conflict and delayed prospects for a peaceful settlement for decades.^x

In offering my criticism I would not hesitate to say that what was needed in Sudan was an all-encompassing peace settlement involving all the parties to the conflict, rather than one tailored for the SPLM/A to the detriment of other marginalized groups in the country. By leaving them out of the equation, these groups (most notably the rebels of Darfur) will seek to play the role of the "spoiler," in order for their grievances to be addressed. Secondly the Western-sponsored Kenya peace process has exploited Sudanese cultural diversity for the service of foreign agendas aiming at the disintegration of Sudan, rather than for the preservation of Sudanese unity and territorial integrity. Only time will tell if the CPA agreement will achieve real peace or instead serve as a blueprint for the piecemeal disintegration of Sudan as we now know it.

In my view a number of questions underlie the state of affairs and are likely to determine which outcome becomes a reality. For instance, what will happen with the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment of President Omar Bashir? Will he be toppled? Will he be arrested? Will the referendum be free from coercion, intimidation, and victimization and antagonism? What will be the results of the referendum; will it be accepted by both sides? What will happen with the implementation of the Abyei arbitration? Will it be accepted? The people of Abyei region too have a referendum to choose to remain in Southern Kordofan or to become part of Warrap State in Great Bahr el Ghazal. According to the Sudanese Bishops Conference Pastoral letter of 22nd July 2010, the Bishops argue that borders and voter eligibility have officially been agreed; however, there remain currents of dissatisfaction amongst other groups in the area which could derail the process. Furthermore the Abyei referendum Commission has not yet been formed, and the Abyei region has experienced sporadic violence and the Bishops fear that more violence could be in the offing. Other questions that are raised include especially in the case of secession, will there be a further agreement on wealth sharing and border demarcation issues not dealt with in the CPA? Will the South remain united or will it be torn apart by power struggles? This will depend on a large scale whether the South has the capacity and stability of a cooperative and confident leadership.

Policy options for the international community

The following are desirable steps to be taken. First, there should be establishment of a humanitarian corridor from the North to the South aimed at providing humanitarian assistance to meet the basic needs of the "new" people. Secondly, there should be support for the civil society to strengthen the unity of the Southern Sudan. Thirdly, there is need to support the repatriation of refugees and resettlement of the internally displaced persons their reintegration into local communities and for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the areas they can and want to live in. Fourth, there should be provision of peace keeping presence to protect civilians, mainly in the border regions behind the frontline and humanitarian assistance under the UN Charter article seven. The fifth desirable step is to ensure the provision of training to leadership to ensure better educated and better substantiated decision-making. The monitoring of the human rights and the rule of law is needed and the implementation of the agreements under the CPA. Last but not least, there should be continued support and capacity building in monitoring of future elections.

Whether Sudan as a country stays united or not, negotiations about its future can-not be avoided. It is important that with a sense of urgency, both the North and the South start thinking about how, for instance, the independence of the South will look like if that is the result of the referendum. What will happen during the transitional period? How long will that last? What to do with international treaties? How will oil revenues

and resources be divided? By such talks the time horizon of the parties can be extended; but is it feasible?

Looking to the Future

There should be an inclusive process of engaging with western powers, non-western powers and international organizations such as the AU, IGAD and Arab League to support the whole spectrum of post-2011 arrangements. Second, the multilateral partners should lead the way by supporting Southern Sudan's institutional capacities and governance in all vital sectors (health, food, security governance and state building) as well as in the Nuba Mountains, Abyei and the Blue Nile.



In the next two to ten years

In order to contribute to the stability of the future of Sudan, collective effort should be put in place for an 'insurance against shocks' fund for Sudan, to prevent civil war and conflict outbreaks linked to weather shocks. Moreover, there should be support either by technical assistance on large-scale urban planning where appropriate. Additionally there should be continued work with both the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan to develop their technical oil expertise and support initiatives to improve transparency and accountability by engaging oil companies involved in Sudan (i.e. from China, Malaysia and India) as well as Sudan's main oil consumers (Japan). Support should be provided on the existing best practice in Sahel region. For instance by having a systematic and long term support of the livestock sectors and mitigating conflict over grazing lands through inclusive and legitimate processes.

