

## EDUCATION FOR THE REALIZATION OF THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR: CATHOLIC CHURCH ACTIVITIES IN UASIN-GISHU COUNTY, KENYA

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**ABSTRACT:** *The present world is largely characterized by people who live in two opposite extremes; the extremely poor and the extremely rich. The challenge of poverty remains a major concern to governments and non-governmental organizations alike. Faith communities respond to poverty by looking to the teachings of Scripture to establish structures and actions that can liberate and empower the poor. The Roman Catholic Church's commitment to empowering the poor is expressed in its social teaching and practices. Social amenities offered by the church range from provision of food, clothing, shelter, medical care and affordable quality education. Despite such initiatives on the part of the church, poverty is rife. Therefore, based on a study conducted in Uasin-Gishu County in Kenya, this paper examines the activities of the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret in the realization of preferential option for poor students in secondary schools. The study adopted descriptive mixed methods cross-sectional design comprising qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The target population comprised pupils in all the fourteen Catholic-sponsored schools in the Diocese, their head teachers, as well as teachers offering guidance and counselling. A sample of 351 students, 9 head teachers, and 28 teachers were drawn from those schools. Purposive sampling was employed in selecting 24 key informants, 12 from Catholic Diocesan secretariat, 4 priests, 4 officials from the Ministry of Education in the County and 4 members of the management at Catholic University of Eastern Africa (Gaba Campus). Schools were selected using simple random sampling technique while teachers and diocesan education officials were purposively sampled. Kathuri and Pals formula was employed in sampling student population. Questionnaire and interview schedule were the main tools of data collection. Analysed data was presented using cumulative frequency tables, percentages and pie charts. The study established that there are activities that are organised from within the church. The Catholic Diocese of Eldoret manages five key programmes that support poor children in its sponsored schools. Most of them are donor-funded although efforts have been initiated to involve parishes in raising money to sustain them. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the Diocese should explore ways through which continuity is seen in terms of funding. The study found that some projects that were supported by missionaries experience great challenges when the same donors leave. The findings of the study highlight practical strategies that the Catholic Church uses to assist poor children get education.*

**KEYWORDS:** Education, Activities, Catholic Church, Preferential Option, Poor, Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya

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## INTRODUCTION

Poverty has been the subject of much scholarship, with most discussions focusing on the causes and possible solutions. The Church has also been a major player in the fight against poverty.

When Pope John XXIII convened the Vatican Council II, for instance, most of the Cardinals knew that the church was headed for major reforms. True to their expectations, the final document that came from the Vatican II had a resounding emphasis on the place of the poor in society. In Latin America, Catholic Bishops understood even more clearly the ravages caused by poverty and poor governance. Vatican II and the meeting of Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) in Medellin demanded that the poor should be considered in the programmes set out by the church. For the first time the cardinals attending the meeting recognized poverty as a big challenge and that an option for the poor was necessary. It was at the Puebla meeting opened by Pope John Paul II that the term preferential option for the poor was coined. In using this term, the Catholic bishops confirmed that poverty was indeed a concern for the Catholic Church. The Catholic social teaching has principles that enable humanity generate ways of self-improvement.

Amartya Sen (1992) describes poverty as lack of capability to function effectively. His was a reflection on inequality in the world in which people live. In his attempt to work out solutions for reducing poverty, he suggested a capability approach whereby people should be facilitated to function. This idea is similar to what the study calls self-reliance approach whereby the students who benefit from assistance that the Church gives are enabled to function on their own. His idea of justice for the poor led to a proposal of quality education through which the poor can improve their situation. What this assumption of quality education for the poor means is that those who go through school effectively are likely to get good jobs, become productive and earn more (Sen, 1992, p. 27). He argues that factors that influence educational outcomes can be traced back to the home. For him, poverty and the economic status of the person are correlated. Though the idea of quality was not developed clearly throughout the discussion, it is not lost on future studies to pursue.

Gutierrez (1973, p. 287) describes the plight of the poor from the perspective of liberation theology. He understands the poor as marginalized people who should be cared for by the Church. He posits that the poor are poor, not because of fate but, due to actions of those entrusted to their care. From his perspective, prophets such as Isaiah and Amos warned Israel to free themselves from oppressing the poor because by not doing so, the mandate of the people of God would not be clearly defined. In the spirit of Gutierrez's argument, the church takes up the prophetic task as an advocate of the poor. The Catholic Social teaching on the preferential option for the poor has extensively been influenced by the position of liberation theologians, thanks to Medellin and Puebla discussions. St. Pope John Paul II, though an advocate for the poor, steered clear of liberation tendencies in order to direct the church at that time to play a clear role in uplifting poor people from inhuman conditions. Therefore, he urged thus: "The church in seeking to promote human dignity should show preferential love to the poor, the voiceless and marginalized because the Lord has identified with them in a special way" (John Paul, 1987, p. 42).

The Pope aware of dissenting voices during that period argued that the mystery of poverty is that when people share what they have with the poor they get to know how they feel and at that point, love begins. The Encyclical is laced with biblical interpretations that awaken the church wherever it is to adopt a clear sociological and theological teaching for the poor. What this means is that the church should advance the cause of the poor in its lifestyle, programmes and policy. Perhaps in the mind of Pope John Paul II was a radical approach in which the church should listen to the poor and allow them to be part of problem solving initiative. While the Catholic Church in the Latin America opted to form Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) as a

way of attending to the needs of the poor, most other countries particularly Africa continued to welcome missionaries who brought God's word and encouraged members to go to school.

In the Apostolic letter titled *Novo Millennio Inuente* (At the Beginning of the New Millennium), St. John Paul II says: "Love opens out into a service that is universal; it inspires in us a commitment to practical and concrete love for every human being" (John Paul, 2001, p. 45). He demonstrates through his teaching the special presence of Christ in the poor which demands from a preferential option. Coming from the argument and the teaching of the Pope John Paul II, this term received legitimacy in the face of outright challenges from some Catholic conservatives. Perhaps what has been lacking is a practical matrix to identify the essential elements of this 'option for the poor'. Significantly, this option is a testimony to the nature of God's love shown when Jesus served those who had both spiritual and material needs. The Apostolic exhortation does not exclude anyone from taking up the role to assist the poor. The result of such an undertaking is that the Church cannot afford to sit by the side when poor people continue living in squalid conditions.

Pope Benedict XVI also looks at the poor in relation to God's love. As such, "God's love...raises questions about who God is and who we are" (Benedict, 2005, p. 2). Benedict alludes to what his predecessors pointed out, that the church's biblical mandate to help the poor cannot be left to a few. On 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2011, Pope Benedict issued the Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (Word of the Lord), adding voice to *Deus Caritas* (God is love) released five years earlier. These two documents are significant because they add voice to the role the Catholic Church has in identifying with the poor. When the documents are read in the light of Pope John Paul II's spirit of Puebla, the place of the Church in social and economic progress comes into sharp focus. Though Benedict's reflection does not give the modalities of how this should be done it was evident from the Vatican II council that the stage had already been set for the church to testify that it stood for the poor.

Looking at this teaching of Pope Benedict, two ideas critical to the discussion come into perspective. First is the religious vision that the church has for the poor despite the lack of approach in meeting the task. Secondly, this option for the poor requires a structured examination on the part of the whole Christian family. This last perspective elicits several other questions that perhaps escaped many other scholars before him. The Pope attempted giving an answer on whether there was valid option for the poor. Again, of critical reflection is how such an option should be interpreted and implemented pastorally. This study sought to investigate how the Diocese of Eldoret has interpreted and implemented the preferential option of the poor.

