

SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY STAVANGER

THE CHURCH IN A POVERTY STRICKEN SOCIETY:
AN AGENT OF DEVELOPMENT IN RELATION TO
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON

THESIS SUBMITTED
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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

- AACC: All Africa Conference of Churches
AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ELCC: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon
FEE: Femme Education Economie
FEMEC: Fédération des Eglises et Missions Evangeliques du Cameroun
FPC: Femme Pour Christ
GDP: Gross Domestic product
HIPC: Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
HIV: Human Immune Deficiency Virus
JEELC: Jeunesse Eglise Evangelique Lutherienne au Cameroun
LWF: Lutheran World Federation
MDGs: Millennium Development Goals
NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation
NMS: Norwegian Missionary Society
NORAD: Norwegian Aids for Development
PADI: Projet d'Appui au Developpement Integre
PHC: Primary Health Care
PRSP: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SM: Sudan Mission
SSP: soins de Santé Primaire
UN: United Nations
UNDP: United Nations Development Program
UNICEF: United Nations Children Funds
WCC: World Council of Churches
WHO: World Health Organisation

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

1.1 Introduction

Development is about people. It is about people with fundamental needs but also with fundamental rights, with unalienable dignity, and with remarkable imagination, creativity, potential, and capacity. Development is about real people in concrete situations. It is about people in poorest regions of the world. It is about survivors of natural disasters. It is about people in war zones. It is about people with HIV/AIDS. It is about people who hunger daily, who have no access to clean water. It is about children who work when they would love to go to school and parents who cannot give them minimum health care. It is about all the other reasons that people throughout the world are poor and marginalized and yet still manage to hold out hope for better future for themselves and their children. Development is about human potential that is in each person, a potential that is compromised by poverty.

Despite several decades of development, efforts to radically reduce world poverty have only enjoyed moderate success. Many of the hopes of early decades have faded and many beliefs have been challenged and changed. The former vision for a better world with full employment, decent income, universal primary education, health for all, save water supplies, a demographic transition to stable population, and fair terms trade between rich and poor countries, have not been realized. While there have been improvements in overall human development in handful of developing countries, the number of people living in poverty in the world has not actually declined. Hundreds of millions of people are worse off now than twenty years ago. They suffer the daily anguish of deprivation in some form or another. That some nations should be rich and others poor can even seem inevitable as we watch, year by year, indicators of well-being improve in some, and decline in others, with lower incomes, fewer children in school, deteriorating services in health, lower expectation of live, and greater vulnerability.¹

1.2 Purpose

The present Master's Thesis aim at describing and projecting the church as an agent of development in a poverty stricken society with focus on the city of Ngaoundere; at creating

¹Robert Chambers, *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last* (Warwickshire: ITDG Publishing, 2005), 1.

more awareness to both the government and development organizations to the church contributions in fostering development in the society; and at reawakening the church to her great task of meeting the physical and spiritual needs of people in the society. What motivate me to write this thesis is to have more knowledge on the contribution of the church in the struggle against poverty; what make such contributions different from that of the government and development organizations? How does the church understand itself as development agent?

1.3 Statement of the problem

Adamawa province is the 3rd poorest province out of the ten which form the Republic of Cameroon. Its poverty index is 37 %, statistics based on environment, illiteracy, and malnutrition. It presents the highest rate of HIV/AIDS infections in the country; official government figure gives the province an HIV infection rate of 17 %.² These numbers come from samples in Ngaoundere only, and infection rates in more rural areas are probably lower. Islam is the religion which dominates there and women suffer from social discrimination and are marginalised by men. There is a prevailing low standard of living due to low income. Environmental hazards have also added into human's problems that exist in the region and make life more difficult for peasants. The soil is poor, difficult to cultivate, and the climate harsh during the dry season with harmattan. There is lack of portable water and where there exist, the sources are dirty and unhealthy for drinking.

We know that the church as an institution acts in the society. It takes an active stance in society in its involvement with human salvation, people's lives, and social struggles. Looking keenly into these problems as church member, I came to ask myself this question: what is the church doing in its holistic ministry to foster development in the province and in the city of Ngaoundere as far as health, education, agriculture, and social justice are concerned?

1.4 Motivation

The church is a pervasive and vital force that has for centuries inspired bold efforts to educate, feed, heal, and house those who are poor and excluded. But the world of religion has often gone unnoticed by the government and development organizations, and the

² [http://site resources.worldbank.org/INTPRS1/Resources/Cameroon-PRSP.pdf](http://site.resources.worldbank.org/INTPRS1/Resources/Cameroon-PRSP.pdf)(2006)

traditional approaches of economic and social development have seemed far removed from the central values and concerns of the church. Attention of the church, governments, and development institutions has to be called in order that they may recognize the commonalities between their tasks and work in partnership in their mutual commitment to the welfare of the poor and social justice. These combined efforts will certainly lead to remarkable results. It is in this sense that the Dublin meeting of the world faith and development leaders held in 2005 came to a consensus stating that “development encompasses the social, cultural and spiritual factors together with the economic and finances and that successful and sustainable long term social and economic development programs must weave these elements together”.³

1.5 Delimitation

I’m aware that poverty has diverse causes and it touches many aspects of life. I will point out the sensitive areas of life affected by the phenomenon focussing more on some millennium development goals and what the ELCC is doing to achieve these goals in the Adamaoua province and in Ngaoundere city in particular.

1.6 Sources

In my description and discussion of the role of the church in a poverty stricken society, I will gather materials from different sources including the library and field research. The field research materials are based on data collected through oral interviews at Ngaoundere. These materials will be supplemented by the library research which will comprise books on development, periodicals, unpublished materials related to my topic, and different report of ELCC. Besides the observations and interviews process, I will use my background and personal experience as one who have worked with the church project in the rural areas. I will also include internet sources. These are examples of some relevant books that will be used for this purpose:

Agbasiere, T., Kabajungu. In *Church Contribution to Integral Development*, point out the social teaching of the church on the importance of development, clarifying the Christian meaning of development, and the church’s role in the promotion of the welfare of the society at various levels. The book covers a wide range of topics such as: basic health care, care for

³Katherine Marshall and Lucy Keough, *Mind, Heart, and Soul in the Fight against Poverty* (Washington: World Bank, 2005), xxi.

the poor, respect of the rule of law and human rights, promotion of justice and peace, promotion of women's development, recommendation to the church to make effective use of mass media for promoting holistic development particularly by inculcating a religious and moral sense into the society. This book is a great source of inspiration especially as it is written in African context.

Marshall, K., L. Keough. In *Finding Global Balance: Common Ground between the Worlds of development and Faith* talk about the important partnership between development and faith organizations and leaders, partnership build on a common commitment to human dignity. The focus is on the millennium development goals and how stronger collaboration between the worlds of development and faith can work toward their realization. The key development issue on common concern are: poverty eradication, social justice, and hope for a better life for the world's poorest communities.

The same authors, in *Mind, Heart, and Soul in the Fight against Poverty*, appeal to faith institutions and development practitioners to combine their efforts in order to achieve remarkable results in their mutual commitment to the welfare of the poor and to social justice.

Myers, L. Bryant. In *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* illustrates Christian views of poverty, it causes, and how it is experienced differently in different cultures. The book stresses how Christian mission can contribute to overcome poverty and dismantle evil in the society.

Dickinson, Richard. In *Line and Plummet: The Churches and Development* points out the necessity of economic and social development all over the world and how the church is also expose to that problem. But the church is in need of strategic thought and action especially when resources are not adequate to an enormous task. Priorities of action need to be established, stewardship demands it.

Republique du Cameroun. *Document de Strategie de Reduction de la Pauvrete*. This book analyses the poverty situation in Cameroon and describes different strategies that can be used to reduce it with short or long term result.

Just to mention but a few, these books are directly connected to my thesis, they will be regularly consulted, and my literature review will be based on these.

1.7 Methodology

I used qualitative research with interview guide to gather information from the field that will be useful to me in the writing of this thesis. The interview guide was a combination of different themes related to my topic and that could help me to answer the research question. My field work was also based on observations, focussed discussions, and informal conversations with my informants. Informal conversations were usually done before and after the interview with a particular informer. Observations also play an important part in the collection of the data, as I often walked to the church hospital to watch what is going on there. Since all my informants accepted that their voice could be taped, I used tape recorder, digital camera, and computer in order to keep the data save. I also carry out some finding in the church archives especially about the history of the church and how mission started in the region.

The church leaders, the Christians, and the Muslims were interviewed individually. I first sought an appointment with them, depending on the availability of each one. Each one spoke out freely what he/she think the church is doing to reduce poverty and enhance development in the region. They also pointed out some areas where the church is lacking behind and give the reasons why. Nursing mother, youth, and peasants were interviewed collectively each because they are people who usually have the same problems. Putting them in group may give them more inspiration as they reasoned together.

The qualitative research interview here is an interview, whose purpose is to gather description of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. It is carried through following an interview guide, which rather than containing exact questions focuses on certain themes such as poverty, and development. The subject of the qualitative research interview is the life-world of the interviewee and his/her relation to it. The purpose is to describe and understand the central themes the interviewee experiences and lives towards. In the interview project, poverty and development were the central themes in the life-world of the population of Ngaoundere, and the interview sought to reflect on these themes. The qualitative research interview is theme oriented not person oriented. Two persons are talking together about a theme, which is interesting to and important to both. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what is said. The interviewer thus registers and interprets what is said, as well as how it is said: he must be observant of and able to interpret, vocalisation, facial expressions, and other body gestures. Common discourse often takes place on factual level. A farmer stated: my poor life situation is not associate to me being lazy, but I have poor farming

methods. My common reaction was to ask what his farming methods are and if he feels that laziness has no influence on his life condition? I received an immediate confirmation of my interpretation of what the farmer was saying. It is necessary to listen to the directly expressed descriptions and meaning as well as what is “said between lines”, and then seek to formulate the implicit message and send it back to the interviewee.⁴

The qualitative research interview aims at obtaining uninterpreted descriptions. The interviewee describes as precisely as possible what he experiences and feels, and how he acts. Kvale drew an analogy to a doctor’s diagnosis. He said that the doctor does not start by asking the patient why he is sick. He rather asks the patient what is wrong, what he is feeling, or what symptoms he has. On the basis of the obtained information the doctor may formulate a hypothesis, and on the basis of the patient’s answers and results from other methods of investigation he then makes his diagnosis. The primary task, however, remains to obtain descriptions, in order for the doctor to have detailed and relevant material upon which he may draw his interpretation.⁵ I proceeded in the same way as Kvale is describing here when I was collecting data from my informants. The interview is taped and transcribed word for word. The typed out version together with the tape constitute the material for subsequent interpretation of meaning. My research was based on a sample of 17 people, including church leaders (both clergy and laity), and ordinary inhabitants of Ngaoundere. The church leaders are people of the milieu and they are in the better position to give me accurate information about the history of the church and its holistic ministry. That is its work as spiritual agent for human salvation and its diaconal activities which focus on the human physical needs. The church leaders included the national bishop, the assistant bishop in charge of evangelism, the church general secretary, the representative of the director of health, the representative of the director of PADI, the director of women for Christ, and the director of youth movement. The cross section of the population included two nursing mothers, two youth, two Christians, two Muslims, and two peasants. These people are looked upon as outsiders, not directly involved with the church affairs, but can be beneficiary in one way or the other of its different activities. They have another way of looking at the church, its activities among the people, and its relation with other faiths and institutions. Their contribution was great, and the material gathered from them will be very useful for my thesis.

⁴Steinar Kvale, *The Qualitative Research Interview. A Phenomenological and Hermmeneucal Mode of Understanding*. Journal of Phenomenological Psychology 14(2) (1992), 175.

⁵ Kvale, *Qualitative research Interview*, 176.

1.8 Disposition

The topic under study has been arranged into six chapters. Chapter one is a general introduction that brings out key elements on which we will focus our attention. It also gives some basic explanations for the understanding of this project and how the work is going to be proceeded. Chapter two gives an overview of ELCC, how it came to be, its growth, and what it is today as far as its development work is concerned. Since this study is the reflection of poverty and development facing the ELCC in Ngaoundere, it is important to present the region with its peculiarities. Chapter three deals with poverty with special focus on the definition, causes, characteristics and holistic understanding of poverty. It also analyses what development mean and whether or not the church suppose to engage in such work. Chapter four analyses the development work of the church in the society in the different spheres or areas. Chapter five answers the question: Is the church equipped to do development today? It points out some challenges that the church is facing in promoting development, and laid out suggestions for church's involvement in development work. Chapter six underlines some concluding remarks with important points that will enable this research work to be useful to the church and the society.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON (ELCC)

2.1 The city of Ngaoundere

Adamawa province is one of the ten provinces that form the Republic of Cameroon. It is called the water tower of Cameroon, since a large number of the country's rivers rise in the area. Its capital is Ngaoundere which is also the head quarter of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon where this research work was carried out.

2.1.1 Geography

The name Ngaoundere is a composite word in Mbum language meaning navel-mountain, where "Ngaou" means mountain and "Ndere" means navel. The town is named after a nearby mountain. The city was founded in approximately 1835 by the Fulani leader Ardo Njobdi, although the site had previously been an Mbum capital as well. It lies at the northern end of the railway to Yaounde and is also home to an airport. Ngaoundere high elevation (1,100m) gives it a relatively cool climate average between 18 and 23 degrees Celsius. It has two seasons; November begins the dry period with low water and even complete dryness, and April the wet with high water from May to September. Rainfall here averages 900 to 1,500 mm per year.⁶ Seasonal floods are also recorded. A long history of volcanism has also created a number of crater lakes in the division, the results of volcanoes filling with water. Among the most well known are lakes Tyson and Mbalang. The Tello fall drop 40m from a rocky springboard which forms the roof of a cave accessible from the side. Temperature rise due to the harmattan (wild, dusty and dry wind from the desert in West Africa) beginning in January, reaching a high in April. Torrential rains in May and June bring temperatures down again. Ngaoundere vegetation has been shaped greatly by man. It was once highly forested, but repeated bush burning and cattle trampling have made great change. The soils are mostly made up of brown or brownish red laterites (clay formed by weathering of rocks in a tropical climate, composed chiefly of iron and aluminium hydroxides), the result of the annual shift

⁶Anne Debel, *Cameroon Today Editions* (J.a, 1977), 171.

between dry and wet conditions and soil wash on the mountains. Iron and aluminium content is high, which causes hardpans to form near the surface due to oxidation. These render the soil difficult to cultivate especially as the farmers here use traditional methods and tools for the work.

2.1.2 Demography

Ngaoundere has a population of 189,800 (2001 estimate). The Mbum are the indigenous population of Ngaoundere and the immediate areas. The Fulani invaded the area in 19th century, becoming the ruling caste of the area.⁷ Being the largest city in Adamawa by far, Ngaoundere attracts numerous settlers from the surrounding rural areas, including Dii from further north, Gbaya from Meiganga, and Pere from the west. Ngaoundere is one of the Cameroon's fastest growing cities due to its location at the terminus of Cameroon's north-south railroads with large number of that population originating from outside of Adamawa province. This is evident in the ironic dichotomy between the so-called "big market", adjacent to the big Mosque and housing mainly local merchants, and the much larger "small market located to the northwest in neighbourhood housing a population largely originating in the southern provinces of Cameroon. Large numbers of foreigners from the neighbourhood countries are also settled in Ngaoundere, coming mostly from Chad, Nigeria, and Central Africa Republic.

Large swathes are devoted almost entirely to the use of Fulbe cattle herders, this pasture punctuated only by occasional settlements. The Fulbe are subdivided in two subgroups: the sedentary or town Fulbe, and the pastoral Fulbe or Bororo. The sedentary Fulbe are more numerous and inhabit most of the province's major towns. The pastoral Fulbe create only temporal settlements, preferring instead to range across the province and beyond with large herds or cattle. They are lighter skinned than their town brethren, tall and thin. The Cameroonian government have made efforts to persuade Fulbe herdsmen to adopt sedentary ways, but the nomadic tradition shows little sign of change. Because the savannah has been push south, however, there is now a substantial amount of immigration to the Centre and East provinces. The Fulbe speaks Ffulde. Due to their historical hegemony of the territory, it also serves as a lingua franca. Other languages include Dii, Gbaya, and Mbum. Most educated inhabitants also speak French and English.

Debel, *Cameroon Today Editions*, 172.

2.1.3 Religion

The city has a mixture of religion. Islam reign supreme in Ngaoundere, especially among the Fulbe majority. There are approximately 60% Muslims, most are rather pragmatic with regards to religious observances. However, there is a noted difference between the sedentary Fulbe, who are more religious and the nomadic one (Bororo), who are often only nominally Muslims. Christianity has made some inroads, though Christians are in distinct minority. There are further 30% of Christians of various denominations including Lutheran, Presbyterian, Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, and Pentecostal. Many of the tribes retain animist or pagan beliefs. There are traditionally been few problems between the various religions, but a radicalization of Islam does seem to have taken place the last ten years or so. Women in the area are traditionally worn a cloth over their hair (irrespective of religion), but garments like hijab were previously almost unknown. Some Muslims women now choose to wear the hijab, but other Muslims dresses like burqua are unknown.

2.1.4 Economy

The economy here is based almost entirely on one single thing: cattle. The region's low population, high humidity, and vast fields of grass make it ideal for grazing. Herdsmen rotate pastures and they often construct watering holes or wells for themselves and their animals. The close relationship between the Bororo and their herds gives a great cultural importance to a Fulbe's number of cattle, and a more heads of cattle a man has, the wealthier he is. This often leads herders to never kill their animals, however, and to keep sick ones alive for fear of losing a portion of one's net worth. Nevertheless, many Fulbe herders transport their cattle to the big markets of Yaounde and Douala for sale (some make it as far as Gabon and Congo). Most of these animals are of the humpbacked zebu breed. These are called Peul zebu, large and freshly animals with dark brown hides and white spots. The nomadic Fulbe on the other hand, herd Bororo zebu. These are leaner, lighter-coloured beasts that are better able to travel long distances. The government run "Institut de Recherches Zootechniques (IRZ) and SODEPA" have established a handful of modern cattle ranches as well. It initiatives have also been instrumental in the eradication of the tsetse fly in the region. The station is also crossing local breeds with foreign ones in order to develop a new type better adapted to the region and more

productive of both meat and milk. It is also training stock farmers to combat diseases, and explaining the need to give the animals nourishing food at regular basic. Many ranchers and Bororo also raise horses and donkeys. There are also goats and sheep in the region. Pigs, however, are much less common due to the prevalence of Islam in the region.

