



An Investigation on the Contribution of the Church in Community Transformational Development; A Study of Kijabe Town in Kenya.

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ARTICLE INFO

Article No.: 121825018

Type: Review

DOI: [10.15580/nsij.2025.1.121825018](https://doi.org/10.15580/nsij.2025.1.121825018)

Accepted: 21/12/2025

Published: 31/12/2025

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Keywords: Church and development, Transformational development, Kenya, Theology of development, Community transformation

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of the Church in promoting transformational community development in Kenya, with particular attention to the Africa Inland Church (AIC) and its long-standing influence in Kijabe Town. Despite notable economic growth since independence, Kenya continues to grapple with deep-seated challenges such as poverty, inequality, corruption, substance abuse, and social fragmentation. Within this context, the paper interrogates the paradox of a predominantly Christian society experiencing persistent developmental deficits. Employing a qualitative document review methodology, the study draws on theological literature, development theory, and national and international policy documents to analyze the Church's contribution to holistic development. The study is grounded in an ecclesiological framework that understands the Church as simultaneously visible and invisible, local and universal, and inherently missional. Drawing on African theology, Vatican II teachings, and the Theology of Development, the paper argues that the Church's prophetic mission transcends numerical church growth to include the restoration of human dignity, the transformation of worldviews, and the empowerment of communities toward social responsibility and freedom. It further critiques dualistic and colonially inherited paradigms that confine Christian mission to the spiritual sphere while neglecting social, economic, cultural, and political realities. The case of Kijabe Town demonstrates how sustained ecclesial engagement can shape moral consciousness, communal discipline, and social cohesion. The study concludes that while the Church is not a substitute for the state or civil institutions, its Spirit-led, contextually grounded, and ethically oriented engagement remains vital for advancing authentic transformational development in Kenya.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to define the role the church can play in contributing to community transformational or holistic development. It briefly reviews the Kenyan development landscape, defines the research problem, objective and methodology as well as limitations and key terms. Further, the perspective of Kenya as a nation on development is explored, and an analysis on the contribution of the church undertaken. Lastly, the specific contribution of the Africa Inland Church (AIC) in Kijabe town is analyzed and conclusion made with key lessons that can be applied by other churches to foster transformational development.

1.1. Background

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) rated Kenya as a lower middle-income country, with an economy estimated at US\$77.5 billion¹. According to World Bank, Kenya's 2019 average economic growth was 5.7%, depicting Kenya as one of the fastest growing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa². Despite such success, Kenya continues to struggle in some areas, especially as pertains to inequalities and corruption. Kenya's public debt increased from about 42.1% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Fiscal Year (FY) 2013/14 to 57.6% in FY 2016/17³, a reality that necessitated more stringent government efforts to curb corruption which plagues the country. In fact, according to Transparency International, out of 198 countries, Kenya was ranked 137th⁴ in Corruption Perception Index. In addition, Kenyan poverty as feminized, given that 30.2% female headed households are poor compared to 26% male headed households⁵.

UNDP described Kenya's economy as highly vulnerable to climate variability due to the country's overdependence on agriculture, water, energy, forestry and tourism, all of which is climate sensitive. Accordingly, 70-75% of the population rely on agriculture for livelihood, and this constitutes 25-30% of the GDP⁶. Cycles of drought and floods are common phenomenon in Kenya, and in 2018, 183 people died, 332,000 were displaced and 2.7 million were food insecure⁷. Politically, Kenya has also made some milestones in the process of democratization. However, the country faces cyclic tensions especially associated with general elections, where many people have lost their lives, while others have lost property or been displaced. The number of cases of internally displaced persons (new displacement associated with conflict and violence were 118,000 in 2012; 220,000 in 2014; and 1,800 in 2019⁸. According to 2019 Kenya population and housing census (KPHC 2019), Christians account for 85.5%, while Muslims account for 11% of the population⁹. The remaining 3.5% constitutes other religions, traditionalists and those who profess no religion.

