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# ENGAGING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF AN INFORMAL QUAKER MOVEMENT IN KENYA

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Oscar S. MMBALI<sup>1</sup>

***Abstract:** In a society that is composed of both secular and religious groups, religious activities or presence often cause tension. A study of religious activities in Kenya shows the church viewed as a force for development on one hand and as detrimental to development on the other. A more tolerant society requires re-examination of religious activities from different contextual perspectives. This study explores an informal Quaker movement's engagement with the Maasai community in community development. The findings of the study suggest that religious groups are organic hence they adapt to environmental changes that characterize their ecology. Organizational adaptation to the environment is a process in which organizations transact values with the society based on mutual interests and benefits. To effect value transaction, they employ techniques available within their environment in order to thrive against forces that tend to disadvantage them or threaten their existence.*

***Keywords:** Indigenous community; development; Quakers; Kenya.*

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## 1. Introduction

The role of faith communities and religious groups in development is dominated by two perspectives namely: (1) faith communities are agents of, or actors in development. This view is drawn from the historical work of churches and mission movements in promoting access to basic needs around the world. It has been in the recent past reinforced by World Bank reports which recognize faith communities as critical to the development process. (2) Faith communities are anti-nationalists or setbacks in development. This view is derived from historical studies that criticize the role of missionaries in independence movements as collaborators with the colonial system.

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<sup>1</sup> PhD candidate and researcher at Center for Philanthropy and Civil Society, NIDA, Thailand.  
Email: mmbali76@gmail.com

### ***Faith communities as anti-nationalists or setbacks in development***

Missionaries played a crucial role in colonial development. It is important to note that different missionary organizations in Kenya had different polity based on which they engaged the colonial government. Some missionary agencies were actively involved in discussing the transformation of Africa. As a result, they differed with African societies on some issues. In such cases, they were seen as supporting colonial government policies. There were also essential issues that brought missionary agencies into collaboration with the colonial government for instance; at the time, missionary organizations were dominantly white and relied on government support in matters such as security. They supported government policies they deemed positive for development and were also involved in shaping welfare policies since they owned the largest share of the education and health sector (Christopher, 2013). It is this complex relationship from which the idea that missionaries were collaborators with colonialists is embedded. The ties of the missionary agencies to the colonial government were such that Kenya's independence was also interpreted to mean the independence of the church (Smuck, 2005). After 1963, there was a gradual transition of power and agenda from missionary agencies to African churches.

Some critics also view missionaries as co-imperialists with the colonial government. This view is based on the idea that both the colonial government and missionary agencies had policies that intended to change African values. This school of thought holds that the education curriculum in missionary schools imposed Christian values on the local people who wanted to maintain their own way of life (Maura, 2005). The early missionaries settled where the White settlers had settled in Africa. As a result, missions existed as somehow exclusive communities within the larger African communities. Because of the hostility and resentment local people had for the colonial government as a result of among other things mass displacement of local people, missionaries just like early Christian converts were viewed as traitors (Karanja, 2009).

Missionaries were also viewed as beneficiaries of the colonial system at the expense of Africa's development. Some historians uphold the view that Africa was evangelized by colonial instruments of power. As a result, Christianity became the religion of civilization and instrument of modernization. This view holds that Christian missionaries were involved in trade with colonialists hence they were a spiritual wing of the secular imperialism (Ekon, 2014). This view is much stronger in areas where local communities lost their land to colonial occupation some of which was allocated to missionaries by colonial government either free or through some business transactions.

### ***Faith communities as agents of or actors in development***

The church plays a significant role in development. Even though the church as a people of faith or an institution has engaged in matters of social justice for centuries; it is until a few decades ago that the concept of faith based development was popularized by World Bank. Studies on faith based development largely focused on the role of faith communities and religious institutions in development (Mawdsley & Rigg, 2003). While there has been an emphasis on the separation of the church and the state in some western countries; churches because of their power to mobilize their followers along

issues of interests, official statements which they make on matters of public concern, and their coherency to form a persistent movement towards issues of public affairs continue not only to shape public policy; but also to participate actively in the public policy making process as interest groups (Fink, 2009).

