

**THE POTENTIAL OF RURAL WOMEN IN PROMOTING
SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS SUPPORTED BY
AN APPROPRIATE THEOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT
IN KATETE CATHOLIC PARISH, MALAWI**

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**The Potential of Rural Women in Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods
Supported by an Appropriate Theology of Development in Katete
Catholic Parish, Malawi**

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of Human Sciences School of Theology and Religion University of KwaZulu Natal Pietermaritzburg, South Africa In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree Master of Theology (MTH) In Theology and Development.

Happy Patrick Mzumara

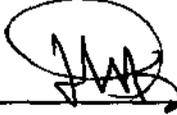
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Declaration

I hereby state that the whole DISSERTATION, except where specially indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work:

Sign:



HAPPY PATRICK MZUMARA

17th March 2005

Date

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my Loving parents, Mama Nyachirwa and Dada E. Mzumara, at Area 1 B, Luwinga, Mzuzu, Malawi. To my late sister Christine Mzumara, who encouraged me to write about the potential in rural women and was eager to see this work. May Her Soul Rest In Peace with the Loving Lord, Jesus Christ.

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Abstract

It is a duty of every person of good will in any given community and society to promote freedom and development that enhances the potential of rural women and women in general. One can only achieve this important task by firstly acknowledging that women are persons fully created in the image of God and that they are part and parcel of God's creation in all what is needed for human beings to value and appreciate healthy livelihood in the world.

Once this duty is achieved, we will fully conclude that human beings need each other in all social and economic development that helps to promote the potential that every individual has in order to build sustainable livelihoods in a community. This is a big task. This task could be facilitated if local resources, individual capacities, gifts, skills, talents and dedicated people are available in the community.

This study has pursued the sustainable livelihoods of the rural women especially those in Katete aiming at enhancing their potential. The major problem that this study has focused is that the society and church in Katete is patriarchal and has failed to give freedom to women so that they could utilize their capacities to participate in social and economic development that would accord them healthy and sustainable livelihoods.

The methodology used in order to achieve these goals out of the women of Katete Catholic Parish was through dialogue between the researcher and the women. Through theological reflections, we discovered that the women of Katete have the potential to contribute into the general livelihoods of the people of the area and the women in general. From what the study gave us, we can freely say that women have natural gifts imparted on them by God. The gifts that the women have can change the church and the society's attitude bounded by patriarchal biases against women, which perceives them as second-class citizens in participating fully in developmental agendas of the society.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABCD	Asset Based Community Development
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BBC	British Broadcasting Cooperation
CAFOD	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCAP	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
CEP	Clinical Pastoral Education
CFSC	Central For Social Concern
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JCTR	Jesuits Centre for Theological Reflections
MIC	Missionaries Immaculate Conception
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
PLWA	People Living with HIV/AIDS
SJ	Society of Jesus
SL	Sustainable Livelihoods
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations Program on AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USA	United States of America
WB	World Bank
WF	White Fathers

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Chapter One

General Introduction

1.0 The Issue

This study aims at showing that the potential of rural women, if well utilized, can enhance social and economic development in any given situation. Women have the capability of turning things around in a positive way regardless of hardships. The major set back is that male driven societies have overlooked women's potential. Many societies have come up with a stereotype that women have a limited mind in performing theological and developmental duties in society. Because of such generalization, most women have been sidelined in areas where they could perform even better than men. Most rural women of Katete Catholic Parish in Malawi have fallen into this web of thought. This has created insecurity and impinged upon social and economic sustainable livelihoods on women's right to work.

The first section of this chapter will present an overview of this study on the "potential" of rural women in promoting sustainable livelihoods supported by an appropriate theology of development in Katete Catholic Parish, Malawi. This will be followed by the background to and motivation for the study and the aims and importance of the study, namely to create a base of information that is needed in order to analyse the church's response to the situation of rural women in terms of social and economic development. We will then briefly discuss the statement of the problem followed by sub-problems. The hypothesis of the study will be stated in this section of the chapter, followed by the existing literature, theoretical framework, limitation of the study, definition of terms and the assumptions of the study. In the final section of the chapter, we will present the methodology and organisation of the study. This chapter will end with a summary and conclusion that will lead into the following chapter which will be dealing with theological vision of development, critique of development and the importance of freedom in people's lives, especially the rural women of Katete Catholic Parish, in Malawi.

1.1 Background to and Motivation for the Study

Katete is one of the Rural Catholic parishes of the Diocese of Mzuzu, in Mzimba District, Northern Region of Malawi. With the population of about 20,000, Katete remains the poorest parish in this part of the region in terms of social and economic development. The poverty of Katete affects more women than their male counterparts due to many reasons. These include the lack of appreciation of women's potential to contribute to the economic dynamism of the parish, patriarchal attitudes of the traditional community and negative attitude towards women by the early missionaries, which are based on patriarchal theory.

The Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) were the first Roman Catholic Missionaries who settled in Katete in 1938 with the intention of establishing Roman Catholic Christianity through teaching catechism and basic education to the people. Fr. Marc Henry Dupuis, a Canadian, or "Dupusi", as the people called him, was one of the first priests to settle at Katete. Katete therefore became the first Catholic Mission for the Missionaries of Africa in the northern part of Malawi. They immediately started providing material goods for the people such as; salt, clothes, bedding, pencils, notebooks, textbooks (English and Tumbuka). Some people were employed to work as house workers, gardeners and Catechists (teachers of catechumens). Because of these provider attitudes that the missionaries brought they promoted a sense of dependency in the minds of the people. Instead of being self-sufficient, people looked to the priests to gain money and other material incentives. Since the arrival of early missionaries in Katete, women would be seen performing most duties in the church such as organizing singing practice, preparing children for Sunday school programs, cleaning and sweeping in the church, washing priests' vestments and so forth.

What prompted this study was the realization of how the women of Katete have been sidelined by the church's developmental programs mostly due to patriarchal leadership. Most of the women would have achieved better livelihoods had developmental goals been imparted to them by the early missionaries.

A further motivation is the way the institutions such as hospitals, schools, craft centres and infrastructures like roads and water reservoirs have become dilapidated over years through neglect. For example, it's a fact that there are abandoned houses that give an impression of social and economic decline in Katete.

It is high time that some sustainable projects in the area of economics, gender, social and health issues including the impact of HIV/AIDS on women took place in this area. It is also important to restore all abandoned buildings of the parish and turn them into useful assets. Again it is the duty of the church to work strongly on gender sensitivity programs, an issue where the Roman Catholic Church has always lagged behind.

1.2 Aims and Importance of the Study

This study aims to examine the potential of rural women of Katete Catholic Parish and to give guidelines on how to develop this potential.

The study will create a base of the information that is needed in order to analyse the church's response to the situation of rural women in terms of social and economic development. As in most African churches in Katete Catholic Parish women are in the majority. During this research, we found out that the parish registered 10,500 women, 7,500 men and 2000 children (12th January 2004). In spite of the fact that the women are in the majority men make most decisions in the parish and women are completely sidelined. They are viewed in the patriarchal leadership as second-class citizens whose voices do not deserve to be heard. Mercy Amba Oduyoye has reminded us that:

The way Western churches that have been implanted in Africa look at women mirrors their Euro-American predecessors. As transplants that have never firmly taken root, they have not yet grown free of the attitudes of their "mother churches," nor have they been able to cope with reforms that have taken or are taking place in those churches. Issues such as the ordination of clergy and ecumenism are prime examples, as is their firm attachment to nineteenth-century evangelical theology. Faced with the vastly complicated, hydra-headed challenges of living in today's world, Africa finds little sustenance in the continuing importation of uncritical forms of Christianity with answers which most often take the form of patriarchal hierarchies, accept the material services of women but do not listen to their voices, seek their leadership, or welcome their initiatives. One African spokeswoman has said, "It is an indictment on the Euro-Christian world that African church women have no significance in the church (Oduyoye 1995: 172-173).

What Mercy Oduyoye has said about this type of theology is also true for Roman Catholic theology. This is echoed by Susan Rakoczy that:

Augustine of Hippo (d 430), the most important of the Western Fathers of the Church, asserted that only the male is created in image of God and that woman is the image of God when she is joined to her husband. Augustine's influence continued in European medieval theology (Rakoczy 2004: 34).

This research will, we hope, contribute toward a positive change in the church's perception of women. We will explore practical steps for a theology of development for rural women. Without being prescriptive but descriptive, critical issues investigated in this dissertation are:

- The potential of the women of Katete Catholic Parish.
- Sustainable development in terms of social and economic programs of Katete Catholic Parish.
- The extent to which the Roman Catholic Church in Katete has addressed the importance of gender issues.
- Ways in which theology and development promote good conditions for the women of Katete Catholic Parish.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The problem that the dissertation is trying to investigate is the extent to which patriarchal church leadership at Katete Catholic Parish has neglected to enhance women's potential in promoting sustainable livelihoods.