Conclusion

The fundamental issue currently is that under the present adverse circumstances in the Sudan, there would be no way for a free, fair and transparent referendum. Therefore it would be in the interest of the advocates of unity and separation alike to unify their ranks and join efforts to impose the favourable climate for the dissemination of their ideas about unity or separation so that they reach the Southern citizen, the voter in this referendum. It is also in the interest of both camps to ensure a free, fair and transparent referendum in order to make its result acceptable to all, hence, obtain recognition of the international community. This entails that the pre-referendum arrangements must be discussed in order to reach consensus about them and thereby ensure equal opportunity for the two camps of unity and separation. If the two parties to the agreement possess enough political will, the required favourable circumstances for the referendum can be created within two months. The South – South dialogue is crucial to the referendum.

As there are differences between the North and the South, there are also differences within the South itself. Therefore, if separation occurs, the situation of Southern differences must be dealt with prudently.

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Endnotes

ⁱState here refers to a broad definition of the concept which includes the executive branch of the central and local governments within a state but also the legislative and judiciary arms of government.

ⁱⁱThe Juba conference was held from the 26- 30 September, 2009 in Juba Southern Sudan. According to Fayez Zaki Hassan while writing in China views he had this to say, the conference tends to set up a map for tackling Sudan's internal and external issues. The four-day conference discussed many political issues including the 2010 general elections, the 2011 referendum in southern Sudan, the Darfur conflict and the future of the relationship between the NCP and the SPLM. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-09/26/content_12114404.htm. Last up dated 2009-09-26 Accessed 22-9-2010.

ⁱⁱⁱOkolo Paul and Maren Maram "African Union Leaders Accept Mbeki Report on Darfur Conflict". The AU meeting Abuja, Nigeria. <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aIg0Q1H8F6UA> - Last updated October 29, 2009 . Accessed 22-9-2010.

^{iv}Sudan's Abyei constitutes an important co-existence area between Arabs and Africans. On May 26, 2004, the National Congress — the ruling party of the Salvation regime — signed an agreement with the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM), in Nifasha as a protocol, which renewed the old question regarding to which side Abyei should belong http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1248187488933&pagename=Zone-English-Muslim_Affairs%2FMAELayout. ACCESSED 21-9-2010.

^vNevine Khalil, "Al-Ahram Weekly" Concerned Support for Sudan Deal, 8(8) 2002. At the end of the six-year transitional period, the South will vote in a referendum on whether it wishes to be part of Sudan or secede. Machakos Protocol," United States Institute of Peace Library : Peace Agreements Digital Collection : Sudan July 30th, 2002 And The clause reads as follows: "At the end of the six (6) year Interim Period there shall be an international monitored referendum, organized jointly by the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army, for the people of South Sudan to: confirm the unity of Sudan by voting to adopt the system of government established under the Peace Agreement; or to vote for secession." http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1156077720132&pagename=Zone-English-Muslim_Affairs%2FMAELayout accessed 23/09/2010

^{vi}Akol Lam "South Sudan Referendum: First things first" The Sudan Tribune. 5(9) 2010. The right of self-determination is not a mere date, when due, people go to vote and everything will be over. Those who called for the right of self-determination did so with a vision that the people would have to be made fully aware of the meaning of self-determination and the consequences of each of the two options so that they make an informed choice. People must be explained of these two options: why unity option and why separation option. When the CPA dealt with the right of self-determination, it mentioned specific things which must be realized before referendum. First, the self-determination in the CPA was an attempt to break the deadlock over the issue of separation of religion from the state or the relation between religion and the state. So the CPA stipulated that Northerners shall have the right to apply Islamic Sharia in the North provided that Southerners shall have the right to self-determination. Therefore, the call for a secular state as the only condition for the realization of unity implies a call for re-negotiating the agreement as the two parties had already agreed that the North applies Sharia while the South applies laws that are derived from the people's consensus and customs including religious beliefs. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article36175>. Accessed 23/9/2010.

^{vii}Hassan Abu Taleb, "African Cloaks, Foreign Daggers," Al-Ahram Weekly August 8th, 2002. http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1156077720132&pagename=Zone-English-Muslim_Affairs%2FMAELayout

^{viii}"Sudan: Oil in Sudan – Deteriorating Human Rights," Amnesty International May 3rd, 2000 .

^{ix}Ibid.

^xKamel Kareem quotes, Eric Margolis, "Tread Softly in Sudan," Canoe August 15th, 2004. http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1156077720132&pagename=Zone-English-Muslim_Affairs%2FMAELayout.

www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1156077720132&pagename=Zone-English-Muslim_Affairs%2FMAELayout.

