

## DEMONSTRATION FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

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### Abstract

*Sustainable development is an urgent global concept that requires governments to lead well the distribution of natural resources in order to secure current and future generations. After fifty years, the resulting mixed fortunes show that Christians in the leadership of development work should demonstrate the impact of Biblical theology as the necessary philosophical foundation for truly holistic sustainable development. This paper is based on some of the reflections of the findings of a qualitative study “Missional Motivation for Sustainable Development” that interviewed 33 respondents from five organisations, based in Kenya, that had received local or international awards for exemplary service in ten or more years of operation. These are the African Inland Church Cheptebo Rural Development Center, outstanding in their transformation of the Keiyo valley into a landmark agricultural training and demonstration center; Tenwek Community Health and Development that hosts one of the best mission hospitals in East Africa in addition to promoting thousands of women’s Bible and care groups in Bomet, Nakuru, Baringo and Narok; St. Martin Catholic Social Apostolate made famous for their compassion to the most vulnerable and their mobilisation of over a thousand community volunteers in Laikipia, Nyandarua and Baringo counties; Utooni Development Organisation that decreased abject poverty in Makueni, Kitui and Machakos by building thousands of sand dams; and Kijabe Environment Volunteers that has worked through research and environmental conservation to protect water towers in Kiambu and Muranga. Biblical examples that support this model of Christian leadership include the directive of creation care in Genesis; Jesus’ demonstration of the suffering servant in Isaiah 61; and Paul’s example and writings in the New Testament. These communities of practice provide demonstration sites where Christian leaders provide consistent mentorship, evangelism and discipleship, as well as teaching and demonstration of concepts that beneficiaries feel welcome to experiment on for contextual solutions.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable development, Demonstration, Christian Leadership

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### INTRODUCTION

This paper is derived from an on-going study by the author called “Missional Motivation for Sustainable Development” that seeks to understand how the transformational nature of Christian faith influences and motivates Christians in development to practice sustainable development. It seeks to encourage Christians to reflect on how their faith teachings and practice impact their character, vision, goals, and practice in development work to demonstrate the place of Christianity in sustainable development (Garber, 1996, p. 43). Christian faith, expressed through Bible teaching, preaching, study, reflection, meditation, discussion and related spiritual disciplines of prayer, solitude, mentorship, teaching, and demonstration are effective in improving and sustaining human life in the community for multi-generational sustainability (Perkins, 1982, p. 74).

### METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on the preliminary findings of my study done in five organisations based in the Central and Western parts of Kenya. These Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have won local or international awards for excellence in sustainable development practiced for over ten years. The study utilised semi-structured interview protocols administered to thirty-one individual respondents and two groups. Respondents consisted of staff members, beneficiaries and directors. Data was transcribed and analyzed using NVIVO 12.4 (QSR, 2019).

### Criteria for Selection of Organizations

The following five organisations are set in Kenya in the area south of the equator but spanning the country from East to West. They were selected upon a random online search and a visit to ascertain their suitability. The following criteria were used for selection.

- Longevity of development initiative - that respondents will be able to draw from a fair amount of history of participation and effect. All organisations in this set will have been operating for a minimum of 10 years.
- Sustainable development agenda- It will be good to interview respondents who are conversant with a variety of social, environmental, economic and political issues in their community. All the projects have been awarded prizes or recognition for their application of sustainable development principles.
- Integration of theology and development- respondents were expected to be growing Christians who can discuss what they learn and apply from the Bible and integrate into what they do.

While it was preferable that a Christian ethos governs the organisation's vision, this was not a requirement as the study was interested first in individual and not corporate respondent experiences, whatever their context is because the sources of their Christian teaching are expected to be many. Examples included Christian radio, church participation, open-air and door-to-door evangelistic initiatives, books and mentorship by mature Christians.

### Theoretical Framework- Communities of Practice

To analyse the concept of demonstration for Christian leadership in the experiences of the participants of the five organizations in this study, the theoretical framework called “communities of practice”(Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 1) was used. This framework brings together foundational components of practice that provide for a community, a space for learning, experimentation, and implementation and important domains or felt needs that bring people together to solve their problems.

Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor: a tribe learning to survive, a band of artists seeking new forms of expression, a group of engineers working on similar problems, a clique of pupils defining their identity in the school, a network of surgeons exploring novel techniques, a gathering of first-time managers helping each other cope (ibid, p. 1 )