1.2. Research Problem

Despite impressive progress as appertains to the economy of the country, the nation still exhibits poverty of being¹⁰ especially as featured by high corruption and selfishness. Christians and hence the church represent the large majority of the population. It is often seen as a paradox that a nation that has so many Christians and hence churches is at the same time very corrupt. Bryant Myers notes, "it is impossible to imagine a transforming community without a transforming church in its midst."¹¹

¹ UNDP, *UNDP Kenya Annual Report 2018*, 2018.

² "Overview," Text/HTML, *World Bank*, accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kenya/overview>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Results - 2019 - CPI," *Transparency.Org*, accessed September 18, 2020, <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2019/results>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ UNDP, *UNDP Kenya Annual Report 2018*.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "CountryProfile," accessed September 8, 2020, https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=KEN.

⁹ "Publications," *Kenya National Bureau of Statistics*, n.d., accessed September 8, 2020, https://www.knbs.or.ke/?page_id=3142.

¹⁰ Bryant L Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2009), 84.

¹¹ Ibid., 115.

1.3. Research Objective

Through a review of Africa Inland Church's influence in Kijabe community, the study aims at offering the Kenyan church with practical lessons in fostering holistic community development.

1.4. Limitation

Traditionally, development agencies like the United Nations and World Bank have tended to focus on social economic indicators to assess the level of development of a given country. As such, there is very limited data available in the development industry, to show progress in relation to spiritual dimension. Also, the churches themselves do not seem to have well organized data repositories showing their presence and work, or such information is not accessible. Further, the available official data, particularly social indicators in the census reports are not decentralized to the lower administrative units of the country. This inadequacy of evidence is the main limitation of this paper. To overcome it, the author sought alternative information, including qualitative documentation.

1.5. Methodology

The methodology employed in this paper is document review of credible qualitative and quantitative sources.

1.6. Definition of Key terms

1.6.1. The Nature of the Church: Community, Spirit, and Historical Expression

Luigi conceives the Church fundamentally as a **Spirit-gifted community**, constituted not merely by institutional affiliation but by a shared consciousness that what binds believers together is the gracious action of the Holy Spirit. From this pneumatological gift emerges a radically new mode

of life and a transformed understanding of existence itself—one rooted in participation in divine life rather than social contract. The Church, in this sense, is not first an organization but a Spirit-formed people whose identity flows from regeneration and communion.

Wayne Grudem complements this perspective by defining the Church as “*the community of all true believers for all time*”.¹² This definition deliberately stretches beyond denominational, geographical, and historical boundaries, emphasizing continuity across generations and cultures. Yet, as F. F. Bruce wisely cautions, any attempt at a rigid definition risks flattening the Church's lived complexity. Bruce therefore situates the people of God within a creative tension between **the ideal**—the universal communion of saints—and **the particular**—specific communities embedded in concrete historical, cultural, and political contexts.¹³ This tension is not a weakness but a defining characteristic of ecclesial life.

Grudem further advances ecclesiological clarity by distinguishing between the **invisible** and **visible** Church. The invisible Church refers to the Church *as God sees it*—the totality of the elect across time, known perfectly only to God. The visible Church, by contrast, is the Church *as Christians on earth experience it*—imperfect, institutional, and historically situated.¹⁴ This duality was authoritatively affirmed by the Second Vatican Council, which declared that the Church exists simultaneously as a **visible society and a spiritual community**, a mystery that is both human and divine.¹⁵

The visible Church is the primary referent of the New Testament epistles. Paul, for instance, addresses concrete ecclesial communities such as the Church in Corinth, Thessalonica, and Rome—churches marked by real struggles, ethical failures, and doctrinal disputes. Grudem further observes that the Church manifests at multiple, interconnected levels: the **house church** (Rom. 16:5), the **city-wide**

¹² Grudem, W. (1994). *Systematic theology: An introduction to biblical doctrine*. Zondervan.

¹³ Bruce, F. F. (1984). *The church: The people of God*. InterVarsity Press.

¹⁴ Grudem, W. (1994). *Systematic theology: An introduction to biblical doctrine*. Zondervan.

¹⁵ Second Vatican Council. (1964). *Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*. Vatican Press.

church (1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1), the **regional church** (Acts 9:31), and the **universal Church** spanning the entire world (Eph. 5:25). This multi-layered visibility underscores the Church's incarnational character—rooted in place, yet oriented toward catholicity. It is this **visible, historically embodied understanding of the Church** that informs the present study.

