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## Assessment of Socio-Economic and Spiritual Benefits of Moratorium within the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Nyeri and Kirinyaga Counties, Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

The growth of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) is based on Jitegemea (Self-sufficient) principle which entails the three self's which are self-reliance, self-consciousness and self-determination. This Jitegemea principle was birthed by the moratorium call on western missionaries and funds in Africa as brought out by John Gatu through whom the church considered itself mature enough to determine its own destiny. This paper therefore assesses the practical benefits of moratorium within the PCEA in Nyeri and Kirinyaga Counties in Kenya. The study adopted both descriptive and inferential research designs. This study was guided by Henry Venns Theory of a self-sufficient, self-governing and self-propagating church. The target population consisted of all the 13,180 members, 418 elders and 20 parish ministers. Yamane's formula of 10% was used to select a sample comprising of 99 full members, 80 elders and 11 parish ministers yielding to a sample size of 190 respondents. Simple Random Sampling procedure was used to select the church elders and the members. The Parish Ministers were selected through purposive sampling. Data for this study was collected using questionnaires and interview guides that were administered to the respondents. The data showed that there were several Spiritual and financial benefits that the PCEA reaped from the call for moratorium on support from churches of the west. There were also some recommendations that were made in light of the findings and discussion of the study.

**Keywords:** Moratorium, Jitegemea (self-sufficient), Presbyterian, Missionaries, Support.

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### 1. Introduction

Moratorium on missionaries is basically a call for temporary withdrawal of all activities on the part of missionary personnel as well as cessation of financial assistance brought to the African churches

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from Europe and North America. In the PCEA, it is the taking of full responsibility for the work of the church in their own country and a self-giving commitment to support it and its mission. The moratorium call was well articulated by the Very Reverend Dr. John Gatu, the then Secretary General of the PCEA. He led the church to issue the famous moratorium on foreign missionaries and funds in 1971. According to Sundkler & Seed,(2000) the proposal for a moratorium was to help the younger churches find their own identity and feet. At first Africans had a popular belief that people and the nations needed to be served with the gospel by co-operating with the western personnel. Gatu therefore wished the church of Africa to go forward but felt that it could not do so because the missionaries were a stumbling block to its development. He felt that with their withdrawal, the church of Africa could regain her identity and give room for self-sufficiency and future development. Further, the other churches from the globe could emulate the same.

Gatu (2016) highlights that Cannon Burgess Carr dates the beginning of the modern call for a moratorium to 1961 when the international Missionaries council became integrated in the World Council of Churches (WCC) at their assembly which took place in New Delhi. Later at the Mexico assembly, the concept was most clearly articulated in the assembly's theme "mission on all six continents". Carr further highlighted the significance of this theme as to create awareness that mission work must be reciprocal and mutual but not one sided Gatu further articulated on a call for moratorium. The overseas bodies reacted to the moratorium call differently but Uka (1989) summarizes the feelings of some critics like Johannes Verkuyl who felt that the attention should not be a moratorium but the task which still remains to be done. This expressed the strong feeling of the westerners that they still had a lot to do in common with the Africans because the task of evangelization everywhere was unfinished. Gatu (2016) highlights that the proposal for a moratorium was for the church to have its own identity and feet. Reese, (2013) mentioned the four major issues highlighted by Gatu in the international congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne. These were the need for selfhood and self-reliance of the church that emerged on the mission field that may or may not be desired by the church, the supervision of such institutions and resources to sustain them. The other two were the uncertain relationship that existed between sending and receiving churches and the need for the national church to take responsibility for mission with its own resources and its own people (Reese, 2013). After other various presentations of documents to bodies like the WCC, PCEA (Presbyterian Church of East Africa) took responsibility for mission with its own resources and adopted the Jitegemea policy which means to be self-sufficient according to (Miano, 2008). As a concept, it now means a movement towards self-reliance thus being self-propagating, self-governing and self-sufficient.