A recent look at the definition of the poor by Pope Francis can shed light into what his predecessor had asked. According to Pope Francis: "The poor are those left out or pushed into poverty by being denied water, food, housing and other necessities of life which are basic human rights" (Francis, 2015, p. 16). The Pope's *Evangelii Gaudium*, translated as the Joy of the Gospel, is an exhortation that invites the entire church to pursue happiness by way of reaching out to the poor and the broken. As time advanced, the church required a new meaning to the challenge of the poor in the society. Pope Francis understands preferential option for the poor as a pastoral strategy for members of Christ body to be witnesses in the world even if they face opposition. For him, God who is love has given the church the Gospel which has to be used to respond to challenges facing it. Hence, "A true Theology can be developed only on condition that a Theologian makes an unequivocal option for the poor and for their liberation" (Francis, 2013, p. 7).

Pope Francis has since exemplified this since he ascended to the office in March 2013. He made history during his trip to Mexico by castigating what he called institutionalized indifference to the poor and those displaced by war. In February 2016, he travelled to the migrant Island of Lampedusa off the coast of Sicily – indeed living to the spirit of liberation already propagated by theologians such as Leonardo Boff and Gustavo Gutierrez. Boff (1988) argues that suffering is not to be accepted. The statement should be transliterated to mean: poverty should not be accepted. His work affirms that those who own massive wealth are very few while a majority of the people live in abject poverty (Boff, 1988, p. 140). John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*, reflected on the theme of Evangelization in the light of preferential option for the poor and the vulnerable. This theme came as a reflection of some challenges that still bar people in Africa from experiencing the love of God in their lives. Part of what came from Popes' reflection was 'structures of sin'. The document became an invitation to the church in Africa to rise up and reflect on itself with an effort to avoid occasions in which it has become complacent to wrong systems instead of being an advocate for social justice.

One educationist, who supports the idea of a living system of education that every child can learn and achieve, is Zappone (2007). She recommends a framework that includes a description of the process and overall objective of achieving equality in children's educational provision despite the locality of a person. For her, a process that involves educationists engaging in change process in the lives of people is the priority. As Zappone (2007) suggests:

...achieving equality in children's education requires a living system that supports common ways of learning, accommodates diverse capacities, cultures, learning paths and achievement outcomes. One that also enables communal solidarity or 'sticking together'; and reduces inequalities of resources between social groups and geographical communities (p. 82).

The author above acknowledges that the challenge posed by inequalities of resources requires people to stick together. By proposing a social group as an avenue through which the endowed can contribute to the poor, work of peace on earth can be achieved (John XXIII, 1963, p. 434). Inequality of resources according to Zappone makes children from minority groups, such as socially disadvantaged children, children from ethnic minorities and those with learning difficulties to be left out. What this means is that there needs to be a deliberate effort to ensure that their differences do not result in inequitable or discriminatory treatment (Zappone, 2007).

If poor children are subjected to inequality or discrimination in school, their experience of school can be one of alienation and marginalization. Their experience of education tends to be, therefore, in sharp contrast to Dewey's (1966) view of education as "a fostering, a nurturing, and a cultivating process" (p. 10). Their educational experience also represents a contradiction of McLaren's (1995) belief that, in order to ensure some level of equality, "the society need to give the poor and the powerless a preferential option" (p. 138). In order to create a level ground where every child can receive education without feeling marginalized, the church positions itself as a moderate player. Through equal education provided for all, the church works for peace and unity among members of the human family. Catholic Church's option for the poor is hinged on poverty eradication through education.

The document, *Social dimensions of Development: An Appraisal of Human Centred Development and Alleviation of Poverty* (Republic of Kenya, 1994), indicates that poverty in Kenya has been on the rise since 1994. This paints a grim picture on the steps made by all the



stakeholders since independence. It revealed that at that time, 3 million people out of a population of 30 million controlled the country's wealth, leaving the rest to subsist either in poverty or just above the poverty line. It means that government efforts towards reduction of poverty, ignorance and diseases have been facing challenges. The three key areas were spelt out in the *National Poverty Eradication Plan* (GoK, 1999) and the *Sessional Paper No 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya* (RoK, 1965). The NPEP views poverty eradication as both a moral obligation and an economic imperative for Kenya's development. From the independence document above, the government of Kenya committed itself to an education process aimed at lifting the standards of the poor. The NPEP lays out plans for the country's economic growth together with plans on how to tackle rising cases of poverty. It also provides a framework on ways of reducing the scourge of poverty. As a long-term measure, the government of Kenya through its ministry of planning and interior coordination worked out a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). This became a roadmap for future developments of the nation towards wealth creation and sustenance.

The County of Uasin-Gishu worked out the first County Fiscal Strategy Paper (CFSP) in 2014 that highlighted several areas of interest including poverty reduction. This document pointed out the grim reality of the rising demand for basic services within the country despite economic uncertainty. The church, as the conscience of the society, challenges the injustices faced by poor children by creating avenues for assistance. The Catholic Diocese of Eldoret accomplishes this through the efforts it has in its schools in Uasin-Gishu County.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Ministry of State for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030, Kenya, estimates poverty level in the whole country at 48% (GoK, 2012). However, poverty is not evenly distributed: there are major disparities within the country and within counties. A Kenya Integrated Household Baseline Survey (2005/6) done by USAID, Uasin-Gishu County recorded a 51.3% poverty rate. This figure is much higher than that of the whole country. Every county in Kenya struggles to achieve universal access to education envisioned in Kenya Vision 2030 a reality. Despite many children benefiting from free primary education, access to quality secondary schools has remained low due to lack of fees. Out of 12,476 candidates who sat for KCPE in Uasin-Gishu in the year 2014, only 760 benefited from the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) kitty (Citizen's Constituency Development Fund Report Card for Uasin-Gishu-CFSP, 2014). The County has benefited from corporate bodies such as Kenya Equity Card and Master Card's 'Wings to Fly' as well as KCB Foundation scholarship which cumulatively supported 85 needy children in the county in 2014 (Murithi, 2014). The need to partner with like-minded organizations in addressing the challenge of poverty through education is highlighted in the County Fiscal Strategy Paper of 2014.

The Catholic social teaching highlights poverty as the greatest challenge that the Church in general (and the Catholic Church in particular) should eradicate through education for upward social mobility (Paul VI, 1967). Education improves the economic growth of a country and therefore generates economic opportunities and income (World Bank, 2004). In light of what the universal church teaches, the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret runs secondary schools in Uasin-Gishu County. Out of the 129 secondary schools in Uasin-Gishu County, 73 are Catholic-sponsored. There are Catholic-sponsored secondary schools with a package for bright students from poor backgrounds. The poverty index released in 2014 places those below poverty level and hence the need to scale up efforts to empower citizens to invent ways to fix (CFSP, 2014). What this means is that those parents with very low or at times no income may find difficulties

in sending children to high cost institutions (presumed to offer quality education). Borrowing from the missionary spirit of the early 1990s, the church can do something to assist such poor parents. Therefore, the study explored the activities of the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret towards the realization of preferential option for the poor in selected schools within Uasin-Gishu County.

### **Rationale for the Study**

The study sought to look into the social teachings and practices of the Catholic Church on the preferential option for the poor, specifically its application in Catholic schools in Uasin-Gishu County. Christian missionaries that first came to Kenya introduced schools in order to empower people with knowledge. They also built hospitals and attended to the sick within their established institutions. Some of these amenities were availed alongside the preaching of the Gospel in line with the Catholic social teaching. The findings of the present study highlights practical ways that the Catholic Church has embarked on to assist poor children get education. It was important to conduct the study in order to provide useful recommendations for policies and practices in current church practices towards poverty alleviation.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

A mixed methods and cross-sectional research designs were used in the study. The study was conducted in Uasin-Gishu County, a cosmopolitan area. According to the 2010 census, Uasin-Gishu has a population of 894,179 with 202,291 households and a population density of 269 people per km<sup>2</sup>. The age distribution is 0-14 years (41.5%), 15-64 years (55.7%), and above 65 years (2.9%). A young population signifies a high level of dependence, especially to cater for such needs as education and health (Uasin-Gishu County website). An estimated 90% of the entire land area in the County is arable and can be classified as high potential.