1.4 Sub-problems

- How can sustaining women's livelihoods in Katete Parish through the Catholic Church's teaching be accentuated?
- Is creating gender awareness an answer to retrieving women's status in Katete Catholic Parish?
- What are the restraints on women of Katete Catholic Parish to initiate developmental programs that suit their capability?

1.5 Study Hypothesis

The study is based on the premise that the Katete Catholic Parish has a role to play in realizing the full potential of its women to enhance social-economic development and sustainable livelihoods.

1.6 Critical Review of Existing Literature

Isabel Apawo Phiri (1996), in her article, "Marching, Suspended and Stoned: Christian Women in Malawi 1995", points out important issues of partnership. She says that for the church to achieve positive development there has to be partnership between men and women. The results of equal participation of both men and women in any development endeavour are rich and fulfilling. She says that women should be included in the decision-making committees of the church at all levels, and have voting powers. The church should recognize and encourage the gifts and talents of women. There should be equal opportunities for both men and women to go for training for leadership and studying theology. Phiri shows how it is important to be gender-sensitive in all aspects of development. She gives a detailed account in her article of the positive direction with regard to what should be done through her experience as an academic and a member of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (C.C.A.P.) of the Blantyre Synod. However, what the author has not gone deeper into is the wider representation of other churches in Malawi in which women experience marginalization of different types. This is what this research aims to do by concentrating on the experiences of women in Katete Catholic Parish.

Coolen (1989) in *The History Of Mzuzu Diocese*, points out the early missionaries' developments. Coolen talks about the importance of the collaboration that took place between Katete and Likuni. Since its founding in 1938, Katete mission belonged to the Vicariate of Likuni, central region of Malawi (Coolen 1989: 56). The Rev. J.M. Saint Denis was appointed Prefect Apostolic and arrived in Katete on November 14th 1947. With the arrival of the new Prefect, Katete became more of a focal point than before (1989: 58). From an ordinary Mission Katete became the headquarters of the Apostolic Prefecture of North Nyasa. It remained in that position until 1954 when the

headquarters were transferred to Mzuzu (1989: 57). From the very day of his arrival, Msgr. Saint Denis started to push for the development of schools and the opening of new ones, which were mostly for boys. On the other hand women missionaries e.g. the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception opened Katete Girls Boarding Primary School in 1948 (1989: 57). This is an indication that women have the capability of starting something important in any given area, including Katete Catholic Parish, when they are given a chance, a point that the current study will pursue.

Henriot, P. (2002) in *Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection* Bulletin No. 54, Fourth Edition 2002, pages 5-6; "Role of the Church in Relationship to Women, Peace and Development" points out what Pope John XXIII wrote in a letter in 1963. The letter was entitled 'last will and testament' (Henriot 2002: 5). This was the Pope's last letter to the Catholic Church; he died a few weeks after the publication. The author of the article gives three insights that the Pope wrote. The first one was 'The movement of previously colonised peoples to full independence'. This movement was not simply a *political* event but the action of God in history, bringing freedom and dignity to a dominated people (2002: 6). The second one was 'The movement of labourers to achieve just wages and decent working circumstances'. This was not simply an *economic* event but the action of God in history, establishing conditions both worthy of humans and necessary for development (2000: 6). The third one was 'The movement of women the world over to claim full equality and participation in society'. This was not simply a *cultural* event, to be isolated tightly only in Western cultures, but a universal action of God in history, bringing recognition to persons created fully in God's image (2000: 6). Henriot's article tells us to respond to what the church teaches through what the Pope has written. He talks about God's actions in history, a feminist's perspective and the role of the church. The role of the church is to teach, to witness and to challenge. "Our teaching today must show the openness of Jesus to women, so contrary to the accepted cultural patterns of his day. And it must repeat sharply the condemnation of scripture to the abuse of women, for example in the treatment of widows and orphans" (2000: 7). Being a bulletin, it is a short article. The author could also have hinted openly that despite Pope John XXIII's letter as it was written to Catholics in 1963, with all its good intentions, most of the women in the

church still suffer oppression, marginalization and their potential is still not appreciated by their male-counterparts.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The main drive of this study is the quest to find out if the church has been enhancing the potential in rural women through gender sensitivity. Development failure, gender biases and women's proneness to vulnerability form the framework from which this study will be conducted. Before the development era came into being, colonialism wrought despoliation to the seemingly stable societies of Africa. It is important to know and learn that "development as theory and practice is a gender issue and all our analysis needs to be undertaken from the standpoint that unequal power relations exist between men and women. Poor and marginalized women are severely discriminated against in macro-social and economic policies resulting in this group continuing to bear the brunt of poverty..."(Haddad 2001: 6). Though issues of gender biases existed, they were not as bad as they later became after decades of colonialism and later decades of development efforts (Phiri 1997: 21). Development came after colonialism but made life worse rather than better for women in Africa. Development failure therefore may contribute to a huge extent to the social and economic breakdown in most societies in the world including Africa. Patriarchal culture, religious biases against women, lack of education, poor health, lack of women leadership and participation, and poverty among women worsened further during the decades of development efforts. Development practices have been male-centred, growth-centred with a top-down approach rather than asset-based, people-centred and capacity-focused. The socio-economic development and the place of women in society have facilitated unsustainable livelihoods among rural women. There is a lot of powerlessness that prevails among rural women.¹ It is because of this situation of powerlessness among women, especially those in rural areas, that their potential has been ignored and this will be a major concern in this study.

¹ Several people have written different perspectives of the origin of development and livelihoods. See Mfugale1994: 76-80; Haddad 2000: 95; Kinyange 1994:62; Ogunidipe1994: 30; Haddad 2001:19; Leshabari 1994: 34-38; Haider 1996: 19.

Rural women have the ability and creativity to transform a life that they have great reason to value. It will be argued that the overall goal of developing the women of Katete is what, from the theological perspective, we call Shalom – a complete well-being, where people are living lives that are full of dignity, justice and human value. There are many fundamental elements that are important. According to thinkers like Paulo Freire (1993), Amartya Sen (1999), Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), David Korten (1990), Sarah White, and Romy Tiongco (1996) and others, all human beings deserve a decent living standard regardless of where they live and their gender status. There are five fundamental elements that this research focuses on in order to enhance the potential of women of Katete Catholic Parish:

Capacity-Focused Development rather than A Needs-Driven Dead End: This study looks at the importance of utilizing the community's own capacities and skills and is inspired by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993). Capacity Focused Development emphasizes that people are not empty, useless and full of problems but are endowed with creativity and various capacities that should be enhanced in order to bring about a more desirable life.

Freedom instead of Domination: Freedom enables people to utilize their capabilities in order for them to create a life they consider worth living. Freedom should be seen in relation to justice and peace. Therefore following the ideas advanced by Amartya Sen (1999) and others, the study affirms that freedom is dual – a means and an end to bringing about well being on earth for all. In the Old and New Testaments the importance of freedom was emphasised and affirmed.

Dialogical Action instead of Antialogical Action: Studying the thoughts of Paulo Freire (1993), we assert that what makes us human is the ability to share our talents. To be human is to participate in dialogical action that enables people to be involved fully in their own development. Theologically we will explore how God engages with the people and uses dialogue as a tool to uplift their livelihoods. God wants people to talk about issues with one another in order to enhance development. We will then

show how Jesus became a dialogical figure here on earth through his deeds and contacts.

Equity Led Growth is Better than Market Led Growth: In order for peace to take place in any given community, people should have equal access to all things that support human life. We all need natural resources that the earth provides. Using the thinking of David Korten (1990), we will explore and support his ideas of equity-led growth, such as the notion of Jubilee year, the aspects of sharing of the early Christians and how Jesus understood riches.

Inclusive Power instead of Exclusive Power: Power, being the possibility of self-affirmation in spite of internal and external negations, is therefore the dimension whereby a person is an object of manipulation and control. We will affirm that for the church to engage effectively in issues of development it has to be aware of the power it wields as a religious institution. We will therefore examine this phenomenon basing our thinking on the writings of people like Beverly Harrison (1985: 3-21), Isabel Phiri (1997) and Paul Germond (2001: 21-31).