Nearly all farming in the region is done at the sustenance level. The crops grown include maize, manioc, cocoyam, yams, millet, and groundnuts. The Gbaya, Dii, Mbum, and inhabitant from the southern part of the country are the region's most prolific farmers, though even the herdsmen farm in the rainy season. Farms are typically small plots that are cleared or burned out of the bush and then planted. Plants grow during the rainy season, when they are harvested. Because the dry season is long, crops must be preserved, so most are transformed into grain, which is pounded by hand with mortar and pestle. Cash crops play a small role in the region's economy. SODEBLE grows wheat on 100 square metres at Wassande, near Ngaoundere.

Much of the industry here is tied to the region's cattle based economy. For example, leather working is an important industry in Ngaoundere, as evidenced by the Societes des Tanneries et Peuseries du Cameroun (STPC) factory. Rubber, perfume, and dairy are also processed in the capital. Handicrafts, including woodworking and mat weaving, form another sector.⁸

The railway has acted as a major stimulus for the region previously ignored because it was so cut off compared with towns of South, Ngaoundere now enjoy a sufficiently improved situation to be able to extract the utmost benefit from the tourist trade. Trade is also part of the economy of the region. Traders are mostly Haoussa and some town Fulbe. They go as far as Nigeria, Centre African Republic, and even to Mecca to buy goods according to the taste and needs of the people of the region.

2.1.5 Education

The region's education level is generally very low. The nomadic Bororo rarely send their children to school. Boys stay home to take care of the cattle in the bush, while girls often help their mothers in the selling of cow milk by the road side or in the city, after travelling long distances on foot. Meanwhile, town Fulbe often marry their daughters off early into puberty and married girls do not go to school. Those who mostly attend school are not

⁸ All comments in these paragraphs are from Debel, *Cameroon Today Editions*, 172-173.

indigenes of the place. The region has an estimated 70% illiteracy rate.⁹ Another obstacle is lack of schools and teachers. Most schools are located in town, meaning that students often must travel long distances or live away from home, particularly at the secondary level. And to get relatives that can easily accommodate them in town is not always evident. In addition, Cameroonian teachers who are assigned to the region often refuse to go on account of its remoteness.

2.1.6 Health

The region's major health concern is lack of sanitation. This is especially pronounced in the increasingly urbanized Ngaoundere. Different types of illnesses and diseases emerged as a result of such insalubrities. In addition, malnutrition, and not all people have access to safe water. Another concern is HIV/AIDS. Official government gives the province an HIV infection rate of 17%, the highest in the country.¹⁰ These numbers come from samples in Ngaoundere only, and infection rates in more rural areas are probably lower.

2.1.7 Missionaries

The Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS) first established a mission here in the early 1920s. The church built in 1934 still stands.¹¹ At the time of the construction, there were not many Christians in the city, but being optimistic, the church was built for a capacity of roughly 200-300 persons.¹² In cooperation with the local Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon (ELCC) and the American ELCA, the NMS has built hospitals, high school, and several other institutions. Ngaoundere used to hold one of the largest Norwegian contingencies, with over 100 Norwegians living there in the 80s. The dedication of three church buildings last February was the latest event that made Ngaoundere hosts a huge delegation of Norwegians coming for that celebration. The neighbourhood was even dubbed "Norvege" (Norway in French). The Catholic Church also has representatives and large congregations in the area. Ngaoundere is even a diocese in the Catholic Church.

⁹ [http://site/resources.worldbank.org/INTPRS1/Resources/Cameroon-PRSP.pdf](http://site.resources.worldbank.org/INTPRS1/Resources/Cameroon-PRSP.pdf) (2006).

¹⁰ <http://site/resources.worldbank.org/INTPRS1/Resources/Cameroon-PRSP.pdf> (2006).

¹¹ Rev Doudet Luc, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 16/07/08.

¹² Ibid.

2.1.8 Gender issues

Women face discrimination in this region due to religion, tradition, and culture. People believe that woman is made to work in the kitchen, take care of the children, and work in the farm for those tribes that favoured farming, and to do all these does not require any education at all. A lot of sensitization is been done by the government and the Church in that domain to promote gender development and equity, and her integration into the different levels of the society.

2.2 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon and its background

2.2.1 The first works of the missionaries societies

2.2.1.1 The Sudan Mission (SM)

The Sudan Mission (SM) came up as the result of the work of Adoulphus Eugene Gunderson, American citizen but Norwegian by origin. He worked in Nigeria from 1912 to 1916 under the umbrella of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM). It is from there that he felt the call to also preach the gospel in Cameroon. Because of the insecurity that existed after the First World War, his church in American refused to back him up. He convinced a certain number of people to form an independent organization called Sudan Mission; and he took some years to present God's challenges to Christians in America asking for their spiritual, financial, and physical supports. Gunderson got the authorisation and left to Cameroon on the 8th April 1923 with his wife Anna Maria and two nurses: Olette Berntsen, and Anne Olsen. After a long journey, they arrived at Ngaoundere on the 22nd May 1923, date that marked the beginning of the evangelisation of Adamawa.¹³

They wanted to settle in Ngaoundere but were impressed by the warmed reception and openness of the Gbaya people at Mboula; a village where they were to cut wood for their buildings. They arrived at Mboula in January 1924 and mission work started there.¹⁴ Eight temporal houses were built. The villagers thought that missionaries were traders who could make their village's popularity to increase. At the same time they also have in mind that there was some money to gain from the job the missionaries were offering. It is latter on they understood the difference. Gunderson learned Gbaya and developed an

¹³Kåre Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté* (Amstelveen: IMPROCEP, 1990), 12.

Adamawa is a province, and Ngaoundere its capital. The missionaries first arrived at Ngaoundere before moving to settle at Mboula, a Gbaya village not very far from the capital. The Gbaya are one of the larger ethnic groups in the Adamawa province. Their language is also called Gbaya.

¹⁴Tomas Drønen, *Communication, Conversion and Conservation: The Dii Meet The Norwegian Missionaries Northern Cameroon 1934-60* (Stavanger: Netprint Prosessen, 2007), 76.

alphabet. He started producing materials for teaching and reading. The teaching was based on the word of God, and Mrs Gunderson had a class of 40 pupils. Some elders of the village learned how to read. A health centre was created. The Gbaya, Haoussa, and peul or Mbororo were treated and it was an opportunity for the missionaries to preach to them the word of God and to sell some part of the Bible in Haoussa and in Arab. In 1924, there was already a sign of a missionary work at Mboula: School in local language, care to the sick, and evangelisation by words and through written materials.¹⁵ The first chapel was inaugurated at Mboula in May 1932. Not long after that, six men gave their lives to Christ and were baptised in December 1932. By the end of 1934, 39 persons were baptised.¹⁶ Religious instructions constituted on Bible studies, women's meetings, catechumenal classes, prayer meetings and church services. The work extended to Meiganga, Betare Oya, Garoua-Boulai, Poli and Abba.

2.2.1.2 The Norwegian Missionary Societies (NMS)

It was in March 1925 that a crew of the Norwegian missionaries composed of Flatland, Sverre Oseland, and Jens Nikolaisen arrived at Ngaoundere. Thrana was a member of the team but he remained at Numan in Nigeria due to his ill health. Their target was to reach out to the Mboum who were pagans and farmers. They settled in Ngaoundere because the climate was good. The first years were concentrated to the building of houses and the study of different languages without knowing which one to use exactly. Five temporal houses were built, and five languages were to be taken into consideration: mboum, peul, haoussa, pidgin, and baboute.¹⁷ Finally the peul was selected and it was in this language that the bible was going to be translated. People were not free to seek for job. Workers were mostly offered by the Lamido.¹⁸ Many of them were slaves and their masters claimed their salaries on the payment's day.

During the year 1928, there were 49 meetings at Ngaoundere with 1370 attendants. Up to 1931, the number of participants at the meetings solely depended on the number of the workers at the mission and people from the South; and it was a clear indication that the pagan Mboum who was the target group, was much more influenced by Islam than first

¹⁵ Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 17.

¹⁶ Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 22.

¹⁷ Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 40.

Baboute is the language of the Voute people who live in the Yoko area in between the Adamawa and the Centre provinces.

Pidgin is used as lingual franca especially for those coming from the southern parts of Cameroon.

¹⁸ The lamido is a traditional ruler who has important power and rules over a large territory.

assumed.¹⁹ In December 1930, Paul Gonon and his son Ahmadou were Baptised at Ngaoundere, and in 1931, a parish was organized there. There were also 100 medical consultations a day at the dispensary, the school has 20 pupils. The first church building was inaugurated in December 1934 at the station in Ngaoundere and could host roughly 300 persons. In 1938, 9 boys were baptised: 4 from Yoko, and 5 Dii.²⁰ No indigene of Ngaoundere has been reported yet. In Ngaoundere, strangers are the one who opened up to the Gospel; like the Gbaya, the Pana, and the Laka.²¹ The work extended to the Dii land, Tibati, Yoko, Bankim, Galim/Tignere, Gadjiwan, Banyo and Mayo Darle. In most places where missionaries worked, the indigenes were reluctant to follow their teachings. It is only in Bankim and in the Dii land that the inhabitant showed particular interest to the work and the teachings. It was a period of social transformation among the Dii. They took active part in the encounter with the missionaries and through this, they became politically independent, they received Western education and strengthened their ethnic identity.²² People from the southern part of Cameroon were more opened to the missionaries' teachings and also willing to serve. Probably because they had a bit of the skills required for the different types of job.

2.2.2 The growth and autonomy of the ELCC

2.2.2.1 The growth

The strategy of the SM was to form a parish when ever the number of the baptised people reached 20 in a particular place. The local parishes will then have responsibility over finances, church discipline, choice of the candidates for training in the bible school, sending of the catechists to the different districts, and even where the church is not yet existing. This local administrative experience remained only at the level of the districts. Nevertheless, evangelists were sent as missionaries to far away regions. This practice developed the idea that people living in distant places from one another can be united together through the Gospel. Regional conferences brought together Christians from the different districts of each region to listen to the word of God, and also to discuss about

¹⁹ Drønen, *Communication, Conversion and Conservation*, 77.

²⁰ Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 41-43.

The Dii are inhabitant of the vast plain after Ngaoundere falaise. They are found in Mbe, Karna, Ndom, and Wak. Their language is called Dourou. They became more interested on the mission work and they constituted the dominant tribe in the work of NMS.

²¹ The Pana and the Laka are ethnic groups both from the south of Chad Republic and the north of Centre Africa Republic.

²² Drønen, *Communication, Conversion, and Conservation*. 88.

matters of common interest; like the application for financial help to pay the salaries of the workers, or the application for the building of schools.²³ There was an executive committee put in place by the missionaries to see into the Smooth running of the work. Unfortunately there were few local people represented in the committee. Some of the local people benefited from such environment offer by the missionaries. They carried out different types of job in many places and in different situations. An example of such is Darman Paul, who served the church in different capacities, and even represented the church at Tanganyika before the church became independent.²⁴ This enabled people to see the church as an organisation or unit beyond geographic, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries.

The NMS formed committees at the parish and district levels. These committees were headed by missionaries. They were in charge of posting catechists and settling problems between Christians. Latter on, the responsibility was handed on to the local people. They had to take care of the church buildings and the finances in collaboration with the catechist.²⁵ Unlike the SM, the NMS did not organize regional conferences. Workers remained only in one district. They had no idea of the largeness of the church and consequently lacked administrative skills to lead something above the district. But through primary schools many people received general training which help to increase their levels.

2.2.2.2 The negotiations towards autonomy

The two missionary societies engaged themselves with faith in the negotiations to form one Lutheran Church and the handing over to the indigenes. They were to put down a church constitution and regulations before the handing over. Different committees were formed to take care of the matter. It is to be noted that those indigenes were kept aside while important decisions were being taken. How could they now handle such responsibility? In addition, the districts and then institutions like the hospitals, the schools have to be self sponsored before the church can become completely independent. It was a big challenge. Christians were to be taught that they are God's servants and consequently, responsible for the advancement of his kingdom on earth. The problem of self

²³ Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 153.

²⁴ Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 153.

²⁵ Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 153.

sponsorship was found mostly in the districts covered by the NMS. The SM succeeded in organising a decentralised and self sponsored work whereby responsibility belonged to the parishes. It was a positive and encouraging point but there was unequal distribution of wealth between workers depending on their different places of job. The SM was more liberal even in the formation of the different committees and power transfer. Unlike the NMS who was more conservative in her own policy making and the evolution towards church's autonomy.²⁶ The negotiations lasted so long and were tiring.

In December 1960, a meeting was held in Ngaoundere where the church constitution and the cooperation document between the two missions were signed. The name of the church became the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon and Centre African Republic (ELCCCAR). The church was divided into four regions:

- South-west region (Yoko, Banyo and Tibati sub-division)
- South-east region (Meiganga, Betare oya, part of Batouri and Baboua in the Centre African Republic)
- Centre region (sub-division of Tignere, Ngaoundere, and part of Rey-Bouba)
- North region (sub division of poli, Garoua, and part of Rey-Bouba).²⁷

The region had the right to post pastors and to discuss any matter related to the church. The regional synod was almost like the general synod. During this same meeting, the first president of the church was elected: 63 voices for pastor Endresen, against 60 for pastor Darman. The natives did not have confidence that one of them could handle the post. On another hand, there was fear of dominance, mismanagement of funds, and tribal rivalries.²⁸

In reality, the church was a federation whereby power was at the hands of the board of missionaries. As a result, the ELCCCAR was not recognised by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) as such. During the 10 following years, there were constant negotiations on church's organisation and the relationship between the church and the two missions. In 1963, Pastor Paul Darman was elected president and Walle vice president. The natives now hasten the process of real independence. In fact the big problem for the church was the power of the missionary board. The natives wanted to address their issues directly to the Directions at Stavanger and Minneapolis without passing through the missionary board. But that freedom was not given to them. The SM

²⁶ Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 155.

²⁷ Rev Doudet Luc, taped interview, Ngaoundere, 17/07/08.

²⁸ Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 162.

and the NMS had never come to an agreement as far as subventions given to the districts are concerned. The SM was against while the NMS and the natives favoured the idea. This brought high tension between the two missions as well as the suggestion to dissolve the missionary board.²⁹

The agreement that the two missions signed in the new convention in 1969 stated that income from the district should be used to paid workers' salaries. The districts unable to cover their expenditures should submit their application for financial support to the missions. It was a great step to the autonomy of the church. But latter on, the convention was considered by the church as favouring separation and not encouraging cooperation. The convention was rejected and the general council of the church decided to dissolve the committees and sub-committees that assumed the link. Every application was to pass through the regional council to the general council who will then send it directly to the missions' direction.

During the May 1975 general synod, new convention was signed by the president of the ELCC, Pastor Joseph Medoukan; the secretary of the American Lutheran Church, Pastor James Knutsen; and the superintendent of the NMS, Pastor Iver Fageli.³⁰ Twenty years of negotiations had led to the integration of the missions into the ELCC from January 1976. All the institutions were also integrated into the church and under its control. Even though the church had authority over all the activities, it was still dependant financially for workers salaries, church buildings and houses, running of the institutions. Beside, the church depended on missionaries for evangelisation and work in different institutions. They were given important post in the institutions and their number in different committees remained high. This was out of the wish of the church organs, not imposed to them as it used to be.

2.2.3 The current state of ELCC

The church which was first concentrated in the Adamawa province of the Cameroon has now become national. It has extended in 8 out of the 10 provinces of Cameroon. It will also be implanted in the two remaining ones in the nearest future because preliminary works have been done already to start the church in those areas. It took the ELCC so many years to extent to the southern part of the country and even in the extreme-north.

²⁹ Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 162.

³⁰ Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 166.

Only during the last 20 years the ELCC has been gaining fields in those places especially in the main cities. This extension is a sign that the ELCC has increased in size of buildings and in number of members. The starting point of ELCC is Ngaoundere which has now become a multireligious city. The presence of other churches did not stop the ELCC to continue with its evangelisation work and church planting. The ELCC constitutes the largest protestant church in Ngaoundere according to the number of its members as well as its different institutions. Fifteen different parishes of ELCC are now found in Ngaoundere. The first one was built in 1934. Others came into existence over the years so that Lutheran parish is located almost at each quarter in Ngaoundere. According to the report of the general synod held in Garoua in May 2007, the ELCC has 10 ecclesiastical regions, 65 districts, and 1200 congregations. But 7 out of 10 ecclesiastical regions together with most of the districts are found in the northern part of Cameroon where the ELCC is still largely represented. Recently, the church has extended to the West province of Cameroon, and there is a congregation now in Bafoussam and in Foubot. By the time I was carrying out my field research, the district of Ngaoundere town was split into two different districts as well as that of Ngaoundere station. These show that the next general synod of May 2009 will see an increment in the number of the districts and congregations of the ELCC.

It is also to be noted that most congregations of the ELCC are based in the rural areas. This raises a problem of income generating and self sponsorship of the church since the rural areas are affected by poverty. At the same time it is a challenge to the church that has a dual mandate in the society and is called to fulfil its holistic ministry among people. That is why the church did not concentrate only in the evangelisation work. It also carried out social services among people without consideration to the religion, tribe, and background. Schools, hospitals, dispensaries, orphanages, agricultural projects, translation centres, literature and radio centre were put in place. Though the primary intention was to use these institutions as instruments for evangelisation, the faith was not imposed to anyone. It was a matter of choice and self-commitment. These institutions went a long way impacting knowledge on people in the different localities; knowledge that played an important role in the transformation of their societies. Like in the case of Ngaoundere that was dominated by slavery, discrimination against women, illiteracy and malnutrition; the implantation of the ELCC there brought power to liberate, to change, to transform, and to develop. Today the ELCC has 3 district hospitals, 15 health centres, 1

secondary school, 35 primary schools, 1 centre for the blinds, 1 theological school, 3 bible schools, translation centres, literature and radio centre, and development projects.³¹

³¹ Rev Dr Nyiwe Thomas, Taped Interviewed , Ngaoundere, 21/07/08.

3. POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT

This chapter deals with poverty and development. It stresses the meaning of poverty in different aspects and perspectives, and shows how the poor themselves understand their poverty. It analyses the different factors that lead to poverty in Cameroon, and in Ngaoundere in particular. It also points out the holistic understanding and causes of poverty and then, focuses on the development from the Christian perspective. How do Christians understand the term development? Why should they engage themselves in the development works? These are some of the questions this chapter will answer.