In South Africa, the church has been a strong and vibrant movement championing a wide range of justice issues since the apartheid era (Simpson, 2015). Powell and Robbins (2015)'s study on mental health, religion and culture in Australia shows that people utilize their spirituality as resources in work engagement. Therefore, there is a positive relationship between faith and mental wellbeing. Furthermore, church attendants are likely to volunteer. Moris (2010)'s study of the church as an alternative for the disabled suggests that if the church can transform itself, it can be a place where every person is valued and treated with all their uniqueness equally. It can be a place where even those who appear weak and most vulnerable are not excluded, oppressed, or marginalized.

The church as a faith community shapes the beliefs, values and experiences of the members of that community. The study of faith based organizations in Nigeria indicates that faith based organizations provide social services in areas where the government is either unable to, or has failed to. In doing so, their religious nature is a major influence (Olarinmoye, 2012). At the heart of faith based organizations are the values, beliefs and initiative to go beyond one's own boundaries, and improve the material well-being of those who need intervention (Clarke, 2015). Faith based organizations in the US for example have played a major role in providing welfare services in the country as well as relief and emergency assistance abroad. In doing so, they emphasize both the moral and political role they play (Cooper, 2014). Faith communities provide a rich culture that enables the members of that particular community make spiritual sense of the daily life experiences (Gregory et.al., 2012). They build sense of community by providing social, recreational, and education resources, especially when the community cannot afford these resources (Ekon, 2014). Faith communities also promote good behavior for instance tobacco use prevention and health living (Reinert, et.al., 2003).

The ministry of the church in society is driven by the ethic of care. There is a strong tradition in the church and among faith communities to intervene in the problems facing the other. It is a tradition rooted in emulating the life of Jesus in the gospels, as well as the commitment of the early church. It emphasizes self-sacrifice and self-giving for the well-being of the disadvantaged other (Kean, 2003).

Public expectations demands that the church stand for what is ethical. The legacy of the traditional church and the challenges within which the contemporary church finds itself suggest that the church still holds a relevant role in social transformation. Tannehill (2012) drawing from authority of the Biblical books of Acts and Luke observes that the church has an ethical responsibility to witness, preach, teach and lead. It is a moral and spiritual responsibility on the side of the church to set an example of what it means to stand for and live an ethical life. This implies that church leaders mirrored by the symbol of discipleship and apostleship face public expectations to live an exemplary

life, to provide direction to believers, and to shed light on what the church and the gospel stands for in a time of crisis.

The priest, pastor, or church elders play an important role in a faith community, especially in socializing the members of that community into values, beliefs, and tradition that shape the way these individuals view the world, as well as behave (Walker, 2014). For church leaders to be effective, they need effective training. Effective training should take into account the quality of the training (Lincoln, 2002). This means that trained leaders will not only have the capacity to perform functions; but will also have the capacity to understand complex ethical issues that arise in ministry. The ability of church leaders to understand complex issues in society is paramount to their ability to know when and how to provide necessary intervention in both church and public ministry.

### *Some statistical evidences of faith in development*

Studies in the previous sections focused on the analysis of two dominant views that: (1) faith communities are agents of, or actors in development; and (2) faith communities are anti-nationalists or setbacks in development. These views are derived from an analysis of historical studies, religious studies, well as the interpretation of cases in various development experiences. This section however is concerned with the review of literature about statistical studies seeking to measure the effect, contribution, or influence of religion and spirituality on development. The limitation of empirical studies in this section is that statistical studies linking religion to development in Kenya are scarce. As a result, empirical studies in this section constitute a blend of studies on Kenya as well as other regions in the world. The reason for doing so is that as a matter of shared belief system; Kenyan Christianity is dominantly a derivative of western denominations. Therefore, these studies indicate that religion or spirituality contributes to; or has influence on development.

In America, 79% of religious progressives believed that being religious is about doing the right thing. On the other hand 82% of religious conservatives believed that if enough people had a personal relationship with God, social problems would take care of themselves (Jones, et.al. 2013). Similarly, The Kenya Youth Survey Report shows that faith is the most cherished value among the youth in Kenya (85%) ranking above family and work (The East African Institute, 2016). This is an indication that religion assumes priority among other personal values the youth subscribe to in Kenya.

These views emphasize the idea of defining faith in terms of action. The idea of defining faith in terms of action goes beyond the belief system and takes into account things people do as a result of what they believe in. In Côte d'Ivoire for instance, faith groups including Roman Catholic parishes and charismatic movements provided shelter in 35 sites to refugees fleeing the 2011 political crisis. This was in response to the refugee crisis that had affected over 20,000 people (UNHCR, 2014).

