

**THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CLERGY IN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF
THE CHRISTIANS IN THE DIOCESE OF MA'DIWEST-NILE**

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Declaration

I, Munduru Hellen, declare that this is my own work and it has not been submitted to any other institution for academic award.


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Date: 11/08/2025

Approval.

I hereby attest that this work has been under my supervision

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the significant and relevant contributions of the clergy in economic empowerment of the Christians in the diocese of Ma'di west-Nile where the Clergy play a very vital role in the economic empowerment of the Christians they lead. Use of desk research approach is implored with limited interviews to explore relevant information. A Biblical concept of empowerment is discussed based on both Old and New Testament Literatures. Then comprehensive discussion of the activities and contributions the Clergy make towards the Economic Empowerment of the Christians in Diocese of Ma'di-WestNile is looked at which among others include; leadership development, educational and training programs, organizing vocational training, personal growth and development, community services and outreaches. The thesis also looks at the challenges the clergy encounter while contributing to the economic empowerment of the Christians which include; lack of clergy expertise, resistance to change, socio-economic disparities and religious opposition. We then have conclusion and recommendations like; inclusive approach, advocacy and awareness, capacity building and community engagement. Lastly we have the Bibliography.

1. Thesis statement

The clergy are known for vital contributions as their role they play in economic empowerment given to Christians in ways such as developing communities, financial or economic growth, moral uprightness, educative ventures, whereas self-reliance is built, and holistic establishment of the church as a community despite the alarming crisis.

2. Introduction

Despite all plans established and efforts made in the Diocese of, Ma'di West Nile, the majority of the Christians in the community have remained un-empowered economically, with over-whelming poverty-stricken conditions, and mostly having one meal a day. More so, they have inadequate health facilities, poor level of participation in church offertory, lowest payment of church clerics, and lay readers who are termed to be dependent on Christians and the church offertory. The common use of old instruments, and at time completely no use of instruments in the church causing migration in high level of main stream Christians to born again churches, and lack of proper accommodation for the church leaders, and low education level of the community members, with most churches under trees as well as grass thatched. Accordingly, the church of Uganda, (2016) Strategic Focus Vision 2025, "Socio -Economic Focus "mainly on increased church of Uganda infrastructure (spiritual, social and economic) by at least 25% over the period; ensure that Church of Uganda has ownership and full control over its educational, health, and other facilities; church generates funds locally; there is effective environmental management". Can the clergy do something and make contribution about the alarming situation?

It is therefore on this ground that the reflection is prompted, and seeks to examine the mandatory contributions of the clergy in economic empowerment of the Christians in the diocese of Ma'di West- Nile today.

2.1 The purpose of the study

The reflection is intended to investigate the significant and relevant contributions of the clergy in relation to their mandate to oversee the body of Christ as the focal point representative of the Lord Jesus in the ministry area. The clergy are expected to engage responsibly when under taking the holistic ministry to lead the flock into the kingdom of God, with full knowledge of the needs of their Christians, both seen and unseen focusing

to establish self-sustained, economically empowered, spiritually nurtured and intellectually enlightened more socially developed Christians in the contemporary church.

2.2. Method

The Use of desk research approach with limited interviews exploring relevant information from internet, different resource books, published and unpublished materials, where this reflection gathers the relevant data to do the work.

To start with, the reflection surveyed the deteriorating condition in holistic ministry embedded with negative perception about the clergy in relation to transformation, and economic empowerment in development of the church members, and the community.

3.1. Concept of Empowerment in Biblical Literature

By the term “empowerment” advanced learner’s dictionary 2005, refers to as “to give somebody authority or power to execute one’s duties, to give someone more control over their own situation or life style.

According to Loren L. Fenton, 2015 “empowerment” is a ‘buzzword in business and management cycle’, but his true empowerment in church setting refers to every given resources, knowledge, and authority to congregants to perform relevant duties.

The term empowerment biblically is strongly attributed to the specific themes of spiritual power, and strength, justice that promote fairness in judgment and treatment given to people, and liberating the captives. Specific teachings, different avenues applied to strengthen, create provision, and narratives, reflect empowerment of individuals as well as communities regarding scriptural writings in the entire bible. Therefore, this is a section of reflection that attempts to examine the basis for pastoral contribution and response to church as community wellbeing.

Empowerment through Liberation and Exodus: This great action of setting the people of God free after ill treatment from a hostile nation. The episode of Israel’s exodus liberating them from slavery from the hands of Egyptians cruelty narrates great delivery and empowerment and freedom of the captives. Yahweh, ruling over the oppression and captivity while pursuing human dignity being the promoter of self-determination by giving hope and salvation to the people (Exodus Chapter. 13 and14). Similarly, children of God were promised restoration accordingly, the contemporaries are oppressed and imprisoned

by the world's odds of finances, drugs, hostile cultural practices, and other nations causing slavery, and cruelty in the communities where large population of youth are on drugs, families, and church from which people need interventions but not much attention is paid to liberate them.