3.1 Defining poverty

At the heart of every human experience is the desire to survive and prosper. To live without fear of hunger and suffering. To imagine how your life could be better and then have the means yourself to change it. Yet, every day, 1.2 billion people, one fifth of the world's inhabitants cannot fulfil their most basic needs, let alone attain their dreams or desires. Sub-Sahara Africa is the part of the world mostly affected by this situation. Cameroon is one of the 42 countries that form Sub-Sahara Africa. The ELCC exercises its ministry among the people there and as such is confronted with this problem.

We tend to take the meaning of poverty for granted. When we see its demonstrations on television or hear its stories, we recognise poverty with ease. Like so many of our ideas, the meanings we ascribe to poverty reflect our way of looking at, thinking about, and making sense of our world. Therefore, we need to examine how we understand poverty as well as how we think and feel about the poor. Poverty is the condition of people whom we describe abstractly as "poor". Let us remember that the poor are not an abstraction but rather a group of human beings who have names, who are made in the image of God, whose hairs are numbered, and for whom Jesus died. The people who live in poverty are as valued, as important, as loved as those who do not.³²

The concept of poverty covers monetary and non monetary aspects. Monetary poverty can be considered as an absolute concept, or a relative concept. As an absolute concept, poverty may be defined as an inability of an individual (or household) to command sufficient resources (or assets) to satisfy basic needs. These basic needs may include

³²Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of transformational Development* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 57.

food, clothing, shelter, health care and other non food necessities of life which may vary from one society to the other. These requirements are evaluated and expressed in local monetary units as the poverty line. The relevant unit, individual, or household, is then classified as poor if its income or consumption is below poverty line and non-poor if it is above. As a relative concept, the poverty line can be measured, for instance, as the average real income of the poorest 40% of the population. In this context, the poverty line is augmented in proportion to increase in the medium income or expenditure, that is, the richer the population in which poverty is been measured, the higher the poverty line.

The World Bank (2000) report on poverty and development, takes a specific position with respect to the concept of poverty and the effects of globalisation. In particular, (1) Poverty is viewed as a multidimensional phenomenon arising out of complex interactions between primary and secondary assets and (2) global trends present extraordinary opportunities for poverty reduction, but also extraordinary risks: growing inequality, marginalisation and social explosion.³³

Human Poverty Index defines poverty as the denial of choices and opportunities for a tolerable life. Accordingly, Human Poverty Index focuses on the most deprived groups, and is composed of the following five components: the percentage of people expected to die before 40 years of age; the percentage of adult who are illiterate; the percentage of people with access to health services; the percentage of people with access to safe water; the percentage of children under five years of age who are malnourished.³⁴

How, then, do the poor define their poverty? In a widely acclaimed World Bank study, the voices of over forty thousand people in fifty countries were carefully analysed. The result was a three volume publication entitled *Voices of the Poor*, which concluded that the persistence of poverty is linked to its interlocking multidimensionality; it is gendered, dynamic, complex, institutionally embedded, and location-specific phenomenon.³⁵ The study highlighted the multidimensional and interlocking aspects of poverty and grouped poor people's definitions of poverty along five dimensions.

- Poverty is about lack of food in sufficient quantity and quality.
- The poor lack access to basic infrastructures, rural roads transportation, and water.
- The poor emphasise the psychological dimensions of poverty, including powerlessness, voiceless ness, dependency, shame, and humiliation.

³³ World Bank, *Report on Poverty and Development*, (2000)

³⁴D. Banik, *Poverty, Politic and Development* (Oslo: Fagbokforlaget, 2006), 14

³⁵Deepa Naraya, et al, *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.

- The poor are particularly concerned about how education can actually provide concrete opportunities for them to escape from poverty.
- The poor rarely speak of income but focus instead of managing assets (physical, human, social and environmental) as a way to cope with their vulnerability, which in many areas takes on gendered dimensions.³⁶

Similarly, a participatory consultation with the population was organised by the authorities of Cameroon. In particular, this qualitative approach reveals that Cameroon's population perceives poverty as primarily a condition of material deprivation characterised by:

- Insufficient resources for meeting essential needs;
- Difficult or lack of access to basic infrastructure services such as health and education.

The population also perceive poverty as a result of social disarticulation including moral deprivation, loss of self-esteem, loosening family ties and weakening sense of family solidarity, as well as widespread ethnic biases and social discrimination. Finally, the population also associates poverty with insecurity, lack of protection against abuses and lack of basic rights and of access to essential legal services.³⁷

3.2 Causes of poverty

Having explored the nature of poverty, we can now turn to the causes of poverty. Our understanding of why people are poor shapes our understanding of transformational development, and helps us to seek a better future and the method to get there. I will generally present the causes of poverty in Cameroon and then mention some peculiar aspects pertaining to the Adamawa province in particular since the research project is carried out there.

Macroeconomic instability

Cameroon experienced commendable growth during most of the 1970s and up through the mid-1980s. Boosted by exports of agricultural products (coffee, cocoa, cotton) and crude oil, its Gross Domestic Products (GDP) grew at 7% a year, sustained by investment of 25% of the GDP. By the mid 1980s, however, imbalances begin to appear. Inflation

³⁶ Naraya, et al, *Voices of the Poor*, 7.

³⁷ Republique du Cameroun, *Document de Strategie de Reduction de la Pauvreté*, (2003) 11.

was high (10%), and the lack of adjustment of the nominal exchange rate resulted in significant real exchange rate appreciate. Fiscal and trade imbalances climbed rapidly as the terms of trade deteriorated and exports fell, external debts began to swell and domestic savings and investment contracted (the investment rate fell as low as 14% of the GDP in 1992).³⁸ Debt servicing is a significant drain on government resources which, together with growing defence expenditure and wide spread corruption, impacts considerably on the provision of basic services.

The depression and its consequences

From 1989 to 1993, Cameroon experienced serious economic difficulties, with per capita income falling 50%. The contraction was also reflected in a severe fiscal crisis, leading to a large cut in nominal wages, drastic cuts in education, health, and infrastructure spending, and the accumulation of internal and external arrears.³⁹

The participatory consultation on Poor's perception of poverty (April 2000 and January 2002) in Cameroon reveals important differences across regions. Key factors that account for poverty are:

- Lack of employment opportunities;
- Relative isolation due to the lack of physical infrastructure (mainly roads);
- Corruption and poor management of public resources and
- Lack of access to social services (health, education especially in rural areas).

Poor people in rural areas also attribute their situation to higher input prices, unfair prices for agricultural liberalisation. The lack of security is also seen as a serious concern.

In the Adamawa province, the peculiar factors that determined poverty are:

- Ethnic hegemony

The Peul who were Muslims proved themselves superior and subdued other ethnic groups like the Mboum, the Gbaya, and the Dii (who were all animists) to slavery and social injustice. Their rights were not respected and they were loyal to their masters.

- Social discrimination

In this part of the country, women are marginalised, their rights are not respected, and their contributions to the economic development of the region are not recognised.

- Attachment to cultural and religious values

Islam promotes alms giving which is looked upon as charitable deeds towards those who do not have. But many people misuse this opportunity. They transform themselves into

³⁸ Cameroon, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, (2003) 1.

³⁹ Cameroon, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, 2.

beggars whereas they are capable to fetch for themselves. They move from quarters to quarters or seat by the road side every day to beg. The region has a great number of beggars who constitute a threat to its economy, but yet the phenomenon is ignored due to religious and cultural attachment.

3.3 Holistic understanding of poverty

The nature of poverty is fundamentally relational. To understand it requires the tools of different disciplines, all nicely integrated. Poverty is viewed in the holistic sense as a result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious and enjoyable; relationships that are fragmented, dysfunctional, or oppressive; that work against well-being, against life and life abundant. Poverty is the absence of shalom in all its meanings.⁴⁰ The scope of sin affects every one of the five relationships in which every human lives: within ourselves, with community, with those we call “other”, with our environment, and with God. The poor do not know who they are and the reason for which they were created. Similarly, the poor do not believe that they have anything to contribute, and that they can be productive. Therefore, their understanding of their vocation is distorted. With marred identities and distorted vocations, the poor cannot play their proper relational role in the world, either within themselves or with those around them.⁴¹ Sin is a root cause of deception, distortion, and domination. When people hear the good news of the gospel and being given the chance to respond, transformational development can take place in one way or the other. This is what prompted the missionaries to make God’s love visible in different parts of the world through their diaconia works and evangelisation.

The spiritual causes of poverty are not to be neglected; the power of the spirit world, and witchcraft and their very significant contribution to making and keeping people poor. Money is spent on charms for protection and times are lost for feast days, all in attempt to manage these power relationships. Technical improvements are refused for fear of the reaction of the ancestors or the spirit world.⁴² Principalities and powers are also thought by Christians to be one of the causes of poverty. People believe that those spiritual forces control their lives and determine their destinies; their active deception lead to powerlessness.

⁴⁰ Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 86.

⁴¹ Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 88.

⁴² Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 86.

Based on my personal experience as development worker among rural people in the Djerem division, I support this view. The church development project where I was working covers good number of villages around this area. People there live in constant fear that they could be killed through witchcraft if they become wealthy. They deliberately refuse to improve their life conditions: They can not own large farms, build good houses, eat good food, or dress well. In one of the villages called Sengbe, the indigenes refused to use cows to plough their fields and increase their farms because of fear of ancestors curse. In fact it was a great challenge to us as faith institution when the people revealed these things to us.

3.4 Characteristics of poverty

In the 1998 Human Development report, the UNDP poverty index noted that almost one third of the population of Cameroon suffered from the three fundamental forms of deprivations, i.e. short life expectancy, precarious living conditions, and lack of education. Cameroon dropped from 124th out of 174 countries listed in 1995 to a current 132nd, evidencing the country's worsening poverty. Although the improvement in national finances noted in 1998 continues, this has yet to have an impact on the figures shown during Cameroon's household survey in 1996, which underline the country's poverty.⁴³

Poverty in Cameroon varies according to region, roughly increased two folds between urban areas (22%) and rural areas (50%). The poverty rate is higher for farmers (57%) and informal rural sector operators (54%), as well as for informal sector workers or the unemployed in urban areas (40%). Poverty in Cameroon is prevalent in rural areas (84% of the poor live in rural areas and 64% of the rural population is poor). The poverty index calculated for each region shows that the incidence of poverty increases away from the Coastal areas and towards the North. It is below 25% in the South-West urban centre, but climbs to more than 50% in rural areas in the North and Extreme-North.⁴⁴ According to available social indicators (housing, education and nutrition) scarcely-populated forests areas in South and East regions of the country have the highest incidence of poverty. However, the greatest numbers of the poor are concentrated in the densely-populated areas of the Adamawa, North and Extreme-North provinces. There is less poverty on the

⁴³ <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES...> (Feb 2009).

⁴⁴ Cameroon, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, (2003) xi.

coast and around Douala as well as in the North-West, and South-West provinces. In rural areas, poverty is linked to low productivity and soil fertility. Agriculture and forestry account for 32% of GDP, but this sector employ nearly 70% of the population. Most farmers, especially the poorest, practise intensive farming on plots of less than two hectares. Access to technology, credit and infrastructure is limited.

Cameroon is a country where poverty among women is exacerbated by significant gender disparities in health, nutrition, education, employment and the level of participation in economic and political life. But for all their lack of formal education, Cameroon women are very active in the informal sector of the economy. They work under extremely difficult conditions and find it very hard to gain access to the principal means of production, especially land and credit. Many women are actively involved in subsistence agriculture, but have to battle against problems such as land property rights and low wages.

Looking at all these statistics, comments and the background of the study described in the second chapter, we understand that the church is confronted with a diversity of problems in the different regions where it is located and particularly in Ngaoundere where the research was carried out and which is classified among the poorest regions in the country. The church is therefore looked upon to act in order to transform and to bring development among the people.

3.5 What is development?

3.5.1 The development ethos

Development means different things to different people. The concept is fundamentally rationalist, based on an implicit faith in the capacity of reason ultimately to undo the knots which threaten progress. It implies faith in the physical sciences to help man master nature, faith in the social sciences to help man understand human relationships and to arrange them to promote human welfare, and faith in man to act morally and rationally to build a more just and rational society.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Richard Dickinson, *Line and Plummet: The Churches and Development* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), 33.

3.5.2 The goals of development

Originally used to refer to a human design or project, the term development has now been expended in meaning to express man's aspirations for more human loving conditions. Many early theories of development were narrowly economic. The goal of the development was to be an increase in national wealth, in the total goods and services produced within a country in a given year. Such views are now being challenged and many questions rose: Is an increase in goods produced necessarily development? Can a national increase in agricultural production which benefits only the rich farmers without improving the life of the masses of rural farmers be called development? Is it development if the new process of production results in higher human costs and suffering to the worker?

Today development is being redefined in human terms. The goal of development must be understood as humanisation, the development of the whole man. It includes helping the individual to become aware of himself and his place in society. It expands to embrace a concept of community in which all may share in decision- making, in deciding how the products of man's common labour shall be distributed. Therefore, the goals of development are not only a concern of the economic and social planners who determine the technical feasibility of development projects. They should be a concern of every community leader. All should share a concern for the full development of human potential. All need to explore together the human values which will be enhanced or retarded by plans to develop scarce resources, and by the proposed organisations for their production and distribution.⁴⁶ Effective development requires integrated and co-ordinated action.

3.5.3 The concept of transformation

The whole concept of participatory approach to rural development calling for structural change necessary for equitable development has led to the redefinition of development itself. Development has to be seen, not only as economic progress, but also in terms of improved quality of life, cultural regeneration, social justice and cohesion. People based development is self-conscious, self-planned, self-reliant and sustainable progress of a community in all aspects of its life functions and relations which lead it towards a more human existence in terms of contribution towards cultural enrichment, peace and viable

⁴⁶ G.A. Smith. and A. Jolson, *The Role of the Church in Rural Development*, (Salisbury: Mambo Press, 1972), 114.

future for all humankind.⁴⁷ The road towards a true and permanent development lies in enabling the people to become conscious of the reasons for their long-standing poverty and organise themselves for action.

Chambers is more specific on who should be included in rural development when he defines development as a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men to gain for themselves and their children, more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek livelihood in rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of development. The group includes small scale farmers, tenants and the landless.⁴⁸

3.5.4 The Christian meaning of development

When Pope Paul VI in his 1967 Encyclical Letter: *Populorum Progressio*, described development: as the growth of each person and the whole person, he touched upon a most important aspect of the concept that had been eluding general developmental thought and practice until then. Even in the Christian circles, the tendency had been to identify development, almost exclusively, with economics. The instrument for development was considered to be money; the strategy, to be huge infusions of funds into the poor countries: to build up their industries and other economic infrastructures. Success in the economic terms, of the Marshall Plan in Europe after World War II was, of course, the showpiece and seeming justification for this kind of thinking and procedure.⁴⁹ The more damaging effect of the strictly economic perception of development has been on the culture and ethos of the African peoples. Formerly geared to community, communion, solidarity and sharing between and among people, Africans are now increasingly tending to selfish competitiveness, exploitation of one human being by another, and routine and deliberate depredation, for private gain, of whatever natural resources they are in the region. The purpose of economic life is now less the promotion of human values, than the private acquisition of material possessions.

⁴⁷ Francis M. Wambua, *Changing the Poor People's Vision of Reality: The Church's Response* (Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 1994), 50.

⁴⁸ Chambers, *Putting the First Last*, 147.

⁴⁹ Joseph T. Agbasiere. and Boniface K. Zabajungu, *Church Contribution to Integral Development*, (Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 1989), 113.

The Marshall Plan was the European Recovery Programme inaugurated at the Paris Economic Conference in July 1947. Its aim was to provide material and financial aid from the United States for the economic recovery of Europe after the war. It ended in 1952, over \$ 12 billion had been disbursed by the U.S, and the economies of the Western Europe had been restored.

Human values have to be re-appropriated in development. Pope Paul's description of development clearly indicates the restriction of the notion of progress to economics to be reductionist, and from the Christians point of view, objectionable. Its falsity lies precisely in its lack of balance between the physical, the intellectual and moral life of the human person. To possess wealth is of course the need and a right of every individual. No one, least of all the Christian, who understands the importance of the biblically testified divine gift for human beings: to have dominion over the earth Gen1: 28-30, can dispute this. But the human person is more than an economic animal. The fullness of human life as Jesus himself put it does not depend on "bread" (technical progress) "alone" Matt 4:4. The enjoyment of liberty for enhancing the intellectual and moral culture, and developing of one's self understanding, as human being with due rights and dignity, within community of equally privileged human beings, is equally important. In the order of priorities, that ought to precede and direct the material dimension of progress. Therefore, when considering integral development, which any Christian's program must aim at, it is the totality of human values, material and spiritual, including those in the realm of politics, which must be re-appropriated. This is why Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Letter of 1971, Octogesima Adveniens, (quoted by Agbasiere and Zabajungu, 115) amplified on his previous explanation of development, and included in it the crucial political element. He emphasises that:

Economic activity is necessary, and if it is at the service of the people, it can be "a source of brotherhood and a sign of providence"...Yet, it runs the risk of unduly absorbing human energies and limiting people's freedom. This is why the need is felt to pass from economics to politics. It is true that in the term "politics", many confessions are possible, and must be clarified, but each person feels that in the social and economic fields, both national and international, the ultimate decision rests with political power.⁵⁰

What is significant here is that Pope Paul, shifts his concentration from the notion of development in economic terms alone, to underlining the determinant human values: of freedom or liberation in the political realm. He firmly states that the political realm directs, and in fact controls, the economic sphere and the achievement of authentic growth for each person and society. All this means that to put economics at the service of people, the political machinery must have the moral will to do so.

⁵⁰ Agbasiere. and Zabajungu, *Church Contribution to Integral Development*, 115.

Christian anthropology emphasises the centrality of human person. According to this view, the purpose of all structures and institutions of a society is not some abstract ideal, but the actual welfare of the flesh-and-blood man and woman. The objective is therefore to improve the quality of human life, which involves the widest possible dissemination and deepest possible enjoyment of people. To put it in other words, in the present world, provision and development of the quality of life necessitates a constant struggle against the ethos of exploitation, oppression, intimidation, humiliation and contempt of any human being.⁵¹ Positively, it entails the creation of a culture of liberty, of freedom, of liberation that will be manifested in participating in the decision-making, in the context of the community.