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The major focus of this research is the Katete Catholic Parish of the Mzuzu Diocese of Northern Malawi. It is likely that there are other places that women have shown their potential in the areas of theology and development in Malawi. Nevertheless, it is there that the researcher has conducted interviews with women of Roman Catholic Church background of Katete Parish. Another limitation is that the researcher is a male and writing on issues of women's potential. As a male researcher, there is a danger of being biased as the study takes root. Nevertheless, care and consideration will be observed during the study and it will also help the researcher to learn and be challenged out of what the study will be focusing on. The finances that this research demanded were considerable since it required fieldwork in Malawi and then library work in South Africa. Luckily the fieldwork was done, there was less movement between these two countries, which reduced the strain on the limited resources that the

researcher had. When more information was needed the use of other means of communication like emails, telephone interviews and faxes were utilized.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Appropriate Theology and Development: In this study we will be looking at the theology viewed in its local context, the Katete area and how God can be found in all aspects of development that sustains the people of Katete, especially the women. In other words, we will be using the biblical scriptures to match the reality of developing the people of Katete Catholic Parish.

Development: The act of making some area of land or water more profitable or productive or useful (WorldNet 2.0 Search). The common understanding of the meaning of development according to Gustavo Esteva (1993: 8) is “a process through which the potentialities of an object or organism are released, until it reaches its natural, complete, full-fledged form”. In this dissertation, ‘*development*’ is enabling women’s capability through utilizing available resources of Katete Catholic Parish.

Financial Capital:

This is the money that is available to the household, either in the form of stocks, such as cash, bank deposits, livestock, jewellery, and credit; or in the form of regular inflows of money from wages, social security, and other remittances. While financial capital is the one least available to the poor, it is the most versatile asset, as it can be converted into other assets, can contribute directly to livelihoods outcomes like purchasing food or medicines, or by leveraging social and political influence” (De Gruchy 2004: 6).

Human Capital: “This refers to skills, knowledge, good health, and ability to labour. It is the foundational asset that is necessary, though not sufficient, for positive livelihoods outcomes” (De Gruchy 2004: 6).

Leadership: This means “giving vision and direction to a group and enabling its members to fulfill its aims” (Atkinson 1995: 544). In this study, this word will focus on women’s leadership skills and capabilities of being involved in giving vision and direction to a group and enabling the members of their community to fulfill its goals and aims.

Marginalization: To marginalize is to treat something or someone as unimportant (Procter 1996: 865). This could also mean to put someone on the margin, meaning

“the outer edge of an area” (Procter 1996: 864). In this thesis we will be looking at the way women’s potential has been marginalized through male centred development especially in the patriarchal system of Katete, Malawi.

Natural Capital: “This refers to the natural resources that are available to households and communities in pursuit of their livelihoods. It includes everything from intangible public goods such as the atmosphere to direct resources such as trees and plants” (De Gruchy 2004: 6).

Oppression: To oppress, according to Procter is “to govern people in an unfair and cruel way and prevent them from having opportunities and freedom...”(1996: 991). In this study we focus on how women have been hurt emotionally and physically and denied opportunities and room to exercise their potential in Katete. Because of such oppression, there is lack of freedom to sustain a sound livelihood in the area.

Physical Capital: “This is the infrastructures (such as transport, shelter, energy, communication) and producer goods (such as tools and equipment) that are required to support livelihoods. Infrastructure is only an asset in so far as it helps the poor to meet their needs” (De Gruchy 2004: 6).

Poverty: This refers to the physical as well as spiritual experiences of deprivation that people have in the society. The poor are the focus of the word ‘poverty’ in this study, since they lack materials necessary for achieving a fulfilling livelihood, hence the need to be alleviated. In other words, “the poor are those who barely survive” (Atkinson 1995: 678). Environment degradation will also be part of the poverty that people, especially women of Katete Catholic Parish, experience.

Social Capital:

This is taken to mean the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihoods objectives. It includes networks and connectedness, more formal group membership and trust, reciprocity and exchange. Social Capital is not necessarily positive, as exclusion and hierarchical relationships can put constraints on livelihoods security” (De Gruchy 2004: 6).

Sustainable: Meeting the needs of the present without diminishing the ability of people, other species, or future generations to survive (www.nationalgeographic.com/wildworld/glossary.html).

The researcher will look at *sustainability* as an item on the agenda for rural women of Katete Catholic Parish that ensures lasting activity.

Sustainable livelihoods: “Are derived from people’s capacities to exercise choice, access opportunities and resources, and use them for their livelihoods in ways that do not foreclose options for others to make their living, either now, or in the future” (UNDP/SL, 1999).

The researcher will focus on *sustainable livelihoods* as a means of creating an enabling environment in which women of Katete Catholic Parish can use their abilities, fulfil their potential and flourish.

1.10 Assumptions of the Study

This study assumes that the sound social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church Doctrines would enhance the potential of women of Katete Catholic Parish for their sustainable livelihoods. This assumption comes about because the Catholic Church doctrines have a wider literature concerning social justice that guides the society to a life worth living. The researcher feels that in most of the Catholic Church doctrines, there is a concern about justice and fair play in society.

1.11 Research Methodology

A study of this kind requires library research and field research. The dissertation draws on the following research methodologies:

Literature review: The researcher has read extensively literature by many people during his study in theology and development at University of KwaZulu Natal. Most of this literature has been acknowledged in the bibliography. Library research has been used to get information on issues such as African women, church leadership, poverty, culture, patriarchy, oppression, environment and HIV/AIDS. The library has therefore set the groundwork of the study. This has been achieved through reading books, journals, magazines, as well as electronic journals and audio and visual material.

Personal Experience: Having lived in Katete during childhood and attended primary and secondary school in the area, the researcher has a good deal of knowledge of the potential of women of Katete community.

Consultations: Consultations were held with different groups of women and men in Katete, which were purposively chosen for specific fields; for instance teachers, nurses, religious (sisters and priests), youths and farmers. Several focus group discussions were conducted. The interviewees gave valuable information to the study since they spoke out of lived experiences in the area. For example, teachers gave insight with regard to education standards of the people of the area. Farmers provided enough information on agricultural and food security of the area. Nurses helped the study to look at the health issues of the people of the area, especially the women, including HIV/AIDS. Religious people spoke where the church stands on patriarchal and gender issues of the area regarding faith, leadership and spiritual development of the people of Katete. The youths and adults, through focus group discussions, helped the study to obtain a general view of the livelihoods of the society and how such livelihoods could be sustained for the well being of the rural women of Katete Catholic Parish. After the field research, most of the information has been used in chapter four where an analysis of theology and development programs has been presented and discussed through some selected case studies of women of Katete which influenced the study to look at the importance of assets based development in Katete. In addition, and also in the fifth chapter, we have used some information on HIV/AIDS and other sustainable livelihoods programs. This information has again helped to propose approaches that would create part of the policy in theology and development for rural women and livelihoods that enhance their potential.

Maps: Maps of Malawi, Northern Region of Malawi and Katete area have been included in chapter three where we will be talking about the historical analysis of Katete Catholic Parish.

1.12 The Structure and Organisation of the Study

The information and facts of this dissertation are the fruit of a personal reflection on and ardent interest in the potential of women of Katete Catholic Parish, the place of the researcher's childhood; women who still face social and economic problems due to patriarchy and lack of theology of development.

The study is organised as follows: This general introduction that starts with the issue, serves as the first chapter in this dissertation.

The second chapter looks at the theological vision of development as social and economic development. This is in line with Amartya Sen (1999), David Korten (1990), Wolfgang Sachs (1993), Gilbert Rist (1999), Paul Freire (1993), and Gustavo Esteva (1993), and others, who have, in one way or another, concluded that development as it has been practiced in the world over the last century, has not achieved its intended goals of improving people's lives, because women, especially those in the rural areas, have lagged behind in terms of social and economic development. Basing on a theoretical framework, we show the need for a new paradigm based on freedom in order to achieve sustainable livelihoods among rural women.

Chapter three dwells on the historical analysis of Katete Catholic Parish with the coming of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers). In this chapter, segregated developmental programs will be highlighted. We will also analyse the cultural powerlessness of women perpetuated by patriarchal influence and biased religious beliefs. We will also reflect on issues of gender and development more especially in how it relates to women's leadership in development programs in Katete.

Chapter four focuses on the analysis of theology and development programs for the women of Katete. In this chapter, we will discuss the social-economic development of the women of Katete. Study analysis will focus on the potential of some women in theology and development, highlighting short stories of some of them, achievements of some case studies and community development, focusing on theologising development.