Importantly, contemporary African theological scholarship insists that such an understanding of the Church must not remain abstract. John Sele Philip's work within the *Theology of Development* framework provides a critical bridge between ecclesiology and lived social realities. Sele Philip argues that the Church in Africa must be understood as a **transformative social agent**, deeply embedded within struggles against poverty, inequality, cultural erosion, and structural injustice.¹⁶ The visible Church, therefore, is not merely where doctrine is taught but where **development is theologized and practiced**.

In his analysis of community-based resistance to Female Genital Mutilation in Kenya, Sele Philip demonstrates how faith communities function as moral, cultural, and developmental actors, translating theological convictions into tangible social transformation.¹⁷ This reinforces the claim that the visible Church is the arena in which the gospel encounters culture, power, and suffering. Similarly, Sele Philip's work on indigenous language and sacred music¹⁸ illustrates how ecclesial life sustains cultural resilience while nurturing holistic development.¹⁹ These insights resonate deeply with Bruce's insistence on the Church's historical particularity and Grudem's emphasis on its local expressions.

Thus, the Church—visible and invisible, local and universal, spiritual and social—must be understood not only as a theological category but as a **living community of witness and transformation**, especially within African contexts where faith and development are inseparably intertwined.

1.6.2. Transformational Community Development

According to the Oxford dictionary, “community” is defined as “a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common. It is also seen as “a particular area or place considered together with its inhabitants”²⁰. Kijabe community in this case represents the people living in Kijabe town, in Lari sub-county, Kiambu County in Kenya.

Development has been defined differently over the years. In his book- walking with the poor, Bryant Myers reviews various perspectives of development, and highlights some of their gaps. He then goes on to describe transformational development which is biblically inspired, and characterized by “shalom: just, peaceful, harmonious and enjoyable relationships with each other, ourselves, our environment, and God.”²¹ It is about living an abundant life in all spheres, that is, physical, social, mental, and spiritual. He further outlines the goals of transformation as changed people who have recovered their true identity and vocation; and just and peaceful relationships with self, others, community, environment and God.²² This holistic perspective of development within a given community is what is employed in this paper as transformational community development.

¹⁶ Sele, J. P., & Wanjiku, C. (2024). Theology of development: Addressing poverty and inequality in Nigeria and Kenya. *Greener Journal of Social Sciences*, 14(2), 156–165. <https://doi.org/10.15580/gjss.2024.2.093024123>

¹⁷ Sele, J. P., Nyakerario, F., & Wanjiku, C. (2024). Fighting female genital mutilation in Kenya: A case study of ActionAid. *Greener Journal of Social Sciences*, 14(2), 273–279. <https://doi.org/10.15580/gjss.2024.2.112024177>

¹⁸ Sele, J. P. (2025). Sacred music as a catalyst for theological reflection and social development: A critical review of African Christian liturgical traditions. *Journal of Fine and Creative*

Arts, Music, Media and Communication Studies, 1(2). <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/396717884>

¹⁹ Sele, J. P., Davou, S. Y., & Zongo, P. K. (2025). The role of the Berom language in fostering cultural resilience and sustainable development in Jos, Nigeria. *International Journal of Social and Economic Development*, 1(3), 82–86. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/397997660>

²⁰ “Community | Definition of Community by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.Com Also Meaning of Community,” *Lexico Dictionaries | English*, accessed September 7, 2020, <https://www.lexico.com/definition/community>.

²¹ Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 113.

²² *Ibid.*, 115–120.

2. Kenya's perspective of Development

Kenya's development goals are stipulated in its vision 2030. This vision is "middle-income country providing a high-quality life to all its citizens by the year 2030."²³ This vision is based on three pillars. The economic pillar seeks prosperity of Kenya's through an average growth in GDP of 10% per annum from 2012. To achieve this, priority is given to six areas namely, tourism, increasing value in agriculture, wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing for regional market, business process offshoring, and financial services. The social pillar seeks a just and cohesive society with social equity in a clean and secure environment. In this, priority is given to education and training, the health sector, water and sanitation, the environment, housing and urbanization, gender, youth and vulnerable groups; and equity and poverty elimination. The political pillar aims at a democratic political system that is issue based, respects the rule of law, and protects the rights and freedoms of all. In this, priority is given to rule of law, electoral and political processes, democracy and public service delivery, transparency and accountability; and, security, peace building and conflict management²⁴.