3.6 The theological basis of development

The question that needs to be asked here is: On what religious grounds does Christianity seem to be compelled to involve itself in development? Is there not an urgent need for more evangelisation, for preaching, for ministering to the spiritual needs of the people? These needs seem to be plenty as Jesus himself rightly mentioned: “The fields are plentiful but the labourers are few”. Why then intrude into the material arena of development? The answer we can give to this question is that evangelisation and development are not two different terms. The development work of the church connects its actions to its identity; it makes the church understand its position in the society, what it really is, what it does, and who it believes.⁵² It is the task of the whole people of God to participate in God’s own mission, which is to bear witness, to the universal lordship of Christ by word and deed alike, by gathering the first fruits of the kingdom in the church and by renewing the face of the world. For the purpose of the mission is not just the growth of the Christian community as an end in itself but the restitution and redemption of the cosmos as a whole to the wholeness, integrity and peace which the God of peace (1Cor14:33) wills for it, including the redress of evils and injustice, including humanisation and development.⁵³ The ministry of Jesus on earth is the first and foremost example, as it were, of that dimensional unity of proclamation and demonstration which should govern the ministry of the church as well. Though Jesus’ ministry has a unique

⁵¹ Agbasiere. and Zabajungu, *Church Contribution to Integral Development*, 116.

⁵² Rev Nyiwe Thomas, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 22/07/08.

⁵³ Missiological Institute, *The Role of the Church in Socio-Economic Development in Southern Africa* (Umpumulo, 1971), 81.

character, it has set a pattern which must not be ignored. Both aspects, proclamation and service, have inseparably been connected in Jesus' life and death and remain so in him who is risen, who through his spirit activates us for mission and services.

If as we have tried to show, witness and service, proclamation and action, mission and development have their common ground in the dimension of god's own mission in Christ, it should be impossible to put asunder what God has joined together. The commission of the twelve disciples is most striking and it takes the shape of an explicit dual mandate: the twelve are to go out in order to proclaim the kingdom and in order to heal, in order to announce God's salvation and in order to bestow his blessing (Matt10:12-13). The material well-being, the physical integrity of man as an individual and of society as a whole is no less concern of the mission than the saving faith which comes from what is proclaimed and heard (Rom10:17). Even the new people of God which receives its mandate from the risen Lord is simultaneously assured of his blessing presence to the close of the age (Matt28:20), and thus the dual mandate is renewed and confirmed. It is through his people that the Lord will continue his saving and blessing activity in the whole world. It is through the dual mandate, the two distinct and yet inseparable intentions that the dimension of one mission of God is to be expanded. Rev Dr Nyiwe Thomas, Bishop of the ELCC rightly said that the holistic mission of the church has three dimensions: To preach, to serve, and to lift up; if we take out one dimension from our ministry, it will be amputated.⁵⁴

There can be confusion when there is quarrel over priorities, perhaps combined with a run for the largest share in the available resources in terms of finance as well as manpower. If that happen, a strong reminder would be indicated that proclamation and demonstration have a common ground in the purpose of God and in the existence of the church in the world. Professor Verkuyl, quoted by the Missiological Intitute in, the *Role of the Church in Socio-Economic Development in Southern Africa*, said:

“Those who follow Christ on his way to the cross cannot find a single day in his life when the proclamation would have received priority over the diakonia or when the diakonia would have received priority over the proclamation.”⁵⁵ That in itself should be sufficient reason to fight the temptation of destroying the underlying dimensional unity of the church mandate.

⁵⁴ Rev Nyiwe Thomas, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 22/07/08.

⁵⁵ Missiological Institute, *Role of the Church in Socio-Economic...* 85.

We also find the basis of development in the essence of Christian teaching. Rev Doudet Luc, director of the district of Bethlehem mentioned this and quoted some biblical passages to support his declaration. We believe that the Son of God was made man, in order to redeem us and to lift us up into a higher level of existence, as children of god. He taught through his example a new way of life. Among the norms for this new life he gave us are such words: “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (Matt7:12). In John13 verses 34-35, he says: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”. At the last judgement we will be judged according to our works of mercy. Christ says: “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matt25:40).⁵⁶

History shows us how Christianity was the catalyst of improvement, of advancement, and progress in many directions. Works of education, of various direct engagements in charity were taken up by the Christians and later made the aim and purpose of orders, societies, and associations. The churches are in the unique position to foster rural development because they are already established and well represented in the rural areas in the midst of poverty and must face the situation in a comprehensive manner. They are in close contact with the rural population; they know their needs and have their confidence. In recent years the Roman Catholic Church has given out one proclamation after another encouraging the faithful to engage themselves in solving social problems and given a valuable teaching for a better future.

Another reason why Christianity is involved in development is, because it looks always into the future, and believes in a final fulfilment. The Christians are guided by the vision “of a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev20:1). They know that “it was God’s loving design, centred in Christ, to give history its fulfilment by resuming everything in him, all that is in heaven, all that is on earth, summed up in him”(Eph1:10).⁵⁷ In Christ we find the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. The followers of Christ cannot just stand aside and wait until this come to pass. No, they will take in this great work of building the new world in activities of progress and improvement. They are taken up into this forward movement of development.

⁵⁶ Rev Doudet, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 17/07/08.

⁵⁷ Smith. and Jolson, *Role of the Church in Rural Development*, 75.

3.7 Why a theology of development?

There is a theological reflection on the meaning and issues of development because Christians believe that the world we seek to develop is God's world, and that the people whose potential we seek to realise are God's people. They also believe that God our creator has laid upon us as human beings a responsibility to develop wisely the created world, and that we can only succeed in this task insofar as we are responsive to His will. Smith and Jolson organised a theology of development around three central themes: Creation, Judgement, and Redemption.

Creation

A Christian theology of development begins with the affirmation that God, not man, is the centre of the world in which we live. All creation (including man) belongs to God and must be responsive to Him. Our existence and labour, therefore, have meaning only in relation to the intention and purpose of the Creator. Freedom and responsibility are two great themes which must be held together in a Christian theology of development.⁵⁸ God gave man freedom and dominion over the created world. God gave a potential for growth and development: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Gen1:28). In these words we understand God's will for development to be the fulfilment of human potential in harmony with man's natural environment (soil, plants, animals, water, air, etc). Too often the God-given power to have dominion and subdue the earth has been used to justify man's exploitation and wastage of natural resources in the guise of economic development. We believe that to have dominion over the earth means that man has a God-given responsibility to use his resources to recreate and renew the face of the earth, not to consume and destroy.

Judgement

The natural world in which we live is not like a piece of clay which a man is free to shape in any way he sees fit. Christians affirm that there is a moral order of history. The prophets understood the catastrophes of history as in the main judgements against human pride and against man's effort to put himself in the place of God. Such judgement continues today. Where man has destroyed forest without replanting he has reaped erosion and even encroaching desert. His excessive killing of wild life in the plains,

⁵⁸ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 38.

forests and oceans has resulted even in the extinction of many species.⁵⁹ To be given dominion by God over the earth is to become stewards responsible to the Creator for the wise use of all the earth. The standards by which we have to evaluate development must be judged by what they do to human beings: Will it develop the human potential? Will it increase human freedom, human opportunity, and human dignity? God is actively judging man. He speaks to us in the demands of our fellow-men for bread, work, health, education, in short for human dignity and justice. As in the day of Isaiah, so today He calls us to the true religious observances, “To loose the chain of injustice and untie the cord of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? To share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with the shelter, when you see the naked, to clothe him (Isa58:6-7).⁶⁰

Redemption

God does not cease His activity with creation and judgement. He is actively at work to redeem this world and all who labour in it. Christ’s death upon the cross shows God’s forgiving love and that God seeks through suffering and death to redeem man. God calls those who respond in faith and love to be involved in the world of suffering and injustice. To withdraw into a concern for spiritual matters is to make a mockery of Christ’s incarnation and death in the cross.⁶¹ Response to God’s saving love impels us to be concerned about human development. As Christ was the “man for others” concerned for the poor and marginal men of his day, so he calls us to be “men for others” who are concerned for the human development of every person regardless of tribe or nation, colour or creed⁶². As Christians we believe that because God is father of all mankind, and Christ died for all, that therefore all men are brothers. This conviction can reinforce a view of community of mankind which is essential for a world philosophy of development. Smith and Jolson, quoted the world ecumenical assembly at Uppsala in 1968 which stated that:

In a world in which the whole of mankind strives to realise their common humanity, and in which all share proportionately hopes and despair, the Christian Church must identify itself with the community of men if it desires to fulfil its

⁵⁹ Smith. and Jolson, *Role of the Church in Rural Development*, 116.

⁶⁰ Satou Marthe, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

⁶¹ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 39.

⁶² Smith. and Jolson, *Role of the Church in Rural Development*, 117.

mission of service and witness and administer responsibly the goods at its disposal.⁶³

⁶³ Smith. and Jolson, *Role of the Church in Rural Development*, 117.

4. THE CHURCH'S HOLISTIC MINISTRY IN THE SOCIETY

The world of church leaders and communities brings keen insight into the daily life of poor people. Church leaders are often the most trusted in their communities, in most cases providing social services, not only to the people who espouse their same beliefs but also to the community as a whole. Church leaders often work steadfastly despite extreme conditions. They thus have deep and complex perspective to offer. In many cases, they can help bring the voices of the poor to the table in powerful ways.⁶⁴ We know that, in many countries throughout Africa, faith-based organisations represent perhaps half of the health and education services; in the more remote areas that may have been isolated by civil conflict, faith-based organisations are often the only source of health and education⁶⁵. The Church contribution across a wide span of HIV/AIDS interventions in Africa is undeniable.

The ELCC like any other Church has a mission. That mission as stipulates in the article 4 of its constitution, is to bring salvation to mankind: spirit, soul, and body. It is concerned with human being as a whole, without dissociation⁶⁶. The early missionaries did not limit themselves to the sharing of their religious faith with new groups. They have been concerned with people's material conditions, and provided social services in areas such as health, education, agriculture, but also language and literature work, motivated by a wish to enable them to read the Bible in their own language.

4.1 The church role in promoting moral standard

The traditional role of the church in forming individual character, for both personal fulfilment and as responsible citizens, can be minimised only at the greatest risk. It is abundantly clear that the forces of evils and sin in society continually erode the foundation of justice and stability; society does not just happen; justice does not just grow by accident, it must be extracted. Regardless of the impressive gains men have made in humanizing social life, every society is always at the verge of disintegration and chaos based on naked power. An indispensable contribution of the church to development, in its larger sense, is to socialize the generation; to impact the sense of the pervasiveness and

⁶⁴Katherine Marshall. and Lucy Keough, *Finding Global Balance: Common Ground between the Worlds of Development and Faith* (Washington: The World bank, 2005), x.

⁶⁵ Marshall and Keough, *Finding Global Balance*, xi.

⁶⁶ Satou Marthe, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

destructiveness of sin in the human individual and social condition⁶⁷. Socialisation here is used in the sense of recognising the precarious situation of any society at any stage of its evolution. That is to help maintain a fundamental structure of society in the face of constant pressure for society to disintegrate under the relentless pressure of the private greed and ambitions of individuals and groups. Without a network of responsible individuals, themselves sinful but rooted in a morality nourished by a sense of living in the presence of God, even the most advanced and developed society become depraved through naked and arbitrary power. The church has a critically important role to play in maintaining this moral foundation through its influence on individuals, especially its own immediate constituency.

The church should play an important role in forming sound morality among the citizens, especially among the young and in developing God-fearing generation. Paul Salatou general secretary of the ELCC acknowledged that many of them have benefited from religious education, when they were still learning to form their views and vision in life. He said: Perhaps, if we had not been influence by religious education, we might not have been able, to be what we are today, and to subsequently take up the responsibilities we hold.⁶⁸ Religious education is very useful because it can foster in a person a sense of discernment between right and wrong. It is proper that religious education should be given to all the young people, but not imposed. The Bible instructs us to train our children in a way they should go, and when they will be old, they will not depart from it. They are the future of the church as well as that of the nation. They constitute the larger proportion of the population of Cameroon. 60% of the members of the ELCC are youth that is aged between 12-30 years.⁶⁹ It is in this line that the ELCC has one section of its ministry devoted to the youth only called “JEELC” (Jeunesse Eglise Evangelique Luthérienne au Cameroun). This movement is headed by a director who plans and supervises the activities, under the coordination of the evangelisation department. The aim of this movement is to promote deeper knowledge of the Bible and Christian faith among the youth; to enable the youth to have clear vision of the church and the society, and to prepare them to serve others and to take over the responsibility from the elderly ones.⁷⁰ The movement has existed already for 41 years and have different activities. What we are doing now is to put more emphasis on the spiritual aspect in order to revive the

⁶⁷ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 68.

⁶⁸ Salatou Paul, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 22/07/08.

⁶⁹ Rev Dr Nyiwe Thomas, Taped interview, Ngaoundere, 22/07/08.

⁷⁰ Rev Doyambe, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 19/07/08.

spirituality of the youth which is decaying as a result of globalisation. At the same time, we teach the youth to be creative in order to fight against the problem of lack of employment. The world has become so competitive and youth need additional skills in order to stand the challenges of the fast developed world. The ELCC is aware of all that. That is why we encourage the youth not to be passive, but to create small income generating project at their community level and handcraft works.⁷¹

The JEELC also have bible camp annual program. It is a one week program started in 2006 which gathered 350-500 youth of the ELCC from all over the country. During this week, the youth have different activities: Bible studies, with some sections on testimonies, counselling, confession and repentance; teachings on different themes like youth and sexuality, youth and globalisation, Christian and politic etc; they also have leisure time when they learn music, arts and handcrafts work. Last year they learned how to make clay pot. Each one went back with what he/she has fabricated and they were all happy.⁷²

I was opportune to attend personally the last bible camp which took place at Ngaoundere from the 20th-27th July 08. The theme of the camp came from Phil2:15 which says: “So that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe”. My contact with the youth revealed a certain level of enthusiasm in their part and how much they appreciate the program. In fact it helps them to have personal encounter with God, to strengthen their faith, to exchange experiences, learn how to interact with other from different culture and background, and to bind brotherhood tie that may last for the whole life. One of them testified that many of them come to the camp with different motifs, but day after day their ideas changed. He said: I attended the 2006 bible camp and I went back not as I came, but with an uplifted spirit and as a transformed person.⁷³

The impact of the bible camp is to be noted as many parents and pastors of different congregations call to testify the changes that it has brought in the life of their children and church members respectively. During the counselling section especially, many youth say this: I thought that I knew God, but with this camp I realised that it was not the case; now

⁷¹ All comments here are from Rev Doyambe director of the youth movement of the ELCC, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 19/07/08.

⁷² Rev Fomgbami Etienne Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 17/07/08.

⁷³ Kuinte Alex, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere 20/07/08.

I engage myself to take a new beginning. And we believe that the engagement is genuine based on the testimonies of the parents and pastors, declared pastor Doyambe.⁷⁴

Another program of the JEELC is the one called “caravane mobile”.⁷⁵ It takes place one Sunday a month during which the youth organise a service with songs, teachings and sensitisation on HIV/AIDS. The ELCC needs its youth in good health in order for them to continue the ministry that Christ has given to the church. The youth have been sensitised and trained by the ELCC HIV/AIDS program and in turn, they suppose to reach out to others. To reach out to a large number of people irrespectively of religion, the service often take place on neutral ground as in the cinema hall. They speak openly about the existence of the illness, its consequences and how to prevent it or live with it. The impact of that service is being felt especially as many infected people even those who are sick come to revealed their situation and ask for prayers. One interesting event was the meeting held at the protestant college of Mokolo in the far north province. It is a region where sex matter is looked upon as a taboo and it is not supposed to be discussed openly. When the mobile team visited the place, they had open and educated talk with the youth there. They were impressed by the reaction of the youth and by the questions they were asking.⁷⁶

The ELCC also have a department in charge of Christian education. This department produce written materials for the Sunday schools’ teachings and JEELC. It also produces an annual church booklet for daily reading of the Bible. It organizes Bible courses through correspondence. Those who complete successfully these courses win free Bibles. All these go a long way to promote education and good moral standard among the youth. The church is seen as one of the institutions which represents the spiritual needs and seeks to meet them. Its role in the community is not purely symbolic, it is substantial. In order to address that role, the church has got to recognise that there is not easy path ahead. It can identify what it is that has to be done, it can set out and measure the short comings for communities, but to find a way in which it can seek its proper role in pursuing those, is much more problematic.

⁷⁴ Rev Doyambe, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere 19/07/08.

⁷⁵ It is a French word meaning mobile team. It is a team of the youth of the ELCC who moved to different congregations in the town of Ngaoundere and elsewhere to sensitise other youth about the HIV/AIDS. The youth of the ELCC receive sensitisation and training from the church HIV/AIDS program and therefore are called to pass the message on to others.

⁷⁶ Rev Doyambe, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 19/07/08.

4.2 The church role in promoting education

From quite early in the history of its mission in Cameroon until today, the EELC and other churches have played a significant role, particularly in promoting school education. When ever we cater for the children, we strengthen the foundation of the church. The early missionaries realised that in order to prepare people to read the bible, catechism and spiritual books, the best way was to build schools. Without appropriate and meaningful education, a nation would stagnate in terms of development. It should be recognised that education is the key to development. Agbasiere and Zabajungu quoted an inscription on the base of a statue of Danton, a famous French revolutionary leader, erected in Paris: “Next to daily bread, the most urgent need of the people is education”.⁷⁷

To many people, education refers to formal school-education, which begins with Primary and end with University. However, education should be the attainment of enlightenment, which increases the person’s ability: alone or with other people, to overcome what appears to be insurmountable obstacles.⁷⁸ Education should be a liberating force that enables people to free themselves from the imprisonment of poverty, ignorance and disease. Part of this education also deals with changing of people’s attitudes: in the attempt to tackle problems, generated by what seems to be incurable human fatalism.

Adult education should form part of overall education. It means a program geared to adults, and which consists of a series of activities intended to meet identified needs in a particular area, for life improvement. Many people see adult education as the key to solving many of the problems, which trouble the developing countries. African leaders are repeatedly proclaiming their appreciation of the need for enlightened and forward-looking citizens. The quickest way to increase productivity in the less developed countries is to train adults who are already on the job. Adult education is dynamic, and though it is not a universal remedy, because of it flexible and unbiased nature, it can be an effective medium to bring about change. The sole aim of adult education cannot be merely adjusting to an inevitable unsatisfactory situation; it must also be concerned with future development. It should aim to assist a person in the use of the achievements of modern civilisation and of the values of the traditions of his or her culture.⁷⁹ When visible improvements in diet, housing and clothing, are attained, that is when people can really appreciate the value of adult education.

⁷⁷ Agbasiere. and Zabajungu, *Church Contribution to Integral Development*, 185.