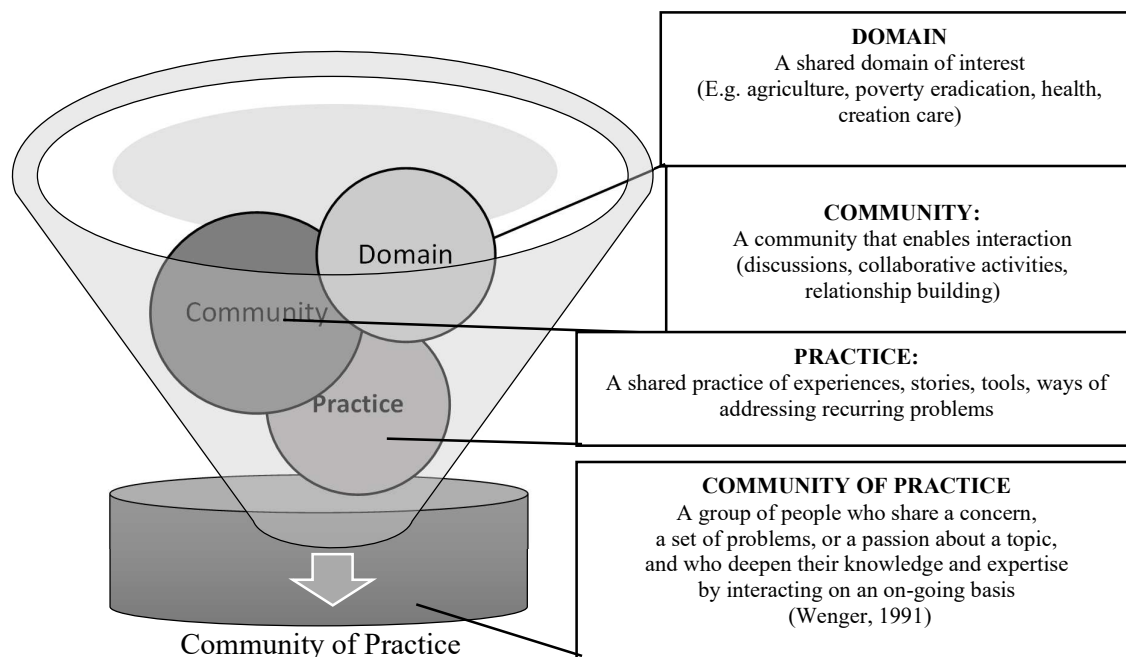


Figure 1: Communities of Practice- Adapted from “Communities of Practice: A brief introduction(Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015)

### ***The Domain***

A community of practice is not merely a club of friends or a network of connections between people. It has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership, therefore, implies a commitment to the domain, and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people. (ibid., p. 2)

The theoretical framework above helps illustrate how the five organisations studied developed themselves so effectively that their participants voted them as successful community organizations. Each of them developed out of felt needs (domains) in the respective communities such as solidarity with the vulnerable, community mobilization and spiritual formation (St. Martin CSA- Catholic Social Apostolate), environmental conservation, research and policymaking (KENVO– Kijabe Environment Volunteers and UDO- Utooni Development Organization), water harvesting and conservation agriculture (UDO), community health and development (TENWEK TCHD- TENWEK Community Health and Development) and agricultural demonstration, conference facility and church ministries (CHEPTEBO RDC- Rural Development Center). As they came together, they developed themselves through training, experimentation, and implementation in the provision of needed services and therefore established themselves as communities of practice.

For instance, in Cheptebo Rural Development Centre (RDC), farmers became experts in grafted fruit tree growing and exotic dairy cow and goat rearing. For many years, farmers travelled long distances to buy their tree seedlings and so the market for fruit in the valley diminished. They began to diversify their farming with animal husbandry, vegetable and herb farming and so had begun to see their fortunes change for the better. Fortunately, after many years of lobbying for external help in capacity building, the center's manager reported in April 2019 that the fortunes of local fruit farmers are now set to change as a fruit processing factory will be built on the center. This is what he had to say:

The Japanese Government has signed an agreement with African Inland Church (AIC) Cheptebo RDC to provide a KSH 8.4 million grant for the construction of a fruit processing factory at the AIC Cheptebo Center. The main product will be gas-dried mango. The success and approval of funding by the Japanese government for the improvement of livelihoods of the Kerio Valley communities through the establishment of a fruit value addition facility (factory). We thank God that we have secured a market in Nairobi for 10tons of dried mangos annually which indeed will benefit the community starting from January next year that is when the factory will have been completed (Personal Communication)

CATIC (Cheptebo Agricultural Training and Innovation Center) has trained over 1000 farmers since June 2016 (Kimeli, 2019, p. 1). This training center serves as an experimentation and knowledge-building hub.

### ***The Community***

A community of practice is distinct from other communities in its emphasis on unity in their shared activities, innovation and learning. A number of illustrations of this emphasis explain this principle below.

In pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other. A website in itself is not a community of practice. Having the same job or the same title does not make for a community of practice unless members interact and learn together. The claims processors in a large insurance company or students in American high schools may have much in common, yet unless they interact and learn together, they do not form a community of practice. But members of a community of practice do not necessarily work together daily (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 2)

Improved and transformed community welfare is the goal of the work of each of these organizations. Initially, charismatic leadership paved the way for development and for inspiring action in the community through the introduction of ideas, some of which they had learned through training in university (TENWEK TCHD, KENVO). Other catalysts had developed their acumen from being mentored by non-governmental and missionary agencies (CHEPTEBO RDC, UDO, ST. MARTIN CSA). Ultimately, no one person in this setting is the holder of knowledge or expertise because each person who lives there participates by sharing, as a beneficiary who is empowered to transform his or her own life through inclusion in shared activity (Mulwa, 2010, p. 127). In this setting, the program facilitators from each organization serve to catalyze action. They may begin by testing an idea but with time, the shape or form it takes is determined by the community. In all settings

except for KENVO and UDO, the leaders also serve as priests, pastors, and spiritual directors. They encourage participants to integrate their learning with faith teachings. By participating side by side with community members in the practice of development, they have opportunities to demonstrate Christian values and principles.

For instance, St. Martin Catholic Students' Association (CSA's) motto is "only in community" (St. Martin, 2019). The approach of St. Martin CSA starts from the potential available within the community.