Hakimani visits Korogocho, Mathare and Kibera

Jesuit Hakimani Centre staff visited three youth groups from Korogocho, Mathare and Kibera in their communities on 29th and 31st October and on 1st November 2010 respectively during theatre in conflict transformation and peer mediation. For the last four months, Hakimani has had workshops with the three youth groups at the Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations (Hekima College). The first workshop in July focused on rights based development with particular reference to the Bill of Rights (Chapter Four). During this time, human rights and fundamental freedoms were discussed within the context of the proposed constitution (that was eventually endorsed by majority of voters on August 4). The workshop also paid attention to national values, devolved government, public finance and constitutional commissions.

The second phase of the workshop mainly dealt with positive ethnicity. The presentations by facilitators and group discussions focused on the problem of negative ethnicity and ethnic stereotypes in Kenya. At the end of the workshop, the participants were expected to appreciate diversity in multi-cultural societies and to come out with recommendations that could help in enhancing durable peaceful co-existence of different communities in the country especially in informal settlements of Nairobi.

During the third phase (Peace Units Training) of the programme, the facilitators centred on conflict transformation and peer mediation. After brief presentations, each community went for group work in which they brainstormed on a play/drama with a theme on conflict transformation and peer mediation. At the end of the session, the youth went back to their respective communities for further preparations.

Once they were done with preparations and mobilization of members of their communities, the youth leaders invited Hakimani staff to their communities during the performance on theatre in conflict transformation and peer mediation. The three days at Kisumu ndogo, (Korogocho); Charles de Foucauld sisters' compound, (Mathare); and in Olympics open grounds, (Kibera) were the climax of the programme that had been running since the last week of July this year. It is our hope that Hakimani will continue engaging the youth on various programmes so that they could bring positive change in their communities!

Deaf Ministry - An inevitable ministry and a pastoral challenge within the Catholic Church in the region

Fr. Cornelius Ssekitto, AJ.

Introduction

We could argue that the universality – Catholicism - of the Church is manifested in its response to our Lord’s mandate to ‘Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19). Through the 2000 years of the Christian mission, the Church has made deliberate efforts to reach out to people in all geographical locations of the earth. Through the ages, however, the Church has always broken new grounds to reach out and extend the gospel message to people of certain categories and conditions who could have been socially excluded from fully participating in the life of the Church. This article discusses new grounds that the Church is making to extend its mission and gospel message to its deaf members through the use of sign language. However, it does not underrate similar efforts in other parts of the globe, which attempt to address the same issue.

This work specifically put in light Guadalupe parish (Adams Acarde), Nairobi, where the deaf ministry is a reality with its achievements and a share in the challenges, and points out the already existing efforts and steps of hope. Further, the relevance of deaf ministry is stressed leading to strong recommendations and conclusion.

The rationale

It is almost 52 years since the first mission schools for the deaf were started in Nyang’oma (Kisumu Archdiocese) and Mumias (Kakamega diocese) and many others followed, leading to many Deaf schools to date. What is not in place, that the deaf are not part in most of our church congregations, after such a long period of time? The core objective of this work is to highlight the deliberative steps at Guadalupe Parish, a call on the Catholic Church in Kenya and the region urgently and seriously to consider the establishment of Deaf Ministry on various levels.



A school for the Deaf in Homa Bay County, Western Kenya

What is Deafness?

According to Kenya National Association of the Deaf (KNAD), Kenya has estimated 800,000 deaf people (John Oywa, 2010). These are the people who have hearing losses of varying degrees of severity. The deaf; ...are the people who have lost their auditory senses. The loss can either be mild or profound. Deafness can also fall into post-lingual and pre-lingual deafness. The former includes people who became Deaf after the acquisition of speech. These people may particularly maintain speech they acquired before becoming deaf for further communication. The later is composed of people born Deaf or went Deaf before the acquisition

of speech. All in all due to the loss of their auditory senses, they depend on vision for communication. (The Basic Kenyan Sign Language Manual, 2002)

There are causes as given by scientists and other writers, which lead to deafness. Some of the causes of deafness are heredity, illness, physical abnormalities, trauma to the skull or ear, certain heavy medications, and, most common, loss of hearing acuity due to age. Hearing losses which are caused by disease or obstructions in the outer ear can be sometimes be corrected by surgery or a hearing aid. Hearing losses which result from damage to the delicate sensory cells of the inner ear or to the auditory nerve to the brain are usually not candidates for surgery, and hearing aids cannot repair the damage (Elaine Costello, 1983). It should also be noted that excess noise, loud music, and bomb blast damage the ear. In the present time, therefore, given the causes of deafness, we are all vulnerable and potentially deaf.