⁷⁸ Agbasiere. and Zabajungu, *Church Contribution to Integral Development*, 185.

⁷⁹ Agbasiere. and Zabajungu, *Church Contribution to Integral Development*, 186.

There is little doubt that the church has had and still has an important role as service provider in Cameroon. Not only has it been the first provider of schools and health services, but it has expanded and increased quality of service delivery over time. The missions started organising schools as soon as they settled in Ngaoundere. As early as 1946, the SM had already 4 primary schools with 60 pupils: one at Meiganga, one at Garoua Boulai, one at Betare Oya, and one at Mboula.⁸⁰ The NMS was having also 21 primary schools with 367 pupils.⁸¹ The missions were very serious about the importance of the schools in such a way that parents who could not send their children there were excluded from the fellowship.⁸² Today the ELCC has 35 primary schools, one secondary school, 3 Bible schools, and one theological seminary.⁸³ These schools have trained many people who today occupy important posts in the church as well as in the government. During the recent inauguration of the millennium church building at Ngaoundere, a minister who was invited for the ceremonies testified the good deeds of the church towards him. For it is from the mission schools that he received his education and then became what he is today.⁸⁴ He is not alone to make such declaration. Many others have benefited from the social services of the church irrespectively of the religious background. “I have many of my friends who finish their primary and secondary education at the mission schools, and up till now, they are still sending their own children to be trained there” declared Djaoro Yaya Moussa.⁸⁵ The reason being that they appreciate the quality of education they received from such schools. The General Secretary of the ELCC also acknowledged that some of them could not have been educated because their parents could not afford to pay their school fees. But because the church offered them financial support through scholarship, they were able to train themselves and get integrated into the active life.⁸⁶

Beside the schools was the literature work especially among the marginalised, motivated by a wish to enable them to read in their own language. This became a step towards liberty as their group identities were strengthened when they got their own writing

⁸⁰ Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 138.

⁸¹ Lisbet Holtedahl. et al, *The Power of Knowledge: From the Arctic to the Tropics* (Paris: Editions Karthala, 1999), 236.

⁸² Holtedahl. et al, *Power of Knowledge*, 237.

⁸³ Rev Dr Nyiwe Thomas, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 21/07/08.

⁸⁴ Kuinte Alex, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 20/07/08.

⁸⁵ Djaoro YaYa Moussa, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 25/07/08.

Djaoro is the title given to the person next to the traditional ruler (Lamido) in the Muslims regions. They are rulers over particular quarters and are accountable to the Lamido.

⁸⁶ Salatou Paul Taped Interview, 21/07/08.

language. The catechists trained in the Bible schools often became secretary to the village chief. They organised both religious and modern teachings, which permit the villager to acquire personal experience in the management of an organisation, probably the parish.⁸⁷ However, the situation has gradually changed as Government services have developed and become more accessible, especially education. When the financial situation has deteriorated, the church has not always been able to continue the provision. The ELCC was forced to reduce the number of schools and remained in isolated regions where the mission schools are the only institutions that can transform the local community. Nevertheless, the effort made by ELCC in this particular domain is great. The Bishop of the ELCC said: The aids that we were receiving from some of our partners have stopped; the government's subvention also has been reduced and is not regular, therefore the church is facing serious financial problems. Some of our schools have being "put in observation" (to use the words of the Bishop) not closed because we are unable to pay teachers' salaries, especially where we operate along side with the government schools. The number of pupils becomes low in our schools because parents cannot afford to pay the fee which is a bit higher compare to that of the government which is almost free.⁸⁸ Should we therefore say the schools play a catalyst role in transforming the society? It is not evident. Many parents in the Adamawa today still hesitate to send their children to school especially girls. They are afraid that the children who cut the family tie or become morally unfit. Some parents opposed girl's education because they feel that it is useless and it can lead them to prostitution. Others testify the pupils' lack of respect towards their parent. The behaviour of some of the teachers has pushed the pupils to look down some of their traditions and cultures.⁸⁹

4.3 The church participation in promoting health care

The practice of medicine is almost as old as people's existence on earth; and the physician has always enjoyed the respect of the community he or she serves. Before the arrival of Christianity and modern science-based medicine in Cameroon, there were traditional religions and traditional medical practitioners. The emphasis in their functions was healing: whether healing of the spirit or of the body. The early missionary health workers who came to Cameroon were at the same time deeply religious. They put much

⁸⁷ Høltedahl. et al, *power of Knowledge*, 240.

⁸⁸ Rev Dr Nyiwe Thomas, Taped interview, Ngaoundere, 21/07/08.

⁸⁹ Høltedahl. et al, *Power of Knowledge*, 240.

effort on building hospitals, maternity units, dispensaries and aid posts, thus participating in the provision of health care to the people. The ELCC has built and runs in different areas a number of health care units to serve all the people there. Today the ELCC has 15 health centres and 3 district hospitals.⁹⁰ The government of Cameroon provides in some ways free health care to the people, and therefore, the services offered by the church are supplementary to that of the government.

The ELCC provides curative health services, and also put emphasis upon preventive health care. In order to promote health for all, the Primary Health Care (PHC) may be the good approach. Agbasiere and Zabajungu say: The objective to provide “health for all by the year 2000”, may give the impression that good health will be assured for all by the year 2000. They suggest that we should, more realistically, amend the slogan to “all for health by the year 2000”, which implies an appeal upon everybody to collaborate in the endeavour to raise the level of the quality of health for all people, by the year 2000.⁹¹

Health education

The missionaries started health education as early as evangelisation especially with women. As they started gathering women together, they showed concern about their spiritual and physical well being. They taught them about God as well as about hygiene, sanitation, and how to improve their diet in order to keep themselves healthy. Most of the services provided under PHC, are mainly preventive: such as antenatal care, safe delivery, postnatal care, family planning, growth monitoring, immunisation, nutrition education, and early treatment of common diseases. This education is done through counselling, and projection of films. The information is diffused from mouth to ear by those who attend the section and the impact is been felt in the community.⁹² For example in Ngaoundere, majority of women do not go to the hospital whether being during their pregnancy or ill health, because culturally they are not supposed to be exposed publicly. They were exposed to many risks and complications and most of their children were not having legal document like the birth certificate. Through such education, many are now coming to the hospital to benefit from different services available.⁹³

⁹⁰John Ngum. et al, “Term Evaluation of the 3rd Phase of the OSEELC Primary Health Care Project: Report” (Ngaoundere: 2005), 15.

⁹¹ Agbasiere. and Zabajungu, *Church Contribution to Integral Development*, 211.

⁹² Mboudga Bernatte, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

⁹³ Mboudga Bernatte, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

The ELCC development project called *Projet d'Appui au Developement Integre (PADI)* is doing a lot on nutrition education. Ngaoundere is endowed with climate and soils capable of producing different types of staple subsistence and cash crops. Why should the region ever have malnutrition? Ignorance and eating habits lead people not to make good use of what they have.⁹⁴ Many parents do not know the essentials food for children and adults. We have been taught that we need protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and fats; and we also know from what foods we can get these food values. PADI workers deal with farmers mostly in rural areas. They don't only teach them how to increase their production, but also to produce different crops and how to use them in other to feed on balanced diet.⁹⁵ The women's group called *Femme Pour Christ (FPC)* have done similar job through the project *Femme Ecomomie Education (FEE)*.

Adequate and suitable water supply is not available to many people in Ngaoundere. Women and children in many parts of the region have to travel many kilometres every day to collect water, which may not even be fit for drinking. PADI has constructed many wells in different villages which had such problem. PADI also teach the people to boil their water before drinking, to build their grass and thatched houses with proper ventilation, to better dispose their waste, and to properly build and use deep enough pit latrines. Because the improvement on the environmental sanitation would reduce most of the endemic diseases: such as malaria, hookworm diseases and bilharzias.

The ELCC has also played an important role to educate people about the HIV/AIDS. Spiritual leaders from many African countries assemble in a conference at Nairobi in 1982 to talk about the HIV/AIDS. They were exhorted "to broke the silence", that is to stop considering the HIV/AIDS as a taboo and a shameful sickness because it associated to the sex; but rather to talk about it, to educate their Christians about the disease.⁹⁶ After this conference, the FPC started sensitising in 1984 in the women's meetings about the sickness. In 2001, they received some funding from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) to organise seminar about HIV/AIDS. Representatives from the youth groups and the women's groups participated to learn about HIV/AIDS. Many of the participants from this seminar have later work as animators within information teams run by the FPC. These information teams travelled to different areas to sensitise about HIV/AIDS.

⁹⁴ Salatou Paul, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 21/07/08.

⁹⁵ Inna Florence, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 18/07/08.

⁹⁶ Satou Marthe, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

According to the report from this work, as many as 25775 persons have received information from these animation teams.⁹⁷

The church project for the fight against HIV/AIDS called “All Against AIDS” later took over in 2002. “All Against AIDS” is an information and sensitisation project to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. Funded by NORAD, its overall goal is to stabilise and reduce the level of HIV infection in the areas covered by ELCC. This is to be done by using ELCC’s entire church structure to inform and sensitise about the nature of HIV/AIDS, how to prevent oneself from being infected and how to associate with and care for people who are infected.⁹⁸ According to the project plans the project administration had organised education seminars with information and education about HIV/AIDS to employees and volunteers from the 66 districts of the church. Seminars were organised for ministers, for representatives from the movement FPC, for representatives from the youth groups, for teachers working at primary and secondary schools, for teachers working at Bible and theological schools as well as other workers within the church structure. After participating at this educational seminar, all employees and volunteers were supposed to go back home to organise themselves in teams to inform people in their own church district about what they had learnt.⁹⁹ The local district teams took the challenge upon themselves and started organising their local district work. They used drama, films projection, leaflets translated in 15 different local languages to pass the message through to people.¹⁰⁰

As a result, people are ever aware of the nature, existence, impact and hopes of the HIV/AIDS. More people are coming for voluntary testing of HIV, and many patients are under anti retro viral treatment. They understood that being HIV positive does not mean immediate death, but that they can be treated preventively and curatively for opportunistic infections. Courses and campaigns have been made on how to live a positive life with proper contextualised nutritional needs, hygiene, medical follow up, and psychosocial support. Infected people are more and more opened and are accepting their conditions without acute fear of rejection and self rejection because of shame. They are also creating or joining support groups and are very active in the groups. At Ngaoubela for example, there is a support group. Pregnant women screening and testing is

⁹⁷ Heidi H. Zachariassen. et al, “*All Against AID*”S, *A Report on Knowledge about and Attitudes towards HIV/AIDS among People in the Adamaoua Region, Cameroon* (Stavanger: SIK, 2003), 3.

⁹⁸ Zachariassen. et al, “*All Against AIDS*”, 1.

⁹⁹ Nirwa Jacob, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

¹⁰⁰ Nirwa Jacob, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

improving as well as infants care because of scientific new discoveries. The large public of “voice of the Gospel” ELCC radio station are listening to sensitisation message in French, English and other local languages. The project “All Against AIDS” works in collaboration with the government HIV/AIDS treatment units at Ngaoundere provincial hospital, and also with The Baptist Church Convention.¹⁰¹

The Primary Health Work “Soins de Sante Primaire” (SSP) within the ELCC runs local health centres in charge of immunisations and care related to pregnancy and maternity. SSP also spreads information about HIV/AIDS, with an objective to change people sexual conduct and attitudes as well as to inspire people to care for those infected by the HIV/AIDS.¹⁰² The health workers regularly travel to different villages to carry out preventive health work. At the national level, SSP has a national team that organise the work. Each health centre has a health committee which works at the regional level to link their action to the local community. The JEELC and FPC often invite SSP especially when they have big gathering to sensitise people about health issues, including HIV/AIDS.

The Integrated Development Project “Projet d’Appui au Developpement Integre” (PADI) is also working in the same line of spreading information about the HIV/AIDS.

But much is still to be done. The Dublin gathering agreed that faith organisations are not just past of the solution, that they are also part of the problem. Despite notable progress among faith institutions in Africa, stigma is still entrenched. Churches cannot credibly work on HIV/AIDS in partnership with other actors if they do not overcome their own contribution to stigma and discrimination, which have their roots in the ambivalent history of missions and the role of the churches in society.¹⁰³ Until the link between sin and HIV/AIDS is definitively broken, stigma will continue to haunt and hinder efforts to combat the disease.

Curative health services

Beside the preventive care, ELCC also offers curative health services through its hospitals and health centres. ELCC has a district hospital in Ngaoundere division where this research was carry out. The hospital is made up of different units to provide variety of services to the population. The eyes clinic is one of the famous in the region especially

¹⁰¹ All comments in this paragraph are from Nirwa Jacob, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

¹⁰² Zachariassen. et al, “All Against AIDS”, 3.

¹⁰³ Marshall. and Keough, *Finding Global Balance*, 55.

as many people are affected by the phenomenon of blindness as a result of the presence of a sickness called “river blindness” (especially in the North and Far North) and other eyes infections. So many people travel far and while to get treatment from the clinic.

Another important service the district hospital in Ngaoundere provides is the surgery of tumours at the level of the neck, mouth, and lips deformations or anomalies. People who have such malformations are often despised in the society and regarded as witches. A team of doctors from Germany come to Ngaoundere district hospital once a year to carry out the surgery. Some local personnel have been trained to assist them in the work. Dr Tim Bartholomey is now working everyday to solve this problem. Since his arrival in Ngaoundere district hospital, many sensitisation campaigns have been lunched.¹⁰⁴ Patients come from all over the country to benefit from this service which is almost free of charge and scarce in the country. Through this service, the ELCC has helped many who were considered as ugly, vicious, or malicious to regain their beauty and identity in the society.

All these structures of the ELCC are working hand in hand to give health education and treatment to people in the areas it covers, thus enhancing development in these areas in particular and in Cameroon as a whole.

Notwithstanding, there are difficulties associated to the fulfilment of these services as some people are diverting from the church’s vision to offer social services. Essential drugs is a very pivotal element of PHC which does not only act as a pulling force for uses towards a health unit, but also remarkably improves on the quality of health in a low income society like ours. Contrarily, increasing the prices of such drugs in order to meet up with salary demands, as is currently practised, is a negative culture which does not only exert financial pressure on the beneficiary, but equally defeats the purpose of essential drugs in PHC as well as the merit of an institution supposedly pursuing objectives of social interest: Making drugs accessible to the needy (poor) at a cost they are able to afford.¹⁰⁵ This practice, if not checked, will push users towards unhealthy health seeking behaviour (auto medication, cherishing of tradi-practitioners) culminating in reduced quality of health and preventable lost of life.

Beside, there is insufficiency in qualified personnel. Certain health centres have less qualified staff, and some posts like the laboratory is occupied by untrained and

¹⁰⁴ *L’Evangeliste Lutherien*, (Ngaoundere: l’Imprimerie de l’EELC, Mai-Juin 2008 No 33),11.

It is the ELCC news paper which is published after two months containing information related to the church activities in different levels.

¹⁰⁵ Ngum. et al, *Report, Term Evaluation of the 3rd Phase of OSEELC PHC Project*, 18.

uncertified personnel. The coverage rates in qualified personnel with respect to the target population are low when compared to WHO standards:

- 1 doctor for 12,400 inhabitants.
- 1 dental surgeon for 55,700 inhabitants.
- 1 qualified nurse for 1,570 inhabitants.
- 1 laboratory technician for 9,290 inhabitants.¹⁰⁶

The inability to meet up with salaries of qualified personnel acts as incentive to assign and maintain lowly qualify personnel to perform tasks beyond their competence.¹⁰⁷ By normal standards, the quality of care cannot be up to expectation. The subventions that the ELCC has been receiving from the partners, the government and other international health organisations have considerably reduced.¹⁰⁸ When the financial situation has deteriorated, the church has faced difficulties in continuing the provision of services. The question is whether the collaboration with the government has been satisfying in education as in health care. There seems to be a need for the church to redefine its role both in education as well as in health, and this need to be done in dialogue with the government.

4.4 The church's role in caring for orphans, destitute, and marginalised

The history of the church shows that there has always been genuine concern for the destitute and orphans among Christians. The substantial assistance given to the under-privileged by church-linked organisations and institutions, private Christian groups and individual believers, is well known.¹⁰⁹

God's concern for the poor can be noted in the prophets' messages. Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, for example, warn against two grave sins, for which divine judgement would be meted out upon Israel and Judah. One of them was that, the Chosen People had abandoned the moral law of justice to each other, and taken to oppression, greed, deceitfulness, robbery and the violation of the rights of the fatherless, the widow, the poor and the stranger (Amos5: 7-13). The prophets testify that God hears the cries of the poor (Prov22: 22-23), and condemns the rich and the powerful: for remaining so insensitive to the cry of the poor. The prophets condemn the injustices of the rich against

¹⁰⁶ Ngum. et al, *Report, Term Evaluation of the 3rd Phase of OSEELC PHC Project*, 18.

¹⁰⁷ Ngum. et al, *Report, Term Evaluation of the 3rd Phase of OSEELC PHC Project*, 19.

¹⁰⁸ Salatou Paul, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

¹⁰⁹ Agbasiere. and Zabajungu, *Church Contribution to Integral Development*, 217.

the poor. Although the poor may evoke prophetic cry in the church, today the obstacle is that, as in the Old Testament times, the majority of the members of the church tend not to hear, and not to respond, by appropriately attending to the needs of the poor.

In the New Testament, Jesus' ministry especially as rendered by Luke concerns itself very much with the poor (Lk4: 16-18). According to Matthew too, the sign of messianic era is that the good news is given to the needy and poor (Matt11: 1-5). Throughout his ministry, Jesus did not only preach to all, including the poor; but he also acted in favour of the latter. What makes Jesus theological vision different from that of the Pharisees is that he was not legalistic like them, but humane.¹¹⁰ Jesus healed the sick and accepted sinners to associate with him. He even ate with publicly known sinners, like the tax collectors, Levi (Matt9: 10-13), and Zacchaeus (Lk19: 1-10). Jesus healed the man with a crippled hand on the Sabbath, despite the proscription not to work on the Sabbath. Jesus did not preach verbally on healing to the crippled man. He healed him. Jesus action is a liberating gospel, which restores wholesomeness, especially to the sinner, the poor and the suffering.¹¹¹

The poor are calling the church back to a redefinition of its original goal: of commitment, like that of Jesus Christ. The poor are challenging the church to rethink its mission and adjust its priorities in the light of its redemptive role in human history, as proclaimed in the gospel. The poor are challenging the church to evaluate its real identity in the world.¹¹² What is the self-understanding of the church, which is called to preach the message of the good news to the poor? Has the church really chosen to be the servant of Christ, who identified himself with the poor? The gospels stress the fact that the poor, including the orphans and the destitute, should be the priority of the church of Christ. Taking them as a priority, must be reflected in the various ministries or apostolate that the different members of the church are doing. They need to enter into solidarity with the poor in concrete ways: by sharing their lives, sorrows, joys, hopes, and fears. Without this, the attempt to serve the interests of such people would remain patronizing.¹¹³ It would also make them feel more powerless, dependent and less appreciative of their sharing with other people the dignity of being human, and of being children of one Father, God.