## **2. Contextual understanding of moratorium in PCEA church**

Gatu is of view that the local church should adopt moratorium and within four decades he challenged a meeting in Milwaukee in 1971 asking the moratorium on foreign missionaries and funding. The PCEA implemented strategies for self-reliance for remarkable and recommended success which was seen as contextual understanding of moratorium. Hastings, (1979) supports this as he cites that foreign missionaries became essentially redundant during the 1970s because most churches in Africa had a large number of local ministries. According to Schwartz, (1991), the church further trained its parishioners with the idea of Jitegemea. The PCEA in Nyeri and Kirinyaga counties has strongly embraced Jitegemea and are major beneficiaries of the outcomes of the call for selfhood. Due to this spirit of Jitegemea the members are allowed to exploit their full potential and are only assisted on issues that they are completely unable to do on their own. Hanciles, (2013) supports that the donors should not be possessed with the attitude of doing everything for the Africa Churches. The major benefit that members in their churches reap from the moratorium is that they strive to achieve full participation in the mission of the church in terms of time, talent and treasure. The Jitegemea model was validated by non-other than the PCEA members without western aid. The movement of self-reliance empowers the church to put in place structures to ensure that the church continue to carry out mission work financially as others go out to evangelize. In place of projects that were funded by the missionaries, the PCEA has encouraged its members to find solutions to economic and social dependency and this has led the churches to undertaking various projects without being supported financially.

### **3. Statement of the problem**

In the early 1970s Africa presented a new challenge to mission relationship between African and Western Christians. The Africa Churches challenged the Western Missionaries to retreat from the mission field so that the relationship between the partners could come to an end for a period of time. This was mainly because the traditional relationship that had bound African and Western Christians was viewed by the Africans as a stumbling block to existing missionary endeavor. The proposal was only a moratorium on Western missionaries and funds. This call birthed the principle of self-reliance in the PCEA; where by the Church encouraged the members in their congregations to be self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing. The three self's principles was embraced by members resulting to several benefits. This article seeks to assess the practical benefits that the PCEA in Nyeri and Kirinyaga counties reap as a result of the call for moratorium which led the missionaries to leave the church to be self-reliant in its mission activities and funding.

### **4. Objectives of the study**

The purpose of this article was to assess the practical benefits of the moratorium within the PCEA in Nyeri and Kirinyaga counties, Kenya. The study sought to assess the benefits of moratorium to the PCEA in Nyeri and Kirinyaga counties, Kenya. The study was guided by the following objectives:-

- i) To assess how the PCEA benefits spiritually as a result of a call for moratorium.
- ii) To analyse the financial benefits of the PCEA after the call for moratorium.
- iii) To evaluate the governance of PCEA after the call for moratorium.

### **5. Justification of the study**

The call in 1971 for a moratorium on missionaries and mission funding from the West for a period of five years came from the so called majority world. This means that the Africans were yearning for self-reliance. They were feeling that they wanted to grow. The movement gained popularity across the Africa Church thus exposing their desire to be self-supporting self-propagating and self-governing. The PCEA benefited from several benefits out of the call for moratorium. This article therefore assessed the practical benefits that the PCEA in Nyeri and Kirinyaga Counties reaped as a result of the call for a moratorium.

### **6. Theoretical framework**

The study adopted a theoretical framework based on Henry Venns theory of the three self's which are self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating Wilbert (1981). It is relevant to this study because the PCEA being one of the Africa churches adopted it. This enabled it to achieve financial independence perceived to be the foundation of the integrity of any church in the world. In Kirimara West Presbytery which cuts across Nyeri and Kirinyaga Counties of Kenya, members express their commitment to practicing the three self's through the spiritual, social-economic activities and in the church administration exercised through its governance in Parish Sessions, Presbyteries, Regional Councils and the General Assembly.

### **7. Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design allowed investigations in to the data presented by the three datasets that were used for analysis. The study was carried out among the PCEA members in Kirimara West Presbytery which cuts across Nyeri and Kirinyaga counties of Kenya. According 16T (A church archival document) entitled Kirimara West Presbytery report to the 22nd General Assembly April 2018, the target population consisted of 13,181, members 418, elders and 13 Parish Ministers. A representative sample of respondents was selected using Yamane's formula of 10%. This resulted to a sample comprising of 99 members, 80 elders and 11 parish ministers totaling to 190 respondents. Simple random and purposive sampling was used to select the members, elders and Parish Ministers respectively.

Data for this study was collected using questionnaires which were used to collect information from the members and elders. An interview guide was also used to interview the Parish Ministers. Validity was ensured through presenting the instruments to post graduate supervisors.