We believe and have trust in people that solutions for problems of the beneficiaries can always be found by the community and in the community itself. We are convinced that resources in the community are available and that many people of goodwill just need to be mobilized. By promoting solidarity, sharing, and love, changes in the lives of the beneficiaries will be lasting and sustained beyond the existence of St. Martin CSA. In addition, they will be of greater quality as they were given by one's neighbors. Besides the available potential in the community, the beneficiaries themselves also have a potential in which we believe. They have hidden talents and abilities, often overshadowed by their issues and problems. Often, they have lost hope, self-esteem, and belief in their capacities. We must bring out the best in every beneficiary and make them realize that they can do something for themselves (Personal Communication, St. Martin, 2019).

#### Practice

A community of practice is not merely a community of interest- people who like certain kinds of movies, for instance. Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems- in short, a shared practice. This takes time and sustained interaction. (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 2)

Each of the organisations studied came about due to urgent needs in the community. The urgency of their needs caused them to work hard together for many years to achieve the level of development they have today. For instance, UDO was started by a man who from childhood had observed that members of his community had for many years walked long distances in search of drinking water. This was his responsibility in helping his family, so as he watched the rain fall around the homestead and drip from his home's iron sheets, running downhill and out of sight, he wondered what he could do so that he would not have to run downhill after the water. He started thinking about how to trap the water near his home (Brinkley, 2013). Kijabe Environment Volunteers (KENVO) was started by a man who at the time was part of a community of young people who felt that something needed to be done about the destruction of the forest in their community. He had the following to say:

As young people, we said we have to do something and protect this forest. I would want to focus on why we formed it. There was a lot of destruction of the forest. We wanted to involve young people in developmental activities. We also wanted to empower the communities to take care of the forest. We were also inspired by the late Professor Wangari Maathai who was a renowned environmentalist in this country. And since then we have been doing a lot of research, monitoring and doing a lot of forest patrols (Kuria, 2016).

These five organisations have been appreciated by their beneficiaries for consistency in building communities of practice that responded to the felt needs of the people. From responding to basic needs such as provisions of water, medical treatment, agricultural training, environmental conservation, they have introduced conservation agriculture, group Bible studies and home building for widows, animal husbandry, and evangelism and discipleship. Three of their leaders have grown in leadership through mentorship and opportunities for growth, an aspect of community development that is critical to its longevity and establishment.

#### Biblical Foundations for Christian Leadership

Within a community of practice, leaders who profess Christianity have a unique opportunity to demonstrate how their faith influences their practice in development work. Good leadership is critical to the success and sustainability of community development work and so Biblical principles for leadership help guide Christian leaders in their role. Christian leadership is characterized by the belief that the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the sovereign God to whom all creation is accountable (Gnanakan, Johnson, et. al. 2014, p. 30). This is a way of life that must be adhered to for its transformational power to be effective. Principles for action can be drawn upon which decisions can be made.

Hebrews 1:3 states that "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven." This verse teaches us that the power for effective Christian leadership is

provided for by God who through the unity of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit possess all that humanity needs for sustainability. Christian leaders believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God that provides sufficient counsel and direction for life in Christian leadership. The Bible demonstrates God's character, work, will and judgment through narrative, poetry, teaching, illustration, and case-studies. The God who lives in the hearts of believers provides power for Christian living. We know God through the Bible but we believe him through experience.

For instance, the stewardship mandate as given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:26 states "to rule over" which may be translated "to provide for" rather than "to lord over" creation. The two were created in the image of God to reflect his attributes. They were given resources and therefore a mandate to take care of creation by tilling the ground to make it productive, utilizing its resources and enjoying the fellowship of God who is creator, sustainer, judge and Lord (Stetzer & Nation, n.d., p. 173). This understanding leads a Christian to an attitude of "responsible stewardship" (Atkinson, 1990, p. 35), servanthood, humility and accountability rather than to corruption, strife and bad example.

Besides, the life of Christ and especially the three years that he spent with his disciples, provides for a good illustration of what Christian leadership entails. For instance, Jesus' great commandment for himself in Luke 4:18 (Quoted from Isaiah 61) portrayed him as a suffering servant who would be led by the Holy Spirit to care for the poor by announcing to them the good news of freedom, sight and God's favor. He would not favor the rich and powerful over the poor and vulnerable. He would touch, speak to, teach and heal the sick and demon-possessed. Reflection on the life of Jesus and his ministry model provides Christian principles of leadership in the marketplace. The ministry services of Barnabas and Paul the apostle starting from the book of Acts, and his letters to the churches (such as Ephesians, Galatians, Corinthians, Romans) and to different disciples that he took care of (such as Timothy, Onesimus, and Titus) are great sources of guidance for the aspiring Christian leader. In these Biblical sources, Paul is seen as a good vision-bearer who takes the time to understand his mandate to the Gentiles, those who Jews such as himself would otherwise marginalize, are considered the focus of God's redemptive love and therefore the focus of missionaries. They traveled across the Middle East and Southern Europe planting churches through leaders that they developed through close discipleship and mentorship. They encouraged young leaders to serve with the strength that God provides so that the church community may be blessed by their diligence and faith. Contemporary Christian leaders have the opportunity to learn useful leadership lessons from the life and service of Barnabas and Paul.

### **Illustrations of Demonstration in Christian Leadership**

#### **Definition of the term "Demonstration"**

A demonstration is the art and science of showing evidence for the existence of or truth of a matter and in the case of agricultural demonstration, "an act of showing someone how something is used or done." (Merriam-Webster, 2004). A demonstration can be achieved through a process of teaching the theory and importance of a concept; the illustration of how it works through hands-on experimentation and the examination of proficiency through project management. Without demonstration, skeptics rule. A demonstration is necessary for the transformation of mindsets because evidence not only proves things right but shows the method that can be adapted easily to achieving success using locally available resources. It links theory to practice in a way that those who may struggle with language or terminology may be able to see what is being done and have the opportunity to try for themselves.