¹¹⁰ Agbasiere. and Zabajungu, *Church Contribution to Integral Development*, 218.

¹¹¹ Agbasiere. and Zabajungu, *Church Contribution to Integral Development*, 219.

¹¹² Agbasiere. and Zabajungu, *Church Contribution to Integral Development*, 219.

¹¹³ Agbasiere. and Zabajungu, *Church Contribution to Integral Development*, 219.

Historically, the Mission and the ELCC have had a major impact on the empowerment of marginalized groups. The approach has been broad and holistic, and the result is in many ways a success.¹¹⁴ The mission and the ELCC have worked among the Dii and the Pere in the Adamawa province. The two ethnic groups are historically marginalised and suppressed by other ethnics groups. For the Dii people, this has been described as slave like conditions.¹¹⁵ The mission and later the church have felt a special responsibility to work amongst these groups, primarily in the area of evangelisation, but also other types of work. The aim gradually developed to include social work, such as education, health, agriculture, but also language and literature work, motivated by the wish to enable them to read the bible in their own language. This became a step towards liberty for the two groups, as their group identities were strengthened when they got their own written language.¹¹⁶ The Mission also tried to improve the situation for the groups by direct interventions. There are number of examples where the missionaries defended the rights of Dii and pere in relation to local authorities.¹¹⁷

The Mission has contributed a lot in the fight against slavery at the Lamida in Ngaoundere. Many people got their liberty through multiple interventions of the missionaries.¹¹⁸

Talking about the nomadic peuls who are also one of the marginalised groups in Cameroon, the general secretary of the ELCC said: our work among this group is to bring them the good news about the risen Lord and his love for all humanity without distinction. Through this, they come to understand that they are also human being like any other person all created in the image of the Father and all partakers of his kingdom.¹¹⁹ The ELCC ministers among the nomadic peuls through a program called Fulani Evangelisation. Pastors Abdoulaye and Nguinda have done a great job in that ministry unfortunately they are both of late now.¹²⁰ But the work is still continuing.

The ELCC ministers also to the prisoners in the centre prison of Ngaoundere. Rev Doudet Luc is a chaplain there and he testified how important that work is for the prisoners. They are filled with enthusiasm when they see me and shout “Daddy has

¹¹⁴ Bistandsnemnba, *Hope in Africa: The Role of the Churches in the Development of Civil Society* (Oslo: Bistandsnemnda, nd) 19.

¹¹⁵ Bistandsnemnba, *Hope in Africa*, 17.

¹¹⁶ Bistandsnemnda, *Hope in Africa*, 18.

¹¹⁷ Bistandsnemnda, *Hope in Africa*, 18.

¹¹⁸ Rev. Doudet, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 16/07/08.

¹¹⁹ Salatou Paul, Tape Interview, Ngaoundere, 21/07/08.

¹²⁰ Rev. Fomgbami Etienne Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 17/07/08.

come”. They understand that their situation could have been worse without me, and even if I have nothing to give them, ma presence alone is very important for them. At the beginning, I was only preaching and teaching them the word of God, giving them the message of love and hope in Christ Jesus. But later on I felt the needs around me; because many cannot afford to eat a pierce of bread a day talk less of buying soap to take a bathe. I therefore decided to call upon parishes and congregations to do something. The reaction is encouraging. Clothes, food stocks, and soaps are often collected and taken to them. FPC are playing a great role as they usually cook some porridge to take to them. But a lot is still to be done because the needs are so enormous and there is no means; the work is just based on faith.¹²¹

The missionaries responded to the cry of orphans in many different ways. They built orphanages in Meiganga, meng, Yoko, and Fourbaka which unfortunately today are all closed down. The realities are no more the same. Social service and development department have been created and among their tasks, one should be caring for orphans.

There exists a social service at the Ngaoundere district hospital. This service works with HIV/AIDS patients in collaboration with the hospital chaplain to see into both the spiritual and the physical needs of the patients. They give psycho-social counselling, and go as far as contacting the family of the patient to give them some orientations on how to accept the situation. The social service sorts out and evaluates the social problem of the patients within the hospital; studies each situation and sees how to bring its help. Beside that, this service also has a group of 60 orphans from 1-15 years to take care of. The hospital has a budget for that coming from free will organisations and individuals especially missionaries. These orphans receive every two months parcels containing milk, soap, cooking oil, rice, and soya beans powder. They also receive some school kits when they are available. Their health is been care for when it is necessary.¹²²

The project “All Against AIDS” is also taking care of the orphans who lost their parents due to HIV/AIDS. Fifty orphans and vulnerable children are followed up through a tri dimensional support including education, food and health.¹²³ They also receive psycho-social support from monitors and social workers who visit them periodically.

In 2006, UNICEF initiated in Ngaoundere town a program of support and follow up of the orphans and vulnerable children. Vulnerability among children is generally defined as

¹²¹ All comments in this paragraph are from Rev. Doudet, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 16/07/08.

¹²² All comments in this paragraph are from Tabebot William, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 17/07/08.

¹²³ Nirwa Jacob, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

conditions that threaten their safety, well-being and development. Important factors that accentuate children's vulnerability include inadequate care, affection, shelter, education, nutrition, and psychological support.¹²⁴ Orphans are particularly vulnerable because they usually lack the emotional and physical maturity to address the psychological trauma associated with parental loss.¹²⁵ The greatest contributor to orphanage today in Cameroon and in Ngaoundere in particular is HIV/AIDS. Seven associations are working with this UNICEF program at Ngaoundere. FPC is included in the program and is working in five quarters in Ngaoundere town: Cifan, Norvegien, Sabongari, Bideng, and Burkina. FPC supported 296 children in 2006, but one year later, the number was increased to 420 children in 110 families.¹²⁶ Every orphan has a file containing information about his/her education, health, feeding, and others. When ever they have problem of health, education, and employment, FPC refers them to the government social service which will look into the matter and bring possible solution. The government social workers visit FPC once a month to follow up their activities with the orphans and to give advises where needed. Unfortunately, the visits have been interrupted for some months now. Birth certificates are established to many who do not have. FPC also gives them psycho-social support, that is conversing with the child with an aim of enabling him/her to express himself/herself. Through this conversation, the animators come to understand the nature of their problems. Since 2007, 40 families have received 50000 francs CFA loans from FPC to carry out small activities that can generate some funs to help the orphans.¹²⁷ During the 2005 women's annual conference, FPC in their action plan called upon all the women to mobilise themselves in the support of orphans and vulnerable children. Different actions are being taken in congregations. An example is given of Ngaoundal whereby two offerings are collected every Sunday, one of which is reserved for the support of orphans.¹²⁸

UNICEF made a research in the Ngaoundere area in 2006 and registered 2200 orphans.¹²⁹ There are as many orphans and vulnerable children as the concerned society cannot manage alone because of poverty. Still the number that these structures and project is supporting is limited compare to the thousands expecting support for education, health, feeding or clothing. Beside, the funs available are insufficient to properly provide for the

¹²⁴ Marshall. and Keough, *Finding Global Balance*, 79.

¹²⁵ Marshall. and Keough, *Finding Global Balance*, 79.

¹²⁶ Satou Marthe, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

¹²⁷ Satou Marthe, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

¹²⁸ Satou Marthe, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

¹²⁹ Nirwa Jacob, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

needs of those who are supported by these different groups especially the social service of the ELCC district hospital at Ngaoundere. This limited resources rendered the work ineffective and the impact less felt in the society. The interruption of the government social workers' visits is not an encouraging sign.

4.5 The church contribution in women's development

Gender concerns are keys to the millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and their critical importance for family welfare attracted considerable comment at the Canterbury meeting of faith and development leaders in October 2002. Gender inequities and biases are manifold in the cultures of developing and developed countries alike.¹³⁰ Whether in the home or the work place, in church, synagogue, and temple, or mosque, women have less status and less power to negotiate decisions and to take actions that directly affect their lives. Although they often carry equal or greater responsibility for supporting their families than their male counterparts, they earn less income.¹³¹ In many countries, women remain essentially entrenched in traditions that render them subservient to fathers, husbands, and brothers. They are voiceless and with poor access to basic resources.

International treaties, charters, and conferences have addressed gender discrimination as well as follow-ups through the decade. The MDGs provide a framework for judging progress in reducing poverty and improving living standards among the world's poor by 2015. The third goal calls specifically for promoting "gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger, and disease and to simulate development that is truly sustainable".¹³² Because of the fundamental role of women in development, gender issues critically influence all the other MDGs.

Women are productive members of every country, community, house-hold, and faith through out the world. They shoulder multiple responsibilities, from home care and child bearing, to education both secular and religious, to market gardening, to factory assembly lines, to cooperate boardrooms. Yet their work is underreported, as well as undervalued; their access to resources and technology is often constrained; and their ability to shape decision making is limited. Women generally work longer hours than men and thus suffer from lack of time. Marshall and Keough in *Finding Global Balance*, 66, quoted Ousmane Seck who described typical conditions for women in rural Africa:

¹³⁰ Marshall. and Keough, *Finding Global Balance*, 62.

¹³¹ Marshall. and Keough, *Finding Global Balance*, 62.

¹³² Marshall. and Keough, *Finding Global Balance*, 63.

Rural women in the African countryside work 17 hours a day just to make sure the family survives. A woman walks 10 or 15 kilometres a day to fetch water. When she is sick or pregnant, she still walks those 15 kilometres. We will like to enable African women from the countryside to find a few hours to do something else...village projects; small rural holdings; effort to build capacity, health centres, and hospitals; all these programs concern women. So in assessing these projects, officials should not talk only to local government authorities. Go and listen to the women.¹³³

Despite almost universal recognition that female education is the single most effective investment a country can make, most low-income countries report significant gaps in schools enrolment and attendance between girls and boys. Even when girls and boys start school at the same rate, girls are more likely to drop out, because their labour is called for at home or they become pregnant. Low levels of maternal education translate into malnutrition, child mortality, and poor child care. Investing in educating women and girls yields multiple benefits in terms of income, education of present and future generations, and health and nutritional status. Education can empower women and help to bring down the incidence of domestic violence. Faith organisations provide a significant share of education in many developing countries; therefore can play a pivotal role in ensuring equitable enrolment for girls.

Social, cultural, and religious traditions and institutions all contribute to lesser status and power of women. If there are educated women today in the Adamawa, it is through the efforts of the missionaries and later on the church.¹³⁴ They went to different villages sensitising people about the importance to educate both girls and boys. Though many parents were reluctant about it, some entrusted their daughter to them, and they were kept in the orphanages created by the missionaries as they go to school.

ELCC today has a powerful women group called “women for Christ” with more than 20000 members. Due to their dynamism, they play a very important role in all the actions of the ELCC. To quote the Bishop of the ELCC, “*FPC is the vertebral colon of the ELCC. You know the role that the vertebral colon plays in the body. When it is affected, the whole body is paralysed*”.¹³⁵ This is a result of the policy used by the two missions to work among the people. Some of their strategies included:

¹³³ Marshall. and Keough, *Finding Global Balance*, 66.

¹³⁴ Rev. Doudet Luc, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 16/07/08.

¹³⁵ Rev. Dr. Nyiwe Thomas, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 21/07/08.

- Visits to different homes to listen to women, to advise them, and to organise specific teachings relevant to their needs.
- Gatherings of women in the mission, in quarters, or in private homes. They usually teach on hygiene, nutrition, gardening, sewing, knitting, and marking. They also do reading and sometimes writing as well. These meetings enabled women to express themselves publicly and to lead group discussions.¹³⁶
- The training of the wives of the students in the Bible schools and seminary was taken seriously. During their years at school, many learn how to organise conferences and lead meetings and they put the knowledge into practice in their different milieus.¹³⁷
- Organisation of women conferences in the parishes. Women come together to help each other, to discuss problems related to their well being such as: polygamy, divorce, cares to give to children, alcoholism, or social problem like illiteracy. But all their activities are founded on the study of the Bible whether as a group or as individual. FPC has social centre in Ngaoundere where young girls are trained on cooking, how to bake, hygiene, sewing, knitting, marking, health, and nutrition. All these skills help the girls to have something to do in live in order to ease their life condition. The centre also prepares the girls for future marriage through advice.

FPC also directed a development project called Femme Education Economie (FEE) “Woman Education Economy”. This project started in 2001 and functioned with a coordinator, a secretary, and 9 animators. They worked in the different regions where ELCC is located, educating, sensitizing women to come together as a group to work in order to reduce poverty in their midst. Almost 250 groups were formed from 2001-2006.¹³⁸ They were encouraged to create small income generating project and little amount of loan was put at their disposal to start. They have different activities: agriculture, trading, and raring of animal. This was so beneficial for some groups since they even received financial support from the government due to their hard work. Women need to be helped to develop their creativity, which can enable them, not only to determine their own welfare, but, also to contribute more significantly to that of their families, local communities, nation, the church and the world.

Women have strengthened their participation and skills in a number of areas through FPC, and it has a great influence in the lives of many women even beyond the church.

¹³⁶ Holtedahl. et al, *power of knowledge*, 241.

¹³⁷ Holtedahl. et al, *power of knowledge*, 241.

¹³⁸ Satou Marthe, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

FPC gives information not only to women but to girls as well. They are given trainings and information on various fields including health, socio-educative and economical activities that aim at promoting their rights and values. As far the UN Resolution 1325 is concerned, ELCC as a whole is making some efforts to promote gender.¹³⁹ The LWF adheres and recommends to all its members to take into consideration the necessity of including women in church activities and mission and else, in other aspects of social, economical and political life. Therefore, ELCC Executive is also complying with this policy by involving women within the management and other church activities.¹⁴⁰ FPC functions as an integrated part of ELCC, having influence in other areas of the church. The participation of women in different areas as well as at the different levels of the church structure is to be noted. The Director of FPC is among the Board of Directors; also, there are more women today than before in higher positions in the church, but much is still to be done.¹⁴¹

Socio cultural considerations are issues within the African context in general. That is why gender promotion is a gradual process. Consequently, some aspects within the ELCC ministries like the ordination of the women, is not yet a reality. Notwithstanding, ELCC has not relent its effort to give theological training opportunity to women who are later placed in different structures of the church. However, some efforts are being made to bring the process ahead. The church Executive staff and the Board of Directors are working through the committee of constitution and convention and that of theological reflections, which, while studying classical themes, also include specific questions on gender and mission within ELCC. The church can play a vital role in ensuring gender equity. We do not think that religions assign women a lower position, though that may be the practical outcome of life practices. Yet the essence of all faith is equity and justice, and if we accept that spirit, then women should not be disadvantaged and voiceless.¹⁴²

4.6 The church participation in the promotion of agriculture and community development

The agricultural work of the ELCC has a history from the time of the missionaries. They were engaged to use their knowledge to help those who were interested and ready to do something. They created agricultural centres in many places like: Meiganga, Meng, Mbe,

¹³⁹ Nirwa Jacob, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

¹⁴⁰ Nirwa Jacob, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 23/07/08.

¹⁴¹ Bistandnemnda, *Hope in Africa*, 19.

¹⁴² Marshall. and Keough, *Finding Global Balance*, 65.

Fokpayono, Yoko, Gadjiwan, Banyo, and Songkolong. The agricultural work aimed at promoting socio-economical development of the people; enabling them to increase their church contribution; and making God's love manifests through it.¹⁴³ The missionaries introduced to the farmers new crops, good variety of seeds, and trained them on new farming methods and planting. They also sensitized and trained them on animal raring like chicken, sheep, goat, and cow. They used tractors and cow to plough the field so that each farmer could have large portion that will give him enough to feed his family and to also sell. The vulgarisation of the different techniques and the loans given to the farmers contributed a lot to develop agriculture in those regions. Transportation and commercialisation of the crops, especially potatoes and yams was organised by the centre. At Meng, the phenomenon of irrigation enabled two harvests a year. An agricultural training centre was opened there with an aim of imparting knowledge to farmers who in their turn will vulgarise it. The radio SAwtu Linjiila also helped in that sense. The agricultural centres contributed to ameliorate the economy stand of many families; to increase and diversify the agricultural production; to present the church as an organisation which takes seriously the daily problem of individuals.¹⁴⁴

The church later embarked on a project called Oeuvre de developpement Rural (ODR), "Rural Development Work". After field survey, the church thought the solution to problems was to produce; produce to sell and also teach people how to produce.¹⁴⁵ It is in this sense that the agricultural centres and the project worked. But today development has a different approach. We can bring development to people but we help them to become conscious of their situation, then, develop their own mechanism and we follow them up.¹⁴⁶ The recent development project of the church called Projet d'Appui au Developpement Integre (PADI) has a larger spectrum. It does not limit itself on production. It touches the socio-cultural and economical activities of the communities, based on their needs and priorities, and playing the role of facilitator.¹⁴⁷ If the community need is farming, raring of animals, trading, school, bridge, or water, PADI will educate and accompany them in the realisation process. PADI works with the community without distinction of age, sex, and religion. It is actually present in four regions: Mbe, Meng, Garoua Boulai, and Sambo Labo with the head-quarter in Ngaoundere. The three first

¹⁴³ Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 201.

¹⁴⁴ Rev Doudet Luc, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 16/07/08.

¹⁴⁵ Salatou Paul, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 12/07/08.

¹⁴⁶ Salatou Paul, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 12/07/08.

¹⁴⁷ Inna Florence, Taped Interview, Ngaounder, 18/07/08.

regions receive financial support from LWF and the last region from the group of peasant-farmers in Norway. PADI's field action extends to 100 kilometres round each antenna. From 2001 till date, PADI has worked with women, men, youth in different villages in the Adamawa, Est, and Centre provinces of Cameroon; with the aim of ameliorating their life conditions through sensitisation, education, and training.