Sustaining a healthy livelihood through dialogue for women of Katete Catholic Parish, in chapter five, will outline the utilization of available community assets such as land, water, forest, abandoned buildings, indigenous seeds/crops and local labour. The programs concerning HIV/AIDS will be included in this chapter. The core of the chapter will focus on an assets based development approach based on the thinking of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993). Most of the major issues in this chapter will be by the use of a theoretical framework, which focuses on ability, creativity, transformation

and the human economic development of rural women. This chapter will give an overview of how Katete can become a sustainable community out of the available resources.

Finally, the potential of women of Katete Catholic Parish will be summarized in the sixth chapter. Then a way forward will be shown that would enhance the potential of the rural women of Katete Catholic Parish. The major emphasis of this chapter will be based on giving proper guidelines for the church's leadership of Katete Catholic Parish so that it can function in an effective and decisive matter in sustaining and enhancing the livelihoods of the women and the people of Katete.

1.13 Summary and Conclusion

We have attempted to look at the format of the whole research in this chapter, starting from the issue, background to and motivation for the study, aims and importance of the study, statement of the problem, sub-problems, study hypothesis and critical review of existing literature. The theoretical framework focused on the thinking of different people, which will carry most of the work of this study. In order to grasp the researcher's understanding of the study, we also defined some terminologies and the assumptions of the study. The methodology and research organisation helped to give the overview of the study. Having done this, it becomes important to present a theological vision of development in chapter two, by providing the critique of development as it has been practiced in the last century and then highlight the importance of freedom for the livelihoods for women of Katete Catholic Parish.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework

A Theological Vision of Development

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter we will begin by providing a critique of development as it has been practiced in Europe in the last century (Sachs 1993: 1-25). Then we will discuss the theological vision for development. The main argument will be that development has failed to bring about sustainable livelihoods for women in general and the women of Katete Catholic Parish in particular. There is a need therefore to look at development from a different paradigm where we will emphasise the importance of freedom. In thinking about freedom we will explore theological aspects of freedom and contemporary thinking about freedom basing on Amartya Sen (1999), David Korten (1990) and Paulo Freire (1993).

2.1 The Critique of Development

The word "Development" has different meanings and the term itself is confusing. However, the dominant development paradigm found its origins in the enlightenment period which started early in the 15th century in Europe. Drawing parallels with nature and driven by modernist mindset, development was understood as progression from the simple to the complex, from inferior to superior and from worse to better (Sachs 1993: 10). Everything in nature grows and follows a time trajectory toward perfection such that if something did not grow into its own potential something had simply gone wrong in the process. Through this metaphor, it became possible to show the goal of development and, much later, its program (Estava 1993: 8). Also Monty Roodt emphasizes and puts it opening that its:

Thrust was the belief that undeveloped countries could move from a pre-industrial state, through a number of stages, to become a mature capitalist state. This was to be achieved through elite investment in urban industry, the benefits of which would spread, or 'trickle down', to traditional, backward sectors" (Roodt 1996: 314).

This is typical as seen in the inaugural speech of the United States President Harry S. Truman on the 20th of January 1949 when he proclaimed the southern hemisphere as 'underdeveloped areas' (Esteva 1996: 7). Looking from colonised to underdeveloped areas it became clear that the agenda of developed world was to identify what went wrong in that natural process of development, which has kept the south backward. For the potential of the so-called underdeveloped south to achieve its goal, the north should have helped the south to sustain itself through giving guidelines of development. Wolfgang Sachs states and asks:

It is thus obvious that the 'advanced' societies are no model; rather they are mostly to be seen in the end as an aberration in the course of history. The arrow of progress is broken and the future has lost its brightness: what it holds in store are more threats than promises. How can one believe in development, if the sense of orientation has withered away (Sachs 1993: 2)?

However, Sachs says that re-viewing the developmental model of reality and recognizing that we all wear, not merely tinted, but tainted, glasses if we take part in the prevailing development discourse is important. He concludes that, "at a time when development has evidently failed as a socio-economic endeavour, it has become of paramount importance to liberate ourselves from its dominion over our minds" (Sachs 1993: 5).

It was even sad to learn how great leaders of Africa, like Mwalimu Julius Nyerere of Tanzania were looked on as foolish when they tried to contribute to proper understanding of development. Nyerere looked at development with the focus on people but his proposal was seen as madness. Gustavo Esteva noted:

Since then, development has connoted at least one thing: to escape from the undignified condition called underdevelopment. When Nyerere proposed that development be the political mobilization of a people for attaining their own objectives, conscious as he was it was madness to pursue the goals that others had set..." (Estava 1993: 7).

He seemed to have known that it is very difficult to just describe the word 'development'.

Development carries a lot of issues that need to be considered. For instance, environmental degradation may cause many people to misunderstand what

development stands for. The World Bank looks at the way many people can mismanage developmental programs in search for better livelihoods. The World Bank put it clear when it stated that:

It is the poor that are usually the first to suffer the consequences of the environmental degradation, and poverty on its own can have a negative impact on the environment. When other alternatives break down, poor people are often forced to use the land and water in ways that threaten the productivity of these vital resources in future.²

On the other hand, NEPAD has put it strongly that:

Greater integration has also led to the further marginalization of those countries that are unable to compete effectively. In the absence of fair and just global rules, globalisation has increased the ability of the strong to advance their interests to the detriment of the weak, especially in the areas of trade, finance and technology. It has limited the space for developing countries to control their own development, as the system has no provision for compensating the weak. The conditions of those marginalised in this process have worsened in real terms. A fissure between inclusion and exclusion has emerged within and among nations.³

This is sad because market forces also judge development. The argument of the market driven economic growth perspective is that, once economies grow, the wealth that has been accumulated can then be distributed to benefit other people in the community. Reality however shows that that is not the case. We know that even a small percentage can be shared if proper care is to be taken but Vernon Mwangi⁴ put it openly that, “the African Stock Exchange taken together account for only about 1 percent of the capitalisation of all the exchanges in the world compared to 7.5 percent for the other developing countries and 91.5 percent for the developed countries” (Mwangi, Post News Paper, 11. 1. 2004: 6). Prosperity as calculated in overseas direct savings terms also has a similar representation. By the end of 2000 the “African countries accounted for less than 1 percent of global foreign direct investment compared to 25 percent for other developing countries and 74 percent for other industrialised countries” (Mwangi, Post News Paper, 11. 1. 2004: 6). This demonstrates that trickle the down

² See: World Bank, *National Environment Strategies: Learning from Experience*, pages 12-17.

³ See: NEPAD. *The New Partnership for Africa's Development*. <www.dfa.gov.za/events/nepad.pdf> (October 2001), 7.

⁴ Vernon Mwangi worked as a cabinet minister under the former President of Zambia, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda during one party system in early 1970s and also worked as a minister during President Frederick Chiluba when Zambia turned into a multi party system.

theory has failed to make wealth reach needy people but is concentrated in the hands of the few. This is even more true when it relates to women, "rural women produce more than 55% of all food grown in developing countries".⁵ This is a clearly factor that women contribute a lot into economic set up of any development program. In spite of the fact that both culturally and economically women have provided suitable conditions for men to function properly, their intuition, inputs and potentials have not yet been recognised. They remain marginalized and ignored in all decision-making processes. "Economic activities undertaken by women such as peasant farming, childcare and domestic work do not even form part of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) aggregation of the countries in spite of them being the providers, enablers and supporters of the male workforce and society at large to function" (Haider 1996: 39). In Malawi, 70% of people live in abject poverty.⁶ The majority of these people (50%) are women-headed households and the child mortality rate is high⁷. This is a clear indication that development as it has been practiced has been very unfavourable for recognizing women's potential in the world.

It has become clearer than ever that development practices have contributed to the harming of the environment in which we live. Creation, as a gift of God, needs to be respected. But due to the economic growth driven concept creation has been violated and raped leading to a phenomenon that has come to be known as global warming. In 2000, many people died in Europe due to a heat wave that struck that region⁸ while over thousands died in an earthquake in Iran and flooding in India in 2004.⁹ The world can no longer stand aloof and deny the fact that greenhouse effect gases released from European, American and African industries are changing the weather pattern around the earth. In 2002 – 2003, Malawi experienced droughts that led to a reduction in food security and increased women's suffering. In 2003, the Centre for Social Concern (CFSC) put it openly and clearly that:

⁵ See: Women at a Glance, <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/women/women96.htm>, 2.

⁶ Malawi receives \$90 million in aid each year but pays out \$162 million in debt service to IMF, World Bank and other wealthy creditors. See: <http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=news.display-archives&mode=current-opinio...> (2004).