The study population comprised students from all Catholic-sponsored schools in Uasin-Gishu County. The Diocesan Education Report (2013) indicates that there are thirty-nine (39) Catholic-sponsored secondary schools with a student population of 3,882. The study also targeted 12 diocesan secretariat staff, 4 County education officials, 4 executive managers of Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), Gaba Campus, Eldoret, and 4 other priests who are experts in Catholic social teachings. Purposive sampling technique was used to identify nine schools with preferential option for the poor programmes, Catholic University of Eastern Africa – Gaba Campus, and the diocesan secretariat officials, four county education officials, the management of CUEA, Gaba campus and four other priests who are experts in Catholic social teaching. In total, 24 respondents were purposively selected to provide qualitative data. Random sampling technique was used to select students from the sample population. The sample size of the students was determined using the formula indicated by Kathuri and Pals (1993) which arrived at a sample size of 351.

Questionnaires, both structured and unstructured interview schedules and content analysis, were the main instruments of data collection. Once the filled questionnaires were collected, the data was coded and fed into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data from the open-ended items in the questionnaire and the semi-structured items in the interviews was transcribed and qualitatively analysed using thematic approach. They were interpreted and presented alongside quantitative data. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive

statistic which involved frequencies and percentages. The processed data was presented in tables, charts and explanations provided.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Provision for the Poor by the Church

The study sought to establish the extent of agreement of respondents concerning certain statements relating to provision for the poor students in Catholic schools. The responses to the statements were ranked basing on a Likert scale as follows: 5-Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Undecided; 2=Disagree, and 1=Strongly Disagree. A summary of the results is presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Provision for the Poor by the Church**

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
All the educational needs of poor students are provided for by the Catholic Church here in school	20	132	20	87	41	3.01
The Church has enough projects that meets the needs of poor students in its schools	61	168	31	20	20	3.77
The Church helps poor students' families with basic needs (food, clothing, shelter)	67	144	11	47	31	3.56
Poor students are never sent home for fees	16	52	20	103	109	2.21
The school involves my family whenever in fee problems	47	106	41	60	47	3.16
<b>Aggregate mean</b>						<b>3.142</b>

From Table 1 above, it can be observed that the aggregate mean of the responses stood at 3.142. This suggests that majority of the responses were undecided as far as provision for the poor by the church is concerned. The implication is that either the Church provides for the poor only on a small scale or only attends to the poor who are Catholics. It is possible that respondents may not have had knowledge regarding who pays fees for whom. Notable in the results is the fact that majority of the respondents (mean, 2.21) disagreed that poor students are never sent home for school fees in the schools that were sampled in the study. This suggests that the extent to which the Church attends to the poor students is low. The fact that many respondents disagreed regarding retention of students with challenges of fees suggests that not all poor children were in the programme for assistance by the Diocese. The study established that activities within the church were either in form of programmes or periodic contributions towards poverty alleviation or eradication. These two forms are discussed below.

### Church Initiated Programmes

The study revealed that all the five programmes covered aspects such as economics, social and political. The diocesan programmes were as indicated in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Church Initiated Programmes**

<b>Programme</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Education for Life (EFL)	45	24%
Gender and Women Development	30	16%
Small Internal Lending Communities (SILC)	47	25%
Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC)	23	13%
Caritas	40	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the table above, the five programmes initiated by the Diocese serve a minimum of one hundred and eighty-five poor children through provision of school fees and stationery items. These programmes were founded on the Gospel mission to seek Justice for all. Most of these donor-supported programmes help the diocese of Eldoret to achieve its mission in the following key areas: poverty eradication through provision of quality and affordable education, material assistance to hunger-stricken areas and civic education programmes. They also help the poor within the universal mandate contained in the Catholic social teaching. Through these programmes, the Church situates the person as the reason for any development agenda (Banahene, 1996). Banahene (1996) replicate the initial work done by the missionary communities that came to the diocese to develop schools, hospitals and technical institutions. According to Banahene (1996), human progress has since time immemorial been a concern of mankind. In the following sub- sections, the study focuses on each of these programmes.

### **Education For Life (EFL)**

This is a programme managed by the Diocese of Eldoret through the assistance of other partners targeting children of People Living with Aids (PLWA). EFL assists children from diverse backgrounds to go through school through payment of school fees and provision of food to their parents. Through the programmes managed in Education For Life centre based in Elgon View, Eldoret, the Diocese trains beneficiaries on basic living skills as well as vocational skills. Behaviour change and counselling programmes are part of the ways EFL uses to improve the life of these children. From the study, forty-five students were assisted in 2016 by the Diocese through Education for Life (EFL) programme representing twenty-four percent of all students involved in the study. Funds ear-marked for supporting the poor are channelled through the Education Secretary of the Diocese to enable EFL to reach to the intended persons. Most of those who have benefited from this arrangement were children from families of People Living with Aids (PLWA) within Uasin-Gishu County.

It targets children in high school through fee subsidy. They are given life skills during holidays away from school to make them relate well with the society. This initiative has improved quality of life of those in the programme as one respondent reported: "...programmes under EFL inculcate in students such qualities as perseverance and flexibility that help them live with a sense of purpose and wellbeing" (Personal Communication, Project Co-ordinator, 43 years, May 16, 2016). With the establishment of this programme in the Diocese, the study gathered that it has greatly supported many poor children through school. The programme is also concerned with character and social skills development in line with the call by Pope Leo XIII on the Church:

Neither must it be supposed that the ministry of the Church is occupied with the spiritual concern of her children as to neglect their temporal and earthly interests. Her desire is that the poor, for example, should rise above poverty and



wretchedness, and better their conditions in life: and for this, she makes a strong endeavour (Pope Leo XIII, 1891, no 11).

Those who manage to get into this arrangement go through a rigorous admission policy where an interview is conducted then a support team notifies the family upon acceptance of the child. New participants are admitted every year depending on availability of funds.

### **Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC)**

This is a ministry of service established by the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret to cater for all people facing challenges related to social justice. The programmes offered are grounded in the Church's Social teaching. It promotes transformation of individuals, parishes and the community to answer the call of God towards love of God and neighbour. Events that take place in this programme include peace building and advocacy initiatives for the poor. The Diocese sources for funds to help the poor children in this programme. Pope Benedict XVI called on the Church to play a pivotal role in bringing justice and harmony in lives of the people. He appealed: "The Church cannot and must not remain on the side-lines in the fight for justice" (Benedict XVI, 2009, no. 8).

The Catholic Diocese of Eldoret, in partnership with such friends as Konrad Adenauer Foundation-Germany and USAID, has worked towards the attainment of peace in places experiencing tribal conflict in Uasin-Gishu County. Through these forums, leaders from communities living near one another are helped to discuss ways of promoting peaceful co-existence. CJPC makes follow-up programmes on the beneficiaries so as to become peace ambassadors in their villages. The study gathered that through the CJPC, twenty-three of the respondents benefited from partial scholarships set aside for children of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in 2015. These IDPs were as a result of the 2007/2008 protracted election that led to death and internal displacement of people, particularly those who were residing in 'hotspots' in the country. Generally, the assistance given by the diocese through its friends was intended to create a peaceful and conducive environment necessary for learning. They do this to draw justice closer to the people irrespective of their gender or religious affiliation.