## 8. Research findings and discussion

### 8.1 Socio-economic and Spiritual benefits of the moratorium to the PCEA in Nyeri and Kirinyaga Counties in Kenya.

In relation to the Socio-economic activities the study assessed the benefits that the moratorium had on the PCEA in Nyeri and Kirinyaga Counties in Kenya. Benefits identified are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

*Benefits of the moratorium to the PCEA in Nyeri and Kirinyaga Counties*

	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Total
<b>Financial Freedom</b>						
No	0	2	2	7	3	14
Yes	26	8	6	35	10	85
<b>More Membership</b>						
No	6	5	2	11	6	30
Yes	20	5	6	31	7	69
<b>Regular visits</b>						
No	7	0	2	7	3	19
Yes	19	10	6	35	10	80
<b>Gender equality in Service</b>						
No	2	1	2	4	5	14
Yes	24	9	6	38	8	85
<b>Funds build Projects</b>						
No	5	4	1	13	7	30
Yes	21	6	7	29	6	69

From the Table above, 69 out of 99 (69%) respondents revealed that there was an increase in the membership of the church. The church develops spiritually by being involved in evangelism, discipleship and equipping men for ministry. Also recruitment and commissioning of members to serve in the church has seen men grow spiritually with a good transition to church leadership as deacons and elders. These support the parish ministers and evangelists in carrying out daily church activities and thus reaching the members through the gospel, fellowships, social and charity work giving every member an identity. Gatu (2016) cites self-propagating as one of the three self's. The PCEA using the resources that they contribute in the congregations' respond to the new direction of self-propagation by effective mission work. They organize for missions to reach the "unreached" with the gospel. This is called the "Nendeni" (go ye therefore) mission as coined by Gatu, from Mathew 28:29...'Go ye therefore... It is through this that the Christians participate in noble work of evangelization. In PCEA the responsibility of carrying out mission to the areas that PCEA Churches are not yet well established and door to door witnessing has been taken over by the local church members under the evangelism team. Some contribute to the mission work financially as others go out to evangelize.

In relation to regular visits, 80 out of 99 (80%) agreed that the Parish Minister is able to visit the local churches and the PCEA sponsored schools regularly and the visits are focused on strengthening of the members and also performing church ceremonies and ordinances. This finding conforms with Muita (2003) who states that the church cannot confine itself solely to the preaching of the word and the administration of purely religious ordinances but also help the church undertakes educational, medical and charitable work. This is aimed at promoting mental, physical and moral welfare of the whole community.

Regarding gender equality in services, 85 out of 99 (85%) agreed that women serve in the church equally with men. The work is thus done by all together as guided by the model of Jesus Christ whereby in Mathew 10, he gave his disciples authority to do what was expected of them as at that moment. This demonstrated that Christians have divine responsibilities which they are to independently do but his presence is always with them to do for them what they cannot do according to (Mathew 23:28b). Waweru (2011) highlights the concern of women and their role in the church from as early as 90's since by 1989, women formed what came to be called 'the circle of concerned African Women Theologians' who initiated the institute of African women in Religion and culture and met regionally from 1989 to 1996. They sought to engage in church activities and give support to existing church projects. This is no exception in PCEA in Nyeri and Kirinyaga counties where women serve as Parish Ministers, and elders. Both men elders serve in the Church with the women elders under the same capacity. They play a major role in their church groups as elders, deaconesses, woman's Guild among other capacities that they serve in making a real claim to be involved in ministry.

At the Parish level, mission and evangelism activities take place and both men and women participate fully. These have women who are chosen as leaders in charge of the Church groups. The data on preference of PCEA women to serve equally as the men heeds to Schussler Fiorenza's (1983) clarion call for a reconstruction of the history of early Christianity to include women's visibility and contributions in the Church affairs. This goes along with the major concern that Jesus had for the women as recorded in the Gospel of John but which patriarchal interpretations have often ignored. This leads to women being isolated in many activities in the church and society in a big way. Ngewa (2003) as quoted by Waweru, (2011) cites a concern and asks "What are the reasons behind the African's church leadership's sometimes negative attitude towards women? He further highlights the great spiritual potential among women in the society who once they have accepted the gospel have the capacity to turn around and improve the world.