Deaf culture

Generally, culture is understood as a shaped or nurtured way of life in respond to the surroundings or environment. Culture is a system of beliefs and activities by a group of individuals who are linked together by ethnicity, religion or language. One's culture underlies how individuals understand the world, their system of beliefs, their plan to live by, and their way of identifying themselves. Objects people use in their daily lives and how they interact with them are also culturally defined (Tom Humphries, Carol Padden, Terrence J. O'rourke, 2000). Indeed this applies to the Deaf as an independent group of people who appreciate themselves. But we have to consider the sociological and pathological understandings.

The term deaf people with small 'd' refers to individuals with a physical condition characterized by lack of sensitivity to sound. According to the pathological approach, deafness is a deviation from the norm, a physical problem-disability that needs to be corrected by using hearing aid, attending speech therapy or undergoing surgery to get a cochlear implant so that the individual can live a "normal" life in the society. (Deaf Culture Online, Culture Vs. Pathology,2010)

The term culture with capital 'D' refers to a community with its own interest and experience which conforms to a particular identity. In this regard, "Deaf people do not view themselves as disabled or handicapped. Instead their view of themselves is one of wholeness and completeness. They view themselves as competent individuals with a linguistic and cultural history" (Tom Humphries, Carol Padden, Terrence J. O'rourke, 2000). In this case, the deaf have a common language – sign language which allows them to share ideas, needs, struggles, and world view, like any other group of people.

In our case, the term deaf will be applied in a generic sense without referring to the pathological or sociological specifications.

What is sign language?

It is extremely important to know what sign language is, since it is the mode of communication in deaf ministry. Sign language is a visual-gestural system of communication. It is the native language of deaf people and was created by the deaf people for the purpose of communicating with each other (Elaine Costello, 1983). However, sign language differs from one country to another, just as there is no language spoken universally. The term sign language is used here in reference to all forms of manual communication. Sign language, be it American, Japanese, Kenyan, Ugandan etc, is a language on its own with rules that govern it, just like other languages like Swahili, French, German and others. Mastering sign language of any given country is appropriate for deaf ministering.

Deaf ministry at our Lady of Guadalupe - Nairobi

The parish community of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, in Nairobi, has established a specialized ministry to the deaf known as "Ephphata": Ministry to the Deaf. This name is inspired by an episode in Mark 7:34 in which Jesus healed a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech; he was enabled to hear and speak when our Lord said to him "Ephphata" – 'Be opened'. This is the motto in the logo of the ministry to the deaf in Guadalupe Parish.

This new initiative is deliberately integrating the deaf in liturgical functions and so enabling the deaf to fully participate in acts of worship and community service. The deaf are enabled to listen to the word of God, and to participate in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread. The ministry has brought peace, joy and hope to the usually excluded group, it has enhanced the realization of the dignity of those who are usually made to feel that they do not fully belong to the family of the people of God. Ephphata has changed the experience of the deaf as they celebrate the 11.30 am Sunday Mass in which their needs are addressed.

The origins of this ministry revolve around the St. Joseph Small Christian Community of the Deaf, which is one of the communities in the parish. One key mission of that community is to nurture the culture of inclusiveness by enabling the deaf members to read, understand and preach the word of God, and in this way nourish their faith.

The group's origins

The foundation of the ministry to the deaf in Guadalupe parish was laid in the year 2008, by Joseph Guadalupe of Guadalupe Missionaries by then a theology student at Hekima College. Inspired by his faith and his theological training, Joseph realized a need to have the deaf fully included in the Christian acts of worship. He discussed his interests with the Parish Priest, Fr. John Joseph, and his assistant Fr. Eduardo who were very supportive and encouraged the establishment of the group. The initiative had humble beginnings but it soon expanded as it was joined by many deaf people, and gained the support of others who shared sentiments of support to the group. Within two and half years the ministry gained a membership of 40 deaf people, and 10 others who were capable of hearing, but were able to communicate through use of the Kenya Sign Language.

The Ephphata Ministry has a clear pastoral plan with a vision and objectives that are approved by the Parish Priest, and works in harmony with other parish departments.