Though this scholarship does not cater for everything, the effort on the part of the Church to step out and assist is a sign of how it responds to the Gospel in terms of ministry in action. The Catholic Justice and Peace (CJPC) helps children of from poor families through the school by giving little fee subsidy.

### **Caritas**

*Caritas* was set up as one of the programmes in the diocese to meet the growing material needs of the poor. It draws its structure from Caritas International that works to restore order in the world by assisting in relief efforts, development and social service provision. The Caritas national office in Nairobi coordinates and sources for funding. Occasionally, the office takes up supervisory role of projects under its funding regime to ensure that it is channelled into the right use. Caritas in the Diocese of Eldoret has been instrumental in co-ordinating food relief for those affected by disasters. According to the co-ordinator of Caritas Eldoret, the programme sponsored forty students who had just completed 2015 KCPE examinations representing twenty-two percent of all students supported by the church through church projects. The beneficiaries of the programme went through a closely knit follow-up initiative in order to

encourage them to plough back their efforts to help others. Through its Caritas programme, the Diocese creates a better world for the poor.

Pope Benedict addressed the particular role that the Church plays not just to the Catholic only but to the whole human family-thus: “Besides the good of the individuals, there is a good that is linked to living in society: the common good” (Benedict XVI, 2009, no 7). One of the diocesan departmental heads said:

With the help of Caritas international, some funds that are set aside from its programme trickle in to help poor children. The programmes that are spread mostly in Catholic sponsored schools in Uasin-Gishu have made children who would not have finished their school very successful in their future (Personal Communication, Fourth Departmental Head, 50 years Old, May 17, 2016).

The statement above is an indication of the focus this programme has had in the Uasin-Gishu County and its vision for the future in educating poor children. Apart from the partial scholarships that they give, they also make follow-up programmes to ensure that families where the poor students come from access clean and safe drinking water. Regarding the question on whether or not Caritas had other provisions through which members of the Church were assisted, the study gathered that members were provided with micro finances to set up their own business through which they can get money to pay fees for their children.

The programme also offers holistic health to poor children in the Diocese. For example, in the year 2016, it gave seventy-five wheel-chairs and clutches to poor children in schools within the diocese. It continues to co-ordinate healthcare and medical assistance for the children in the programme. According to the co-ordinator, Caritas- Eldoret took up psychiatric patients from among school-going children initially in reformatory homes and rehabilitated them. The programme takes up the responsibility of footing bills in case members of the family of any of those in the programme are unable to pay. The study gathered that Caritas had a credit facility and those who receive are required to pay after sometime so that the money becomes a revolving fund to support others in need.

### **Gender and Women Department**

The director of Gender and Women department of the Diocese indicated that the department supported close to thirty poor students across the county during the year 2016. In 1983, the Diocese created a department charged with caring for physically challenged persons. Although the department was established to deal with all types of physical challenges, some of the most complicated cases requiring specialized attention could not be accepted due to challenges of funds.

The Diocese began to specifically concentrate on the crippled and visually impaired who form the bulk of the poor in the region. The department established “Small Homes” in almost every region of the Diocese. These include: Tach-Asis, Kobujoi, Matunda, Kipsaina, Kobil, Chebororwa, Nerkwo, Chesongoch, Mindililwo, Iten School for the deaf, Chesoi and Chepsigot School for the blind. The study gathered that these schools are part of a bigger family of Association of Physically Disabled of Kenya (APDK) and community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programmes. With support from and good will of friends and partners, ‘Small Homes’ initiative has started and managed its programmes. Caritas director organizes seminars and

advocacy sessions in areas where such homes are deemed necessary in order to make people living around be part and parcel of the initiative.

The communities living close to these 'Small Homes' collect food items or at times money that is used to subsidize the day- to -day running of the home. Once a home is established, the Diocese employs a trained 'house mother' to be in charge of the home and care for the children. A teacher trained in special education by the Diocese is appointed and given the responsibility of caring for children's educational as well as psychological needs. The 'Small Homes' in the Diocese provide boarding facilities for many children with physical disabilities. Some of them are from extremely poor backgrounds. The study gathered that the students pay between eight thousand five hundred to ten thousand shillings per term. Those parents who cannot raise the amount are assisted through the office of the Bishop.

Sometimes, members of the Church visit schools that they sponsor to deliver items to the poor students. This is done in conjunction with the school administration more so guiding and counselling department. Occasionally, the government of Kenya channels its aid to the 'Small Homes' through Kenya National Fund for the Disabled (KNFD). A senior programmes director within the Diocese noted that the contribution of the Gender and Women department to the mission of the Church in the region has been immense. It has led to improved education of the people in the church and therefore an empowered community. An empowered community is a confirmation that the church is modelled on the kingdom of God in every aspect of life (Banahene, 1996). A departmental head said that parents whose children are beneficiaries of the programme had been helped through micro financing and capacity building to think of coming up with sustainable livelihoods.

A 'Small Homes co-ordinator and member of the cathedral deanery, added her voice concerning the support of the Diocese to 'Small Homes' during events such as 'Happy days'. Parishes within the region around these homes organize visits to the children and give donation both in kind and financially. The study gathered that some children who went through the 'Small Homes' kitty were in colleges pursuing courses of their choice. Some have made an undertaking to return to the small Homes upon completion of their studies in order to inspire and adopt other poor children. The Director of Gender department in the Diocese noted that the church undertakes to pay school fees for a number of children with difficulties. Parents or relatives of the beneficiaries reciprocate by faithfully supporting Church initiated projects and by bringing their children to parish schools.

A Diocesan administrator observed that the Church needed to educate parents to make use of preferential option for the poor initiatives in its sponsored schools in order to realize the fruits of church's activities. The study gathered that when parents take up their rightful roles of providing for their children whatever is required; - poverty reduction measures undertaken by the Church will be meaningful.

### **Small Internal Lending Communities (SILC)**

The Catholic Diocese of Eldoret, in partnership with donor communities, has rolled out Small Internal Lending Communities (SILC). The initiative is geared towards boosting economic life of its members. SILC managed to support forty-seven poor children. This study gathered that, compared to any other programme in the Diocese, SILC had played the biggest role in fee payment and welfare support for poor students. Unlike any other micro-financial arrangements available, SILC enabled members to promote their small businesses by creating financial

capability. Credit facilities provided at lower interest rate by the Church through SILC has enabled members to start small scale businesses that provide food for them and school fees as well.

Activities towards preferential option have been beneficial to many members of the Church wishing to educate their children. Through SILC, the Church organizes financial management programmes for those in small trading activities. From the small business enterprises, they sometimes make donations in support of poor children in secondary schools. The study revealed that the Diocese has adopted various strategies in agricultural development, education, health, and youth and women development to help reduce poverty in Uasin-Gishu County. These interventions are mostly long term projects that include infrastructure provision like schools, water and health facilities. Where such infrastructure assistance exists, children from poor families benefit through quality education.

Respondents gave two main reasons why they thought these economic activities initiated by the Church were effective in helping poor children. First, the support given by the Diocese in terms small loans, micro- finance facilities and training in business enterprises had helped members to embrace self-reliance. Secondly, SILC had brought people of various churches together to pursue poverty eradication activities thereby affecting their lives positively. In this case, the Diocese had succeeded in inculcating community spirit by making the communities contribute both in cash and in kind in the execution of infrastructural projects in the Diocese.