⁷ See: Demographic Healthy Survey in Malawi, 2002 Revision, <http://esa.un.org/unpp>

⁸ See: <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa.climate/extremes/2000/july/extremes0700.html>

⁹ See: www.db.idpproject.org for Earthquake Victims in Indian - 2004.

The environment centred around concerns over wanton deforestation, lack of proper waste management, increased volume of trash and sediment in the Shire River, depletion of Chambo fish in Lake Malawi and poor water resource management... there is need to critically examine the problem of environmental degradation in Malawi. Indeed, as the Environment Minister Uladi Mussa said, 93 percent of the country's needed energy derives from wood fuel, which translates to 50,000 hectares of deforestation every year. Furthermore, rapid population growth and high levels of poverty exert huge pressure on the environment, while the country lacks affordable energy alternatives. Therefore unless the country addressed the root causes of environmental degradation, natural resources will continue to decline at an alarming rate. The months of December and January 2003 saw the eruption of floods in some areas of the country, which were a direct result of wanton deforestation... Likewise, the Water Board is facing a problem of increased volume of trash and siltation in the Shire River, this problem has been attributed to cultivating crops along the Shire River Banks and its tributaries as well as deforestation...¹⁰

These effects of environmental degradation are a concern not just for Malawi, but also at a global level and this is why the United Nations Commission on the Environment warns that:

Acid precipitation kills forests and lakes and damages the artistic and architectural heritage of nations... the burning of fossil fuels puts into the atmosphere carbon dioxide, which is causing gradual global warming... other industrial gases threaten to deplete the planet's protective ozone shield to such an extent that the number of human and animal cancers would rise sharply and the oceans' food chain would be disrupted.¹¹

It is for these reasons that Amartya Sen says economic growth cannot sensibly be treated as an end itself... (Sen 1999: 14) and David Korten agrees by saying:

We have become prisoners of an obsolete vision of our global reality and the nature of human progress. This vision equates human progress with growth in the market value of economic output and subordinates both human and environmental considerations to that goal. The result has been the extravagant consumption of the world's resources by a favoured few with little recognition of the social and environmental costs borne by many. These costs have now accumulated to the point of endangering the continued well-being of everyone on the planet (Korten 1990: 3).

¹⁰ See: Center for Social Concern (CFSC) a special edition: Annual review of the news from major newspapers in Malawi, 2003, 32.

¹¹ See: World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) 2.

We can therefore concur with Daneel (1996) that, “fortunately the Christian Church worldwide is showing signs of awakening to the fact that environmental stewardship is an integral part of its mission and ministry in the world” (Daneel 1996: 214).

Clearly development has failed us and there is a need to rethink and find new approaches that can bring about better living conditions for all and for women of Katete Catholic Parish in particular.

Development must be achieved within the framework of solidarity and freedoms, without ever sacrificing either of them under pretext. The moral character of development and its necessary promotion are emphasised when the most rigorous respect is given to all the demands deriving from order of truth and good proper to the human person... true development must be based on the love of God and neighbour, and must help to promote the relationships between individuals and society (Walsh 1991: 417, *sollicitudo Rei socialis*: 33.7).

That new approach could come through a Christian thinking based on freedom to which we turn our attention now as we tackle theological vision of development.

2.2 Theological Vision for Development.

In pursuing our study, we turn now to a theological aspect of development and a contemporary thinking of it in the next section of the chapter. We therefore look at the importance of freedom, and how it can enhance the potential of rural women of Katete and women in general.

2.2.1 Freedom

We have just rejected the development paradigm of economic growth and we have asserted that it is not favourable for the poor, particularly women. In the following paragraphs we propose a theological vision for development. This vision is based on the comprehensiveness of humanity and nature and puts emphasis on a holistic approach to human well-being. The theological vision of development will be focused on freedom. It is based on a theological fact that human beings are created in the image of God, born free. It is that inherent freedom which is founded in God that all

development programs should be striving to expand. In this study we argue that development practice should be the process of expanding people's freedoms. The vision of development as freedom is consistent with the theological aspects of freedom.

The history of Israel is testimony to the foregoing. The Bible tells of the people of Israel who were enslaved in Egypt. According to Exodus 1: 8-14, the people of Israel were subjected to inhumane conditions through forced labour and lack of wages for the work they did. One day Moses was walking along and saw a Jew being beaten by an Egyptian. Moses was angered by the brutality of the Egyptians to the extent that he killed the Egyptian and fled to Midian (Exodus 2: 11-15). It is there that God heard the cries of Israelites by calling Moses to set the people of Israel free. After that, the children of Israel were liberated from the slavery and achieved their freedom. They began to experience their freedom to live and create a life they had reason to value.

The other aspect of freedom can be seen in Isaiah 58: 1-12, when God put it clearly to the people that they were to fast without pretension. He warned them against fasting when they did business, oppressing their workmen, quarreling and squabbling and striking the poor with their fists. God questioned them by asking "Is that the sort of fast that pleases me, a truly penitential day for men" (Isaiah 58: 4)? However the fasting that God wants is for people to break unjust fetters and undo the thongs of the yoke, to share bread (food) with the hungry, and shelter the homeless poor... "If you do away with the yoke, the clenched fist, the wicked word, if you give your bread to the hungry, and relief to the oppressed, your light will rise in the darkness, your shadows become like noon...you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose water never runs dry...you will rebuild the ancient ruins, build up on the old foundations. You will be called 'Breach-mender', 'Restorer of ruined houses'" (Isaiah 58: 7-12). Only people who feel free within themselves are able to see the justice of God and are also able to equate freedom with development.

The Mission of Jesus in the New Testament emphasizes the aspect of Freedom. When Jesus began his mission, he went to the temple to speak for the first time to the public. The first thing he did was to take the scroll and read, "I have come to set the captives free...to let the blind see...(Luke 4: 18-19)" he then concluded that this scripture has

been fulfilled (Luke 4: 21). Freedom is therefore the central part of his mission. Jesus spent his entire life liberating people not only from sin but also from physical malaise. This is demonstrated in his healing, socializing and his teaching. In the healing Jesus is setting people free granting their physical well being which is a precondition for participating in one's development.

This theological view can be translated into a social economic policy for women just as it has been outlined and demonstrated by Sen (1999). Sen says, "freedom is both the primary end and the principal means of development..." (Sen 1999: 18).

2.2.2 Freedom as Means and End of Development

In his book entitled *Development as Freedom*, Amartya Sen (1999) says that development is both the means and the end of development. It is the means because free individuals can participate in the creation of conditions that respect both individuals and the community, thereby creating a better and more just society. It is the means in the sense that free individuals can take part in shaping life as they see fit. Because they are free they can be creative, committed and able to transform realities of their lives into the way they would like them to be. Again freedom as an end means that every development action should be evaluated in the light of how it has enabled people to be freer than they were before.¹² It is an affirmation that when people have utilized their freedom and have put their best to work they will eventually be freer to live; hence be more human instead of being dehumanized by poverty and binding factors. It is end because freedom is good in itself (Sen 1999: 18). It is worth working toward since it is founded in God and in the self worth of an individual. Thinking about freedom as a means Sen (1999) identifies what he calls instrumental freedom, which should be taken seriously in the process of liberating all people, including women and recognizing their potential. The following are the instrumental freedoms:

¹² See how Steve De Gruchy explains Sen's concept of freedom in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 117 (November 2003), 26-27.

2.2.2.1 Political Freedom

This is the opportunity to choose, analyse and criticise leadership, and freedom of information flow. In other words, he is talking of the enhancement of democracy. “They include the political entitlements associated with democracies in the broadest sense (encompassing opportunities of political dialogue, dissent and critique as well as voting rights and participatory selection of legislators and executives)” (Sen 1999: 38). People’s voices become their power. Sen has demonstrated that in countries where there are democracies there has never been famine because information flows and governments are kept on their toes to deliver goods and services. This is because people tend to live more freely and are able to serve and complement one another.

2.2.2.2 Economic Facilities:

This refers to the opportunities that individuals respectively enjoy to utilize economic resources for the purpose of consumption, or production or exchange”(Sen 1999: 39). Sen says that the economic entitlements that a person has will depend on the resources owned or available for use as well as for exchange. The most important issue here is the working market. What we should know is that the economic development increases the income and wealth of any given country. Therefore it is of great importance to allow people to participate fully in the economic affairs of the country be it large enterprises or small/tiny establishments.¹³

2.2.2.3 Social Opportunities:

This “refers to social amenities and arrangements made for important aspects of health care, education and welfare systems”(Sen 1999: 39). Social opportunity opens room for people to live with free minds and influences them to enjoy better life. According to

¹³ In many places, people especially the rural women, are not even allowed to participate in small development programs, yet it is through such small programs that make a difference. During research, we noticed that many women managed Community Based Organisations (CBO) in Katete Catholic Parish. Most of these CBOs are dealing with HIV/AIDS awareness in the area. For sustainable development to effectively take place, there is need for women to be encouraged to fully participate in rural development in order for them to help fight the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Sen, these opportunities are important as they make it possible for people to participate fully in economic and political activities. This is made possible once the community is able to communicate with each other through literacy skills. The society that is literate always fights to eradicate illiteracy in order to facilitate healthy living. Sen gives an example when he says; “illiteracy can be a major barrier to participation in economic activities that require production according to specification or demand strict quality control (as globalized trade increasingly does)” (Sen 1999: 39).