## **8.2 Moratorium and socio-economic benefits in PCEA in Nyeri and Kirinyaga Counties**

In relation to the financial benefits of the PCEA in Nyeri and Kirinyaga 66 out of 99 (66%) respondents felt that money assigned to their churches to pay annually was very high. In this case, 85 out of 99 (85%) respondents appreciated that the local church and the parishes have freedom to carry out its financial activities. This encourages the principle of self-reliance thus enabling the members to meet the local expenses of the church as well as have finance to enable them to participate in the mission of the church. Gatu, (2016) asserts that the church must be free from excessive dependency so that it can develop proper structures for an authentic life. The church through its various church groups like youth, Woman's guild, PCMF (Presbyterian Church Men Fellowship) and church school has various weeks in the course of the year to collect funds. They also after paying the parish maintenance fund come up with their own project within the church or in the community and fund it. Jointly they undertake larger projects which includes purchasing of plots and constructing of rental houses, purchasing of church instruments, construction of church walls, gates and water reservoirs were evident an indication of self-reliance. These findings are in line with Gatu, (2016) who stated that the idea of self-sufficiency was not new to the PCEA as in 1937, Rev. Knapp had urged PCEA church leaders to work towards a truly indigenous and self-supporting native church.

In addition, some local churches have started preprimary and primary schools as income generating projects to help them raise church funds other than begging from donors.

## **8.3 Moratorium and Self-governance in the PCEA in Nyeri and Kirinyaga Counties**

Self-governing as one of the three selves principles of Henry Venn and Further strengthened by Gatu in the call for Moratorium is highly embraced by the PCEA in Nyeri and Kirinyaga Counties. The PCEA is self-governing and works with a structure because it is court-led rather than Episcopal. PCEA has three courts; the Kirk session, the Presbytery and the General Assembly that are backed by various committees. There is a moderator within the courts moderating their minds, giving information and tapping people's wisdom before making decisions (Gatu, 2016). The parish ministers are in charge of the congregation. Every court of the church is empowered to give full mandate and to exercise full leadership and decisions both pastoral and on investments without interference from the other court.

The higher court can come to work with the lower court to ensure that things run smoothly but when the emerging issues are solved, then they are left to govern themselves.

This promotes a peaceful and harmonious interaction among the member churches. This is because way down from the general assembly to the local churches there is no one court that can usurp the other authority and neither can the parish minister of a higher court dictate to a lower one and this again enhances justice and order (Muita, 2003).

In Nyeri and Kirinyaga Counties, the PCEA fully embraces the structure of the leadership and have the parish ministers who regularly visits the local churches as 80% of members cited as a result of a call for moratorium. The district fellowships that take place in members' homes are under ordained elders' ad they are in charge of 10 to 13 homes assisted by the deacons. This has led to an increase in membership as 69% felt that the PCEA members increase as a result of the self-hood of their church. The local church groups like Youth, Woman's guild, Men Fellowship and church schools have elected leaders and also operate under the patrons who are also ordained elders.

It is in this spirit that Muita (2013) concludes by highlighting that the Presbyterian Church is a church of order and discipline and must remain so in her worship and all other activities. He further encourages members that this can be achieved if we constantly remember and keep to that in which we believe and put in to use the laid down procedures and practices of our church.

## 9. Conclusion

The study assessed socio-economic and spiritual benefits of moratorium within the Presbyterian church of East Africa in Nyeri and Kirinyaga Counties, Kenya. It established that financial freedom, more membership, gender equality in service and the Church projects are too beneficial attributes since they contribute immensely to self-reliance, self-consciousness and self-determination of the church. Therefore, members, church elders and parish ministers should embrace and put in to practice the socio –economic and spiritual benefits of moratorium for the stability, integrity, independence and smooth running of the local, regional and global churches to avoid unnecessary conflicts.

## 10. Recommendations and policy implications

From the findings, the study recommends the following:

- i. The PCEA church should empower members to serve in the church through regular training on how to carry out mission work and evangelization. This is geared towards maximum reaping of spiritual benefits and growth of members.
- ii. The local churches are encouraged to raise their own funds as a pull towards stewardship without the help from the west. This is through carrying out short term projects like farming to long term projects like starting schools, dispensaries, buying vehicles for hire or also building rental houses. Starting of well thought out construction projects and purchasing of church items according to needs and priorities would save a lot of church funds leading to less borrowing.
- iii. Leadership training for all the church leaders from the congregations to the general assembly is encouraged. The leaders should embrace servant leadership, humility, integrity, love, courage and teamwork to enhance smooth church governance. The practice and procedure which is the constitution of the PCEA should be well outlined to address emerging needs within and outside church governance.
- iv. The Church administration should formulate policies to aid in decision making for the spiritual wellbeing of its members and also for proper church governance in the hierarchy from general assembly to the local churches.

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