There are four departments namely:

- Network and Communication Department, whose director is Dn. Joseph G, GM (hearing);
- Catechesis Department, whose director and is Fredrick Otieno (Deaf), also coordinator of the entire group.
- Liturgy Department, which is directed by Fr. Cornelius Ssekitto,AJ - (hearing), also assistant coordinator.
- Awareness and Empowerment Dep. directed by Hillary Otieno (hearing)

The St. Joseph Small Christian Community for the Deaf has an executive which provides its leadership and is composed of the following three persons namely,

- Chairlady – Sharon Musimbi (Deaf)
- Vice - Francis (hearing)
- Secretary – Peter Mugambi (Deaf)
- Vice - Leah Ogada (hearing)
- Treasurer – Grace Namboka (Deaf)

In the last two and half years, the Small Christian Community (SCC) has made number of achievements in the areas of catechesis and liturgy, with around 10 Deaf who are under faith instructions. It has convinced the deaf community of the fact that its members can gather and pray as a community.

From experience, myself as the only priest serving among them, I usually sign-read the Sunday gospel. At the time of singing and sharing the word of God, the hearing are always overwhelmed and inspired by expression of faith of their deaf brothers and sisters. As a preacher I have to confess that quite often, I feel enriched by the experience and refocus my homily to address the specific needs of that community. Such moments, one experiences the universality of the apostolic faith which made St. Peter, while in the house of Cornelius, to confess, “In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. But in every nation the one who fears him and accomplishes righteousness is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34 – 35). In the course of this year, three deaf men are undertaking catechetical training, in view of becoming full catechists of the Catholic Church. This is a result of serious commitment and sacrifices of the deaf ministry in Guadalupe. They are a sign of God’s grace working in that community.

Spiritual nourishment

The community organizes moments of spiritual retreat to provide its members with opportunities to deepen their faith. Some hearing persons have expressed surprise to learn that the deaf, due to their special needs, also undertake retreats. For example, during the 2010 Lenten Season, the group had a prayer day at the Resurrection Garden in Karen to prepare themselves for the Easter celebrations. They also celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Awareness and empowerment

As it may be expected, the deaf people especially the youth are faced with more challenges than their hearing counterparts. Because of this reason, the group organizes and equips the deaf through awareness and empowerment talks. These are organized during school holidays and they equip them with life skills such as assertiveness, feeling valued and cared for and a sense of belonging to a community. They gradually come to face their low self-esteem and develop positive attitude to life, ready to take charge of their future. These achievements bring joy especially as the numbers of the beneficiaries increase. They are involved in owning the programme, and they always look forward to the next day's items.

Extension of the sign language

Presently, there are many parents, relatives, friends who require communication with the deaf. This necessitates learning sign language. The department for Network and Communications is responsible for the teaching of the sign language, and has achieved much given the numbers of those who have benefited from it. Sign language (KSL) is taught on every Sunday at 2pm. Through this, the group enhances sign language skills; it helps people to communicate, interact, understand and value the deaf persons for what they are.

Given the number of those who have learnt to communicate with the deaf at Guadalupe, it is a cause of joy for the group. The fruits are already visible as those who have learnt already interact and interpret for the deaf during liturgy and prayer meetings. Our Lady of Guadalupe parish is a step of hope and reference in Kenya and region, as far as Deaf Ministry is concerned. Having been a parish priest, I know the implication of initiating a Deaf ministry where there is no diocesan Deaf pastoral umbrella. It is a real risky venture, subject to criticism and discouragement. Even in any other parish, the involvement of the deaf in liturgy implies interpretation. This, in most cases, will cause distraction and grumbling on the side of the hearing congregation. But fortunately, the priests at Guadalupe parish risked for Jesus. Today, the Guadalupe parishioners too have become very receptive and integrative with the deaf, hence, constituting God's family.

Our presence and efforts in Guadalupe Church have not gone unnoticed. Fr. Joseph Healey, a Maryknoll Missionary well known for his writings and promotion of the small Christian communities in Eastern Africa visited the Deaf Christian community. He was impressed and recommended the group's efforts. Fr. Ignatius Ikunza, SJ, the former director of Jesuit Hakimani Centre, whose death shocked us also showed interest in our apostolate. In his meeting with the leaders, the late Fr. Ikunza credited the group in its venture in the 'mission land' of the Deaf Ministry. He had pledged readiness through his time and ideas to contribute to the Deaf involvement on a wider level. We shall miss him a lot!

With the growing numbers in the Deaf Christian community, the youth learning sign language, and the deaf involvement in the community activities, the humble beginning and risky venture have become a step of hope. The deaf persons are in our parishes, but why don't they come to our churches? Have we created a room for their language to pray with them? It is here that Guadalupe ministry to the Deaf gives you hope, we can constitute what is lacking in our church to make a complete family of God. Again, the three Deaf who are undergoing instructions to be catechists, no doubt are beacon of hope, and a remarkable achievement answering to the real need in the Church.

Facing the challenges

There are many challenges that the members of the Deaf Community face. They are social, financial and religious and we cannot claim to have answers to all. But with the few achievements, we can afford a smile, since we are putting our aspirations visibly, lighting a candle of the Deaf Ministry, instead of cursing the darkness of indifference and insensitiveness to the needs of the deaf in the church.

The insensitivity to the needs of the deaf is identifiable in many ways, for example, many professionals and pastoral agents in religious fields, are not conversant with the deaf culture. This imparts on the deaf persons a social stigma as they experience exclusion, a feeling they get when the society is indifferent to their existence. Social stigma is a result of ignorance, which nurtures negative attitudes and prejudice towards the deaf. Hence, denying them access to education and employment opportunities. The deaf people face harsh realities and denied the joy of enjoying their rights. It is very hard for them to access legal services, medication, counseling, entertainments and education (John Oywa, 2010). Yet, these are basic human rights that every human being is entitled to.

A case in the point, are the many TV Channels that are available in the country. But very few those channels have proved relevant to the deaf, at least in terms of interpreting the daily news to enable the deaf access information. It is only once in a long while, like on the day of the constitution promulgation on Friday 27th, July 2010 that Kenya Broadcasting Corporation could flash on and off, captioning the sign language interpreter. Even big gatherings as graduations in our public universities are neither friendly nor attractive to our deaf compatriots.

As a section of the society becomes more sensitive to the needs of the deaf persons, it is my humble appeal to every citizen to pay attention and be sensitive to the less privileged members of our communities, particularly the deaf. Let us not become deaf ourselves to the realities and cries of our fellow people who have hearing defects. We ought to listen to them because they see us.

The number of the deaf is likely to rise hence their presence cannot be ignored. It implies that the use of the Sign Language should become more and more relevant in our society. "As long as we have deaf people on earth, we will have signs It is my hope that we all will love and guard our beautiful sign language as the noblest gift God has given to deaf people" (George Veditz, 1988). By communicating with the deaf we give them an opportunity to express themselves in their own way. We are therefore duty bound to give the deaf people a chance to contribute to a national and kingdom of God building. They have a lot to enrich us from their language and culture.

What we ought to consolidate

The number of schools/institutions for the deaf in the country and the region, is a good point of departure. It is important that we consolidate what we have for the better future of all citizens. Looking at these schools/institutions, many have not shown considerable progress over the years, with no upgrading. In such scenario, it seems the society does not expect the deaf to go beyond technical institutes in their education or career development. This leaves us with a very big challenge, because the society seems to have decided the professions that the deaf people must embrace.

We have Dr. Michael M. Ndurumo, HSC, who is a lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of Nairobi as the model and reference of proof that the deaf are capable and can compete in professional and intellectual fields. For the better future therefore we should arise as men and women, deaf and hearing to look forward for a higher learning institute/university for the deaf in the region. This will enable the deaf to shine and bring out their potentials contributing to society building. The Deaf culture is so rich, and we can never enjoy its fruits unless we enhance its growth.

Kenya Institute of Special Education

Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE), Kenya National Association of the Deaf (KNAD), Kenya Sign Language Interpreters Association (KSLIA) and their counterparts institutions within the region are doing a recommendable job. However, they should be empowered and special attention given to them.

Steps of hope

Besides the schools/institutions for the deaf in the region, there is a seed of hope in the hearts of men and women interested in teaching and educating the deaf. Myself, a fruit of this effort, feel indebted to those who taught me sign language at Karen Technical Training Institute for the deaf (KTTID). This service is an opportunity for many of us to reach out to the deaf. The fact that sign language is offered also by KISE, KNAD, KSL research project, faith based groups and others, is an opening for

the society to get set for what it takes to bury the negative attitudes and prejudice towards the deaf. We have the opportunities to learn sign language. Deaf people are so good, and are always ready to assist those interested in their language. Many have and are still helping me in mastering their language and in understanding their culture. The integration process within the deaf schools has been a boost to the accessibility and knowledge of sign language. This is a sign of hope since it adds up to the number of persons with sign language knowledge.

New Constitution

A turning point and a new dawn for Kenya is the new constitution. This is also a point of hope for the person with disabilities. In Chapter Two on The Republic, Article 7, 3(b) states that “the state shall promote the development and use Kenya sign language ...Braille and other communication formats and technologies accessible to the person with disabilities.” Again in Chapter 4, the Bill of rights, article 54, 1 (a), states that “A person with any disability is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect (b) to use sign language, Braille or other appropriate means of communication ...” In the same article 54, 2: “the state shall ensure that at least five percent of the members of the public in elective and appointive bodies are persons with disabilities.” (The Constitution of Kenya, 2010))

If this is implemented, it becomes a dawn of hope for the deaf. This will, as I have already said, be a call to us all to overcome our attitudes and prejudices towards people with disabilities. Instead, we ought to look at them as people with equal opportunities and enhance their participation in societal responsibilities.

Sign Language (KSL) Learning

In equipping the pastoral agents with sign language, the AOSK (Association of Sisterhood in Kenya) has taken a recommendable step. At Chemchemi Catechetical and Pastoral Institute, the pastoral agents learn sign language as a tool to help them reach out evangelizing/catechizing the deaf persons. At the Apostles of Jesus Theological Seminary (Karen), the seminarians learn sign language too as a necessary package in pastoral theology. These two institutions are responding to the signs of the time; they are pointing to the inevitable consideration and relevance of Deaf Ministry in the Catholic Church in our region. Giving sign language a chance in religious training institution’s syllabus is a door opening opportunity since it is from here that we go to minister to all people. The encounter with the deaf, therefore, will not be a strange world.



Deaf Kenyan leaders attend a graduation ceremony to support graduates

The relevance and Importance of Deaf Ministry

From the time Guadalupe ministry to the Deaf begun, there is a remarkable sense of belonging among the Deaf. And putting in consideration what influenced the birth of the SCC, the Church indeed is a place where every individual should feel the sense of belonging. Deaf ministry is, therefore, very relevant in our dioceses, and its creation will give tremendous results; the deaf will feel at home with a chance to live their life to the full. This will resonate with what Jesus said: "I have come that you may have life, life to the full." (John, 10:10)

Through the Deaf ministry and the sign language skills, I have personally experienced how the sacraments become relevant and a heart touching reality to the Deaf. The times I have administered the sacrament of reconciliation to the Deaf, I discovered more how deep it is healing to the soul, heart and conscience. Unfortunately, where there is no sign language knowledge on the side of the minister, the Deaf just write on the paper. In such situations, there is no chance of that deep expression. For many of us, genuine confession is a moment when we speak out our deep and tear shedding self, expressing our remorsefulness. This is truly a part of the inner healing. Therefore, sign language skill on the side of the priests enables the Deaf persons to have also a personal encounter with God's love in the sacraments.

On visiting any counseling centre in our countries, one realizes that people all over, regardless of religion, background or status, face emotional and psychological challenges in life. I am sure through the Deaf ministry the deaf can access counseling services. There are estimated 200 trained sign language experts in Kenya (John Oywa, 2010). This percentage is too small to enable the deaf enjoy the national services. And the truth is that, not all the trained sign language experts are trained counselors. This, open to us a very delicate sphere. The deaf, like any other person, experience emotional and psychological challenges which need attention. Personally I am for this task and I am now taking the counseling course. To stress the point once again, if the Deaf Ministries are initiated within our dioceses, the deaf persons will be cared for spiritually, socially, emotionally and psychologically.

Recommendations

My recommendations are based on the fact that within our respective places, the deaf people do not hear what we Catholics preach. The deaf are very few in our Churches/Cathedrals, and there is nothing wrong with the deaf, but there is something terribly amiss with us. Evidences to this, have been manifested by the deaf themselves in different fields. ".....I have had a hard time, and I still can't hear, and I still get frustrated, but it doesn't matter, if you can't accept me, it's not my problem, but yours." (Lewis, 2007)

In 1 Cor 12:12-30, St. Paul says, "Christ is like a single body made up of many parts, have concern for one another." With these sentiments, Fr. Peter McDonough (Deaf) said, "....if a diocese does not offer a diocesan service to the Deaf people, they will remain forgotten and excluded from the Church, and as such the Church will be the poorer for it." (Fr. Peter McDonough, 2008)

Vatican II states that, "the Church encourages full, conscious, and active participation by all peoples in liturgical celebrations; and This is their right and duty by reason of their baptism" (Flannery OP, 1975). This goes without doubt that, ".....liturgical celebrations with the Deaf people can enrich the whole Mystical Body of the Church. Further, the ignorance of the existence and presence of the Deaf people and their needs/rights is ignorance of service to the Body of Christ, the Church. If there are no Diocesan Deaf services, the Church as a whole will be the poorer for it" (Fr. Peter McDonough, 2008).

In the same perspective, "No matter how beautiful liturgies are, no matter how strongly we shout in defence of the disabled, the deaf will never find the church appealing until they themselves are made to feel that they are part and parcel of the ecclesial family not only in worship but also in ministry. Secondly, the deaf find it difficult to relate linguistically and value-wise to other Sunday congregations. As the various ethnic groups have been given the opportunity to express worship in their own native tongue and customs, so too must the deaf be given the same opportunity.there must be opportunities available for the deaf to serve not only their community, but the universal church. We must, if our ministry is to be effective, take the time to facilitate the discovery of deaf charisms amongst ourselves."(Rev. J Vitucci, 1988)

Therefore, more pastoral agents should access sign language learning. They can in their various places/parishes eventually influence the establishment of Deaf Ministry from parish to diocesan level. The obvious results to this will lead to the national structure as Kenya Catholic Deaf Ministry or Association, for the case of Kenya, and similar ones in the region.

Secondly, as a Church we must appreciate, value and nurture the Deaf wisdom and culture. Cyril Axelrod (Deaf and Blind Priest – London) said that, “Deaf wisdom in and through their sign language: this is the bridge for communication. This is a GIFT, and the Church must use and cherish the language as a gift for the entire Church. It is unthinkable to tell the Deaf to stop being Deaf...” (Axelrod, C., 2009). From these deep feelings expressed, we realize that the more we are unreceptive, unaccommodating and negative towards the Deaf, the more we deny ourselves the richness of their culture and wisdom. To be charitable and as Christians, we should “view deafness as a gift of God which has led to the creation of a unique language and culture, worthy of respect and affirmation.” (Charlotte Barker – Shenk, 1985)

As a Church/people of God therefore, we have this noble task of being at the forefront to facilitate the change of attitude and become inclusive. The Church, therefore, as a voice of the voiceless, has a big role to play. It is true there are existing efforts in serving the Deaf people, from the religious, governmental and non-governmental establishments. But as Catholic Church, we have to go an extra mile to have the deaf in our Churches, catechism groups and in the small Christian communities. They should have opportunities to access marriage encounters as couples.

Conclusion

In conclusion, on my journey so far, walking with/among the Deaf persons, I invite the hearing people to arise and give the deaf people a chance. The Deaf are only deaf not dead. They deserve all rights and opportunities in life; more so, they have a gift of faith to express. The call and a knock to discipleship to minister to the deaf is a reality and an urgent one because; “The Deaf world will always be a small world, and the Catholic Deaf Community will even be smaller. The hierarchy will ask if it is worth the time, energy, resource and money for such a small community..... Church must include everyone..... people, whatever gender, race or disability, are treasures or jewels hidden in the ordinariness of life, in the way they have to struggle with daily living. The call to discipleship is nothing fanciful or romantic...”

In the early centuries, the Church was strengthened by the blood of the martyrs. Today, the Church is strengthened and blessed by Deaf people, blind people, and people with disabilities. The Church will do well to listen carefully and respectfully and put into action what is right and just. Empowering the Deaf people is the way forward...based on the full involvement of Deaf people in realizing their Baptismal call – God calls and they, they alone, respond. It is like a treasure (Matthew 13:44), hidden in a field that Deaf people bought, not with money but with patient tears, putting up with injustice and oppression, and overcoming them, utilizing their gifts for the good of the whole community, and the Church – the Body of Christ”(Fr. Peter McDonough, 2008). It is true we may be hearing, but we become deaf when we resist and remain insensitive to the presence of our brothers and sisters, in the Church/society who are deaf.

Fr. Ssekitto AJ is a priest with a lot of experience in the Deaf Ministry

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