2.2.2.4 Transparency Guarantees:

This means openness in dealings and information dissemination that builds up confidence and trust in individuals. In other words, “ the freedom to deal with one another under guarantees of disclosure and lucidity”(Sen 1999: 39). People should be able to engage with clear understanding. In this aspect, trust is the main issue. Once this trust is violated, the society may be adversely affected and the result is a lack of openness. Sadly, people may start doing things that destroy the community such as corruption, financial irresponsibility and subterfuge. Sen concludes that, “no matter how well an economic system operates, some people can be typically on the verge of vulnerability and can actually succumb to great deprivation as a result of material changes that adversely affect their lives”(Sen 1999: 40).

2.2.2.5 Protective Security:

This includes the introduction of safety nets that ensure that people do not descend into abject poverty. Safety nets may include ideas such as unemployment benefits or disability funds. In the case of disasters that occur beyond human control such as floods due to torrential rains, droughts, severe winds, earthquakes and so forth; people should be able to be protected from the miseries that comes with these things. A good and effective government is the one that prepares itself for the unseen problems in order to safeguard its people. This is “the domain of protective security”(Sen 1999: 40).

Development actions happen in institutions and mechanisms such as the market, tradition and cultures, which have the ability to erode people, ability to be free but also provides an opportunity for people to interact with each other and undertake mutually advantageous activities. In themselves institutions and mechanisms may not be bad although there could be bad elements in them. Looking at development as a journey to enhance human freedom gives us an opportunity to evaluate these institutions and judge them in the light of how they are enhancing human freedom to make life worth living. Institutions and mechanisms should be evaluated along the lines of their inclusiveness, for example, how do they promote the agency of women rather than reinforcing their alienation? Sen puts it clearly when he says that “there is considerable evidence that women’s empowerment within the family can reduce child mortality significantly” (Sen 1999:193). In other words, institutions and mechanisms should be playing a role in removing the iniquities that depress the well being of the under privileged in the society including the well being of women. Women do more domestic chores than men do. Women should be recognised, be it politically, economically or in social participation and leadership. This is indeed, concludes Sen, “a crucial aspect of ‘development as freedom’”(Sen 1999:203).

2.2.3 Dialogue as Necessary to Enhance Freedom

Focusing on life from this perspective emphasizes the fact that the process of granting people greater freedom should be through dialogue. According to Paulo Freire (1993) humans are humans because they have a *word*. It is important to indisputably to accept that an individual is a subject, a citizen an actor with a *word*, capable of communicating, acting and reflecting on her or his own acts. In other words an individual is a free being. By that very fact the people are entitled to express themselves freely to share what their thoughts and actions are.¹⁴ Through dialogue people are capable of naming the world and thereby shaping its future. Freire says that because dialogue is an encounter among women and men who name the world, a situation where some name the world on behalf of others should not arise. “The

¹⁴ See: Steve De Gruchy. “Of Agency, Assets and Appreciation: Seeking Some Commonalities Between Theology and Development” in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 117 (November 2003), 25.

domination implicit dialogue is that of the world by the dialoguers; it is conquest of the world for the liberation of humankind”(Freire 1993: 70).

The necessity of dialogue is demonstrated in various chapters of the bible. For instance in order to liberate Israel from the shackles of oppression God did not airlift them from Egypt. Instead he engaged in various dialogue sessions, firstly with Moses at Midian as it is illustrated in Exodus 3: 1-12, then with Pharaoh through Moses. When God was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18: 16-32), he did not just send the hails of fire; he first had a discussion with his friend Abraham, in order to ensure that justice was done and that the proper decision was made. Abraham negotiated on behalf of the people of Sodom and those that were not sinful were allowed to leave the city.

To achieve something important in life, we should never be silenced by the unknown results that we might face, but we need to insist on voicing our thoughts. Dialogue in most cases helps us to achieve what we want. We see this in Luke 11: 5-11, when Jesus stresses the importance of asking even if conditions or situations are tough. Dialogue makes it possible to achieve whatever we want God to give us. This is also true in real life experience as those who are humble enough to dialogue and ask, get whatever they want. If we want freedom, it is right to ask for it even if the road is tough and winding.

In the healing of the blind man, Jesus did not just come and say “you are a blind person I am going to heal you”. Instead he asked the blind man what he wanted from him (John 9: 1-7). The question was important because Jesus recognised the freedom of the blind man to express his needs so that a proper response to his needs was clear and could be given abundantly.

Dialogical action is therefore necessary for noticing and bringing the potential of women to light so that such potential is given the respect it deserves...In order to expand women’s potential there is a need to recognize the fact that dialogue should be used in the process of adult education, a point that Paulo Freire (1993) highlights in his book. Education should not be the process of loading the ignorant with knowledge; assuming that the learner does not know what the teacher knows or that the role of the

teacher is to fill learners who are empty minded with information and knowledge. This is “ ‘Banking Education’, where ‘the students are the depositories and the teachers are the depositors’”, (Freire 1993:56). Education should be dialogical where both the teacher and the learner approach the world as a wide phenomenon with plenty of lessons to be learnt from it. Together the teacher and the learner can then interpret it and re-form life as the way it should be. Klaus Nürnberger has reminded us that:

Freire develops his educational methods against the background of this danger. The people must consider the revolution to be necessary; they must be committed to it; they must take responsibility for its implementation. The people must think for themselves and act for themselves. Revolutionary educators should not provide a new doctrine, which would again flood the consciousness of the oppressed; they should facilitate an analysis of the situation by the oppressed themselves. They should not impart the contents of their own consciousness, but, together with the people, bring into the open, and reflect upon, the ideas that are already present in the consciousness of the people. In this process, the people gain their own insights and develop their own motivation. In short, revolutionary pedagogues function merely as catalysts, not as teachers (Nurnberger 1999:234).

As children of God, the task that we should have is to live our lives based on the values of the gospel that does not ask for distinctive boundaries in order to administer justice in our communities. “Only when the descender has reached the bottom and the ascender has reached the top can equality of dignity be established” (Nurnberger 1999: 251).

To sum up the thinking of Sen (1999) and Freire (1993) we can line up with Korten (1990: 4-5) that the critical development issue for the 1990s was not intensification. It was transformation. Our collective future depends on achieving the transformation of our institutions, technology, our values, and our behaviour being consistent with our ecological and social realities. This transformation must address three basic needs of our global society. These basic needs include justice, sustainability and inclusiveness. Justice, Korten affirms does not require equality of income, nor does it require that the productive be required to support the slothful. It does require, however, that all people have the means and opportunity to produce minimum decent livelihoods for themselves and their families. Korten also put it clearly that sustainability does not require that nature be left untouched. It does require, however, that each generation recognize its obligation for stewardship of earth’s natural resources and ecosystem on behalf of

future generations. The transformed society must use the earth's resources in ways that will assure sustainable benefits for our children. Finally Korten outlines that inclusiveness does not mean that everyone must enjoy equal status and power. It does mean that everyone who chooses to be a productive, contributing community member has a right to the opportunity to do so and to be recognised and respected for these contributions. The transformed society must assure everyone an opportunity to be a recognised and respected contributor to family and society. This is the reason we appreciate Korten's concept of an equity-led sustainable growth strategy where it inverts the popular concept of growth with equity and growth with a redistribution strategy (Korten 1990: 73). We are also reminded of the notion of Jubilee, the sharing of the early Christians in the New Testament. This is where justice plays its role. A just society is necessary for the growth of every member of the community who should respect one another and feel for each other.

What Korten has written makes us conclude that women's potential in any given society can only be achieved if the women have been given freedom to do things that makes them appreciate and enjoy their lives as equal partners in development at all levels. This includes all the women of Katete Catholic Parish.