#### **Cheptebo RDC**

Before 1986, the church leadership of the Africa Inland Church in Keiyo felt that it was difficult for the church to grow because people were leaving the area. The people thought that the land had low economic potential and so they needed to find their sustenance elsewhere. According to Michael Bowen (Priest & Barine, 2017, p. 107), AIC Cheptebo Development Center was started in 1986 as a joint initiative of the local church and the community. They agreed to work together to change this situation by utilizing 50 acres donated by the community to initiate activities that would help them spiritually and economically (ibid., p. 1). The twin goals of the center are evangelism and sustainable development as captured in the vision of the center which is to be "a Christian Center of excellence that effectively contributes to the community's spiritual and physical development" (Cheptebo AIC Rural Development Center Kerio Valley Kenya - Vision and Values 2013).

#### **Spiritual Disciplines, Evangelism and Discipleship**

Christian leadership requires the regular practice of spiritual disciplines because Biblical wisdom provides them with the necessary philosophical, moral and strategic foundation for demonstrating sustainable development. At

a personal level, it is necessary to build a lifestyle of Bible study, meditation, reflection, prayer and fasting, evangelism, discipleship, mentorship, coaching, and demonstration. In Cheptebo, Christian leadership has been demonstrated since the beginning through several avenues. The non-governmental Christian organization World Vision and missionaries, particularly from African Inland Mission, came to the Keiyo valley and had begun engaging the community in conversation and evangelism. They ran youth rallies through which most of the current leaders were identified, mentored, trained and deployed. They helped build local church fellowships that led to church planting all along the valley. Most of the churches here are church plants from the African Inland Church. This foundation of fellowship, Bible study, mentoring and coaching was the spiritual and social foundation upon which the development center was built as the community members got to engage the workers on a daily and personal basis and became convinced that the people who were reaching them and the ideas they had brought were sound. This foundation continues to serve the community well with those who struggle in their Christian faith being helped to reach a place of healing, restoration, training in different business and trade skills and management of family life at increasingly comfortable levels.

#### Demonstration Plots

Coaching consisted of the building of agricultural demonstration plots where different land development ideas were tested on the 50-acre piece of land the community had gifted the church development project with. They brought in exotic cow and goat breeds that were not expected to survive the harsh climate different from where they were sourced. They worked together as friends with the local people and finally managed to persuade the local farmers that these animal breeds were the answer to their problems.

#### Mentorship

One aspect of the demonstration of Christian leadership that is significant is the mentoring relationships that the partners and staff team develop with their team members, many of whom have grown up in this region. For instance, the director and his wife host a weekly Bible study in their home next door to the center for a large and growing youth group. A good number of workers in the center are recruited from these young people who have grown up being mentored by this staff team. Relationships built over many years have served to establish a leadership and development strategy that should last the test of time.

A key aspect of demonstration that draws people from far and wide is the facilitation of agricultural training and innovation at their new center where over a thousand farmers have already learned a wide variety of skills. Currently, they are teaching five modules, listed in the table below with theory and practice classes weekly. Some of the beneficiaries interviewed stated that they had seen the benefits of the development center and training school and would recommend it to others.

#### Agricultural Training

##### Cheptebo Agricultural Training and Innovation Center Study Schedule

Module 1	Introduction to Crop and Livestock Production in semi-arid areas
Module 2	Fruit Production in semi-arid areas
Module 3	Dairy management in semi-arid areas
Module 4	Poultry management
Module 5	Beekeeping

(“Cheptebo AIC Rural Development Center, Kerio Valley, Kenya,” 2018)

Most of the teaching and practical training is undertaken by CATIC staff who have many years of practical experience in semi-arid agricultural production and continue to be involved in the running of the farm. The Cheptebo RDC farm is available for demonstration and to provide practical experience to students in crop and livestock production. Where appropriate, other specialist trainers with particular expertise are brought in to provide training in some subject areas. As a Christian training center, all our training and activities are based on a Christian Biblical foundation. This underpins all our activities and daily Bible Study, worship and prayer times where all staff and students are expected to participate. The training is open to those of all faiths and none, but participation in these Christian activities is considered as an integral part of the training course (Cheptebo AIC Rural Development Center, Kerio Valley, Kenya, n.d.).

During my visits to Cheptebo, this relationship between Christian character and development work was fairly evident even when some of the workers and beneficiaries needed patience and help to fight poverty. Some of the beneficiaries told me of how they had struggled with family conflict that led to the abuse of local alcohol.

The center chaplain and director worked with them over time to draw them into new realities within the fellowship of the church and believing neighbors. Cheptebo is a good place to spend time observing all the activity going on and the interactions that characterize the relationships that they have among them.

### ***TENWEK Community Health & Development (TCHD)***

TENWEK Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) was founded in 1983 as a mission “to serve Christ by facilitating change through community-based health care - Sustainable Development, and appropriate development within needy communities.” They have two satellite offices in Narok West Sub- County at Ngito and Naikarra. In 2008, TENWEK TCHD began the Community Capacity Building program whose foundational participatory concept was to build citizen capacity for active engagement in leadership and governance. In promoting food security, they have developed foodbanks and the use of dairy goats. Their HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care project provides the communities with counseling, testing and promoting the role of men in HIV prevention. They teach abstinence through the “Why Wait” program and train parents on teenage parenting. They have a WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) program providing water filters, water-harvesting tanks, and spring capping. They also run a ministry for women in prostitution (WIP) for those interested in ministering to women and work with local churches (TENWEK, 2016).