Religion can also be seen as a structural or social condition that inhibits the socio-economic and political system. Religion for example determines access to employment opportunities especially for women in Kenya. A study by De Giusti and Kambhampati

(2016) shows that protestant religion was a determinant of women's employment (0.028\*). The study also indicated that protestant women were likely to be employed than Catholic and Muslim women. This is because of religious influence for such as the use of religion to justify attitudes and norms that inhibit socio-economic structures upon which employment and economic opportunities are anchored.

From these studies; one can infer the following: (1) religion remains a source of motivation or inspiration for development action among religious communities; (2) drawing from their own faith; religious communities are actively engaged in development work across the world; (3) majority of Kenyan youth highly value religion and participate in religious activities.

While these studies cannot serve as the basis for disputing the historical view that faith communities are set-backs in development, they show that: (1) people continue to find value and meaning in religions; and (2) people find their religious experiences a reason for doing something good to the society or those in need. Unlike the traditional view of religion which portrays religious groups as missionary in nature, motivated to expand and conquer; there is another dimension to religious groups. This dimension portrays religion as a need-based entity just like a hospital. You don't need it always but someone may need it at some point. This dimension does not change the reality of the traditional view that religion may be missionary but rather adds voice to the idea that religious groups and interventions are not always driven by the motive to conquer and expand. On the contrary, faith communities seek to co-exist and adapt to changes as they respond to different experiences.

### *Quakers and development in Kenya*

Quakers have their unique history and characteristics in the development literature. The first Quaker movement originated from English reformation. George Fox (1624-1691), the father of Quaker faith emphasized Quaker testimonies such as equality, honesty, integrity and peace as core to Quaker way of life. The Quaker doctrine of inner light emphasizes that there is that of God in every person. Quaker missionaries arrived in Western Kenya in 1902. They were from the American Quaker tradition. They had a four tier strategy namely: evangelizing local communities; building schools to promote education; building hospitals to promote health care; and initiating income generating projects to improve the livelihoods of the local people. While at the beginning the Quaker mission was initiated by American Quakers; the development and spread of Quaker way of life, faith, and initiatives were carried out by Kenyan Quaker converts with support from American Quakers. However, Quakers did not collaborate closely with the colonial government and had difficulties penetrating in African communities that held strong values such as polygamy, patriarchy, drinking alcohol (Kakaya, 1980).

In Kenya, Quakers have preferred mediation with stakeholders rather than leading or participating in open political confrontational movements, or engaging in direct legal engagement in pursuit of settling public disputes. This is in line with the Quaker pacifist tradition (Haitch & Miller, 2006). Quakers firmly hold anti-religious religions view of faith for instance protesting formal church structures and rituals used in worship for example images. Quakers often strive to maintain still and silent way of worship or

expressing faith (Coleman & Collins, 2000). Since the colonial period Quakers have maintained silent church state relations. Unlike other churches which for instance make press statements on critical national issues, Quakers rarely do so or join such coalitions. Therefore, their visibility in Kenya's political space is rare.

Since 1902, the work of Quakers in Kenya has focused on promoting equality through community empowerment for instance building of mission hospitals and schools, engaging in peace building, and providing relief in times of crisis. Rural Service Program for example which began in 1902 as Africa industrial mission provides health care, education, and infrastructure along with evangelism (Moyer, 2015). Quaker programs focus on providing alternative to government welfare policies. In their advocacy, Quaker organizations maintain minimal direct engagement with government on issues of policy in favor of providing services to marginalized communities. Until 1970s Quaker initiatives were concentrated in western Kenya, where they have built 515 primary schools, over 200 high schools, two technical colleges, and three hospitals (Musonga, 2014). In 1970s, Quakers moved to Northern Kenya where they built their first mission center in Turkana, and later expanded to Samburu in 1990s (Friends United Meeting, 2012). By the year 2015, Quakers had established 240 secondary schools in Kenya (Hockett, 2012).

Quakers highly esteem the phrase "Let your life speak." It is phrase they attributed to George Fox the founder of the Quaker Movement and is interpreted to mean that faith is much a reflection of what people do rather than what they confess. In this case Quakers cherish values such as peace, equality, simplicity, community, and stewardship (Pierson, 2011). While Christianity has its own religious limitations as regards gender equality for instance; the idea of a faith based on the inner experience of Christ (also known as "that of God in every person" or "inner light") allowed women to perform functions that were traditionally reserved for men. This created lanes of freedom from which African women were empowered through access to education and freedom of expression (McMahon, 2016). In 2007 Quakers developed a peace and conflict resolution curriculum for high school students in response to Kenya's 2007/8 post election violence. This is in line with Quaker mission to promote peace and conflict resolution around the world (Hockett, 2012).