2.3 Notion of Freedom and Sustainable Livelihoods

Looking at the importance of freedom, we can therefore say that the notion of freedom and the aspect of sustainable livelihoods go hand in hand in enhancing the potential of rural women. As freedom demands that peoples' lives need values so do sustainable livelihoods, because a livelihood is only sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks. It maintains or enhances its capabilities and assets and provides sustainable livelihoods opportunities for the next generation and thus contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels with the short and long term (Chambers and Conway 1992: 37). When people experience unfreedom in their livelihoods, they will never sustain their living standards. The most important thing here is to understand that "greater freedom enhances the ability of people to help themselves and also to influence the world, and these matters are central to the process of development" (Sen 1999: 18). Women in Katete Catholic Parish, which is a

patriarchal society, find it hard to sustain their livelihoods because of lack of freedom to exercise their potential. For potential in people to be utilized they need freedom, and for sustainable development to take place, people also need inner peace, which is guided by freedom. With this in mind, we concur with Steve De Gruchy in his concept paper when he gives the insight of Sen and Freire that:

Sen argues that freedom creates the space in which dialogue can occur so that people can be agents in shaping not only the struggle for development, but also the very vision of what that 'development' might be... Sen recognises, like Freire, that if agency means anything, then it is not just a question of mindless action, but also of a contribution at the level of theory to 'values and priorities', so that the preferences for political, social and economic life can be shaped by all the citizens, including the poor, and not just the dominant elites.¹⁵

In the midst of this, politically, in a socially context, ethnically and religiously subjugated women will be able to accomplish and put into effect their ability to sustain livelihoods, if freedom is accorded to them by the society. To develop therefore is to indemnify that people's freedoms are lengthened in order that they can be able to create a life that they have reason to value, a fact that affirms the agency aspect of the individual. Sen put it openly when he says:

With adequate social opportunities, individuals can effectively shape their own destiny and help each other. They need not be seen primarily as passive recipients of the benefits of cunning development programs. There is indeed a strong rationale for recognizing the positive role of free and sustainable agency – and even of constructive patience (Sen 1999: 11).

We will look at the issues of sustainable livelihoods in chapter five as we tackle sustainable living based on humanity and the community of creation, HIV/AIDS programs in Katete Catholic Parish and the importance of sustaining community livelihoods through the asset-based development approach.

¹⁵ See: Steve De Gruchy. "Of Agency, Assets and Appreciation: Seeking Some Commonalities Between Theology and Development," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 117, (November 2003), 28.

2.4 Summary and Conclusion

We have attempted to critique development and plot the understanding of development in terms of theological vision focusing on social and economic development with an emphasis on freedom, dialogical action and equity in order to lay the foundation of potential in the women of Katete Catholic Parish in Mzimba District of the Northern Region of Malawi. We have said that development has not achieved its intended goals as many people supposed it would because people are still facing harsh livelihoods. Women, especially those in rural areas have lagged behind in terms of social and economic development. We used some scriptures from the bible where they emphasise the importance of granting people freedom. We looked at the way God set the children of Israel free through his servant Moses and how he used dialogue to liberate those who were faithful to him through his friend Abraham. In the book of the prophet Isaiah, we showed the proper meaning of fasting being practical in what people do in their livelihoods, and ceasing to oppress each other. In the New Testament, we gave the example of Jesus' way of dealing with the society when he dealt with different classes of people through his activities. We have also noted the notion of freedom and sustainable livelihoods in the society and said that they go hand in hand in dealing with development. In order to pursue our study from a different approach it will be necessary to recognize that true development must be based on the love of God and neighbour, and must help to promote the relationships between individuals and society.

Chapter Three

A Historical and Social Analysis of Women in Katete Catholic Parish, Malawi.

3.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter we looked at development as it has been practiced in the 20th century and concluded that it has failed to bring about sustainable livelihoods particularly for rural women. Our focus has been the women of Katete Catholic Parish, who belong to a patriarchal society and most of whose activities are influenced by the way a patriarchal system perceives the role of women. The Roman Catholic Church in Katete is also a male-dominated leadership hence women also face marginalization even from the Church. So the women of Katete suffer from a double-edged sword in that through their culture and the church leadership, they experience marginalization due to male domination. When it comes to domestic violence, women are the victims.¹⁶ Most women apart from working long hours in their gardens, they have also to fight poverty through selling the little they have along the main road (M1) between Lilongwe and Mzuzu.¹⁷ Some can be seen going about from house to house selling their produce in order to sustain their families. We therefore propose a theologically alternative way of thinking of development, that expands peoples' freedoms so that they are able to participate in creating a life that is worth living, a life full of dignity and well-being. This includes women of Katete Catholic Parish who live in a society that practice patriarchy where women have practically no say in handling developmental programs.

In this chapter we turn our attention to the marginalization of women in Katete Catholic Parish. We will look at models of gender-based segregation focusing on patriarchal cultural influences, religious and development program biases. We will

¹⁶ There were seven cases of wife battering that we came across at Katete Mission Health Centre, which came about because of domestic violence; their alcoholic husbands were abusing women.

¹⁷ M1 is the High Way that most people use when they travel from Lilongwe to the Northern part of Malawi. Many women especially from Katete area sell their agricultural produce along this road.

3.1 Brief History of Katete Catholic Parish

The history of Katete Catholic parish is traced back to Fr. Hubertus Zoetemelk. He was born in Holland and opened many mission stations including being the first superior of Katete with Fr. Dupuis¹⁸ from whom he took charge. Fr. Zoetemelk, or “Zutu”, as the people called him, started his career as a missionary in Likuni Vicariate during the First World War. He was stationed at Ntakataka on the lakeshore and it did not take long for him to build a boat. John Coolen speaks of Zoetemelk that:

He was an ‘all round’ missionary: he knew many things, was extremely practical and although he was rather simple and shy in his relations, he did not hesitate to show others how to do things, his method was classical for these days. Most of his travels were done by bicycle...and where not possible, he walked. He was happy when he could travel, when he could be in the villages among the people, living in their huts, eating their food and chatting with everyone. He knew the language perfectly and it was child’s play for him to learn a new language. He could converse at ease in Chinyanja, Chitumbuka, Chisenga, Chi Swahili, and Chinkhonde. In Chinyanja – speaking areas and in Chitumbuka he wrote books, composed a Dictionary...he also made the first hymnbook in that language. He would set out to find the best place...always preparing the road for the penetration of the Gospel. This enabled him to study the land and gathered information, which he used in making maps of the area. He became an expert in making maps and these proved to be so accurate that the government officials used them for their purposes. Christmas 1938 was a great day for the people of Katete since their new and permanent church was opened. Therefore Katete Catholic Parish was opened in 1938. In 1940, a primary boarding school was opened and there were 27 pupils all of them boys. Fr. Hubertus Zoetemelk died in his native Holland on April 24th 1964. Katete has 19,500 Catholics (1989: 141). The outstations of Katete Catholic Parish¹⁹ include Unyolo, Kapita and Msese (near Mabulabo), Phembe, Lodjwa (near Ciwawalo), Msazi, Malembo (near Kambombo), Embangweni, Kamatawo, Ehleheni (near Zawa Gumbo) and Chibwana.²⁰

The majority of the population of Katete Catholic Parish are women. In Katete women have been marginalized and their potential hindered by mainly three factors, namely, patriarchal culture, religious beliefs and development biases. The patriarchal system has given privileges to men to exercise their freedom in all sorts of ways. Religion has

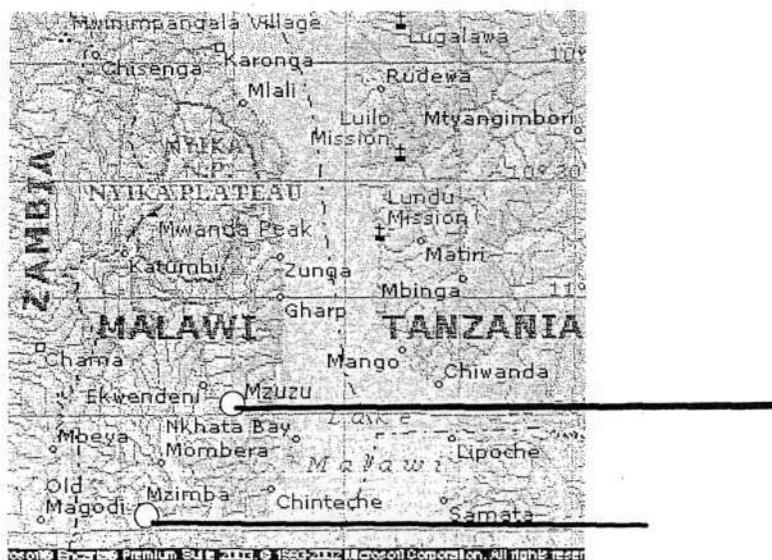
¹⁸ See: Background to and motivation for the study, in this dissertation on the first chapter, page 6.