To what impact the project has in community development, the president of the group of women gardeners in the quarter called "douze poteaux" at Ngaoundere said: Before the government agricultural service came, the church was providing such service already. We benefited a lot from their trainings and advices. Before, we worked in an archaic manner. But now we have acquired new knowledge, new methods, and new ways of doing things. Through this, we are able to ameliorate our life conditions. Even different species of maize are planted differently, we never new that. Now one can get vegetable from Ngaoundere market at all time whereas that was not the case before. We are happy that people can benefit from our services and we also have something in return to feed our families and little money to solve some of our problems. Everyday, the least amount I can have from the sell of the vegetable is 300 francs CFA. We sell it in the market and people also come to buy directly from the garden.¹⁴⁸

The work of the ELCC in other sector like agriculture and community development also seems to have had great influence on the daily life of many people, but it is difficult to determine whether long-term development is achieved. However, community participation and empowerment of certain groups is central.

4.7 Transforming the poor through the gospel

Gospel as a source of hope to the poor

The majority of people in Africa are becoming poorer by the day. The reasons can be reduced to a combination of gross corruption, economic mismanagement, professional incompetence, political intolerance, and unemployment among many others. Many watch helplessly as their national heritage is destroyed through meaningless wars. Others are reduced to poverty when they are forced to flee their homes due to insecurity. Their hopes of a bright future are shattered. It was this type of situation that prompted the African Synod of Bishops to manifest unceasingly, forcefully and unanimously their faith

¹⁴⁸ Mayo Françoise, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 18/07/08.

in Jesus Christ to whom they entrusted their continent, convince that he alone, through his Gospel and his Church, can save African from its present difficulties and heal its many ills.¹⁴⁹

Christians through out the continent would agree with the synod Bishops that it is only Jesus Christ that will raise Africa from it present confusion. After all God sent him to this broken world so that people would “have life, and have it to the full” (Jn 10:10). Before ascending to heaven, Jesus commissioned the apostles and those that will come after them to continue his mission in the world. It is therefore the church’s major task. In this way, it will restore hope to the existing situations of hopelessness, poverty, discouragement and despair characteristic of Africa today.¹⁵⁰ Its presence in any place ought to make a difference as it endeavours to penetrate every area of human life and activity with Christian principles, values, attitudes and priorities. Christians’ active involvement in live at different levels of: family, professional and social life, business and politics ought to bring about joy and optimism in spite of the poor living conditions.

Making the gospel meaningful into people’s life

The first beatitude, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mtt 5:3) was quite contradictory to real life experience where the rich and powerful seemed to be the “happy ones”. Jesus’ message however, is that human dignity is not based on possessions, but on the fact that we are children of a loving Father who cares so much that he provides whatever his children need as long as they set their hearts on his kingdom first. This is really good news for Africa’s poor because most of them, like Jesus’ audience, live below the poverty line. To restore dignity to poor people, it is important to assist them to develop positive attitudes towards themselves. This can be done by making the good news of Christ relevant to their lives especially where he teaches that, “A man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Lk 12:15). Life, God’s free gift, is more precious than material goods. Christ life of poverty, suffering and death should be a source of consolation and hope for the people immersed in hopeless situations of poverty. Their salvation is not with human beings (politicians, wealthy), but with God through their own effort, to improve their live situations.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Wambua, *Changing the Poor People’s Vision of Reality*, 99.

¹⁵⁰ Wambua, *Changing the Poor People’s Vision of Reality*, 100.

¹⁵¹ Wambua, *Changing the Poor People’s Vision of Reality*, 102.

Christians must therefore encourage policies that empower people to work hard so as to transform their poor conditions of living.

Having inner peace and contentment with gospel poverty

God sent his beloved son, into the world so that people would “have life and have it to the full” (Jn 10:10). This however does not make Christianity an easy way of life but God provides Christians with the necessary strength and guidance to face life’s struggles with courage. The Gospel principles and values, if lived genuinely will give a peace and contentment that money cannot guarantee, thereby confirming Christ’s challenge that: No servant can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money (Lk 16:13).¹⁵²

Material possessions are the greatest attractions for people and can harden human hearts so that God’s word will not penetrate. That is why Jesus teaches by word and example that the “narrow path” that leads to eternal life is that of total detachment. This does not mean that God takes pleasure in the destitution of his people, but it is an invitation to all to be prudent in the use of material goods. A simple life style should characterise genuine Christian living for as the saying goes, “Even with a small bank account, those who are content find themselves with great wealth”.¹⁵³ If everyone’s concern was simply to meet his needs and not satisfy his wants, there would be enough to go around for everyone. It is the greed of a few that deprives many from their livelihood. This is a great challenge to every Christian to examine their consciences before indulging in what their hearts desire, by asking themselves, “Is this a want or a need”? In case of the former, then each Christian must decide whether it is in the spirit of gospel sharing to satisfy his wants when the next door neighbour can hardly meet his basic needs.¹⁵⁴ The church in Africa must start fostering this spirit of sharing, which is actually a traditional African value, right from the level of the small Christian communities.

Identifying with the poor in the light of the gospel

According to the gospel, the historical Jesus is a poor man. He confirm this to the man who was eager to follow him by saying, “Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have

¹⁵² Wambua, *Changing the Poor People’s Vision of Reality*, 103.

¹⁵³ Wambua, *Changing the Poor People’s Vision of Reality*, 104.

¹⁵⁴ Wambua, *Changing the Poor People’s Vision of Reality*, 104.

nesses, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Lk 9:58). This poverty of God’s Son on earth was the mysterious way of the Creator being among his people.¹⁵⁵ In this way he lowered himself to our level so that we could not be afraid to approach him. Jesus’ poverty is a profound message to all Christians to examine their attitude towards the question of poverty and the way they treat the poor among them. Each person has to ask himself whether he willingly puts himself on the side of the poor as they struggle for their essential needs of shelter, food, affection, employment, health, etc. Such concern for people who find themselves in the same conditions in which Jesus chose to be is the essence of Christianity. Christians ought to make an effort to seek the poor out, identify with them, help and support them.

The church has now taken up this challenge of responding to the unfortunate condition of the poor with renewed enthusiasm.¹⁵⁶ Some of its projects and institutions are aimed at working with the poor by sharing their life, expectations and struggles. So, besides proclaiming the gospel message to the poor, the church is actively involved in integral development to ensure that the living standard of the poor are improved. Through its departments of justice and peace, it is challenging the corrupt and oppressive social structures that have created situations which impoverish large section of the common people.¹⁵⁷ In this way, it enables the poor to enjoy justice and equity which will empower them to participate actively in activities that affect them.

¹⁵⁵ Wambua, *Changing the Poor People’s Vision of Reality*, 105.

¹⁵⁶ Wambua, *Changing the Poor People’s Vision of Reality*, 106.

¹⁵⁷ Wambua, *Changing the Poor People’s Vision of Reality*, 106.

5. PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT TODAY: A CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH

5.1 Encountering development

Church and development can possibly be looked into from two angles.

- There is development for the church. Many people raised the issue of whether we need to liberate the church. The church has an institutional structure that tends to be top-down. When one sits in the pew he sometimes wonder if the Bishop actually knows his needs and his problems. If we really are going to talk about development as equal sharing of power, of having access to resources, we need to look at whether our institutional structures can help or hinder that process.¹⁵⁸

- There is also development by the church. How the church actually does it? What does it understand by development? Is it called to be a compassionate church that listens to the needs of the people? The church has to be certain that the development that it engages in really is development, for the poor people have few resources to fall back on.¹⁵⁹ They cannot afford failures. If the church is going to be effective in development, it needs to honestly ask the question: Can we realistically do the development that we are proposing? Do we have the money? Do we have the resources? Do we really have the skills? Let the church be realistic about it.

Development is a sustainable project. That is a challenge to all of us. Perhaps the church could be involved in assessing needs. The church needs to be realistic in assessing those needs and establishing whether a project is feasible. Then, should the church be involved in the implementation of projects or is this something that community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, possibly even the state, should be involved in? Or is this an area where the church can also be a player?¹⁶⁰ The church has to try to understand what development really is about. There is a need for the church to establish what its special contribution is, and to encourage the decision-makers to form a policy on development; a policy that describes their theology of development.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Renier Koegelenberg, *Transition and Transformation: A Challenge to the Church. Report of the Second Church and Development Conference* (Pretoria: WCC, 1994), 141.

¹⁵⁹ Koegelenberg, *Transition and Transformation*, 142.

¹⁶⁰ Koegelenberg, *Transition and Transformation*, 143.

¹⁶¹ Koegelenberg, *Transition and Transformation*, 146.

5.2 Liabilities

Serious liabilities confront the churches as they participate in development.

Ideological reservations

Some Christians feel that churches should not be much concerned with development; the affairs of the world are spiritually contaminating; they see the world as passing away.¹⁶²

Some insist that social questions are outside the churches' competence. Some contend that churches should not jeopardise their spiritual ministry to all people by identifying themselves with certain groups of people or programs.¹⁶³ Development requires a program of action, but Christian should not confuse any political program with God's purpose.

Others feel that churches should work to improve society, but find difficulty with the assumptions of the development ethos; its preoccupation with the socially powerful and productive, its tendency to stress material aspects of development and its apparent minimization of the value and importance of the moral individual and present religious values.¹⁶⁴ The churches have been hampered also by inadequate attention to the conceptual problems of development, including a theological interpretation of development issue.

The assistant Bishop of the ELCC calls this a misunderstanding. Referring to the attitudes of workers in different institutions of the ELCC, he said: some do not understand the mission of the church and its vision for the society. That is why they drag the church to the court or labour services for matters that could have been settled peacefully if they were sharing the church's vision; even if it takes time to do so.¹⁶⁵

Socially conservative

Churches tend to be socially conservative, notwithstanding some pioneering and prophetic work. The churches' self- image is normally to preserve inherited values, to socialise new generations, and to maintain the fabric of society.

¹⁶² Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 53.

¹⁶³ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 53.

¹⁶⁴ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 53.

¹⁶⁵ Rev. Fomgbami Etienne, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 17/07/08.

Identification with the West

In relation to the developing countries, churches also are disadvantaged by their identification with the affluent West. This identification requires that Christians be especially sensitive to the danger of their own cultural imperialism.¹⁶⁶ Large segments of Christianity are integrally connected with Western culture and values. Are these values that should be universalised through development? Are Western values adequately differentiated from Christian values? Is it true that the Western values are more conducive to development than those of the less developed areas? This depends largely on what one means by the term development. Even if the notion of development generated in the West, there is still not enough refined sociological analysis to substantiate the view that western values are more conducive to development.¹⁶⁷ The intrusion of Western values and modes of action often rupture the life of more traditional and coherent societies, thereby appearing negative for development.

Furthermore, the churches' identification with West has psychological liabilities. To many the church appears to be an agent of cultural imperialism, even though it may not intend to be. It has too many historical links and organisational connections with the West to escape the image of being a threat to those who desperately need to find their own roots and independence. Churches must realistically recognise that this psychological liability must be lived with; it limits the kinds and scope of churches' involvement in development in the newer nations.¹⁶⁸

Confusion of Mission and Service

It is theologically sound to see mission and service as aspects of the same reality, but it is dangerous in practical terms. Traditionally, social service type mission programs have had a strong emphasis on building up the Christian community and upon winning converts. Some of this emphasis still marks many Christian social assistance efforts. Because Christians believe that service is a form of mission, an expression of the inner reality of the church; and because they believe the wholeness of life and development are known through Christ, there is a tendency to slide unconsciously from pure social service, with no connection, to evangelising.¹⁶⁹ From the Christian's point of view, the situation is natural and understandable. But it is often annoying to the recipient. Among

¹⁶⁶ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 54.

¹⁶⁷ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 54.

¹⁶⁸ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 55.

¹⁶⁹ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 55.

them it appears that service is being offered as a condition for evangelism, that the motive for service is ulterior, with the main object being to win converts. Their reaction, whether intellectually understandable or not; this heritage of mission/service by the churches in the developing countries is a mixed blessing; in some countries it is a cause for suspicion and resentment, jeopardising the contemporary efforts of Christians to promote development.¹⁷⁰

This goes in the same line with the declaration of the Djaoro of Tongo Pastoral's quarter in Ngaoundere: Before, our fathers told us that all the structures that the missionaries have put in place were to make adepts or converts for the church. But when we grew up, we realised that it was not the case. I have friends who got their primary and secondary education from the mission schools. Their children are still schooling there today and they never compelled them to change religion. Whenever there are religious classes, the Muslims go out. My first son was born at the protestant hospital here in Ngaoundere. Whenever he is sick that is where we take him for treatment. I also go there for treatment. If I go there for leg's pains, they treat only my leg and that is all. They never talk to me about Jesus. I think there is something there that we cannot find in the state hospital, and I believe all this is grounded on the fear of God and the love of the neighbour.¹⁷¹

Lack of coordination and strategy

Most churches have gone about their development work almost haphazard way. They have been competitive more than cooperative. The history of the ELCC shows us that the missionaries' policy of expansion was mostly because they did not want other denominations to settle around them. Too often, programs reflect the mood of the donor rather than the real needs of the recipients.¹⁷² Donors also tend to identify problems in the developing countries which they experience in their own, but often the real and pressing problems are different. There is lack of coordination with other church structures. The lines of communication and collaboration have been from the developing region to the West rather than within region needing development. There have been instances where government actions towards development are seen as competition and threat to the church enterprises. This suspicion of the governments has helped to perpetuate the

¹⁷⁰ Dickinson, *Line and Plumbet*, 55.

¹⁷¹ All comments in this paragraph are from Djaoro Yaya Moussa. Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 25/07/08.

¹⁷² Smith. and Jolson, *Role of the Church in Rural Development*, 115.

scattered and unintegrated nature of projects, preventing rational complementation of efforts.¹⁷³

The ELCC is far from making competition with the government. It understands that it is the responsibility of the state to provide social services to the population. The church is there only to help and bring its own contribution to the development of the society. So, wherever the government has put down schools or hospitals and the church own structure can no longer function well, the church merely closes it down.¹⁷⁴

Research and on-going evaluation is not seen as an integral part of the project formulation and operation. This blind spot about research and planning is a problem for the churches at all levels of their operation. The information systems of the churches are another major weakness. Information systems have been oriented towards fund-raising, and not towards systematic documentation for coordination and evaluation of efforts.¹⁷⁵

There has been little systematic documentation about efforts, resulting in frequent duplication of efforts, or failure to learn from the mistake of others.

The evaluative report of the 3rd phase of the OSEELC Primary Health Care Project brought out one point on the effectiveness and acceptability of the health information system for decision taking within communities. It was noticed that there is lack of feedback to the lower level leading to lack of commitment and interest in the management of the health information system. The communities, through their representatives do not receive copies of health unit activity reports. In this case, the community is not treated as an equal partner who has a say in what is being done nor a right to be informed about the unit's activities.¹⁷⁶

Shortage of human and material resources

It is clear that churches' participation in development efforts be subordinated to government and other development work. But even to perform this role, the churches are also severely limited in human and material resources in comparison with governmental and some non-church organisations. The situation is not likely to improve in the near future. Current disenchantment about aid deeply affects not only government but the churches as well. Growing reluctance to give aid is not based only on moral apathy, but is nourished by the belief that aid is not achieving its objectives. Should the church be

¹⁷³ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 56.

¹⁷⁴ Rev Fomgbami Etienne, Taped Interview, Ngaoundere, 17/07/08.

¹⁷⁵ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 56.

¹⁷⁶ Ngum. et al, *Report Term Evaluation of the 3rd Phase of OSEELC*, 20.

involved in building capacity, those skills that expertise, that make projects work on the ground? It is one thing to have a bright idea, to have a vision, but the challenge is to make it work and make it work well on the ground.¹⁷⁷

Social position of minority churches

Development theory increasingly stresses the importance of self-help as a stimulant for change within a developing country itself; outside assistance can precipitate and compliment, but it cannot be the primary and sustaining cause of development. Therefore, are the churches in the developing countries equipped to generate this kind of participation and self-help? In many situations, Christians are a tiny minority, often without much obvious social power. Are the Christian churches in the developing countries in a position, in terms of ideas and social position, to contribute to development? There are inspiring examples from such churches that need to be emulated. In many situations Christians are marginal to the centres of power and influence; marginal in their mentality as well as social position.¹⁷⁸ Realistically we cannot expect such churches to promote much development. Therefore, the social position of these minority churches often is a liability for their effective influence for social change, even though their vulnerable social position may also make Christians more deeply aware of the powerlessness of the poor and the injustices to which they are constantly subjected.

Organisational obstacles

Structural and organisational characteristic of the churches also impede their development work. To raise money, church leaders in certain areas of the world feel bound to propose relief-type projects which they know from experience donors will support, than long-term projects for transformation of society. Decision-making is often fragmented and scattered, so that even churches within one country or region have not evolved lines of mutual collaboration and joint-planning.¹⁷⁹ Decision are still usually taken in the West, by various congregations, mission boards and service agencies, thereby short-circuiting the normal lines of mutual interest, contact and decision-taking which would develop more naturally were real responsibility invested in the local

¹⁷⁷ Koegelenberg, *Transition and Transformation*, 143.

¹⁷⁸ Smith. and Jolson, *Role of the Church in Rural Development*, 115.

¹⁷⁹ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 59.

level.¹⁸⁰ Putting decision-taking on the local level could also lead to chaos. But as long as lines of responsibility and decision-making run to the West, it will remain difficult for the churches within developing areas to evolve effective development programs.

Church efforts are also hampered by considerations of equity and impartiality. This concerns particularly multi-lateral aid, such as ecumenical projects. Each denomination within the fellowship needs attention, and a balance between countries is attempted.¹⁸¹

The nature of leadership in the churches is also a source of difficulty for orienting projects to development objectives. Persons having technical competence on various types of projects are only slowly being brought into the decision-making process. Most projects are still approved or refused, sometimes even planned completely by person who have little or first-hand operational experience in the developing countries.¹⁸²

Church leaders typically have meagre, if any, training in the skills and disciplines of social organisation and influence, as well as in the technical studies required for judgments on technically-oriented projects.¹⁸³ Church leaders in the developing countries themselves are often even less equipped on this. This liability would not be difficult to overcome if churches were prepared to bring into the organisation and decisions of the churches laymen or pastors with appropriate skills, yet the awareness of the need of this kind of competence is slowly perceived. And it is common that where this competence does emerge it threatens the establishment and is suppressed and minimised.¹⁸⁴

These are some of the major liabilities which churches, as social institutions, face as they seek to participate more fully in development. They are not an occasion for despair and retreat, but must be recognised as obstacles if the resources of the churches are to be effectively mobilised. There is not justification for defeatism.