Since 1930s, Quaker organizations have used the following approaches to engage in community development. (1) Focus on reduction of inequalities in a wide range of areas including gender and socio-economic inequalities, income inequalities in rural sector, and provision of basic education and health; (2) Promoting community participation and inclusion in the development process; (3) Fostering the principles of equality by creating an environment where members of the community join the development process as partners in development.

The freedom within the Quaker community allows for diverse development processes for example: (1) The church as a development actor engages in development using church structures, resources, and agenda as instruments of delivering development outcomes. An example of this is the current Quaker mission schools and hospitals. (2) International Quaker mission organizations partner with local churches around the world in realizing development projects for example the work of Friends United

Meeting in the United States. (3) A group of Quakers in a local congregation form a movement to engage in development process and work with Quaker churches as partners. While many inferences on the relationship between church and development have been drawn from larger development impacts of the work of church organizations; there are limited actual studies that systematically documents and analyzes what actually happens when informal Quaker movements engages in development, how the movement works, and what development lessons can be drawn from this development experience.

## 2. Methodology

### *The Context*

By late 1800s, African leadership had resisted the penetration of missionary activities in Kenya. This was fueled by among other things lack of trust in the colonial administration and the fear of losing land (Omwami, 2014). This explains the earlier reaction of the Maasai community towards Christianity which has been described as hostile. Some studies indicate that some of the Maasai were evicted and displaced by the colonial government from their lands in order to pave way for European settlements between 1905 and 1911, a few years before the outbreak of WWI (Duder & Simpson, 1997). It is estimated that the Maasai lost 50 % of their land to what later became Kenya. For over 100 years, the Maasai still struggle with the legacies of eviction and displacement, some of which have often culminated into cycles of post-election violence (Hughes, 2000). Today, the Maasai inhabit the versatile southern Kenya region along Kenya Tanzania border without land tenure. They are part of indigenous communities that resisted colonialism and Christianization for decades. Their resilience against modernization and Christianization has in the modern literature been interpreted as a model to preserve cultural values. The Maasai are largely a pastoralist community that holds firmly, values such as communal land ownership, customary authority that regulates everyday life including use of natural resources, and reciprocity (Seno & Shaw, 2002). There are a lot of positive things about this for instance, such resilience serve to assert the significance for respecting other people's values and way of life. This is one of the universal rights and norms (Hodgson, 2011).

Much of the land inhabited by the Maasai is dry Savanna, a semi arid region with limited infrastructure and economic opportunities outside livestock keeping. As a result, majority of the local people rely on informal economic activities such as charcoal burning and seasonal agriculture (Rucina, et.al. 2010). It is also important to note that indigenous communities like the Maasai are the most marginalized communities in Kenya. This is partly because during colonialism, the welfare system, especially education and health care were provided by Christian missions since the colonial government did not adequately invest in these (Moyer, 2015).

In post-independence Kenya, there have been little resources allocated to reduce inequalities among the marginalized communities. By the year 2011, Kenya was rated one of the most unequal countries in the world with vast regional inequalities and imbalanced wealth distribution (Kwaka & Mutunga, 2011). For indigenous marginalized

communities, the first clear national initiative towards empowerment was the 2010 new constitution which provided for the rights of the minorities. The constitution in Article 27 (4) recognizes marginalization on account of historical injustices or present structural conditions. Likewise, Article 56 provides for the state to address issues affecting marginalized people (Republic of Kenya, 2010).

### *Theoretical framework*

This study was located within two dominant narratives, one that saw the role of the church in development as retrogressive and the one that saw the role of the church in development as progressive. The focus was to identify a shift from the dominant narrative and gather ideas one can use to construct the alternative narrative/view. As a result, this study examines the Quaker movement and interprets its activities through the lens of organizational ecology theory. Organizational ecology theory assumes that organizations are organic hence they are affected by the environment within which they exist. This environment changes from time to time hence imposing pressure on these organizations. Therefore, if they don't change to fit the new environment, they will die. Therefore, organizations respond to the external environment by making adjustments that enable them to survive or thrive in the changing environment (Su, 2009).

The since devolution of national resources under the new constitutional dispensation still remains an infancy level; and because of the wide gap in inequalities across regions and communities; the church as part of civil society still plays a significant role in reduction of inequalities by engaging in development projects that are of mutual benefits to the church and the community. Church movements are still inclined to the early protestant ethical view that they work to please God, and to demonstrate their worth to themselves as members of their faith community (Edgell, 2012). In return, the community engages the church in development initiatives out of need to benefit from what it perceives as: functional values for example the desired lifestyle; spiritual resources such as hope, faith, emotional relief; and material or infrastructural resources which can give the respective community a competitive advantage in a world where that particular community has been left behind, as a result of historical marginalization. This type of mutual interaction benefits both sides and is relatively different from colonialism or imperialism. It is along this line of interaction that this study seeks to examine what actually happened when an informal Quaker movement engaged the Maasai community in community development.

### *Appreciative Inquiry*

Appreciative Inquiry is a qualitative methodology that emphasizes what brings life for example health, vitality, well-being and excellence. Appreciative Inquiry seeks to honor the past and review the present in order to positively reconstruct the future. It seeks to bring in new perspectives that offer alternative conceptions of knowledge, new discourse on human potential and new directions into achieving an alternative end (Somerville & Farner, 2012).



Appreciative Inquiry assumes that: (1) reality is socially constructed; (2) inquiry is an intervention that changes participants; (3) the questions the researcher asks contains change effect because they influence what participants will think, say, and imagine about the future; (4) organizational life is expressed in stories members share and is always reconstructed through conversations; (5) use words that invoke life or positive emotional energy in participants and inspires people is essential. When you ask positive changes; you make participants envision even greater possibilities and energy (Bushe & Kassam, 2005 in Somerville & Farner, 2012, p.11).

The following four-Cycle approach is used in the study: (1) Discovery; (2) Dreaming; (3) Design; (4) Destiny. This approach assumes that Appreciative Inquiry focuses on: (1) what is positive; (2) gathering knowledge that is applicable to the situation; (3) creating new ideas/knowledge; (4) using images that compel and provoke participants to action (Bushe & Kassam, 2005 in Somerville & Farner, 2012, p.11).

Participants in the study were members of an informal Quaker movement that came together in 2010 with a vision to plant a mission station among the Maasai of Kenya. The station would serve as a community development center providing community services as well as act as a center for Quaker worship, faith and practice. A collection of event narratives and interview techniques were used to collect data from participants.

### 3. Findings of the Study

#### *(1) Discovery*

The purpose of the discovery section was to appreciate the past and present situation. Therefore, the researcher collected from participants, stories about their past experiences. Inquiries were made regarding the following issues: participants' lived experiences and background; the value they brought to movement; their hopes and dreams; and their memories of the last event when they came together to address an issue or issues of common concern. The findings of this section show that participants were of the second and third generation of Kenyan Quakers. They grew up in Quaker families. They lived in communities and attended Quaker schools. They brought into the movement a cohesive force of Quaker values. A part from the Quaker heritage which they shared, they were largely a post-independence generation (born after 1960s), a people who grew up when mobilizing community resources for community development was dominantly a national value. This value locally known as *Harambee* (meaning pulling resources and efforts together) defined Kenya's patriotism for over five decades. From churches to community schools and hospitals, political leaders, religious leaders, and the community mobilized resources to develop infrastructure. The idea was based on the notion that the state alone did not have enough resources to build the nation; hence the state was a development partner in every community. Most of them had been involved in more than one community event in which they mobilized resources or participated in the actual volunteer work on community projects.

Participants were also responding to religious awakening in the city. About a decade before the movement formed, national mainstream media ran shows in which

Pentecostal and evangelical preachers reached out to viewers and listeners across the nation. They taught among other things individual initiative to reach out to others and share the gospel. They highlighted community projects they were engaging in as well. During weekends, they held open air gatherings where they preached the gospel. Gradually, people in mainstream Christianity began to demand a more proactive community engagement. While these were not new teachings and practices to Quakers, they were awakening. Besides Pentecostalism, the expansion of Islam had reached in places that it had not been before. Many villages and sub-urban areas that did not have mosques before had several. Early morning Muslim prayers woke up people in urban centers. These changes induced in young people a sense of response. Some young people left local Quaker congregations to join them. Others began the discussion about remaining Quaker and doing something of their own in response. In a way, pressure from Pentecostal movements and Islam provoked an inner awakening among Quaker congregations. When the need to reach out to the community arose, many found resonance with the call to join the movement.

## *(2) Dreaming*

The mission to plant a Quaker mission center among the Maasai of Kenya was informed by a range of factors and negotiated through informal networks over time. In January 2007, a Quaker elder from Nairobi who worked for a seed company had been transferred by the company to Loitoktok District. Loitoktok is located down the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro, about 25 kilometers from Kenya Tanzania border. The region is a semi-arid area. Because of the vulnerability of the region to drought and famine, international organizations like USAID work with government on community development projects such as agriculture and health. This intervention stimulates the rural economy of the area prompting private sector firms to establish branches in the area selling products such as seeds and agricultural inputs to farmers. To a large extent, much of development financing in the region comes from non-governmental and civil society sector.

For about four years, the elder frequently sent letters to the church in Nairobi inviting Quakers to establish a mission station in Loitoktok. These letters were read in local congregations as part of public communication sessions. In October 2010, a group of youth who had attended a youth conference approached local church leaders who were standing outside the church. One of them asked: Why can't we go to Loitoktok and establish a mission there? The conversation grew spontaneously among those who were standing by. Local leaders adopted the idea. They encouraged the youth to take it up as a youth initiative. On 27<sup>th</sup> of October 2010, two youth leaders volunteered to travel to Loitoktok. The following day, they travelled to Kisanjani, a rural area about twelve kilometers from Loitoktok town. They surveyed the area and upon return, they submitted a report to the Young Friends Program Office. Kisanjani was a scarcely populated rural semi-arid area. One catholic mission had been established in the area. It ran the only community school in the area.

### *(3) Design*

On 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2010, Young Friends Program Office facilitated the formation of the Mission Loitoktok Committee to organize for the mission to establish a mission station in Loitoktok. It comprised of youth leaders and other members of the Quaker congregation who felt the urge to join the movement. This committee focused mainly on the mission event planning. As a result it held consultations with: (1) individuals and other local Quaker congregations in Nairobi who donated resources used in the mission and provided volunteers teams; (2) local police in Loitoktok who provided security; (3) passenger service companies that transported volunteer teams and resources used in the mission; (4) a hotel enterprise that provided lodging for volunteer teams; and (5) members of the local community in Kisanjani who were intended to host the mission. The committee also organized the following mission events: (1) public relations; (2) humanitarian relief services; (3) church community consultative forum; and (4) preaching of the gospel. Public relations activities involved community engagement to introduce Quakers to the host community. It focused on sharing with members of the community who Quakers are, their values, and beliefs. Church community consultative forum involved a series of meetings between the local community and volunteer teams in which the following issues were discussed: (1) What will be the role of the church in the community? (2) Who among the community would be interested in joining the Quaker community? (3) In what ways would the Quakers be involved in the life of the community in the future? Preaching the gospel was basically talking about belief in Jesus Christ as the transforming power and ultimate reason behind the Quaker way of life. The committee raised funds and material needs from well-wishers. It also conducted a fundraising on 6<sup>th</sup> of March, 2011 where local churches and individuals contributed to the mission. Finally, the mission was conducted from 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> March 2011. About thirty two youth took part in the mission.

### *(4) Destiny*

The movement organized rallies, conducted road shows, and distributed leaflets through community leaders, inviting members of the community to its events. Some volunteer teams provided humanitarian relief to the community. Others interacted with members of the community creating new friendships, while others engaged in church-community consultative forum. Worship services were conducted twice on the evening of 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2011 and on the morning of 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2011. Twenty three members of the community joined the Quaker movement. Through the consultative forum, a local building was hired to provide initial services for the Quaker mission center. The movement however faced the following challenges:

1. There were Limited finances which led to limited work and charitable services.
2. Since many local people were illiterate, most of the participants preferred use of their native language. This prompted for the constant need for translation services which were hard to find.
3. There was need for more time to discuss church-community engagement.

4. Volunteers lived twelve kilometers away from the mission field due to lack of facilities and security in the area. This limited the amount of working hours.
5. Humanitarian work was overwhelmingly more than the volunteers who had come to serve the community.
6. Humanitarian relief was not adequate for the community

Following this experience, a series of follow up meetings were conducted with the members of the community to assess the community needs and ways in which Quaker movements would assist. As a result of the community engagement, the local community offered the Quaker mission Centre community land to build a mission Centre, a school, and a hospital.

On 6<sup>th</sup> Jan 2014, Quakers started a Nursery School at the mission center. About 35 students were enrolled. This was much more than the number that had been anticipated during the initial planning since there was no data on the children in the community. A Voluntary Teacher from the community offered to teach the children. In the initial report on the opening of the nursery, the chair of the nursery school committee wrote:

*It is a challenge to support her (volunteer teacher) in order for her to continue doing the work. I request well-wishers to come out and support the nursery school in whichever way. We have started a feeding program for these little children. We depend on members to contribute food for the children. I therefore invite you to be in this group contributing to the feeding program.*

In response, well-wishers raised funds through the nursery school committee. By December 2015, the school had provided free nursery education to over 70 children and community support services to more than 150 families. By early 2016, an elementary community school had begun.

## 4. Implications for Practice

This study has shown that the Maasai community in Kenya is a typical example of indigenous communities that remain the most marginalized communities in many developing countries. With entrenched historical structural injustices and limited public spending on inequality reduction projects; the community stand vulnerable to poverty and increase in inequalities. Like other indigenous communities around the world, the community also inhabits the most underdeveloped areas of the country with limited infrastructure. As a result, it is quite rare for these regions to attract private sector investment. This means that neither public policy solutions nor private sector interventions are available for the community. In the absence of public and private sector interventions, civil society interventions become the core source of community development. Therefore, while religious intervention in other parts of the world may not be necessary in public affairs; it is essential in such areas heavily affected by inequalities, and where minority groups do not have adequate political influence over public policy.

## 5. Conclusions

As indicated earlier, previous studies on the role of faith communities in development are dominated by two perspectives: (1) faith communities are agents of, or actors in development; and (2) faith communities are anti-nationalists or setbacks in development. These contrasting views are based on an analysis of historical studies, religious studies, as well as the interpretation of cases in various development experiences. Empirical studies measuring the influence, contribution or effect of religion on development indicate that (1) religion remains a source of motivation or inspiration for development action among religious communities; (2) drawing from their own faith; religious communities are actively engaged in development work across the world. In light of this, this study explores how an informal Quaker movement engaged in community development with the Maasai of Kenya.

The study employed Appreciative Inquiry technique to investigate and explain the movements' engagement in community development. The findings were interpreted through the lens of organizational ecology theory. Organizational ecology theory assumes that organizations are organic and vulnerable to external forces. Therefore, they respond to the external environment by making adjustments that enable them to survive or thrive in the changing environment. This study shows that in a way, pressure from Pentecostal movements and Islam provoked an inner awakening among Quaker congregations. This awakening inspired individual members to form an informal movement to respond to the pressure which they saw as a threat to the survival of the Quaker church. The movement drew its inspiration from the Quaker tradition to reduce inequality and promote inclusion. Members of the movement mobilized their resources which included social capital gathered from the members' lived experiences as a post-independence Kenyan generation that always pulled resources together to tackle public problems.

The movement became instrumental in negotiating space in the indigenous Maasai community and finding new meaning in engaging in development. This engagement is a continuous interaction where the church gives its social capital as well as material resources in exchange of space in the community. This is an example of spirituality that works as force for interfaith dialogue and development. Unlike western oriented Christian missions that are characterized by western power and resources when they come to Africa; this informal movement was organized by Kenyan youth who represented the local initiative without embedded influential power and resources. The movement represents the idea that Christian movements are not always powerful to exert influence on society. On the contrary, like any other organization, religious movements are vulnerable to environmental forces that threaten their survival.

This indicates that religious movements which will survive this era are partly those that innovate new ways to adapt to the environment and relate to the society. Successful religious movements are likely those that continue to play interventionary role in society, those that negotiate new space in society, and those that evolve to participate in the life of society and play a more meaningful role in development for example reduction of poverty and inequality. This study suggests that the emerging model of interaction between the Quaker movement and the community is not imperialistic or

expansionist. On the contrary, it is a model of mutual cooperation. This model can not only reduce ethnic tensions but can also propel new ways of thinking about religious activities, especially those aimed at improving the living conditions of the people, particularly in the absence of state and private sector services. Religious activities that are open to community input, participation, and interests do not only benefit the community but also shape the way faith communities apply their faith for public good.

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