Prophecies Advocating Justice for Marginalized people: God the creator and sustainer is consistently watching over his creation and is remembering the people from their suffering. The Old Testament highlights against harsh treatment, and oppression to the marginalized people advocating for their fair treatment to empower them (Isaiah 58:6-7, Exodus 14). Re-premending leadership for their social injustice and the oppressive governing systems rather to empower the people by breaking the chain of bondage and advocate for equal opportunities to the inclusiveness of the society Isaiah 1:17 promoting fair treatment of the society, as in Amos 3:12-15. This calls for the clergy to read the word in the lense of God looking out to serve a whole person understanding circumstances under which people operate chance stand to defend and speak out about social injustice, harsh policies of the government like the recent "Uganda's marriage bill, 2024 and legalizing polygamy among others" and Church of Uganda Provincial leadership stood up to no. The poor, women and children are the most marginalized, and the political prisoners are crying for justice. "Women activists have asked the parliament to discourage polygamy while processing marriage bill", (5 Feb 2025). This being a national issue has attracted several organization among the Church of Uganda, otherwise at local level this would be neglected.

The Ministry of Jesus Christ: Jesus in his ministry, embarked on threefold ministry of preaching, teaching and healing hence holistic empowerment. The ministry of Jesus in New Testament was inclusively an act of empowering all categories of humanity reflecting on well-being and sustainability by establishing the Kingdom of God Mark (8:1-8, 22-25). Today, preaching mostly takes place in the Sunday services which is once in a week, or burial services, and ceremonial as such. If it comes to teaching programs as Jesus commanded his followers, this is not effected sufficiently to hold several teachings on different aspects in life including biblical principles of finances, resource mobilization, and retreat which is only done for couples who have opportunity for church marriage and are able to wed. However, few churches struggle to do teachings especially to the children, youth, and women through conferences that are done once in a while or a year. On the issue of healing ministry Jesus mandated, most church leaders consider healing from

demonic attacks also forgetting oppression, trauma, relationships and family life that need total healing for better transformed wellbeing.

Pauline Concept of Empowerment: The Letter Apostle Paul wrote to Philippians 4:13 affirm the absolute empowerment drawn from Christ who strengthens humanity *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”*. This is attitudinal and takes mastered seed like faith, Ideal to an empowered person who remains determined by the Holy Spirit enriched with unweaving ability to meet the odds of life navigating stability. In light of the St. Matthew 25:13-16, humanity as the hand and feet of Jesus to carry out the Lord’s ministry to be the light and salt of the world to be a transformed person to transform others and the community as well. This is disappointing that we the followers of Christ Jesus are not doing what we are mandated to do mistering to a whole person, we so much interest on the spiritual growth neglecting other aspects.

The Old Testament Prophecy concerning Justice: Accordingly, Social injustice has been the key prophetic Hebrew concern hailed against the marginalized, poor and disadvantaged. The call to empower them was through the systems that were oppressive in the society where harsh treatment of the poor and to advocate for equal and fair opportunities and fairness to all members in the community as recorded *“to learn to do the right things, seeing justice, defend the most oppressed. These are the fatherless, to plead for the case of the widow”* in (Isaiah 1:17,58:1-6).

3.2 Old Testament Concept of Empowerment

The Old Testament concept of empowerment seeks to examine critically the response as drawn and reflected deeply in specific themes of divine intervention, liberation and advocate for fairness in the society. This may not necessarily capture the term *“empowerment”* vividly to view the concept broadly. Meanwhile the narratives and principles in the Old Testament portray explicitly the concepts of Gods’ empowerment of the people through ministry entrusted to leaders such as Moses, Joshua, Abraham among others (Exodus 3:7-10, Psalm 146:6-9, Joshua 1:1-9).

Divine Wisdom and Knowledge: Hosea 4:6 says *“my people perish because of lack of knowledge”* The Old Testament records and values knowledge wisdom that embrace empowerment particularly, the writings in the books of wisdom literature Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes capitalizing on the guidance of practicability in life. Whereas (Proverbs 4:4-

7ff) describes understanding, wisdom, knowledge if acquired will honor you, make you rich, and gain favor that navigates success and guidance while facing lives challenges to live uprightly.

The Covenant Relationship: Relationship building enhances flow of services and efficient communication at all levels. The sacred agreement or promise between God and his people essentially establishes and deepens commitment and relation with God the creator. God's covenant relationship begins right from the Old Testament gyred towards empowering the people making promises of protection, blessing, provision, and salvation. The scripture says, in Deuteronomy 7:9; Genesis 12:1-3) as recorded, covenant relationship enhances empowerment to the people in the third and fourth generations to come that should be lasting blessing. This covenant relationship to the Israel got fulfilled through obedience to live as chosen and empowerment people, and this applies to us calling for obedience to God to sustain the promised blessing.

Authority and courage in Leadership: Everything rises and falls on the leader. As such the art of leadership seen in the Old Testament has been critical in God's strategy filling them with the Holy Spirit empowering and positioning Gideon, Deborah, Moses, Joshua, Solomon, Nehemiah to mention a few during periods of specific assignments. God empowered them with the very reason of giving guidance, deliverance, fairness and to ensure Israelites governance with divine intervention. *"Let everyone be determined and courageous as the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God to constantly observe the commands of God to succeed. (Joshua 1:1-9), "Have confidence in your leaders and submit to the guiding principle and authority set by God, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, sharing roles so as not to over burden, and wear out yourself, for that would be of no benefit to you", (Exodus 18:1-24. God bestowed divine authority over the chosen leaders to the assignment entrusted to them.*

3.3 New Testament Concept of Empowerment

The New Testament concept of empowerment under central theme figured in the actions, narratives, and teachings of Lord Jesus Christ during his three years' ministry among the

community impacting the people both Christians and the outcasts. The New Testament has broad view engagement in holistic, and inclusion of Kingdom expansion.

Empowerment through Faith: Jesus in his ministry focused on empowering every individual but not walking with crowd over shadowing individuals. He touched peoples' lives by introducing faith as basis of empowerment to experience miraculous manifestation and receive blessings of God. Jesus assured people he healed, that "*your faith has made you well*" (Mark 10:52; Matthew 9:22), and the woman who bled for 38 years (Mark 5:25-34), the individual encounter with Christ portrays the connection between their faith and the empowerment demonstrated through transformative power of faith in redeemer Christ.

Empowerment in Jesus' Ministry to the vulnerable: The ministry of Christ Jesus embarked on empowering the vulnerable, oppressed and marginalize in the community. "*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor*" (Luke 4:18-29). This is typical act of demonstrating God's wonder working power through miracles performed, healing the sick, demon possessed, forgiving sins, and feeding the hungry. People encountered forgiveness, transformation and spiritual liberation in the acts of empowerment. The contemporary clergy are at the forefront in carrying Jesus' ministry to impact lives in the communities to proclaim recovery of sight, freedom for the captives and oppressed and to restore their hope to rebuild them.

Empowerment of Community: According to the recordings of Matthew 25:34-36, 40, it is the text that summarizes the concern Jesus gave as the last instruction to his loved disciples. He remarked the fact that, in later time of the final judgment, the only righteous standard by which a true Christian's faith will be measured is the work of compassion one had done or not done during lifetime towards the vulnerable Christian brethren to support them, that builds good relationship within self, and others transformation.

Jesus had set an example of empowering the less disadvantaged and privileged ones throughout his earthly ministry. He loves them like a brother that is why whatever was done to the needy, whether good or bad was regarded as a direct service to Christ. Jesus teaching on Values of Kingdom, and Christ Jesus capitalized on the Kingdom of God embracing the values focused on empowering the community for equity and fairness.

Christians must love and care for those in need to affirm their faith (Mt. 12:33-37), otherwise their faith is in vain without. This was done through kingdom values advocating for social wellbeing such as compassion, love, and justice that challenged traditional values and norms that deprive the society and are oppressive to the kingdom of God.

3.4 The contribution of the clergy in economic empowerment of the Christian in Diocese of Ma'di West- Nile

The activities clergy can contribute as their role in empowering Christians economically

With the understanding that God did not only champion and cares for the poor in a very special way both in Old and New Testament, but also call us into partnership, this section seeks to discuss various roles pastors have to play to empower the church members. When you are sent to a church as pastor, what will be your respond to those persons who have just lost jobs or farms or businesses, the long-time unemployed, the financial problems of persons and families and even whole communities where there is unemployment, persons and families who are evicted from their homes, the poor and the hungry are enormous.

In such situation, a pastor should guide against falling into two common extreme teachings on this subject propounded by some liberals and evangelicals. In talking about the church's relationship with poverty, it should be noted that prosperity teachings by liberals has caused more problems to the poor than good as rightly observed by Walter Kaiser that, Walter Kaiser, (2015),

The poor have suffered due to those in the church who without warrant preach the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel, incorrectly stating that God wants everyone to be equally rich. Proclaiming this false gospel turns out to be a get-rich-quick scheme for those who lead the movement while the benefits rarely - if ever - reach those at the bottom of the pile, and this is done in the name of the Almighty!

On the other hand, the church stood at the forefront of giving freely to the poor, caring for widows, and taking in destitute orphans, visiting the sick, and caring for the dying. Despite this long and often- appreciated legacy of support for the poor and the needy, the evangelical church ceased or slowed to provide such ministry in the years that followed 1925. This was probably due to the emphasis on the "social or feel good gospel" (Switzer, 1969.p.17) in liberal theology. S.S.D. K. Switzer (1989), Tongam Sihol Naban, (2017)

observed various structural problems are unresolved adequately particularly the social and economic life. Considering this as a matter of fact the church must have sensitivity and a strong commitment to encourage serious cooperation of significant parties that can take priority to empower the poor congregation. The people are raised, and empowered to pursue their own welfare and individual economic business. According to Naaban (2017), any success of the congregation depends and lies on the motivation and orientation of the actors themselves for which the church is expected to seriously engage the fight.

Derek Jacob, (2009) opens up with the question *“So what can the Christian community do? Are we to sit a long side of life and hope then economy will get better on its own without any help from the church? No, we must act with emergency and work together as the church of Jesus Christ to provide ministries that empower people to empower their communities”*. Further he says, a healthy economy is one driven by person the church has empowered to give back to the community.

The “Economic empowerment and Development Ministry in reference to St. Luke Community United Methodist in Dallas, Texas, endeavors to empower people to be better. With the focus that if our people are better, the church is better, If the church is better, then the economy is better, if the economy is better, then this nation is better and if the nation is better this world is batter” (Derek Jacob, 2009). This to a greater extent is a reality of economic empowerment in all spheres of life.

The ideal situation is that Jesus’ ministry was carried both in the church wall and the outside wall into the community whose need affects the people of God within the church, so to economically empower people is to in turn cause transformation on the planet earth obviously led by the church leader the clergy.

According to Gregory J. Reed (1993), economic empowerment is having a reasonable response of the actual reality that we represent in this world witnessing the physical needs demands to be addressed.

The role of the clergy an article: careerexplorer.com by Sokanu, the clergy as (a clergy man and clergy woman) is an ordained member of the church meaning of a religious order, and conducting religious worship, performing spiritual functions associated with religious faith, and aids in the spiritual well-being of the congregation.

What the clergy do according to Jesus in Matthew 25:36, is to provide spiritual, personal and moral guidance and assistance to the church members and will offer encouragement to those facing challenges, hardship, illness, imprisoned, hospitalized, orphans and the retired, and the homeless, counsel and provision of necessities for the needy. They can well be known as the spiritual leaders in catholic, Protestant Christian, Jewish, and Islamic religions and also called priests, ministers, pastors, rabbis, and imams.

However, the following are the viable activities the clergy can undertake to consider empowerment of the Christians as the members of the church being the overseer. It comes clearly through these vital activities to engage Christians empowering them holistically.

Leadership Development: The aspect of leadership identification, mentorship, and training emerge critical to the service given to congregation with relevancies and appropriate ministry within the church communities. Findings by Wakahiu, J., & Salvaterra, M. (2012) revealed that leadership development promotes sustainable leadership initiatives, dissemination of skills through mentoring and promulgation of development. This takes provision of adequate, and appropriate training opportunities, to leaders in order to thrive in all ways of ministry that should support the individual to grow in their different capacities as called by God.

Teaching the Bible and Discipleship: Lack of knowledge subjects to perishing of the people of God “my people perish because of lack of knowledge” (Hosea 6:4). Therefore, teaching the bible comprehensively through the power of God provides discipleship helping Christians with a deep knowledge of the bible message that develops a strong foundation that is grounded in the faith and spiritual growth with the preaching, small group discussion, bible classes and reading to study be routine program. Isaiah says in chapter 11:2 that “the Spirit of the Lord rest on him the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord” to empower with intelligence. However, disciple making is key, but in practice the discipleship is not considered as a priority by clergy in the Diocese of Ma’di West Nile as they are pre-occupied with routine administration work and sacraments, burials, and ceremonies. This could start with children’s programs, youth programs and to the adults, unfortunately few clergy have the heart for children and youth ministries while others do not have time to attend children and youth activities within their parish hence missing out discipleship for very large

population. I tried this through having Christmas Carols December 2024, in the parish I was posted to known as “Assa Parish in Arua Archdeaconry, surprisingly only to discover the number of children in the church is over six hundreds of age between 3years - 13 years old. This gave me to train teachers and launch children service on 12thFeb, 2025 immediately, and the service is vibrant now with over seven hundred children who never had a service, and you wonder where the children had been. This opens the mind to introduce other programs for the children to grow and disciple them within the church and they celebrated Easter Party with sweets and cake prepared for them this April 2025 to keep them loving the church.

Educational and Training Programs: Deliberate effort to organize trainings, workshops, and seminars on vocational skills, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship with topic of economic empowerment that are relevant to give knowledge and understanding to members of the church. Most importantly the increasing productivity in their level of organization, and quality of life the communities can release as transformation occurs. The greatest impact of sustainable initiatives, lessons and implications of a specific leadership development program is providing insights on ways to engage and encourage leadership competencies (Wakahiu, J., &Salvaterra, M. 2012). In a similar way, Jesus gave mandate to teach, preach and heal in Matt. 28:19, but in practice you will find most church clerics tend to neglect teaching and has caused church members needs to be neglected as well.

Organize Vocational Training Education: Nken Jacob et al., 2015, encourages the clergy from time to time, be innovative in the church to organize vocational training particularly for majority students who are on vacation to get them meaningfully engaged which most churches do not practice and the youth are neglected and forgotten more so blamed. This is worth mentioning from the early age to mature with transformed mind and developing their talent to empower them. Taking advantage of holidays is sowing the best seed where the unsuccessful ones can build on the skills acquired.

Nken, et.al., 2015, further states that, the acquired vocational skills development teaches members of church different skills like bead making, waving, knitting, maintenance of generators, photography/ video production, cake and confectionery making to mention a few. The church extent this scheme of foods staff, clothes, kitchen ware and shoes to any and every other needy member whether of the church congregation or not. The clergy can

opt for the church to establish a foundation to operate orphanage and street gays, and women rehabilitation centre to impart vocational skills and education at any level (Nken Jacob et.al, 2015).

Pastoral Counseling and Formation: Organizing opportunities by the clergy to offer counseling services to church members with different challenges in support to their spiritual growth. The one-on-one discussion initiative provides a deeper understanding of one's problem faced due to crisis in life. This experience gives closer opportunity getting to the roots of a person heart and time to address meaningfully issues of life. Pastoral counseling helps to address individual issues that are not looked into publicly. And if the person's problem includes livelihood issues they can be encouraged to join some income generating ventures to support their needs besides spiritual growth to sustain their faith.

This is referred to by Ameyaw, 1996, as the great challenge to the churches mostly situated in the developing countries. Where the Christian members in developing countries such as Ghana are unemployed and fall within the low-income bracket. Whereas for such Christians membership to contribute to support their church, there must be a life changing program to improve members' standard of living and their contributions and commitment to the church for sustainable growth. Thus, positioning the church in Ghana to a of self-reliant and self-supporting state which is not a matter to motivate members to sacrifice and give, but a way of how to empower them individually, and as a family to earn in order to sacrifice and give. It is prudent that establishment of church-facilitated and church supervised small-scale income-generating programs by the lay members of the SDA Church in Ghana plays a great role as the small-scale income generating programs (SSIGPs) are tools of empowerment, and development, and proven methodologies of empowering church people in developing countries to improve their livelihood and the standard of living in their church communities.

However, this reflection paper entails the concepts of SSIGPs from a development perspective. It uses development principles as a foundation in developing a strategy to improve the living standards of the members of the SDA Church in Ghana. It brings out the fact that economic empowerment and development principles are Bible-based and are reflected in various themes of the Bible as discussed earlier. Models used in both the Old and New Testaments to assist the poor and needy are in line with the principles of

empowerment. As a “*case study of SSIGPs of both SDA and non-SDA Church members and groups in Ghana were given to show the impact of such programs on the lives of individuals, their communities, and their churches. Based on all of the above, a strategy was developed to enhance the abilities of the members of the SDA Church in Ghana and to empower them to establish their own SSIGPs. The aim was that the church members would be able to increase their income, improve their standard of living, and contribute to making their communities and the church self-reliant and self-supporting*” (Ameyaw S.D., 1996. p.4).

Personal Growth and Development: The livelihood program is prudent that the clergy can employ to address the needs of the Christians through establishing different provisions that support personal resources for economic empowerment, development, and growth specifically to the interest of growing the Christians as individual member at household level. I personally, tried this during my opportunity to serve as the assistant vicar in the year 2018-2022, the Christians were able to make wreaths using local materials for sale, they also engaged in Urban farming where there is no large space for larger cultivation for families, and floriculture which is viable business for making wreaths with fresh flower in the town and cities. This empowers the individual Christian to raise resources to support the family and the work of God particularly Christians who are underpowered, disadvantaged, and of low class or no income, exactly what Ameyaw 1996, has labored to exemplify of the Ghanaian SDA Church and non-SDAs.

Community Services and Outreaches: Develop programs geared to providing services to the community, clergy initiating project to empower the Christians in the community enhances holistic ministry is a mystery one can contribute with great impact in developing the whole community. In my personal experience God, helped me to initiate ECD center with lots of hesitation from both the leaders and few Christians who were in doubt. But God raised top leadership to support with some Christian with whom, now a great Kindergarten stands to serve the community with subsidized cost that Christians can afford compared to other private schools hosting population of over two hundred children, and creating employment for over fifteen staff three years’ time. This has attracted outreach services from the communities, and practitioners, missions, and educational partners to help in various ventures.

On the same note, the church program can include outreach ministry in form of charity, compassion, spiritual retreats to strengthen elderly, vulnerable and disadvantaged Christians and families if different ministry strategies can be initiated to empower them to restore healthy Christian communities.

Compassion and Justice Advocacy: Most Christians are oppressed, marginalized and ignorant about their own justice and privileges. Since injustice is chiefly enforced by systems that operate within the secular arena, churches that view secular structures as outside their realm of responsibility are necessarily limited in their justice endeavors (Rock, 2016). According to Rock (2016), Justice “intends strict equity, absolute fairness, and even redress with regard to the rights of all” (p.1). The clergy have the mandate to advocate on such issues of Compassion, Equity, justice, and fair treatment of gender despite the societal norms, and practices influenced by culture, religion, politics and social setting. This can be broadly, addressed within the church community and the society particularly the spheres of system operations, and governance.

This can further culminate more on policies, and just opportunities that promote economic justice creation of awareness through community events, sermons, trainings, and educational venture.

Mobilization of Funds/ Resources: The access to resource mobilizing strategy and networks within the community, such as microfinance opportunities, job placement services, business networks, and community development programs, to help church members realize their economic potential to empower Christians and the church community.

This seems a great challenge but easier to employ. In the church setting where I was posted to be a Parish priest, during hand over, there were no resources for the Parish. I started to work in the Parish where no resources and no Parish bank Account. My family raised three hundred thousand Ugandan Shilling as seed money to start a Parish Sacco called “*AssaParish Talanto Sacco*” with an understanding to create IGA for the Parish and to empower the individual’s livelihood at household level to have enriched and empowered Christians in the church.

This was achieved through registering Christians of about three hundred members (300) who each received one thousand shillings as talent known as “*Talanito*” for a period of

fourteen days to be multiplied to in turn bring the amount picked with an interest of one thousand shillings where for the first time return three hundred thousand Ugandan shillings seed money to serve three hundred members. The second time was marked by multiplying the preceding hundreds by two as follows, 300,000= each to 300 members with an addition of one hundred each is 600,000=, and the 600,000= multiplied by two is 1,200,000=, and also multiply by two, in the third time is 2,400,000=, this went on and on with six month to release about a hundred million, with high rate of multiplying within the shortest period as capital for other projects, this raises money in a very simple manner. Through this other sustainable project are multiplied and the tent aspect continues with the entire population of the Christians. And through their soft loan is given with minimal interest to support to make them active with projects of their choice to empower them economically.

These programs support both the individual Christian and the church, you will release that, through empowerment in church and the households, many problems will be solved unknowing hence sustaining spirituality of the Christian community through economic empowerment.

Social Entrepreneurship Initiatives: The Clergy as a leader has the highest obligation to establish social entrepreneurial enterprises, and businesses that are community based. Social entrepreneurship has been defined as “a process that creates social value because of the initiative in seeking solutions to societal problems through innovative strategies that involve the combination of resources, the exploitation of opportunities for stimulating social change, the satisfaction of social needs, and the development of social goods and services” (Morris et al., 2011, as cited in Rahdari et al., 2016, p.2). This promotes economic empowerment and offers opportunities which Christians in the Church can benefit from time to time.

Collaboration and Partnership: Linkages and connections can benefit the local church greatly. Especially, there are agencies of the government the church can collaborate and establish partnership to network in the sector of business, NGO's, educational institution among other linkages. The church community greatly benefits from economic empowerment through these agencies to better livelihood of households. Unfortunately, many church leaders ignore these agencies to benefit from only capitalizing on Spiritual nourishment neglecting the economic aspect of empowering the Christians living miserable

church community, and least empowered. This is evident in our churches living most church stagnant and underpowered. At time the issue of mismanagement can also contribute negatively.

Community Development Project: A forgotten intervention in holistic ministry most clergy in the diocese of Ma'di West Nile. Whereas, the church community is faced with socio economic challenges, and can be addressed through initiating development projects for the community to mitigate their problems by participating in establishing health care centers, infrastructure and housing facilities that are affordable. If social facilities are lacking in the communities, people will struggle to access the services from a distance meaning they are not empowered and make life hard more so, to grow spiritually since their needs are not fulfilled.

The limited interviews, the reflection gathered the relevant information from active practicing pastors and the wardens who do this work within church.

There was opportunity given to church worker in diocese of Ma'di West-Nile who voluntarily gave their time and interviewed on thus matter to give their views.

According to Rev Ocima Joe Easter (2023), a chaplain in Arua Core P.T.C gave his views that, the clergy have contributed enormously to the development and empowerment of the Christians through Education, opening the understanding of people giving them knowledge to differentiate between right and wrong, good and bad, etc is great to empower the congregation lenses of seeing positively. Rev. Ocima added, that the early missionaries noticed clearly at the time when the missionaries come to establish Christianity where they introduced different crops to establish Agriculture, for food to give healthy bodies to worship God and do work in good health as we are all aware a sick person cannot work and worship God as well. Some of the crops were cash crops to cater for social economic transformation of the community.

Not only did they introduce agriculture but also establishment of infrastructural facilities like hospitals, training Schools, Vocational centers, and Schools and other institutions by Christian rural service (CRS) took a great shape in spread of Christianity which was a holistic approach to the development of the communities as Christians to grow the church.

Rev. Inzizu Betty (2022), who serves as the Children and Youth pastor in St. Philips' Church in Arua Urban Archdeaconry, in Arua city on the same note said, the Clergy are endowed with the capacity to encourage the Christians to put the word in action as James 1:17 lights that "be doers of the word not hearers alone. By this, the Christians need to exhibit hard work, which hard work will empower them and change their livelihood in the community. More so the neighbor will learn from the successful venture at the neighborhood. For example, the neighbor can start with one or two chicken that lays eggs and multiplies that grows and this success can give interest as seeing is believing.

To a greater extend I personally, bear testimony of this Rev, Inzizus' view where a Christian gave me one chicken as I write this reflection is now two years' time back I already have over 30 chicken with about seven chicken that can potentially lay eggs, on average twelve eggs and hack ten chicks. This is best for urban farming where one does not have space.

In another development, Mr. Ayibo Wilson, (2024), a teacher of Agriculture in St. Mary's Girls Secondary school, who also served as the peoples' head laity for eight years added that, accordingly, the clergy have enormous contributions to the development and empowerment of the Christians through training Christians by giving them skills, encourage church SAACOs, establish church farms for churches that have land, and this is to have investments as church not to rely only on Christian Sunday giving. The church should built partnership and linkages with other institutions, government, NGOs, and Faith Based Organizations (FBO) to develop holistic ministry.

Furthermore, Rev. Abaku,(202), Nelson a senior Pastor in charge and Parish Priest of St. Nathaniel Ewuata, in Arua Urban Archdeaconry, equally shared a similar view of what they are engaged in with the Christians where they have established SACCOS for the church at zonal level. This new parish that has been established of about five years now hasover three million each in all the three zones, totaling to about eleven million to develop the church and the Christians. Secondly, the women are doing vegetable growing in the urban farming. This is done on member's compound and they are to use sacks to plant the vegetable. The activity makes the church members busy doing good works to improve their livelihood.

According to Feeta Richard, 2024 interview, who is the finance manager in the diocese of Ma'di- WestNile, the contributions of clergy in economic empowerment of their congregation or community are numerous to transform the community.

Teaching the biblical principles of finance: The clergy can educate members on scriptural teachings related to money management, saving, and investing (Prov. 3:9-10). This can encourage entrepreneurship to Support and mentor other Christian members in starting businesses, creating jobs, and innovative ventures. As well as foster a culture of savings to plan budget, for the future since there is saved money as capital.

While providing access to resources connects members with economic opportunities, training programs, and social services. This builds responsible model stewardships among Christians to demonstrate transparency and accountability in church finances and economic justice hence advocates for fair labor practices, equitable distribution of resources, and social justice. Stabilizing economic empowerment gives great support to education and training members to acquire new skills, certifications, generosity and teaching the value of generosity, tithing, and giving to support community development.

Feeta said, the Church has the privilege to build partnerships to Collaborate with local organizations, businesses, and government agencies to create economic opportunities. This can take the presidency to offer spiritual guidance for members to connect their faith with economic decisions, promoting a sense of purpose and responsibility. And create economic empowerment programs specifically to develop initiatives like microfinance, job training, and business mentorship that are asset-based development to identify and utilize their skills, talents, and resources.

However, in implementing these strategies, the clergy can play a vital role in promoting economic empowerment and improving the financial well-being of the congregation.

4. The challenges the clergy encounter while contributing to the economic empowerment of the Christians.

Lack of Clergy Expertise: Interestingly, a fairly, high percentage of clergy may not have the ability and expertise in laying strategies to economically empower Christians to development programs that would hinder them from relevant designed activities that most shots the needs of the congregants for implement. Cloke, P., Baker, C., Sutherland, C., &

Williams, A. (2019). This is one of the hindrances that cause retardation in the diocese of Ma'di West Nile, most church leaders keep counting on developing and nurturing spirituality of the Christians not understanding the critical needs to be met. The Christians find it hard to stand the faith without being empowered as a whole person.

Resistance to Change: The main line church mostly stands for her traditional beliefs, culture, and skepticism due to fear of practice of the heresy, or avoidance of the unknown hence fails in the economic empowerment initiatives. Other clergy believe the church cannot do business and economic growth yet the ministry is demanding.

Socio-economic Disparities: The congregations in a particular church, parish, sub-parish and dioceses have different literacy level, economic power, class, understanding, etc. The disparity in economic status within the same Christian location poses challenges in decision making during establishment, and implementation various economic disparity (Dunlap, G. C. 2024).

Limitation in Resources: The resources that could be mobilized have limitations. However, there is need to establish economic empowerment programs that are finance based, where the clergy face challenges with resources, infrastructure, and ability to effectively design and implement developmental programs. The resources could promote economic empowerment to the congregation, and the community. And the clergy should guide the people by having vision to address the challenges by seeing beyond what people see (Proverbs 29:18).

Religious Opposition: In certainly the clergy face opposition from their fellow religious authorities and conservative factions within the community who view economic empowerment initiatives as conflicting with religious teaching. We have some clergy who take region showily spiritual well-being than Jesus' ministry of feeding people, healing people, and teaching people hence bias of holistic intervention.

5. Conclusion

To crown all, In the course of exploring the contributions of clergy in empowering Christians in this reflection, the following were the true findings, God didn't act like a watch maker to advocate and care for the vulnerable in Old Testament and New Testament, but mandated the authority of the church the clerics to champion and sustain. In considering

the prayer by 'Agur' as in Proverb 30:8b-9 clearly implies the presentation of biblical view of the empowerment saying *"Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'who is the Lord.' Or I may become poor and steal and so dishonor the name of my God. So the aim of the empowerment is to help people get the daily bread that is to be able to meet up with their daily needs as in our Lord's prayer"* (Mt. 6:11).

More so, over the centuries, most clergy in the churches have not sufficiently done justice to the given authority of the holistic gospel of spiritual, economic and social empowerment of a total person as a whole mandated by Jesus as preaching, teaching, and healing. Through education, advocacy, collaboration, and support, clergy can empower Christians to achieve economic self-sufficiency and contribute positively to society.

6. Recommendation

Ministry dynamic approach: Never remain static in old tradition ministry but rather need to clearly design economic empowerment initiatives to meet economic challenges ravaging the Christian communities this has to inclusively cater for benefits that are equitably addressed. The congregation of Christians always stands having all categories children, youth, disabled, women and youth being majority, and men, and both educated and uneducated who all have unique needs seeking to be released (Isa. 65).

Creating room for Advocacy and Awareness: The society needs awareness and advocacy initiative by the leadership especially in the issues related empowering Christians economically to ensure equality, and justice despite disparity since the needy are highly populated in most communities. The Christians have to take the biblical mandate of being light and salt of the world to an better through holistic ministry Matt. 25:13-16.

Building the Capacity of people: The clergy are to employ and provide demand driven programs such as trainings basically geared to principles of economic development strategies to effectively build the Christians economically in the best sustainable manner Matthew 25:14-29. People individually, and as church seek realization as created in the image of God and likeness to the various talents and authority bestowed upon them to continue the ministry.

Cultural practices and Values: The context where different practices of the community have to be studied carefully and appropriately to ensure successful activities to the need of the community and addressing their attitude towards the biblical mandate. Most leaders in the church are rigid when it comes to creating ministries accordingly. The mindset that is negative toward work, and compassion thinking charity can only be done by partners.

Involving the Community: There is need for participatory and hands on strategy where various stakeholders and partner with whom the church, and church leaders can collaborate effectively and maximum through government agencies, business, and expertise to empower church members economically particularly the clergy to take lead

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