5.3 Assets

Deep and pervasive as these liabilities are, and a cause for serious realism, Christians and churches also have significant assets for development work.

¹⁸⁰ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 59.

¹⁸¹ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 59.

¹⁸² Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 60.

¹⁸³ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 60.

¹⁸⁴ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 60.

Sustaining ethos

The churches most important asset may be a comprehensive and sustaining ethos which supports the motive for development work. Development demands a philosophy, a broadly-framed but compelling goal and rationalised means for attaining this goal. It needs a blended ends-means philosophy. Only with such a broad philosophic-theological foundation can energies of disparate groups and individuals be coalesced and mobilised to efficient and long term action.

From a functional point of view the Christian ethos, not legalistically conceived, has the distinctive character of being a constantly renew source of new insight and new commitment.¹⁸⁵ Because it is personal, a Christian view of development is both stable and dynamic; not only from the past experience, but also from a promise and hope for the future. It is not an ideology; it is a faith in a living presence. This sustaining faith is a source of inspiration and guidance for the individual in the development situation. Short-sightedness, far-sightedness and astigmatism need to be corrected by a sense of connection with the living reality of the human and the divine.¹⁸⁶ Not that all the intellectual answers become clear, but next steps become clearer, and the patience and courage to take those steps becomes available.

Study of the ingredient of success in development projects revealed the clear primary importance of staff on the local scene who are able to identify with the aspirations of the people, and to work with patience and complete dedication to the people whom they serve.¹⁸⁷ What support that kind of patience commitment? It is surely a profound and rooted motivation. It is therefore indispensable for the person in development work to have this philosophical grounding, but frequently those in the field do not have it.

International character

Another asset of the churches in development work is their international dispersion and character. Their international and ecumenical character can bring diversity of perspective on common problems. Christians in both developed and developing situations can despite their differences, build upon a common core of mutual convictions, concerns and aspirations.¹⁸⁸ It is also important that in many nations there are Christian communities to serve as centres of contact, communication and influence. These centres can provide a

¹⁸⁵ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 61.

¹⁸⁶ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 62.

¹⁸⁷ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 62.

¹⁸⁸ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 62.

bridge for receiving and channelling financial and technical assistance from churches in developing countries, giving a natural and reliable contact and base of operations. These Christian communities in developing countries may also bring deeper sensitivity about what should be done, and what it is possible to accomplish.¹⁸⁹ These centres are partners in the give and take of ideas and decisions. These Christian groups in the developed countries can serve as centres of influence upon the structures of power and influences through which more generous and effective assistance may flow to the developing countries.

Reservoir of experience

Churches through the years have also built up a reservoir of experience in development work. Despite the need now to shift emphasis from charity toward long-term social justice, at least in some efforts, the importance of this long-term experience should not be minimised. Notwithstanding its varied and sometimes mixed motivations, Christian mission work has yielded a rich harvest of information and skills of anthropological, inter-cultural and group-work experience.¹⁹⁰ In addition, Christian work has made many useful personal contacts and links through which on-going work can be pursued. While the attitudes of some missionaries has made them unwelcome in certain countries, there are many areas where previous generous service and clear human compassion have opened doors of confidence, expectation and goodwill. This legacy is a mixed blessing, but sensitively used it can serve as a solid foundation for new development efforts.

Non-Governmental Organisation

The advantage that churches have as non-governmental organisations should not be overlooked. Voluntary organisations like churches have much to contribute to development: relative freedom from the constricting ideologies of either the donor or recipient of aid; a certain operational flexibility and fluidity because less money, time and prestige are at stake; a constancy which is not so subject to political pressure and changes, etc.¹⁹¹ Along with other non-governmental agencies, the churches enjoy a significant advantage in this respect.

¹⁸⁹ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 62.

¹⁹⁰ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 63.

¹⁹¹ Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 63.

The assets and liabilities stressed here concern the churches as sociological institutions. They are not obscure account of merits and demerits, but rather a call for the daily renewal of the churches by losing and discovering anew their life in concrete service to humanity. Through participation in the concrete situations of humanity in the world, churches should be constantly forced to re-assess their position and relevance. In concrete interaction with the real situation of men they should be forced to re-think the adequacy of their philosophy as well as their structures. Through involvement in concrete worldly realities the churches can constantly discover anew their own character.¹⁹² Despite their talk of changing structures and revolution, Christians do not have a blueprint for action in development. They do not have a universal norm which is directly applicable as a plumb-line for all social questions.

¹⁹² Dickinson, *Line and Plummet*, 65.

6. CONCLUSION

To preach good news to the poor...to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovering of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour: Animated and challenged by this mission of Christ (Lk 4:18-19), this study is centred on the Church in a Poverty Stricken Society: An Agent of Development. Under the above theme, I have studied and analysed the reality of underdevelopment and development in Cameroon and in Ngaoundere in particular. I have tried to bring out the root-causes of underdevelopment, and what needs to be done in order to form a new vision, for planning and implementing development.

While in the past, development was principally understood in terms of economic progress, it has now been realised that development must cater for the whole human person, and encompass the people in the nation as a whole: by developing their spiritual, religious, social, personal, moral, cultural, economic, political, mental, educational, physical and environmental dimensions of life. This involves the elimination of traditional barriers inhibiting the improvement of productive capacity, mobilisation of resources and their rational distribution for the cause of nation-building. In short, development means a balanced advancement of the individual as well as the pattern of life of the society at large. Although such kind of development has taken place in a few sectors of our society, underdevelopment is still a common reality throughout Cameroon. The country's educational system still excludes a large number of school-age children. Many Cameroonians have no easy access to needed health services, or find them too expensive where they are available. Many widows, orphans and destitute are not cared for, or get intermittent relief hand-outs.

The rule of law and the promotion of human rights are still lacking in many aspects. The ELCC as a development actor in relation to projects and in general work can be seen as a local advocate for democracy. ELCC operates according to democratic principles; however, corruption and fraud have not been avoided. Cameroon's high ranking regarding corruption and the fact that the church itself has had a problem with its own staff, has led to negative attention around the church. The leadership in ELCC is currently taking action, and the church is involved with a number of churches in African countries to establish rules and regulations for open and accountable stewardship to prevent corruption. At the national level, both ELCC and the FEMEC network seem to have taken a passive role towards the government and other authorities in relation to corruption

and good governance, which is a major threat to democracy. Also in relation to human right issues, ELCC/FEMEC has been silent.¹⁹³ This is a great weakness, as the abuse of power is a major threat to development of the society. This also seems to be the case in relation to other difficult political issues in Cameroon, where the church seems to have taken a withdrawn or introvert position. An explanation often given is that Cameroonians tend to avoid conflicts and confrontation and swallow the injustice in order to maintain peace. Cameroon may be described as a peaceful country in a region characterised by conflicts. However, corruption and violation of human rights may also be characterised as abuse of power and lack of peace, and one may ask why the church appears not to confront the authorities in order to improve the conditions in the society at a national level.

It is difficult to talk of development where those to carry it out are not morally sensitive and committed to their assigned roles. Morality is thus an essential aspect of the development process. The role of the church in gradually imparting character development in Cameroon is imperative and given the large number of Christians in the country, cannot therefore be said to be inconsiderate. The church should put more and more emphasis on its teaching. It should make the gospel relevant and meaningful to people's realities and lives. To be a teaching church, the later has to set examples. One of the greatest challenges facing the church is the issue of morality within the institution. The church's credibility to point a finger is often questioned. People within and outside the church are sceptical about the ability of the church to spearhead moral reform when the church does not practice what it preaches. The shortcomings within the church make it not to shine and the only option is for it to be transformed to be truly the church of Jesus Christ, a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. The transformation of the church is therefore necessary and urgent if it wants to continue to be credible. The church should be a caring community which sees to it that order and harmony reign. It should play its role of educator of conscience that should involve each and everyone, from the family unit to all level of the church and the society. This is necessary because many people are no longer concerned with right and wrong, or guilt. A question will then arise as to whether the church has missed the point; or has it

¹⁹³ FEMEC is the Federation of Protestant Missions and Churches in Cameroon. This network of protestant churches in Cameroon works jointly to influence national authorities in the areas of school/education, and health care. There is little indication of coordinated action to influence politics, especially in the area of corruption, violation of human rights and development of democracy, but also on social issues like HIV/AIDS.

not been doing enough in its mission? The church should not only be reacting to situations, it should also be leading. The prophetic role of the church is very important. By setting examples, it will lead the way towards a less gloomy future.

We are going through a rapid social change. The church has a special responsibility to help men find meaning in the midst of this change, in order that change may become an opportunity rather than a threat. Rural transformation, creation of productive employment, education and training, and provision of social services in rural areas are therefore the major components of programs in which churches can take active participation. Preaching the gospel of development to change the general attitudes towards development is essential. This undoubtedly assumes a change of mind, and a willingness on the part of churches to bring about reforms within the organisation of churches themselves. Given the overall change of mind in conceiving technological advancement, material progress, and spiritual development as consistent with each other, the participation of churches in development could be significant, especially in the development of human resources, which is the most important element contributing to social and economic development. A profound concern for humanity and well being of the individual citizen should lie at the heart of all measures taken for the success of development programs. The church's work among the needy remains and is a witness and sign in and to the world, as well as an opportunity for the church's own spiritual growth. The church has a special responsibility to cultivate among their members a deepening empathy with the destitute, the marginal and the uprooted. Through a patient and compassionate presence, Christians may encourage uprooted individuals to explore and experience the potential relevance of the Christians hope for their own situation. By helping evolve an integrated perspective on life, the potential energies of individuals are released; they are thus helped to become contributing hands rather than consuming mouths.

Added to the institutional barriers to development and shortage of skilled human power, financial constraints have been serious bottlenecks in achieving the targets of development programs. Here again, churches can help in the mobilisation of both local and external resources in cooperation with government departments, voluntary agencies, and international organisations. The participation of churches in development, important as it is, would have a lasting force if their activities are institutionalised and coordinated with various development organisations. This implies, on one hand, the strengthening of the internal organisations of the churches, and on the other hand, active participation in

the preparation of development programs at various levels. To be effectively involved the churches need greater understanding of the structures of power in society, and to devise specific strategies for influencing these centres of power and decision-making. If not, their influence on social change will be minimal. An aspect of this is the difficulty churches have in relating effectively to government programs. It is appalling that the churches have not exploited the great resources of information gained in the government circles, international organisations, and others involved in development work. Nor have they yet discovered adequate means for sharing their own experiences and skills with others.

Much more attention needs to be given to how the leadership and citizens of the churches can be educated (not only in formal theology education) to assume greater responsibility for the continual transformation of society. From the theological point of view, all aspects of human life are potentially expressions of God's redeeming action, and are important for individual fulfilment and the achievement of a fuller community. While churches should never underestimate the human importance of material aspects of development, they should invest most heavily in those things which are most closely linked to man's freedom, his personal fulfilment, and the fuller realisation of true humanity in community. To pioneer social justice requires asking to what extent existing social conditions and institutions reflect the highest possible incorporation of love in social affairs. Churches find it difficult to maintain a prophetic stance towards society; they are so easily tamed, anesthetised and made comfortable by social prestige and success.

It is a living challenge for the churches to renew their life by participating freely, openly and daringly in the deepest human issues of our time. This renewal will come as a by-product of their full participation in the renewal of all that is human. It will come as a consequence of being chastened and purified in the refining fires of historical realities, in the matrix of high facts and difficult decisions, in the frustrations of seeking to realise a high vision in the midst of little money, little time, little knowledge, little energy, little men and little hope. And yet it will come, paradoxically, by being caught up in that hope and trust which gives grounding to and transforms all human hopes. In large measure the manner and degree to which the churches respond to this situation will determine whether, in the next quarter century the world, and particularly the developing world, comes to believe in the relevance of the churches to the great human dramas. To a significant degree it will also be a measure of the churches' fidelity to their nature and

calling. It is an essential part of the being and the becoming of the church that it be engaged in development, the overriding human issue of our day.

It is a widely held fact that women play a vital role in most Cameroon communities which happen to be agrarian in nature. They are engaged in agricultural activity, growing and processing the bulk of the food consumed and marketing the surplus. It is therefore very disturbing to note that their contribution to economic and social change remains inadequately recognized and undervalued. Despite some commendable steps taken by the church and the government to improve their condition and status, many women, especially in rural areas, are still underdeveloped and discriminated against. Thus on the background of both equity and growth development, programs must give enough prominence to the specific concerns of women and see to it that ample resources are availed to meet their requirements and aspirations. In fact, the call of the mobilisation of women as equal partners in all development processes cannot be over emphasised. A gender-sensitive perspective to meaningful development is not just a political imperative, but rather a paramount condition for sustained, economic, social and spiritual progress.

The church therefore have to promote the right of women to participate in various levels and forms of education; to be accorded equal treatment and participation in all spheres of life: in order to enable them to play their rightful role; and to enjoy the basic human rights and freedoms in the church and society. Indeed, this lack of practical programs to address gender issues is also at church level. I do not think that in this day and age gender inequality as such is the issue; what is at issue is whether or not the church will summon enough courage to put a stop to the traditions, values and structures that seem to discourage women from achieving their full potential in the church of Jesus Christ and deliberately engage in affirmative action to empower women in all areas of the church's ministry. New challenges and work are taken on board in certain fields, such as community initiatives and HIV/AIDS. However in the more traditional sectors of the work of the ELCC, there is a question whether the barriers are too high to allow flexibility.

The church is generally the home of the poor, where they shed the tears of their sorrows. It is largely populated by women, youth, and marginalised people. It reaches out to small villages in the land, in the most remote areas. In the informal settlement areas it is the church that holds the fabric of life together. The question to be asked is: What have the church to be doing even just in its own congregation, to make a difference to the quality of life of these people. That is the challenge the church needs to take up in its different

localities and regions. That challenge will remain unanswered until the church take practical steps to release the energy of the ordinary people in the local congregation, to be a movement of value-based energy for social transformation. God cuts across sexual, racial, age and other barriers in the execution of his eternal plan of salvation, plan which culminated in the death of our Lord at Calvary. Christ came not to enslave anyone to tradition, but to liberate everyone to a life of complete human dignity and respect.

The challenge facing the church in our time is to be responsive to the people's quest for a fuller life free from the dehumanising vices of under-development, political, economic, cultural and religious values of dependence and exploitation. The church must seek to humanise the poor by erecting a firm material basis for the restoration of their humanity. Justice, peace and development must serve as a process of mending the individual and reconciling him/her with his/her neighbour.

Remember that:

Without justice there can be no peace;
without peace there can be no development;
without development there can be no growth;
without growth there can be no fulfilment;
without fulfilment there can be no humanity;
without humanity there can be no divinity;
without divinity there can be no life.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ Koegelenberg, et al. *Transition and Transformation*, 59.

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Doudet Luc	Ngaoundere	16/07/08	Pastor, District director of Bethlehem
Doyabe	Ngaoundere		Pastor, Director of JEELC
Fombami Etienne	Ngaoundere	17/07/08	Pastor, Assistant Bishop of ELCC
Habiba Mamadama	Ngaoundere	18/07/08	Farmer, Adviser of the group Riskou Demri
Inna Florence	Ngaoundere	18/07/08	Animator in PADI
Kuinte Alex Romial	Ngaoundere	20/07/08	Student, youth's member and Singer in Messenger choir
Mayo Françoise	Ngaoundere	18/07/08	Farmers, Leader of the group Kebal
Mboudga Bernatte	Ngaoundere	23/07/08	Secretary in the Christian Education Department
Nirwa Jacob	Ngaoundere	23/07/08	Secretary of the project "All Against AIDS"
Nyiwe Thomas	Ngaoundere	21/07/08	Pastor, Bishop of ELCC
Salatou Paul	Ngaoundere	21/07/08	General Secretary ELCC
Satou Marthe	Ngaoundere	23/07/08	Director FPC
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Waibana Madeleine	Ngaoundere	18/07/08	Farmer, Leader of the Group Riskou Demri
Yaya Moussa	Ngaoundere	25/07/08	Trader, Djaoro of Tongo Pastoral

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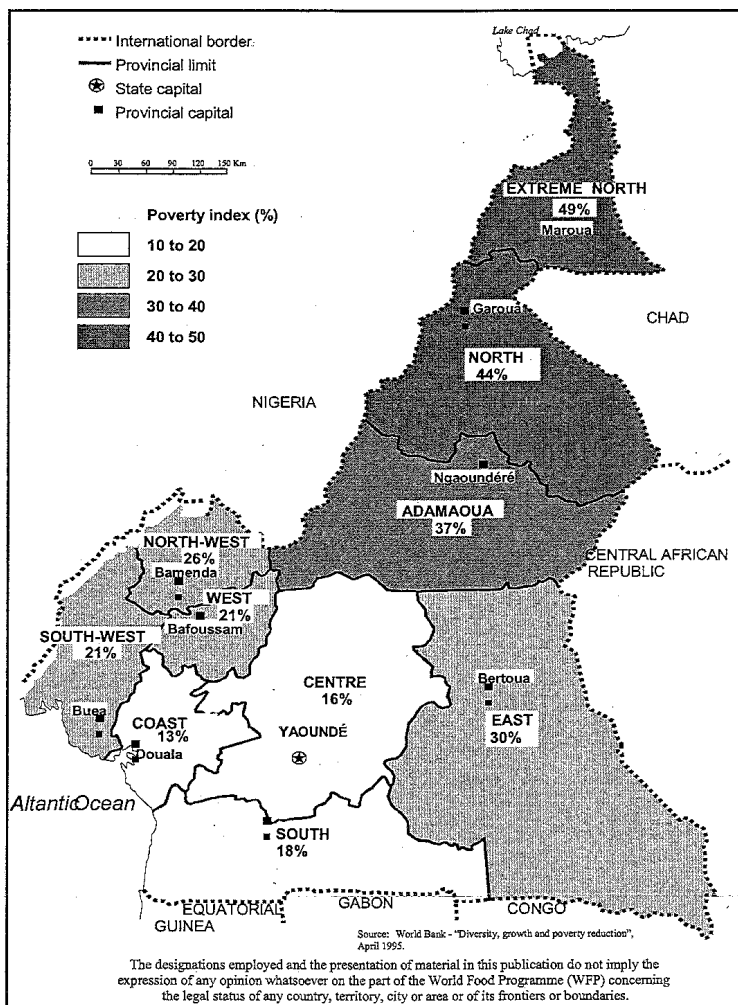
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APPENDICES

1. Cameroon map: Poverty Index by Province

ANNEX

Poverty Index by Province
Based on environment, illiteracy and malnutrition



2. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon

