

SELF-SUSTAINABILITY AS A TRANSFORMATION PROCESS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON

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Abstract

The withdrawal of external and internal sponsors to church projects in African Churches in general and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) and her institutions in particular in the recent past is a whistle blower and eye opener to churches to think out of the box. The PCC Administration has seen the urgent need of self sustainability as a means to combat not only the present financial, spiritual, social, environmental and economic challenges but to be pro-active for future benefits. As such, there is a need to establish more developmental, spiritual, social and economic interventions as preparations for the unforeseen financial and spiritual breakdown of the system(church). This article is qualitative in methodology. It addresses three broad areas of self sustainability which is seen as a process for transformation. The three areas are: Spiritual, social and economic development. Three areas are suggested to be the core practices in the attendant of self sustainability as transformation process. The areas are: 1) Biblical texts supporting self sustainability. 2) The activities that the pastor need to do with him/her self, to the Christians and community in order to instill and sustain spiritual and socio-economic self sustainability as a transformation process. 3) The role of the Church and its institutions in the community whose members are spiritually, socially and economically challenged. The conclusion arrived at is that it is mandatory for the church representing religious institution, government institution, economic institution and the family to work together in synergy for a better self-sustainable society. This can only be achieved when the spiritual, socio-economic and environments are managed holistically.

Keywords:Self, self-Sustainability, Sustainability, Transformation, Process, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

Introduction

Self sustainability is the ability to be self sufficient, it entails the self being enough to supply the needs of self. In our context, these needs of self consist of spiritual, material, economical and social needs. The importance of self sustainability cannot be over emphasized as it increases the capacity to establish more sustainable development interventions. It could be spiritual developments, material development, agricultural development, social development and economic development. It also recognizes that people have the right to be treated with dignity, to choose the life they want to live/lead and to be responsible for their decisions. The right and responsibility to exercise freedom is guaranteed.

The Problem

In recent time, the socio-economic, spiritual and self esteem challenges among individuals and groups (churches) across the globe is affecting livelihood negatively. This is seen as individuals, churches,

communities that could sustain its operations with support from individuals within and without, organizations within and out of the country in the past are unable to meet up with some of their needs due to lack of support from those external and internal organizations and support systems. The Christians, pastors and the entire Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) are not left out. In this light, the Moderator of the PCC has been on a crusade to empower congregations, individual Christians to carry on sustainable projects in order to alleviate the unforeseen present and future spiritual, social and economic crises. Thus, the call for self-sustainability in all spheres of life is a clarion call to all. This presentation will address the various areas of self-sustainability of pastors and Christians of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon laying emphasis on what should be done by the pastors and Christians on how to cultivate responsible self-sustainable programs for economical, social, spiritual and social transformation.

Definition of Terms

We are going to define the following terms that will be used in this paper.

- i. **Self:** Self is simply an individual person, seen as an object of its own reflective consciousness. Self in the context of this paper is seen as an individual person or a group of people with common objective(s) aiming to achieve and attain self-sufficiency for consistent transformation process.
- ii. **Sustainability.** It is defined as the ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level. It is seen as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It has three pillars:- economic, social and environmental. For the context of this paper, we are going to add one more pillar- the spiritual.
- iii. **Self-sustainability:** Self-sustainability is a state of being in which a person or organization needs little or no help from or interaction with others. It entails the self being enough (to fulfill needs), and a self-sustaining entity can maintain self-sufficiency indefinitely. It represents types of personal or collective autonomy. A self-sufficient economy is one that requires little or no trade with the outside world. It is described as a type of sustainable living in which nothing is consumed other than what is produced by self-sufficient individuals or systems/organizations. A system is self-sustaining if it can maintain itself by independent efforts.
- iv. **Transformation:** It is seen as a marked change in form, nature or appearance.
- v. **Process:** it is a series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end or result. It is also defined as a set of activities that interact to achieve a particular end.
- vi. **Transformation process** is seen in this paper as worthwhile steps taken, or set of activities put in place by an individual, group or organizations to attend a marked change in form, nature or appearance economically, socially, environmentally and spiritually.
- vii. **Presbyterian Church in Cameroon:** The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon is the historical and constitutional successor of the Basel mission church in Kamerun established in 1886 as an external arm of the evangelical missionary society of Basel (Basel mission) in Switzerland. It maintains the spiritual and theological continuity of that church and upholds the Reformed tradition (PCC Constitution 1998:1). The Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Kumba which is celebrating her 70th Anniversary is one of the Institutions of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

Concepts of Self-Sustainability as Transformational Process

For the purpose of this article, three out of four major pillars of self-sustainability will be addressed. They are; spiritual, social and economic pillars. The environmental is mentioned passively however.

i. Spirituality as Spiritual Transformational Process.

Spirituality is difficult to define because of its subjective nature on how individuals experience it. It is difficult to define without making it too superficial or too narrowly focused; it has to be accepted that spirituality is beyond human experience, and any definition can only provide a guide to the territory under consideration. There are many different forms of spirituality and it is unlikely that all forms of

spirituality that will be acceptable needs to be clarified. Spirituality definitions are centered on the following three areas:

1. The basic feelings of being self-aware and in relationship with others, nature and God (faith).
2. Underlying principles such as values, moral, ethics, virtues, emotions, wisdom and intuition
3. The relationship between inner experience and outer manifestations as seen in practices and behaviors- a journey of personal development and growth.

Spirituality is associated with mystery, is about an internal experience of life and the grasping of a larger unity. Spirituality is a process of living out a set of deeply held personal values of honoring a presence greater than ourselves. It expresses our desires to find meaning in and to treat as an offering what we do. The spiritual life is at root, a matter of seeing-it is all of life seen from a certain perspective (Alain, 1998, Peter,1993, Turner (nd)). Giacalone and Jurkiewicz,(2003) sees spirituality as a framework or organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitate their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy.

Spirituality in the workplace is about individuals and organizations seeing work as a spiritual path, as an opportunity to grow and to contribute to society in a meaningful way. It is about care, compassion and support of others, about integrity and people being true to themselves and others. It means individuals and organizations attempting to live their values more fully in the work they do (Smith and Raymment 2007).

Spirit at work is first and foremost about achieving goals, making more money, becoming better managers, finding ways to get others to do what we want, or even about becoming happier, although any and all of these may and do not happen when it is not taken seriously. What it is about is abundant life: living fully in each moment; paying attention to what is happening within us and around us, and understanding what our lives are about and how we are meant to make a difference within a larger community of which we are part.

Spiritual transformation process according to Pargament (2006) refers primarily to a fundamental change in the place of the sacred as an object of significance in life and secondarily to a fundamental change in the pathways the individual takes to the sacred. Spiritual transformation therefore is neither rare nor incomprehensible; it is, instead, part and parcel of spiritual life, which is one of the processes critical to spirituality. In the search for the sacred, people engage in the efforts to discover the sacred, conserve and sustain a relationship with the sacred once it has been discovered and transformed. Following this transformation, the individual's task shift to the process of conserving this new understanding of the sacred. In this light, the search for the sacred evolves over the course of the individual or organizational life span.

Thus, pastors as main players or as agents of self sustainability of spirituality transformation process, need to be constantly reminded of their responsibilities first within them, Christians and the Church at large. The responsibilities include intense bible studies, memorization of scriptures, praying with scriptures, family devotions, retreats, care for the children etc. Christians on the other hand, are expected to follow their pastors teachings and put into practice all spiritual activities in order to enhance and sustain their spiritual lives.

ii. Socio-economic development as transformational process

In order to understand this concept, let us begin by defining development. Generally, development is defined as a state in which things are improving. In this context, socio- economic development means the improvement of people's life styles through improved education, incomes, skills development and employment. It is the process of economic and social transformation based on cultural and environmental factors. Thus, this article focuses on aspects whereby the livelihoods of pastors, Christians and communities of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) can be improved and

sustained socially and economically through the process of worthwhile education, income improvement and technical skills development.

Socio- economic development therefore is a process of social and economic development in a society. It is measured with indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP), life expectancy, literacy and levels of employment. For the purpose of this article, indicators of socio-economic development will not be addressed.

Social Development is a process which results in the transformation of social institutions in a manner which improves the capacity of the society to fulfill its aspirations. Social institution is a group of individuals who have a common purpose, goals and set of norms. Communities, community service organizations, education, churches, schools, families etc are social institutions. Social development in social institutions implies a qualitative change in the way the social institutions in the society shapes itself and carries out its activities through more progressive attitudes and behavior by the population, and members of social institutions. This entails the adoption of more progressive and effective activities and processes. Progressive and effective activities and processes in our context includes, educative and empowerment workshops on sustainable skills in plantain multiplications, mushroom farming, all of the empowerment processes and activities offered by the Bishop July International Center for Research, Interreligious Dialogue and Development (BJICRID) at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary (PTS) kumba among others. Social and economic development in the context of this paper is discussed together because there seem to be a narrow line between both concepts.

Economic growth or development refers to the increase or growth of the financial income of individual Christians of the PCC, workers of the PCC and the PCC at large. In recent, the leadership of the PCC has as one of its vision, the empowerment of congregations/pastors, Christian with sustainable developmental activities aimed at transforming the livelihood of individuals and church to face the seemingly dwindling economy and drop in external financial/material support to the church in general. Thus the slogan: “one congregation, one farm”. This entails the engagement of human development activities and programs within the church to be able to meet up with this vision. Across the territory where the PCC operates, nearly 85% of the congregations, pastors and institutions are carrying out self sustainable programmes and activities.

Human development: Human Development focuses on expanding and widening of people’s choices as well as raising the levels of their wellbeing. It covers almost all aspect of human life and people’s choices like economic, social, political, cultural, educational, physical, biological, mental, spiritual and emotional. The pastor on the one hand and the church on the other hand have as corporate social responsibility to supply these needs to the community.

Development as seen by Kariuki 2018, is a background based for church principles and these principles ought to promote and shape the present day to day world. Community development should therefore be based on different types of policies that are just, fair, non authoritative and based on peoples wishes. It includes resources provision to the marginalized and it’s about providing assistance that is sustainable. The church capacity to impact effectiveness to the poor people or less privileged is based on its followers.

As a prologue for the conclusion of this article, the following three areas are presented in the text below

1. Biblical texts supporting self sustainability,
2. The activities that the pastor need to do with him/her self, the Christians and community in order to instill and sustain spiritual and socio-economic self sustainability as a transformation process
3. The role of the Church and its institutions in the community whose members are spiritually, socially and economically challenged

Contributions of a Pastor and Church to instill self-sustainability

The pastor is a leader of the church in which he/she has been assigned to pastor. He/she has an obligation to guide and lead those entrusted in his or her care holistically. This entails taking into consideration all aspect of Christian development and growth. The following are some of the ways the pastor and church can contribute to self- sustainability of the Christians and congregation.

Be a pastor leader: To be a pastor leader, it entails faith based hope. He/she should demonstrate a strong desire to achieve something great. This desire is in the form of vision which according to Kouzes and Posser (2002: 125), is the expression of optimism. A pastor leader will always find ways to express hope and reveal faith in God's unfolding purpose. Establishing a clear, compelling vision will guide leaders efforts and keep them moving in a positive direction (page 4). He/she has the ability to sustain vision in trouble times.

Secondly, a pastor leader also exhibits God given stirring shared vision. He/she share visions with his collaborators. This entails collaboration with all stakeholders. Tremendous personal sacrifices to support him/her in making the vision a reality is expected from his/her Christians and stakeholders.. The leader pastor therefore has the responsibility to see the possibilities of the future and to provide a positive climate for members to engage in unfolding, refining and sharing that vision together (Kouzes and Poser 2002:131).

Thirdly, a pastor leader has the inbuilt courage to challenge the status quo.

It is possible that the uneasy nature of the consequences of casting a vision that may be challenged by the Christians and stakeholders can frighten the pastor in his/her vision. The pastor leader requires those under his leadership to move out of their comfort zones for worthy causes and challenge others to do same.

Lastly, the pastor-leader needs the stamina to sustain the vision in short and long term. For the vision to have an effect on the life and ministry of the congregation and society at large, it must become a vital part of the planning, decision-making and communication activities of the church. It should be communicated in a compelling and appealing manner (Nichols 2007:10).

The PCC moderator has demonstrated this pastor-leader attributes in his faith based gigantic structures raised across Cameroon during his leadership period in office as the Moderator of the PCC from 2014 to date. For example, the Synod Office faith project, the Health Complex Hospital in Bamenda, Pres-Micro Finance Institution Limited (PRESMFI), Press Insurance, Presbyterian Comprehensive Secondary School (PCSS) Mfou Yaoundé, the Health Complex at Nsimeyong, Yaounde, the Paper Production Plant in Limbe, the Recapitalization of Tellco- Preswood at Ombe with modern machines, the Child Eye Hospital in Limbe, the Agro Bush mango extension project at Manyemen, the Commercial House extension at Commercial Avenue Bamenda, and many others are projects whose financial and social/spiritual outburst will boost the financial, educational, health, social and economic self sufficiency of the PCC and her Christians (PCC, 2019; 8).

Biblical Support passages backing self sustainability as transformation process activity

- Acts 9:36-39- Dorcas and her works and reaching outs
- Genesis 41:46-47- Joseph creates a long term agricultural policy and infrastructure (food security)
- John 21:1-10- Fishing by disciples
- Acts 18:1-13- Paul's aspects of tent making
- 2nd Thessalonians 3:6-9- Warning against idleness
- Gen. 13:1-12- Abraham and Expansion of Livestock rearing
- Nehemiah 2:11ff.
- Gen. 1:26- Man having dominion over the creation

- Numbers 35:2-5. Man Commissioned to be steward to the earth wisely
- Gen. 2:16-17. Man commissioned to work within the limits God sets

The activities that the pastor, need to do with him/her self, the Christians and community in order to instill and sustain spiritual and socio-economic self sustainability as a transformation process

In order to instill and sustain spiritual and socio-economic self sustainability as a transformation process, the pastor or church leader need to

- Decongest common practices that tend to entangle, frustrate and drain the ministers of the church. Christopher 2014 suggested the following actions:

1. Give feedback to the donors
2. Appreciate with prompt thank you letters
3. Invite the young donors and involved the in activities.
4. Select a trustworthy and competent committee members to handle projects
5. Get good counsel on what your cash flow is liable to look like
6. Draw proper and feasible church budget
7. Draw a realistic loan agreement, strategic plan or donor base information
8. Note that donor fatigue will set in and person will either refuse to donate or keep paying extra and may leave the church
9. Don't go above your church income capacity in taking loans and budgeting for projects
10. Don't rely on the fact that people voted for a large expenditure
11. Don't execute more than 140% of what you raise in a capital campaign
12. Have someone to do a cash flow analysis showing that you reasonably can be off debt in seven to eight years
13. Never let your debt be more than 15% of your budget
14. Never forecast that success demands that you do more than two campaigns back to back
15. Don't fall prey to "build it and then they will come". What if they don't come?
16. Don't calculate start-up/operation cost in your analysis and expenses
17. Know your numbers/personalities
18. Know that how people give/contribute can be a serious indicator of spiritual well being
19. Evaluate constantly how those under your care are progressing spiritually
20. Shun away from secrecy. Know your donor and what e/she has given or contributed for the business of the church. This will enable the pastor to provide appropriate leadership to the church entrusted into his/her care.
21. Study the people in your care. More knowledge is equal to better decisions. Not all the wealthy men/women may contribute or give commensurate to the financial ranks. Sometimes those you consider as 'no bodies' in terms of financial power contribute more than the big financial gurus and are more trustworthy
22. Plan giving and endowment policies and document them.

The role of the Church and its institutions in the community whose members are spiritually, socially and economically challenged

Due to naivety, for some time passed, African Churches saw development as a secular process. The present African church seeks to hold humane and spiritual values underpin social, political and

economic development. There is a need for sustainable development in today's society for a better life. It will enhance economic development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability as seen by Sachs 2015. The church as an NGO action can target skills development, scholarships to universities and even community mobilization.

The Church and its institutions should help the community members who have challenges in spiritual, social and economical in the following programmes as outlined by Kairiuki 2018:

- ✓ Putting together financial resources for economic development
- ✓ Broaden and share research information with Governments and institutions like world bank on the voices of the poor
- ✓ Collaborate with other organization-charity and non-profit marking
- ✓ Involvement in human rights advocacy
- ✓ Develop the community both socially and economically
- ✓ Education
 - Support entrepreneurship by developing a smart educational ideas that benefits the whole community
 - Job training provision for the youths
 - Provision of library facilities
 - Provide scholarship for the less privilege
- ✓ Teaches health education
- ✓ Promote small scale farming training and other related actions on health, spiritual well being, social and family life
 - The church creates opportunities and instilling moral values through material and information distribution
 - Engages in projects like housing, hostels etc
- ✓ Community empowerment livelihood.
 - Provision and running of micro-finance project facility that will encourage entrepreneurship and thereby creating small business in the community that boast employment. Those who cannot afford loans fro conventional banks will get loan from such facility.

Organize seminars together with partner organization to promote Small scale farming training and other related activities to combat food security.

Conclusion: It is therefore mandatory for the church as religious institution, government institution, economic institution and the family to work together in synergy for a better self-sustainable society. This can only be achieved when the spiritual, socio-economic and environments are managed holistically.

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