A review of the Vision 2030 seems to focus majorly on the physical aspects of development. Even where mention is made, on transformational aspects such as peace building, conflict management and addressing inequalities, the paper does not articulate how such will be realized. Bryant Myers, challenging such thinking of development quotes Octavio Paz: "Progress has peopled history with the marvels and monsters of technology, but has depopulated the life of man. It has given us more things but not more being"²⁵. Myers thus adds, "Life abundant is about living, not simply having"²⁶. The priorities described above shows Kenya's intent in "having", but the same cannot be said to be true as

appertains to "being".

3. The Role of the church in transformational development

The Kenya's vision 2030 does not seem to indicate the role of the church in its realization. In fact, church is only mentioned once alongside family, schools and public institutions in regard caution against use of violence in conflict resolution. The document indicates that it was developed through a consultative process with "stakeholders from all levels of the public service, the private sector, civil society, the media and non-governmental organizations (NGO)²⁷". It also indicates that it will be implemented "in close collaboration with government ministries and departments as well as the private sector, civil society and other relevant stakeholder groups"²⁸. While church is part of civil society, failure to mention it while others such as NGO and Media are mentioned may indicate its exclusion from participation.

Pöntinen articulates the *prophetic mission of the Church* as fundamentally concerned with proclaiming the Good News of salvation within the concrete realities of a globalized world. This mission, he insists, must not be reduced to numerical church growth or the mere expansion of Christian membership. Rather, it is a transformative vocation aimed at addressing the lived conditions of people, especially those shaped by structural injustice, poverty, and ideological captivity. The Church's prophetic witness is therefore inseparable from its responsibility to confront dominant myths—particularly the belief that poverty is a divinely ordained destiny rather than a consequence of human systems and historical injustices.²⁹

Central to this prophetic calling is the empowerment of people to participate actively in their own liberation. The Church is called to

²³ Ministry of Planning and National Development (Nairobi), Government of Kenya (Nairobi), and The National Economic and Social Council of Kenya (Nairobi), "Kenya Vision 2030," *Kenya vision 2030* (2007): 1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10–25.

²⁵ Myers, *Walking with the Poor*, 113–114.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 114.

²⁷ Ministry of Planning and National Development (Nairobi), Government of Kenya (Nairobi), and The National Economic

and Social Council of Kenya (Nairobi), "Kenya Vision 2030," 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁹ Pöntinen, P. (2005). *Mission in a globalized world*. Helsinki: Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission.

challenge narratives that normalize oppression and diminish human agency, replacing them with a theology rooted in Christian freedom, dignity, and hope. Such liberation is not only spiritual but also social, economic, cultural, and psychological. As Sele Philip and Wanjiku argue within the framework of the *Theology of Development*, poverty and inequality in African contexts cannot be addressed adequately without theological paradigms that affirm human dignity and dismantle fatalistic worldviews.³⁰ The Church, therefore, becomes a site of conscientization, echoing Freire's insistence that liberation begins with critical awareness and praxis (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*).

However, Pöntinen cautions that this mission must be **Spirit-inspired**. Without the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the Church's mission degenerates into a merely human enterprise cloaked in divine language. Authentic Christian mission flows from divine initiative, not ecclesiastical ambition. At the same time, Pöntinen provocatively argues that a mission lacking contextual grounding cannot be genuinely spiritual. This claim is deeply incarnational: just as Christ had to become fully human, entering a specific culture, language, and historical moment, so too must the Church embody the gospel within concrete social realities. Spirituality divorced from context becomes abstraction; context divorced from spirituality becomes activism without transcendence.

This insight leads to a holistic understanding of mission. The Church's vocation is not fragmented but integrative—holding together spiritual renewal and material transformation. Sele Philip's work on the Church's role in the social integration of persons with physical disabilities illustrates this holistic vision in practice. He demonstrates that when the Church confines its mission to spiritual consolation alone, it unintentionally perpetuates exclusion.

Conversely, when theology informs inclusive social action, the Church becomes an agent of healing, dignity restoration, and communal belonging.³¹

Historically, however, the Church has not always embraced this holistic vision. One of the major obstacles, according to Pöntinen, is what he terms the **“colonized mind of the churches.”** This mindset, inherited from colonial missionary paradigms, sustains a dualistic worldview that sharply separates the spiritual from the material. Within such a framework, salvation is confined to the soul, while culture, politics, economics, and social life are treated as secondary or even suspect. This dualism has deeply shaped ecclesial practice in many African contexts, resulting in churches that are vibrant in worship yet silent in the face of injustice.

Importantly, this challenge is not unique to the Church. As Sele, Davou, and Zongo show in their study on cultural resilience in Jos, Nigeria, colonial epistemologies have fragmented African institutions as a whole, devaluing indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and cultural expressions. The Church, when uncritical of these inherited frameworks, risks reinforcing the very systems that undermine human flourishing.³²

The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) offers a corrective to such reductionist understandings of mission. In *Gaudium et Spes*, the Council affirms that the Church does not merely communicate divine life in abstraction but radiates that life into the world through its healing and elevating influence on human dignity and social relations. The Church strengthens the fabric of society and infuses everyday human activity with deeper meaning and moral significance. In this way, the Church contributes to making the “family of man” and its historical journey more genuinely human.³³

At the same time, Vatican II carefully

³⁰ Sele, J. P., & Wanjiku, C. (2024). The Church's role in the social integration of physically handicapped individuals: A theological perspective. *Greener Journal of Social Sciences*, 14(2), 147–155. <https://doi.org/10.15580/gjss.2024.2.093024122>

³¹ Sele, J. P., & Wanjiku, C. (2024). The Church's role in the social integration of physically handicapped individuals: A theological perspective. *Greener Journal of Social Sciences*, 14(2), 147–155. <https://doi.org/10.15580/gjss.2024.2.093024122>

³² Sele, J. P., Davou, S. Y., & Zongo, P. K. (2025). The role of the Berom language in fostering cultural resilience and sustainable development in Jos, Nigeria. *International Journal of Social and Economic Development*, 1(3), 82–86. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/397997660>

³³ Second Vatican Council. (1965). *Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. Vatican Press.

maintains that the Church's mission is fundamentally religious, not political, economic, or social in the narrow sense. Yet this distinction does not imply withdrawal from earthly responsibilities. Rather, the Council insists that Christians must approach temporal duties with the same seriousness and devotion as acts of worship. The dichotomy between faith and daily life, the Council laments, is among the gravest errors of the modern age. Authentic Christian discipleship integrates belief and practice, liturgy and life.

Consequently, the Church is called to preach the gospel, teach its social doctrine, exercise moral discernment, and speak prophetically on matters of public order when human dignity and the salvation of souls are at stake. This framework legitimizes ecclesial engagement in socio-political issues without collapsing the Church into a partisan institution.

The Kenyan context provides a compelling illustration of this integrated mission. Following independence, Kenya experienced prolonged single-party rule characterized by repression and limited political freedom. In this context, churches emerged as critical voices of conscience, occupying the public space vacated by silenced political opposition. The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) played a particularly prominent role during the late 1980s and early 1990s, openly challenging authoritarian governance through publications, civic education, and advocacy.

Beyond institutional action, individual church leaders embodied prophetic courage at great personal cost. Anglican Bishop Alexander Muge, who died in a mysterious road accident after receiving threats from state officials, remains a powerful symbol of ecclesial resistance. Alongside him, bishops such as Henry Okullu and David Gitari, and Presbyterian minister Timothy Njoya, consistently confronted political injustice and defended democratic freedoms.³⁴ Their witness

affirms Phiri's observation that African churches were instrumental in transitions to political pluralism.

Yet Phiri also issues a sobering critique: once political liberalization was achieved, many churches struggled to redefine their public role, facing either political irrelevance or fragmentation along partisan lines.³⁵ This challenge underscores the need for a sustained theology of public engagement rather than reactive activism.

Beyond politics, Kenyan churches have made substantial contributions to socio-economic development. By 2014, nearly half of Kenya's primary schools and over half of its secondary schools had religious affiliation, while the vast majority of private universities were faith-based. Moreover, Christian-run health facilities constitute an estimated 35–40 percent of the national healthcare system.³⁶ These statistics testify to the Church's enduring developmental footprint.

Sele's scholarship situates these contributions within a broader theological vision, arguing that the Church's social engagement is not ancillary to its mission but a direct expression of the gospel's concern for holistic human flourishing.³⁷ When the Church integrates proclamation, compassion, justice, and development, it fulfills its prophetic calling in both word and deed.

4. The Africa Inland Church-Kenya and its impact in Kijabe town

Peter Cameron Scott was a member of Presbyterian church who realized his call to the Evangelization of the unreached, especially in Africa. He was thus committed to missionary work in Africa, but due to some challenges especially financial limitations, the Presbyterian church could not sponsor his dream of missionary work in Africa. Scott mobilized some Christians from different denominations and shared his idea of "building a

³⁴ Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs. (2014). *Religious institutions and social services in Kenya*. Georgetown University.

³⁵ Phiri, I. A. (2001). Proclaiming political pluralism: Churches and political transitions in Africa. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 110, 19–35.

³⁶ Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs. (2014). *Religious institutions and social services in Kenya*. Georgetown University.

³⁷ Sele, J. P., & Wanjiku, C. (2024). The Church's role in the social integration of physically handicapped individuals: A theological perspective. *Greener Journal of Social Sciences*, 14(2), 147–155. <https://doi.org/10.15580/gjss.2024.2.093024122>

chain of mission stations in East Africa and beyond³⁸. The Philadelphia Missionary Council- an inter-denominational society committed to evangelism was established in 1895 and agreed to sponsor Scott's venture. The council formed the Africa Inland Mission (AIM) in USA and Scott was recognized as its founder and director.

AIM was to evangelize the inland or interior of Africa hence its name³⁹. The first group of the missionaries including Scott arrived in Nzau in Machakos Kenya, in December, 1895 and considered it a suitable site for setting up of AIM's first mission station. Scott however died in December 1896, and this was a major blow to AIM. He was succeeded by Charles Hurlburt in 1898. AIM continued opening mission stations and in 1903 opened Kijabe mission station and made it AIM's headquarter. AIM also established the AIC Kenya, and this has grown to a large protestant church with a membership of about 4 million⁴⁰. The AIC is predominant in Eastern (especially in Ukambani), Rift Valley, Nairobi, Central, Coast and Nyanza provinces of Kenya⁴¹.

A key distinctiveness of Kijabe town which is about 2KM from Kijabe Mission Station is that it is cigarettes and alcohol free. The Daily Nation- a Kenyan newspaper, featuring Kijabe town on September 15, 2013 stated, "The town remains the utmost center of Christian faith with no alcohol or cigarettes being sold"⁴². Another Kenya newspaper known as The Standard, featured an article entitled "Where residents obey strict code left by missionaries 115 years ago"⁴³. It stated that the town is alcohol, cigarettes, drugs and condoms free- a tradition whose custodians are the elders. These elders further have a strong accountability role towards the youth as pertains to sexual behavior. "It is illegal... for a male worker to entertain a female friend in his house. Female workers in the church

and the hospital are not supposed to give birth before they have a church wedding.... It is unacceptable for an unmarried couple to live together. This is considered immoral..."⁴⁴ According to these articles, the AIC which is situated within the mission station has played a vital role in inculcating this culture.

Such a phenomenon cannot be taken lightly in a context with high level of alcohol and drug abuse. A survey on the state of Alcohol and Drugs abuse was conducted in Central Kenya in 2010 by the National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA). Very high alcohol usage among males aged 25 - 34 years was reported by 57.3% of the participants in Kiambu, higher compared to that of the overall province of 54.6%⁴⁵. The report indicated numerous social ills stemming from this, including deaths, domestic violence, school drop-out among others. This is just an example of an impact that the AIC has had in its surrounding community, which affects the whole man- spiritually, socially and economically.

5. Conclusion

In societies fractured by corruption, alcoholism, tribalism, and allied social pathologies, symptoms not merely of material deprivation but of a profound *poverty of being*, the Church remains one of the few institutions with the moral imagination, spiritual capital, and social legitimacy to catalyze deep and lasting transformation. This study demonstrates that, despite structural and contextual constraints, the Church can still function as a redemptive force within the public sphere. Kijabe Town, in many respects, emerges as a contemporary embodiment of Jesus' metaphor of "*a city set on a hill*" (Matthew 5:14), offering visible signs of hope,

³⁸ "A Study of Theological Education in Africa Inland Church-Kenya - PDF Drive," ⁴⁵, accessed September 15, 2020, <http://www.pdfdrive.com/a-study-of-theological-education-in-africa-inland-church-kenya-d51185432.html>.

³⁹ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁰ Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs, *Faith and Development in Focus: Kenya*, 37.

⁴¹ "A Study of Theological Education in Africa Inland Church-Kenya - PDF Drive," 8.

⁴² "Town Sells No Alcohol, No Cigarettes," *Nation*, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://nation.africa/kenya/life-and-style/dn2/town-sells-no-alcohol-no-cigarettes--894470>.

⁴³ Amos Kareithi, "Where Residents Obey Strict Code Left by Missionaries 115 Years Ago," *The Standard*, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/central/article/2001279397/kijabe-lives-in-the-shadow-of-missionaries-115-years-later>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "Publications | NACADA -National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse," accessed September 18, 2020, <https://nacada.go.ke/publications?page=2>.

moral coherence, and communal responsibility within a fractured social landscape.

Yet, as this research clearly establishes, transformational community development cannot be sustained through ecclesial agency alone. The Church's effectiveness is maximized not through substitution of community responsibility, but through *partnership* with local actors, fostering participatory accountability mechanisms that embed transformation within the social fabric itself. Community participation, therefore, is not optional but constitutive of genuine transformation. Where communities own the process, development shifts from charity to covenant, from intervention to incarnation.

The study further underscores that addressing issues of "being", values, identity, ethics, and worldview, requires uncommon courage. Such dimensions are deeply entrenched, resistant to technocratic solutions, and demand spiritual discernment. Consequently, the Church must remain rooted in prayer, continually seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit to interpret its context, reimagine its mission, and realign its strategies. Transformational engagement is inherently dynamic; when milestones are achieved, as witnessed in Kenya's transition toward political pluralism, the Church must resist complacency and return to discernment, asking anew what faithfulness demands in an evolving context.

Strategic engagement with national development frameworks, such as Kenya's Vision 2030, emerges as a critical pathway through which the Church can exercise prophetic participation. By contributing to, interrogating, and critiquing such policy instruments, the Church can expose the limitations of development paradigms that privilege economic, social, and political indicators while marginalizing spiritual, moral, and relational dimensions. The Church's task, therefore, is not merely to align with national visions, but to *heal their blind spots* and bridge the gaps between growth and wholeness.

Finally, the study highlights a critical methodological and institutional challenge: inadequate data availability and weak data management systems within church-led development initiatives. Without credible evidence, the Church's contribution remains under-recognized and under-theorized. Strengthening research

capacity through partnerships with academic institutions and development agencies is thus imperative. The absence of robust quality-of-life data in Kijabe Town points to an urgent research gap. Accordingly, this study recommends a comprehensive primary survey employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, extended to Kijabe and comparable communities. This agenda not only advances scholarly rigor but also positions the Church as a credible, evidence-informed development actor.

This research therefore lays both a theological and empirical foundation for further inquiry. The proposed doctoral study will build on these findings to deepen understanding of the Church's role in transformational development, moving beyond anecdotal success toward analytically grounded, replicable, and contextually faithful models of transformation. In doing so, it affirms that when the Church remains spiritually discerning, socially embedded, intellectually rigorous, and strategically engaged, it can indeed become an instrument through which communities are not merely improved, but profoundly transformed.

Conflicting Interests

The authors state that no conflict of interest exists.

Authors' contributions

All authors were involved in the conceptualization, arrangement, the proofreading and approved the manuscript before submission.

Funding: Self-funded.

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