The interview with one of the project leaders was quite insightful. They function as community pastors and agricultural extension workers. In pastoral work, they initiate group fellowships where members visit one another. This, the respondent said, has the impact of challenging people to clear up their compounds, mend their fences and improve their homes. Those who are too weak and poor to do it themselves are helped by volunteers led by these TCHD leaders. The transformation is so delightful that those marginalized community members who become beneficiaries of these acts of kindness join local churches, even without any spoken evangelism. The staff of TENWEK TCHD have developed a strong Christian ethic in their service as espoused by the seven respondents that I interviewed.

### **Chaplaincy**

The hospital treats many patients, some with chronic and others with fatal illnesses. To help patients grow in spiritual strength for their journey, seven chaplains work around the clock to pray for them, visit and share Biblical teachings with them and console with relatives once their loved one dies. This is what one of the chaplains had to say:

Tenwek’s chaplains work in concert with the medical staff to ensure that every patient treated there has the opportunity to hear the Gospel. Chaplains use the Scriptures to encourage patients who are emotionally impacted by their illness or who are facing disability or death. They also reach out to comfort and help the families and friends of patients. When patients are discharged, they receive a Bible (provided by Samaritan’s Purse) and a letter from a hospital chaplain that they are encouraged to bring to a nearby pastor so they can join a church community and grow in their faith. (4TW4RK)

As the chaplains share God’s Word with the patients, they are sometimes struck by the challenges of interpreting it to the situations that the patients are facing especially when healing takes long or when they do not get better. The chaplains may be challenged by the need to share encouraging news in very dire situations. One chaplain explained how he was struck by the urgency with which people who came to Jesus for help called out to him for relief. He had to challenge himself to grow in faith that God can (if he wills) respond to the urgency with which patients cry out for healing or relief from pain or discomfort. This is a challenging ministry that requires psychosocial support for chaplains as they face their daily work. The pastor of the resident church congregation functions as the chaplain for doctors and hospital staff. He is responsible for dealing with conflict-resolution, motivating and discipling them, providing pastoral care when they have their problems such as illness in the family, financial and relational problems. The pastor described his situation thus:

All the people working here are not necessarily doctors. We have other people with different skills, but in every skill that we put in place, we have wanted to and always emphasized that let that skill be a tool God has invoked in His society to bring change for the glory of His name. Although I’m using my skills as a medic, I’m using my skills as a carpenter, I’m using my skills as an engineer, I’m saying at the end of the day, I have been serving God with these skills and therefore, my faith is playing a role in that particular area. And that’s what everyone else is encouraged to have. (4TW3RE)

### **Physiotherapy**

One of the most inspiring ministries at TENWEK hospital is the physiotherapy and rehabilitation department. Here they use the small space they have to treat people and especially children with physical impairments. My observations are that they are very gentle with their patients who seem to have lived through a lot of trauma.

They talk to their patients and family members constantly in reassuring tones as they continue the treatment which sometimes can be painful as disfigured limbs are treated. The chief physiotherapist has been here for almost twenty years. Though he thinks the hospital management could improve their terms of reference, he feels called to his work and derives much joy from it. This is some of what he had to share:

So, when we involve these children and when you rehabilitate the child, you are impacting not only the child but also the family members, especially the women because mothers mostly have the role of taking care of these children, compared to our fathers. So, we have that passion at TENWEK because TENWEK has a compassionate ministry. It is a spiritual ministry. They get free medical service and we minister to them the gospel and then we follow them. We go to their homes. Our main goal is to reach them, assess their environment, rehabilitate them at their home, brief the parents on what to do, see the barriers they are facing and the challenges they are facing and try to help them. So, every time we go there it is an opportunity for us to also give out the gospel. And by doing that through love, they are very receptive to the gospel. That is our passion (5TW6SR).

#### **Tabitha Ministries**

This women's ministry started as a missionary discipleship initiative among poor local women in Bomet county. It grew tremendously over the years with a total of over 200 Bible study groups started and over 10,000 women having earned their gift Bibles by memorizing the setlist of Scriptures. As narrated by a woman who is the leader of one group, this is how they started;

... So, we started a Bible study. It was December so we started with the book of Luke. Peris was translating for me. And within six months we had fifty ladies coming to our home for Bible study. So, I met with a pastor that we were friends with and we said, what do we do? And he said, get it out to the villages. I said no. We don't have...we are not trying to start a church. At that time is denominational. Still, we had started with the illiterate but it became literate quite quickly. But we realized that women didn't have Bibles so we said if you can earn if you can say all verses we have learned at this point, you can earn your own Bible. (4TW2PL)

This ministry grew in part because they reached out to poor widows and orphans identified by fellow villagers and offered to help build or rehabilitate their homes with the help of generous community members. The community would help build the simple mudbrick and wood huts and Tabitha Ministries would supply iron sheets. This eventually caught the attention of the sponsoring church Africa Gospel Church which had begun to send pastors to provide pastoral care and additional funds. Christian leadership here is demonstrated by local women who having been mentored and developed by the missionary women, have now been able to set up effective administrative structures. They work with the leaders representing villages in the Bible study discussion groups and have settled in their roles very well in spite of being of comparatively low education. The local women in leadership are well respected and have been appointed by the church to lead their compassion ministries. "Tabitha also helps provide seed and fertilizer, minimal medical care, emergency food support, and small business start-up funds. Between this practical help and Bible studies that emphasize individual worth and responsibilities in Christ, thousands of women have been empowered to change their families and communities"(Kenya: Tabitha Ministry, 2019).

Most of the leaders who run Tabitha ministries are village women. They come together in solidarity to pray together, run their Bible studies, memorize Scripture and follow up on development projects in their communities. They are beneficiaries of the ministry and therefore know what it is like to come from the abject and isolating poverty to healthy living. They serve as good demonstrators of Christ's love in action.

#### **St. Martin CSA**

Saint Martin CSA in Nyahururu is "... a religious grass-roots organisation that was established to mobilize and train communities to support vulnerable people in their midst..." (Graaf & Van Keulen, 2008, p. 14). Their operations cover Laikipia and Nyandarua counties in Kenya as well as two areas of Baringo County, Mochongoi and Marmanet. The founder of St. Martin CSA was Father Gabriele Pipinato who was a parish priest in Nyahururu. The organization enlists more than one thousand volunteers annually who form the core of their community workforce. On average, eighty staff members form the support departments for community work and a hundred and sixty management volunteers have enlisted annually. Starting with the Community Program for People Living with Disability, they went on to start the Community Program for Street and Needy Children, the Community Program for Active Non-Violence and Human Rights, Community Program for Alcohol, HIV and Drug Abuse and the Community Program for Savings and Micro-Credit by 2002. St. Martin CSA communities are some of the best examples of communities of practice in this study. They have an



ecumenical approach to the inclusion of people from different faith persuasions and put volunteers representing local neighborhoods at the center of all activity. They believe that the center of their approach is the spiritual formation that guides their thinking and action. Everyone is expected to grow in spiritual formation.

#### Volunteerism

The next most important is the community within which they practice and the able volunteers upon whom the vulnerable rely to lead interventions on their behalf. Volunteers are supported directly by St. Martin CSA field staff who are developed by the organization through training, personal care, and oversight by heads of department. St. Martin CSA provides logistical, legal and operational and leadership support through the management team that is overseen by the board. The board is in turn supported by the group of trustees as required by the law.

#### Community Program for Addiction and Mental Health

Since St. Martin CSA works as a community of learning-based interventions, mental health professionals led the initiative to understand and respond to the plight of those suffering from mental health and substance addiction problems. Everyone was encouraged to relate closely with their beneficiaries regardless of their initial appearance and hygiene. This demonstration of acceptance encouraged beneficiaries to trust staff and volunteers in this program which resulted in growing success in their health and welfare, considering that some of them had suffered for many years without any help. Their families also benefitted from learning how to care for their struggling families better in the knowledge that St. Martin CSA supported their efforts.

#### Community Programme For Children in Need

A great number of vulnerable children find themselves on the streets of Nyahururu where St. Martin CSA is based. Rescuing them directly from the streets into rehabilitation centers is only the first stage of the program. This is where volunteers and staff interact with the children daily to show them love and acceptance, to assess their health and education status and to find their family of origin. The goal is to build a support system that will see them eventually integrated back into their extended families, where a safe and stable environment can be established. Volunteers are key in demonstrating love through consistent relationship building that helps the children settle down and regain as much normalcy as possible.

#### Community Programme for Peace and Reconciliation

This programme deals with human rights abuses such as human conflict in the home or between neighboring tribes. This programme was especially effective during the 2007 post-election violence season in Kenya that saw St. Martin CSA lead the way in bringing people in conflict with each other together for reconciliation. Staff and volunteers training in conflict transformation, mediation and peacebuilding work alongside government and non-governmental agencies to mediate between conflicting parties. They are now widely known and accepted in the Rift Valley area of Kenya for their effective interventions and their godly approach to conflict. Some of the volunteers who have been trained in peace and reconciliation have gone on to get well-paying jobs in other organizations due to the experience they got working with St. Martin CSA.

#### Community Programme for People with Disability

People with disabilities are easily marginalised because of societal ignorance of their capacity and interest in self-development. St. Martin CSA built support systems around vulnerable children due to disability by providing for school fees. Their parents and guardians received training in the provision of therapy. With knowledge comes understanding and commitment so community members were motivated to engage people with disability because they observed St. Martin CSA staff and volunteers lead the way in making a change in the lives of these vulnerable people. On a regular basis, they evaluate their progress and chart the way forward in identifying as many disabled people as possible so that no-one may be left behind in getting proper help.

#### Utooni Development Organization (UDO)

UDO is a community organisation that stands out primarily because of the transformational nature of its work. Prior to its formation, people in Makueni, Kitui and Machakos counties suffered greatly due to the scarcity of water. Hunger was prevalent because crops did not do well with minimal rainfall. Today, flowing rivers and lush greenery are to be found in many areas in this region. The people were encouraged with free meals, group cohesiveness and dam-building training to grow in faith that the building of sand dams would change their lives and it did.

“The organization is built on the early work of Utooni Development Project, an indigenous self-help group formed by Joshua, his wife Rhoda and six families in 1978”. He had grown up fetching water for his home and wondering what to do about the rain that fell outside his house but ran downstream where

he would have to walk long distances to fetch. NCKC helped him learn how to use sand to capture and store water away from the strong rays of the sun that would normally evaporate water quickly. UDO was founded in 2002 and registered as an NGO in 2005. Joshua led them to build not only sand dams but set up domestic water tanks, plant trees and dig terraces” (Brinkley, 2013).

The community work changed the landscape tremendously culminating in the increase in food production, close access to drinking and farming water, an increase in family incomes and improved welfare of women and children who traditionally were tasked to fetch water from long distances. Their work covers the three Eastern counties of Makueni, Machakos, and Kitui.

### ***Technical training and practice in sand-dam and terrace construction***

Bringing people together to synergize effectively was hard work for the facilitators but the water challenges encouraged some to participate in the learning phase of the work. In some seasons, they would need help getting relief food to strengthen them to work physically but in due course, they succeeded. One of the respondents who serves UDO as a conservation agriculture trainer describes his experience motivating groups to grow and work together.

So now from there because you have gone to a formed group, we used to take it through some training for it to become....to increase their cohesion through training them on group dynamics, we actually could show them how people coming together and making a group what are the benefits of a group. You talk to them about good leaders and how one qualifies to be a good leader. All those such things. So, getting to understand how a group undergoes that kind of metamorphosis whereby it has to grow from a forming to norming to storming to performing. They get to understand themselves and through that you make them increase their solidarity...I still have to visit and make sure that they work because you find that, when you let it to themselves, and their leaders it may like, you may not meet your timing because there is that time frame whereby a project has to meet (SUDIAM).

It took the expertise of several governmental and non-governmental agencies for this project to take off. Once the first community succeeded in establishing a successful sand dam, other communities believed that it could work and become more willing to participate in this hard work. The building of sand dams then gave rise to other dependent development projects such as the building of terraces and planting of trees and shrubs. According to UDO, the environment was completely transformed by the dams changing the way the community spent their time, the crops they grew, and the health of the children and general well-being.

...the sand prevents parasites and evaporation as well as providing a filter for the water stored beneath with about 40 percent of the volume behind a dam being water. Sand dams can hold an incredible two to ten million litres of water so even during droughts, water is available. In fact, excellence oldest dams have never dried up in 20 years. They therefore provide a year-round water supply for up to 1200 people and their animals saving women and children two hours a day and up to eight hours during droughts walking to fetch water. ("Excellent Development—Sand Dams in Kenya—YouTube," n.d.)

As a result, one of the respondents reported that there is a transformational change in the lives of different village communities. This is what he had to say:

From that time, things changed. We now have water, food. Our children started eating balanced food because we grow maize, beans, vegetables. We take the vegetables to the market.... we buy meat and oil and come home to cook. We started a project for educating villagers on how to cook appropriate food for the children to guard against kwashiorkor and marasmus. We received training, those who know how to read and write received training. We got government training and got help. We became TOTs. We used to go from house to house in Utooni, teaching the women. Even about health. Each person should have a toilet. Some did not care. Since I had been educated, you can't be clean if your neighbor has no toilet. You will be like him because flies will come from your neighbors' house and into your house. And yet you say that you are clean. We taught the women to dig gardens to feed the children. So, from there we felt that we had been educated. (SUDIAM)

Communities in Makueni, Machakos, and Kitui are some of the long-standing beneficiaries of this development work. They benefitted from the technical skills of many development partners and were motivated to sustain their farms and livelihoods.

### **Solidarity**

In this case, Christians in leadership do not seem to have overtly integrated their Christian faith in their motivation of communities for change. The change came from a need. However, one group interviewed during

this study showed evidence of theology-development integration that was delightful. They explained how they grew in strength and were able to do a lot of farm work when they worked together. They decided to show showed Christian love for one another by helping those who were weak to do their farm work. They also came together to build several rooms for letting. When young students came to study in the school in the village, they rented him a room at a very fair price so that he could complete his education. Their kindness was highly appreciated especially because they had yet to raise enough money to complete the building.

If some of the group members or community members are opinion leaders, there is potential here for further integration. In community meetings called by local chiefs and other administrators, I observed that religious leaders and evangelists are invited to give devotional teachings to those attending the meetings. Since it seems that some of them are itinerant, it is not clear what their long-term impact is.

### **Kijabe Environment Volunteers**

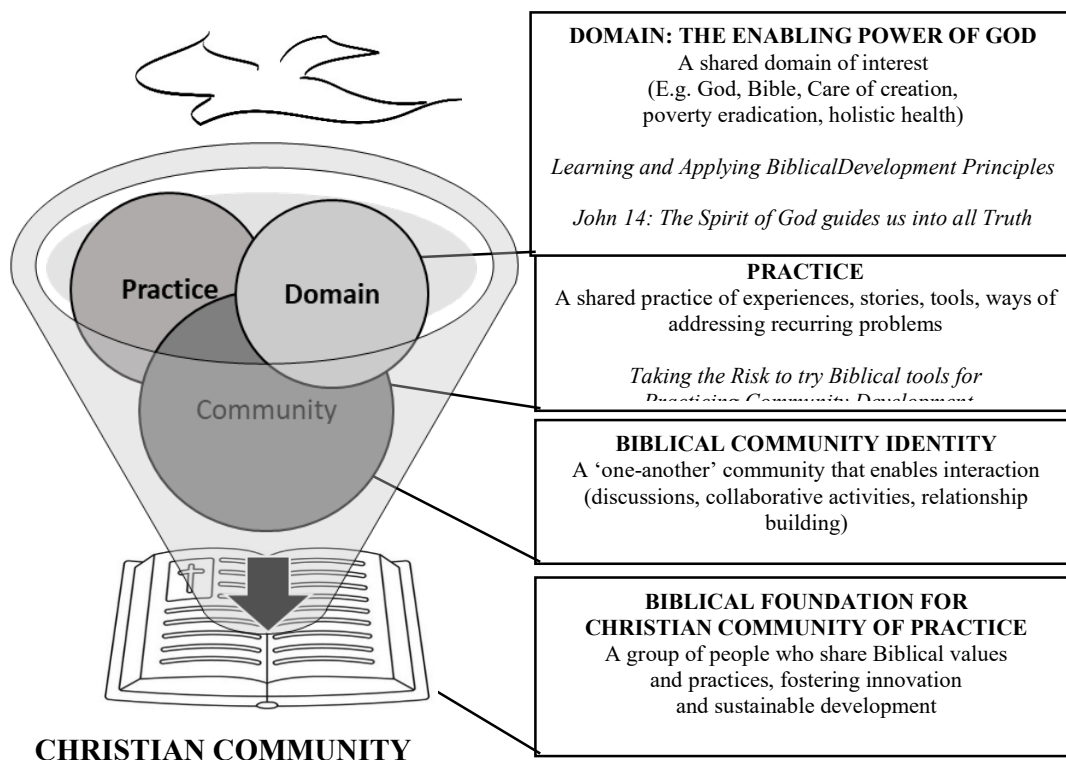
KENVO, an NGO located in Kimende, Lari Constituency, is mainly known for tree nurseries and water filtering where many organisations go to buy tree seedlings and re-forestation. It is known for encouraging schools to start environmental clubs where students and patrons plant trees in their schools and communities. It is also known for encouraging churches to advocate for tree planting through providing trees for their members to plant on different occasions such as birthdays, weddings and funerals. To enhance the benefits of tree planting, they started a beekeeping practice that illustrates aspects of sustainable development practice.

### ***Training in Environmental Conservation***

In terms of social sustainability, those who have been participating have benefited from coming together to deal with community land issues. They have benefited from training in beekeeping after which they were given beehives and funding to establish them on their farms. They got funding for starting tree nurseries where they could increase the number of indigenous trees they planted. Churches, schools and communities around the organization have learned to care for their environment particularly by planting trees and establishing hives in many locations. Other projects that KENVO has shared with the community are poultry farming, biogas, and drip irrigation kits funded by the European Union. In one of the KENVO respondents' view, this long-term engagement with the community has made them very happy with KENVO.

## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

For Christian leadership to make a difference in the lives of the community, they must engage face to face with them regularly to provide a conducive learning environment for all. A few lessons arise from this study on the nature and process of demonstrating Christian leadership for sustainable development in communities of practice.



#### ***Time in Evangelistic Outreach and Persuasion***

It takes time and patient facilitation for Christian leaders who have training, experience, vision, and love for people to persuade others to believe God's Word and to invest their time, resources and energy to try out new ideas. Time allows for people to observe both the development of ideas and the character of those who sell them. It takes patience, time, dialogue, reflection, experimentation for success to begin to be seen sustainably. The organizations in this study took between 22 and 82 years to get where they are today. They faced many challenges but the usefulness of their ideas, the philosophies that led their thinking and their person-to-person everyday engagement helped make their work successful.

#### ***The presence that facilitates mentoring, experimentation and character development***

It requires presence, the incarnational approach of Jesus to influence people in a transformative manner. People learn more by observation, hands-on experimentation, discussion, and character development through mentoring. They can repeat what was demonstrated until they find their innovative ways of doing things that matter to them.

#### **Consistency**

It requires consistency in character, ideals, values, practice, and example. Influencing people for lasting change requires the repetition of the same message and principle many times in various languages and forms.

#### **Demonstration site**

It requires a demonstration site near people's homes where experimentation and dialogue can be done. This way it is cost-effective because it is easy to get to. The demonstration also requires demonstration of good values to guide the mentees' own journey of discovery of who they are and what they are meant to do with their lives.

#### **A Christian welcome**

It requires the opportunity for community members to feel welcome, included and participating, so that new ideas can come up, application of innovative ideas can be effective. Some ideas may not work well in a particular context or time.

## CONCLUSION

Communities of practice are kept vibrant by need. Members learn to work together on felt needs as their relationships grow and evolve. This setting is useful for Christian leaders who want their faith in practice to have a lasting impact on the community. There are several roles that Scripture plays in such a setting. Scripture provides communities with a sense of identity concerning God. Scripture provides a philosophy for negotiating relationships especially in the area of conflict resolution. Conflict resolution is generally led or mediated in such a community by leaders who have demonstrated their faith over time and have unanimously been chosen to lead and mediate between people. Scripture becomes the go-to source of knowledge, wisdom, and power for a harmonious community life.

Communities of practice are not regular communities of people who live as neighbors. They are communities brought together by shared need and aspiration to make a difference in their lives. They learn how to experiment, share, innovate and adapt theory to contextual issues to bring about lasting success. A community will be sustainable to the extent that its members subscribe to and practice their shared values and ethos.

Communities of practice are useful environments for Christian leaders to influence community thinking and action through experimentation, hard work, sharing of ideas and camaraderie. Further, the discussion can help them develop mature Christian theology for the market place, based on the belief that God speaks to humanity, is engaged in their lives and has good intentions for them.

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