### **Church Initiated Contributions**

#### **Parish Contributions**

Catholic Diocese of Eldoret is made up of several parishes. A parish is organized into stations or centres in other regions. Stations on the other hand are divided into small units called Small Christian Communities (SCCs). These Small Communities bring together neighbouring families. Individuals living within these small units make their contribution to support the parish even before getting to the diocese. Sometimes a parish organizes harvest festivals that enables the members contribute towards the activities planned for the year. The diocese then makes it possible for needy students to be assisted through local appeals that come from these parishes. Through annual or periodic donations parishes assists schools with operating deficits to provide poor children with personal items and learning materials. This has been encouraged as: "Supporting the church's missionary activity is a sign of self-offering first to the Lord and then to others; in this way a material offering can become a means for the evangelization of humanity built on love" (Francis, 2013, p. 9).

Pope Francis advocated for a human family considered both as a means and the end, that is to say that they are architects and the beneficiaries of any development effort. Therefore, their perceptions and understanding of any development initiative has a direct link with holistic development. 'Adopt a child' strategy is one of the methods that members of the church take up the responsibilities of upbringing poor children. The study gathered that Church members at times take up the initiative and the burden of the entire Church to care for the poor.

A Father in-Charge of one of the Catholic parishes in Eldoret suggested that the Church through its self-reliance activities should take up the responsibility of adopting needy children as indicated above. He noted that among the members of the Church those who were endowed with wealth deserved to be forthright in supporting initiatives to help the poor. A senior

administrator cited the report of 1994 African Synod in Rome whereby the Church in Africa was challenged to adopt a system in which families would help each other in building their future. This self-reliance approach speaks to individual members in the Church not to ignore children from humble backgrounds if they can assist.

A Priest of Our Lady of Lourdes parish pointed out that by educating children from humble backgrounds, the Church opens future opportunities and therefore reduces poverty. From the small contributions that people make, the Church would easily support its poor. The study found out that with support from friends and well-wishers of the parish, efforts had been advanced to train Church members towards self-employment. The strength of the church is the generosity of its members. By creating strong communities that have economic strength church members can manage to sort out some challenges that would otherwise be left to the diocese. A senior accountant observed that there are congregations of Religious Sisters and Brothers in the Diocese willing to help children with fees challenges. The support given by Religious congregations abroad has given impetus to the Diocese. Some parishes own academies where parishioners bring their children and commit themselves to raise the standards of the schools by all means.

Such schools enable parents who may not manage to pay fees at a particular time perhaps due to a challenge to be given more time. A Priest of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Eldoret town noted that the Church had a school hinged on generating income for the parish. The proceeds from the venture go into supplementing what Church members raise during annual harvest. The study gathered that such parish academies were designed to provide quality education for children from low cost estates of West Indies, Munyaka and Raiply. In addition, some of these parish schools had programmes for helping the poor.

Some parish academies have a bursary fund through which children from poor backgrounds receive scholarships and educational materials. The study gathered from the respondents that funds such as these were managed by a committee in the parish and guided by the Diocesan Education Secretary. The father in-charge of one of the Catholic parishes in Eldoret town-, reported that the Church had assisted many poor children and would continue doing so. An example is that of Sisters of Our Lady of Assumption in Eldoret whose school sponsors a number of abandoned children. A nun remarked: "...the Church has an eternal duty to lift the poor from their conditions. The congregation has managed to come to the aid of over twenty abandoned children since the kitty was established few years ago" (Personal Communication, Sr. Principal, May 15, 2016).

The school also manages a programme for some street children who accept to be rehabilitated. Though some of these initiatives began with the missionaries, the parishes within Uasin-Gishu had taken up the challenge. The study gathered that nuns first initiated an outreach to the street families in Eldoret town to identify their needs. As time went by, the number of these children grew hence the need for partners to support the effort. Respondents cited lack of effectiveness in the provision of support materials for the poor in some parishes. The reason given for this was that most of the income generating initiatives had no place for charities. Some academies are just out for profits.

### **Diocesan Contributions**

The Catholic Diocese of Eldoret makes appeal every year for the purpose of supporting most of its projects. This appeal is an important avenue through which every parishioner can



contribute to the work of the Diocese. A diocesan programmes director noted that the work done by the Diocese for over four years since 2014 to pay school fees for some poor children through local contribution was incredible. At times, clothes and food items donated during Easter got to the homes for the physically challenged. The annual Bishop's appeal otherwise known as diocesan harvest festival is the major funding source for the Diocese of Eldoret. Each parish is assigned a goal according to an objective calculation based on parish offertory totals. The study found out too that the annual Bishop's collections have been useful in helping assist several needy cases in terms of fee payment and other requirements in schools.

When the European missionaries left, indigenous priests took over the work of educating members with the same zeal. St John Paul II in his Post-Synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* noted that evangelization requires material and financial resources. In order to meet this need, Dioceses seek to attain self-sufficiency. Church members have been educated to fulfil moral and divine obligation of living according to the teachings of God's preferential option for the poor. By encouraging individual contribution, parish targets and thus the overall diocesan target become realizable.

According to Marinova and Hossain, resource mobilization should begin from local communities bringing what they have. Thus: "Carrying out a financial resource mobilization at individual level takes the following steps: identifying potential sources of funds, actively soliciting pledges, following up on pledges to obtain funds, depositing the funds, and recording the transactions" (Marinova & Hossain, 2006). The study appreciates that there were parishioners who reciprocated that which they receive from these activities and would readily accept to take up the task of supporting other needy children. They do this as private arrangement though it still takes place within the arrangement of the Church. Needy cases from parishes find their way to the Diocese for consideration in a structured manner. Before the money is disbursed there is thorough vetting to ascertain the level of need. The Father- in Charge of one of the Catholic parishes in Eldoret town pointed out how the Church finds ways to support members in dire need of school fees for their children as an example. The parish designs a way through which all the members of the Small Christian Community are made to contribute to the mission of the Church.

Its leaders submit membership fee of the Small Christian Community (SCC) to the parish as a sign of commitment. SCC membership roll has helped the parish to identify genuine cases for purposes of assistance, whenever available, of the needy members while eliminating others non-members out to take advantage of the Church. The Church has managed the upsurge of needy cases by having a clear policy on who deserves to be assisted. In addition, it provides a forum through Small Christian Communities (SCCs) for people to know each other. The leaders of these small units then provide the data to the parish team that eventually make their own conclusive assessment of the possibility of assistance. Upon such determination, the leaders of the entire Church can make a communication to the whole Church regarding the nature of assistance required.

An administrator at the Sacred Heart Cathedral added that though the parish has had its fair share of challenges in managing its own projects, the focus has always been on ensuring that within the annual budget, some money is allocated to assist members with extreme difficulty in managing fees for their children. The intention to continue with the programme for poor children has been sustained by members who commit their monthly tithe to the needy. A Priest at the St. John XXIII Catholic Church in Eldoret Town also remarked that some money is set aside every financial year to cater for charity at the parish level. The study found out that a high

percentage of this money goes into meeting school fees needs for members. In the event that members have extreme difficulties in matters other than fees, the parish or outstation makes special appeals through Sunday collections. Every situation that comes up is considered on its own merit in order to provide appropriate attention.

The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) is tasked with the responsibility of planning, making correspondence and reporting to the procurator's office regarding the collections of such appeals. A percentage that remains within the parish goes into assisting the poor within the originating parish. The study found that most of it goes into school fees while the rest is channelled into religious education and youth programmes. The study further sought to find out from key informants the source of funding for the diocesan programmes targeting poor children. It gathered that donor partners were either international or local.

### **International donor activities**

The study gathered that the Diocese of Eldoret runs its programmes with the help of such partners as Misereor, *Missio*, ILRI, Vincent De Paul, and Daughters of Charity among others. Through the efforts of such international friends and well-wishers, most of the programmes succeed in meeting their objectives. An appeal is made to parishioners abroad to help out through financial gifts and prayers in supporting the cause for the poor. There are times when various faith-based donor partners come together for the purpose of accomplishing a certain request. The diocese makes an effort to reach out to foreign donors, as a senior diocesan administrator pointed out:

We are encouraged by Pope Francis message during mission Sunday on the need to reach out to the needy. Through the teaching of the church, mission boxes have been introduced in parishes. The bishop also sends priests for foreign mission collection (Personal Communication, Third Departmental Head, May 17, 2016).

The study gathered that donor communities prefer to do their own projects to completion. What usually happens is that proposals made for a particular purpose go through Bishops' office for facilitation and submission to donor communities. Catholic Missions abroad operate through the international structure as part of the international Catholic network such as the *Pontifical Mission Societies*. Catholic Missions respect the principle of assisting people, parish community or a religious congregation. The *Pontifical Mission Internationalis (PMI)* is tasked with the responsibility of helping the Church in mission lands to attain sustainable development. Out of the 185 beneficiaries of all programmes in the Diocese, 111(60%) have received their share from donors and well-wishers from abroad. The Catholic Relief Services (USA) has funded projects for children under fifteen years of age for the last ten years (Catholic Diocese of Eldoret, 2015). These are most commonly in schools, orphanages, rehabilitation centres and health centres within a school set up. The Koch Foundation has been funding catholic schools in remote areas of the diocese.

Apart from its school fees support initiative, it is engaged in supporting publication of Religious literature. They have partnered with the diocese in raising future Church leaders as a means of evangelization. The International Catholic Mission Societies (*missio* in Aachen and *missio* in Munich), a German branch of the Pontifical Mission Societies in partnership with Action Aid assist children listed by the diocese for fee subsidy. For example, in the year 2014, EFL sponsored 29 children from low cost settlements of Langas, West Indies and Kimumu. The children had initially dropped out after KCPE due to fee challenges (Catholic Diocese of

Eldoret, 2014). Occasionally, the students in the programmes find scholarship in mission countries which empowers them to come back and improve the local community. The Diocese has maintained a strong tradition of maintaining donor friends such as those from Immaculate Heart of Mary based in Italy. Immaculate Heart of Jesus Schools (IHJ) Provided Aid and Bishop Korir Education Fund are just a few of these.

### **Local friends' contribution activities (other than Church members)**

Additionally, there are parishioners who make their own contribution towards the poor though not necessarily under Bishop Korir Funds. The money obtained from their initiative is used to meet the needs of poor students in school. A priest observed:

There are members of the Church who have embraced scholarship initiatives started by the Diocese by accepting to surrender part of their monthly salary or savings towards assisting poor but bright children in an arrangement akin to Bishop's scholarship (Personal Communication, Priest over 45 yrs, May 15, 2016).

The above statement is an affirmation of how some people have organized themselves to stand out for a worthy cause. It means that it is a possibility for all those endowed with wealth to support the poor. Another level of donor partnership that the Diocese of Eldoret has explored is that of Diocese-to-Diocese partnership. A lot has been achieved when two or more dioceses twin up for the purpose of meeting a certain social agenda.

The study established that there are partnership activities between the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret and Diocese of Perth in Australia and St. Cloud in Central Minnesota. The activities cover four main areas which include, though not limited to, exchange programmes between students and teachers in schools owned by these Dioceses. Delegates from these institutions make visits for purposes of getting first hand experiences in matters of curriculum exchange and educational exposure. The study also found that from such exchange, some students from Catholic sponsored schools get an opportunity to go for overseas exchange programme. Secondly, the dioceses establish a sustained pattern of receiving stipends for purpose of a certain desired project. In this case, the Diocese of Perth pays fees for students who pass well and join the university. Most of those in the arrangement are those who were supported through Education For Life EFL initiative. In the year 2016, 12 students benefited from this fee support initiative.

Thirdly, mutual partnership is a model of mission that has a series of activities for assisting poor children. The activities here include assessment that is done to ascertain the capability of the parents of the poor to create wealth if supported through loans. The focus of such an initiative is such that they are given a certain amount of money to start income generating ventures. The study gathered also that the dioceses in partnership carry out fact finding visits to identify the needs of those to be assisted. Once this is done, a durable relationship by way of covenant of partnership is signed towards helping the poor.

Lastly, the diocese-diocese partnership activities target publication and distribution of literature. The stipends that come as a donation from the arrangement cater for writing and reading materials required by the schools. The Diocese of Eldoret does not appeal only to the international donors for support. It has explored a new area that targets locals who are well endowed and wish to be part of the mission to help the poor. These local donors respond in their own ways during such days as mission Sunday, Membership in Propagation of Faith

(MPF) and Peter's Pence. Apart from such contributions that are church-related, some Catholic families accept to adopt some of these poor children and sponsor them through school.

### School-based Activities

The study established that there were several activities aimed at supporting poor children in schools in Uasin-Gishu. The activities were as presented in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Management Initiated Activities**

	Frequency	Percent
B.O.M Contribution	114	36
Project Savings	86	27
Fundraising	76	24
Scholarships	38	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The results suggest that the activities under this section are initiated by the school management through students' leadership. From the activities organised, learners from poor backgrounds are assisted as discussed below.

### Board of Management Contribution

School Boards of Management help a great deal in driving the agenda of the church within particular schools. The Boards of Management assist the principals in financial issues. Catholic sponsored schools under the study had active managers. The study gathered that some members of these school boards committed themselves to carry on the pastoral mission of the Church to help the poor. Some members of the school board use their time to improve school's ability to assist the poor by way of providing free advice regarding what other institutions do elsewhere. They also volunteer to meet constantly to plan visits aimed at raising scholarship money for the poor. The study too found out that some made regular visits to school to check on the progress of programmes designed towards the poor. The ways that these boards used to finance the poor children were varied as below.

First, members of BOMs ask other friends of the school, more so those with wide entrepreneurial connection in town, to be part of the initiative to assist. The study found out that some would help the school by readily offering grants, sponsoring cleaning services or by making certain donations. For example, some members of the school board of management offered to assist in procuring required items for consumption or construction within the school. Secondly, the management in most of these schools is responsible in terms of recruiting and motivating fundraising teams such from among parents, teachers and students who would go out at a certain period for a walk to help the poor. The leadership play a critical role in providing direction, designing pleasant experiences and prize incentives for these fundraisers.

Able parents are usually encouraged to avail their time and networks so as to effectively and successfully fundraise for the poor. This greatly minimized the time and effort that would ordinarily be used by teachers and students in organizing fundraisings. The school principal together with management invest their time in articulating the needs of the school for purposes of influencing, motivating, coaching and marshalling parents and staff to maximize fundraising efforts. Thirdly, teachers' welfare kitty provides some amount that is channelled to help the poor. Fourthly, some schools with strong alumni organizations have been able to net some contribution for purposes of helping poor children in the school. It also emerged that head

teachers save on tuition money to provide for poor students. This was reported by one school principal thus: “Savings obtained from tuition fee is borrowed for the purpose of helping extremely needy cases meet their school fees” (Personal Communication, Senior Principal, 47 years, May 16, 2016).

In some schools, the boards of management identified some days whereby the entire school community collected items in kind or in cash for the purpose of assisting their colleagues from poor backgrounds. Whatever is realized in such an arrangement is subjected to thorough discussion to benefit most deserving cases.

### **Contribution of out of school project profits**

From the study, it emerged that 86 students representing 27% of poor students in Catholic schools had been assisted through savings realised from income generating initiatives such as rearing of pigs, rabbits, dairy, and chicken and vegetables farms. Most established Catholic secondary schools in Uasin-Gishu had bakeries which supplied the school kitchens with sufficient bakes throughout the year. Any profits made from such projects were ploughed back for the purpose of helping the poor meet their fees. The same was done for the profits that accrued from all other school projects.

### **Fundraising**

Fundraising is the most common way through which most of the schools organize funds to support the poor. From fundraising activities, 76 students representing 24% poor students in catholic schools were assisted in 2016. The study through data collected in 2016 gathered that there were three levels through which these fundraisings were made.

First, through institutional fundraising whereby the school invites charitable organizations, friends, churches, corporates and suppliers of the school to give assistance towards payment of fees or during construction. This is done annually in most of the schools. Secondly, major donor fundraising would be organized. Here, the institution identifies friends and partners to raise funds for the poor or fund some projects in the school. Some school suppliers fall into this category. Lastly, it emerged that schools invite the staff members to be part of the initiative to assist the poor through their own contributions. In all the three, the organizers may want to make use of special appeal cards, ticketing for charity walk or organized cultural events. This last approach requires a bigger financial support as well as more time. Therefore:

Schools strive to raise more internally by involving its own staff, parents and students in order to realize the desired objectives of fundraising. In the end, its desired that the contribution of guests should fill in the deficit (Personal Communication, Second male Administrator, May 17, 2016).

Though fundraising is a challenging activity to manage, the school principal would begin by meeting with school staff to identify and articulate the needy cases within a particular period so as to design fundraising activities. A Diocesan administrator reported that the involvement of the Church through the school principal would produce better results than a case in which the church was not committed to the activity.



### **In-school Scholarships**

This study suggests that only 38 children representing 13% of poor students in Catholic schools had benefitted from local scholarship programme in the year 2016. From the amount obtained from contributions mentioned above or external through partnerships, a scholarship is given out to substitute to help poor children. Some well-wishers and friends of the Diocese have been helpful in filling the gap created by inadequate financial resources for helping these poor children. One participant expressed it thus:

Local scholarships and tuition assistance programme are available in the Diocese. The scholarship fund is a programme sponsored by the Diocesan education department to assist poor children achieve their goals in school. Those who benefit from this programme get tuition waiver established through relationships between the Diocese and parishes from where these children hail from (Personal Communication, Male Director, May 15, 2016).

Through scholarship, schools receive additional funding from the Diocese in order to offset tuition costs. Where there is deficit on the part of the diocesan contribution, schools use the ways to close the gap. Academically talented students from poor families are given a priority in this financial aid. The study found out that students who excelled in extra-curricular activities got partial scholarship in form of tuition fees. Schools make use of some members of the congregation who are well endowed to adopt a strategy of mentorship.

...the Church requests some members of the congregation and parents to adopt an orphaned child or one from a poor background. This spirit of adoption has enabled bright students who would otherwise have left school to proceed on successfully (Personal Communication, Second Departmental Head, May 17, 16).

The idea of generating scholarship has an origin perhaps from the spirit of the church that grows out to be self-reliant. Most of the scholarships that are functional are from among locals who take up the challenge to do something in the absence of external donations. From the study, the diocesan strategic plan 2012-2016, indicated that though this is the pastoral vision of AMECEA, noting much had been done to build institutions that are self-reliant, self-ministering and self-propagating (Kalilombe, 2002, p. 11). When asked whether local community have embraced the spirit of sponsoring poor children rather than depending solely on foreign donors a diocesan programmes director stated:

...since the idea was given to the community through special sessions prepared by the development wing of Catholic secretariat, the response has been tremendous though much need to be done to ensure that promises are honoured.... (Personal Communication, Male Director, May 15, 2016).

In order for the church to manage scholarships for its own members, local sponsors and donors should locate themselves in all sectors of development. From the study, members had taken up the task of assisting poor children even to college level as has already been indicated earlier in this chapter. By doing so, the Church had become instrumental in safeguarding the future of its members through partial or full scholarships. Bishop Kalilombe once noted that when people come out to help others, the Church makes it possible to achieve so much since members see themselves as agents and ultimate beneficiaries of the efforts to improve their situation (Kalilombe, 2002, p. 12). In school scholarship is an initiative through which students with fee

challenges are identified through the activities that they do such as improvement in class performance. Some schools set aside some money for dormitory units in school for purposes of rewarding good performance. At times schools have ways through which they mobilize funds for such causes. Establishing the deserving candidates for these little grants takes time and diligence. A financial aid assessment is submitted within the school through guiding and counselling department.

The main challenge with this kind of initiative is that of the shrinking grant money and increasing demand for scholarships. Despite the challenge, several efforts have been made by the diocese through the office of the Education Secretary to ensure that such initiatives are supported by parents within the schools it sponsors. The study gathered too that every successful grant demands that the church in collaboration with the schools under its care understand the needs of all its students.

### **The Work-study Programme**

Work study programme that has taken root in most mission schools in Catholic Diocese of Eldoret is an initiative of most school boards. This refers to situations where students with notable difficulties in fee payment remain in school in order to do certain tasks for pay as others go for holidays. According to one principal:

A number of students are willing to take up tasks such as farm weeding, tending flowers and fencing during weekends and holidays so as to get their fees (Personal Communication, First Principal, May 16, 2016).

The study found out that whenever such tasks are to be executed within the normal school term, an arrangement is put in place so that the students engaged in the programme do not miss any class activity. There are times whereby a work study activity is tailored to enable students to get some money for upkeep. Otherwise, the earnings from work - study programme credits students' fee account. The work-study model is aimed at eradicating dependency which reduces needy students to perpetual begging. The model has also made education affordable, as it reduces tuition costs. The work-study arrangement has been exploited by some schools well so that serious students manage projects such as vegetable gardens that deliver kitchen products. The subsidy created here enables the school pay fees or other requirements for these efforts shown by students.

### **Student-Initiated Activities**

The study gathered that schools organize students either through clubs and movements or subject-based groups such as Young Farmers Club. The leadership of most of these initiatives are within the students themselves but supported by boards of management. Talented students are allowed to organize cultural events and talent shows for money. The activities under this section will be discussed in detail.

### **Societies and Movements**

A Diocesan youth coordinator reported that occasionally, Young Christian Students (YCS) and Legion of Mary movements organize events to raise funds for the poor. The study found out that for the last four years, these movements have been raising huge sums of money: over one million shillings or items to assist manage their programmes. In many schools, these two movements not only fundraise but also shape the character of the members towards giving. It

does this through organizing fundraising events through which poor students are helped to meet school fees. A youth chaplain noted:

Student movements in high school are popular as a way that orients them to learn about what others in their group go through. Through the movements youth are made to be pro-social and forward-looking in behaviour (Personal Communication, Priest, Over 45 yrs old, May 15, 2016).

Since inception of these student movements, many young people have been educated to help others. These two movements have inspired the youth by inculcating in them positive development models hinged on the motto to see, judge and act. The youth office has managed to organize fundraising events which they call 'Flag days'. Although much of the funds raised are meant to run the affairs of the Young Christian Society (YCS) movement throughout the year, some percentage go into a Diocesan kitty that supports those in dire need of fees. The young people are able to discern the needs of their fellow members and assist where possible. Pope Leo XIII's encyclical to Religious and families challenged all Christians and people of good will to pay attention to the situation of poverty. He observed:

Love for others, and in the first place, love for the poor in whom the church sees Christ himself is made concrete in the promotion of justice. Justice will never be fully attained unless people see the poor person who is asking for help in order to survive, not as an annoyance or a burden, but an opportunity for showing kindness and a chance for greater enrichment (Pope Leo XIII, 1891 no.11).

Pope Leo's Encyclical was an invitation then, as it is even to date, to look at other people as Christ would look at them. The Catholic Social Teachings emphasise the aspects of concern for others especially the poor in the society. The teaching finds its place when young people in school take an active role to help the less fortunate within their proximity. Generally, Young Christian Students movement and Legion of Mary have become instruments for youth empowerment and involvement in the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret. During school holiday workshops, members of these movements focus on skill development and character building aimed at helping the poor.

When asked whether there was a structure for identifying poor children within the Young Christian Students (YCS) family, a YCS patron revealed that guiding and counselling departments in some schools were extremely helpful in providing credible data on student vulnerability status for the Diocese to use. The study found out that some well-off parents offer to sponsor an extra poor child after paying fee for their own. Such good-will initiatives get a mention during special occasions of the school, so as to inculcate the culture of supporting the poor children in the community.

### **Cultural Events**

Many catholic schools in Uasin-Gishu County utilize participatory sporting events such as running or walking races, songs and dancing competitions to raise money. Such cultural and feast days have been used to raise awareness on the need to respond corporately towards a worthy cause. For example, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes in one Girls' school in Uasin-Gishu provides an opportunity for parents, visitors and friends of the school within the parish to identify a project to better their institutions. Small events such as donation rallies for the needy attract few participants and raise considerably less. Student-managed cultural fetes are

meant not only to educate the participants to donate but they also attract new constituents to the cause. An administrator of one of Catholic schools in Eldoret observed that sporting events are gaining popularity across Uasin-Gishu County. She noted:

...apart from running for the purpose of raising money to help the poor, these activities stimulate meditation, produce relaxation, and relieve stress. As running for the poor grew in popularity, the number of sporting events increased. Today, most catholic schools in Uasin- Gishu enrol for marathon participation in order to attract charity monies for the poor (Personal Communication, Female principal, May 17, 2016).

Another fundraising event that usually attracts generous contribution is gala evening. These events are organized annually or occasionally within the school calendar. From the study, some schools have hosted dancing events as fundraisers. It was noted too that these gala meetings have become avenues that combine other fundraising tactics such as fundraising raffles, silent auctions and concession sales. These gala meetings present opportunities for teachers, parents, students and other members of the school community to be engaged towards assisting the poor. In such events, the study found out that some schools invite friends who make their contribution by corporate giving. Their financial contribution is usually not taken for granted. Gala evenings have translated into special events which if well-organized, have a potential to fundraise for specific needs of the poor. Last December, a dinner organized in one school to fundraise for school fee raised over two hundred fifty thousand Kenya shillings. The Head of the school observed:

There are people who are willing to step forward to help those in need. The school provides such forum every first week of December. The response towards such a student and alumni initiated project has been encouraging (Personal Communication, Senior Principal, over 50 years old, May 15, 2016).

The study gathered that students engage board members to be actively involved in the events such as these by bringing guests. Through such events, staff members use their influence and skills in preparing students to perfect the event. When asked whether such events added value to the corporate image of the school, one principal indicated that apart from increasing community connection and school, the children who come from the neighbourhood are the highest beneficiaries. Therefore:

Gala events have become so critical in shaping the community image about the school. It has brought on board the sons and daughters of the area together with the alumni who feel challenged to give back. The sense of pride has tremendously raised the pride required for growth (Personal Communication, First Principal, May 16, 2016).

The study gathered that careful planning is the cornerstone of a successful cultural cum-fundraising event. With the support of the school management, most events organised by students succeed in realizing their intended purposes. The Church has played a significant role through the Diocesan Education Secretary who ensures that there is a proper representation whenever there are such arrangements in its schools.

### **Class Contributions**

The strength of Catholic Social Teaching rests on whether their content has been taught understood and articulated through action. Pope Paul VI's reflection on the 1974 synod led him to write the document '*Evangelization in the modern world*', as a way of encouraging people to relate the action of justice to the everyday mission of the church. His was a pontificate marked by church's self-understanding of mission and commitment to serious action. All along, it appeared that the church's teaching was geared towards social action for the poor in the church or within its institutions. What came to be branded as 'Puebla Conference' raised serious characteristics of a Christianity associated with ideologies that promise heaven on earth yet not practical. When Pope John Paul II went back to Puebla in January 1979 for a synod, he reaffirmed his commitment:

The Church has learned that an indispensable part of evangelizing mission is made up of work on behalf of justice and human promotion...that evangelization and human promotion are linked together by very strong ties of anthropological, theological, and charitable nature (John Paul II, 1987, no. 8)

The final document of the Puebla meeting influenced the Catholic teaching towards the poor throughout its institutions. As an initiative of the Diocese, students who are endowed are invited to contribute towards assisting the poor in class. This gesture helps them to build the culture of social concern for others. In the spirit of John Paul II's teaching, fundraising effort have been done, for example, for more than three times at a boys' Catholic school in the outskirts of Eldoret town. The principal of the school observed:

The collection started in 2014 when all the students along with their teachers unanimously decided to collect money for poor students whose parents cannot afford to buy them uniform or pay school fees. They do this at class level and have produced great results (Personal Communication, Senior Principal, May 16, 2016).

A mother and a beneficiary of a class fundraising initiative admitted that it was difficult for her family to afford money needed for her children to school. When classmates saw that some of their friends had difficulties in fee payment, they took up the task and started mobilizing resources. The principal considered this initiative an important lesson for the students not only in the context of helping the poor, but also in making them put into practice the tenets of Catholic social teaching.

### **Implications for Research**

The study examined the concept of preferential option for the poor, but it does not clearly distinguish the various types of poverty. It does not draw nuanced distinctions between, for example, long-term poverty and short-term poverty, or between urban poverty and rural poverty; all of which require different approaches and considerations. It also does not fully develop the distinction between the poor in poor or developing countries and the poor in wealthy or developed countries. As Pope John Paul II noted:

One cannot ignore the fact that the frontiers of wealth and poverty intersect within the societies themselves, whether developed or developing. In fact, just as social inequities down to the level of poverty exist in rich countries, so, in parallel fashion, in the less developed countries one often sees manifestations of selfishness



and a flaunting of wealth which is as disconcerting as it is scandalous (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, supra note 34, at 402, No. 14).

Depending on the type of poverty present, the potential approaches to the poor will be different. Therefore, there is a need for a study on preferential option for the poor with a comparative lens between the different types of poverty and between the poor in developing and developed nations. This way, it will be easier to bring the concept of preferential option for the poor into a more clear perspective.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study established three different groups of activities carried out by the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret towards the realization of preferential option for the poor. First, there are activities that are organised from within the church. The Catholic Diocese of Eldoret manages five key programmes that support poor children in its sponsored schools. Most of them are donor-funded although efforts have been initiated to involve parishes in raising money to sustain them. Some of the beneficiaries of these diocesan programmes come from parishes that are wealthy. Once in a while these parishes have been invited to make contribution annually. The entire diocese also appeals for support through its annual fundraising event. Secondly, there are out of church activities. The term out of church does not mean that those who are engaged in them are not Christians or Catholics. There are people of good will who may not be Bishops or priests but want to support the initiative through their contribution.

Such initiatives originated from among members themselves or Boards of Management. The purpose of their initiative is to serve the poor within the Catholic social teaching. These school-based activities are either management or student initiated. Lastly, the diocese works in partnership with other friends and dioceses through partnership arrangement. Diocese-to-Diocese engagement has yielded a considerable support for the poor. It is recommended that the Diocese should explore ways through which continuity is seen in terms of funding. The study found that some projects that were supported by missionaries experience great challenges when the same donors leave. There is need to understand the landscape under which such noble initiatives plunge into challenges when locals take over. The Church plays a great role not only as a teacher but also parents to those who fail to support themselves because of challenges such as fees and other basic requirements.

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