¹⁹ See map 3 of the dissertation, page 40.

²⁰ Father John Coolen worked in the Diocese of Mzuzu for many years and out of his vast experience of Mzuzu and the Northern Region of Malawi, he was able to do research on the history of the early missionaries and the development of different mission stations of the Catholic Church in Malawi. See Coolen, J. *The History of Mzuzu Diocese* (Balaka: Montfort Press, 1989), 53 -141.

men in higher positions and sidelined women in decision-making. Development biases have even prevented women from participation in sound human development programs of the society and community.²¹ With this challenge to the status of women of Katete Catholic Parish, let us briefly explore each one of these factors in order to demonstrate how they have affected rural women's potential and their livelihoods. To be precise, we first focus on northern region of the country of Malawi and then Katete Catholic Parish together with its surrounding communities in the following section of the chapter. This is important because of the case studies that were recorded by the researcher between December 2003 and January 2004 respectively in Katete Catholic Parish and its surrounding areas. Some of the names of the villages and places will be noted in chapter four where we will be listening to women's stories through selected case studies.

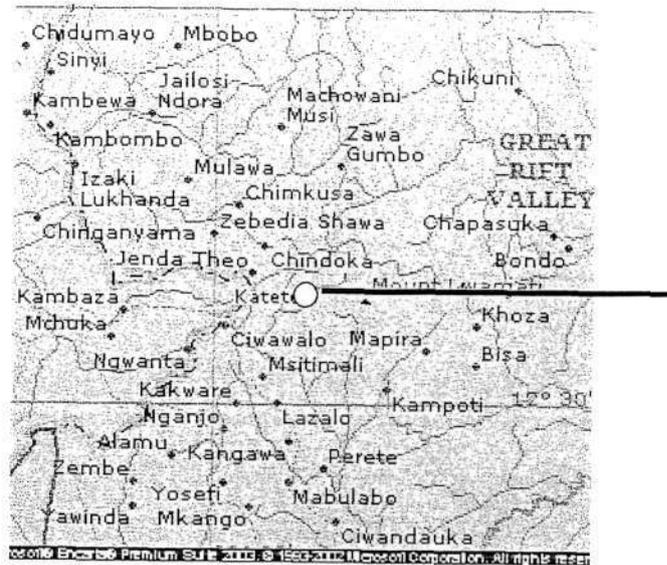
3.2 Location of Katete Catholic Parish



Map 2 – Northern Malawi (Encarta, 2003).

²¹ This information was given to the researcher by the Regional Superior of the White Fathers in Malawi, who has vast experience of the livelihoods of the Tumbuka people of Malawi, on 10.1.2004.

Katete is located in the northern region of Malawi in the Mzimba district of Malawi, where Katete Catholic Parish belongs. Mzuzu diocese covers the whole northern region of Malawi and the Bishop of Mzuzu does all the administrative work of the diocese.²²



Map 3 – Katete (Encarta, 2003).

Katete Catholic Parish is located South of Mzuzu²³ City in the Northern Region of Malawi. Mzuzu is part of the Mzimba District of Malawi. Tumbuka and Ngoni are the major tribes of the people of Mzimba and most people in Katete speak chitumbuka. The population of Katete is about 20,000 and there are more women in Katete than men. Katete mission and land covers 343.9 acres with the title deed number 16804 (Coolen 1989: 126). The soil at Katete is very good for potatoes, fruit, maize, groundnuts and vegetables (Coolen 1989: 58).

3.2.1 The Patriarchal Culture and Women

The Tumbuka people are a patriarchal society. As in any other patriarchal society men have more say and opportunities than women. “Male children are accepted and welcomed because they have trees to fell and wars to fight”, (Oduyoye 1995: 132).

²² See Map of the Northern Malawi (Map 2) of the study, page 39.

²³ See Mzuzu on the map of Malawi (Map 1), page 37.

The children belong to the man since men give bride price (lobola). All the children born of a Tumbuka man bear their father's name and male children are considered the heirs in the event of the death of their father²⁴. For instance if a family does not bear a male child, that family is considered unfortunate in the Tumbuka context. Girls are brought up in a family with the hope that they would bring wealth (in the form of cattle/money) to the family once they get married and the boys would also use that wealth to marry.²⁵ In Tumbuka tradition, before a woman gets married, she is advised by her parents to respect her husband and regard him as the head of the family. Most of the instructions are given to the girls by either their aunts or elderly women during initiation ceremonies. She is even advised to call her husband 'my lord' (a fumu wane) as one way of showing respect. She has to make sure that the husband has all that he needs in a home. In many Tumbuka homes, a man decides what should be done and dialogue between a wife and husband is minimal.²⁶ Those women who have tried to prove that they are better than their men have ended up being divorced or live a miserable life because their husbands have either married a second wife or enjoy having a concubine. To be divorced is seen as a failure in marriage life for Tumbuka women. Katete women are facing this type of livelihoods and patriarchal system find that their potential is being sidelined in spite of them being the ones that do more domestic chores than men and managing most of the homes. The way men spend their time in Katete can be compared with what Magareth Shirima says about the men of Rombo, in Tanzania:

Very few men help out in domestic chores. Those who do, only work sometimes on the shamba (gardens), and wait at home for their wives to prepare food for them. Many men are engaged in illegal business along the border. They spend their days there, and in the evening go to bars where (they claim) they exchange views to improve their business and lead their families. Women do not have this opportunity to exchange views, and if you go to visit the neighbour you will be counted as an idle woman (Shirima 1994: 30).

Some women have ended up being poor because the system has never allowed them to go to school or to participate in wider developmental programs. Most people in Katete

²⁴ This was observed during a focus group discussion on 12th January 2004, where all the participants had their father's name, including the researcher's whose father is a Tumbuka and a mother a Chewa.

²⁵ Rev. Fr. Mughogho of Mzuzu Diocese at the Bishop's house gave this insight to the researcher during a working breakfast on 17th January 2004.

²⁶ Gogo (grandmother) Agnes Chirwa of Lodjwa village shared this information with the researcher on the 8th of January 2004. Lodjwa is near Chiwawalo, See: Map 3 of Katete.

area are involved in subsistence farming and the staple crop is maize. Women go to work in fields as early as 05.30hrs and then come back home to prepare food for their children and husbands. Some women after heavy work in the fields, they also look after their HIV/AIDS patients in their respective homes. The hardest task for most women of Katete is fetching water in the morning because most women carry their buckets on their heads and walk long distances. Whenever Home Based Care Unit visits their villages from the mission centre, it is mainly the women who get involved in helping out in the awareness campaign on HIV/AIDS. Even though they do not own it, due to patriarchal system, land is very essential for women of Katete Catholic Parish since it is their major source of livelihood. Cassava, beans, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, millet, oranges, tobacco, coffee, sugar cane and different types of vegetables grow well in most of the surrounding areas of Katete Catholic Parish and the people of Katete are mostly involved in agricultural activities. But with the pandemic of HIV/AIDS in the area, many people spend their productive time either nursing those people who are terminally ill or attending funerals from village to village. The stigma about HIV/AIDS is very strong in Katete area.²⁷ The study will look into details about the HIV/AIDS in the fifth chapter when we will be discussing the assets based development, a need to sustain a healthy livelihood. It is obvious that patriarchy is a system that is legalized by most cultures and is a structure that justifies masculine domination in social, cultural, economic and political aspects of life. This means that patriarchy asserts the father's and male rule in the domestic space. Patriarchal domination is entrenched in religious and cultural beliefs and is practiced in most communities. Haddad contends that:

While almost half of African households are headed by women, customary law severely limits land and inheritance rights of women, resulting in land often being handed over to male relatives on the death of a husband in rural areas.²⁸

This male dominance is rife and hinders women's progress. Men ensure domination over the household through decision-making. But we must remember that, "gender equality is not just a human right but a prerequisite to sustainable economic and social

²⁷ The information about the Katete women was brought to the researcher's attention during a focus group discussion with men and women at the mission center in Katete on 20th January 2004.

²⁸ Patriarchy can also be the main cause of poverty among Africa women, Haddad, "Poverty and gender in South Africa" discusses this. see: Haddad. Beverley G. *African Women's Theologies of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminisms and Development* (PhD: University of Natal, 2000), 99.

development” (CFSC Press Review, December, 2003). Here are some features of women’s marginalization in the patriarchal system of the Tumbuka people in Katete Catholic Parish.

3.2.1.1 Family

It is common knowledge that marriage is the foundation of a family. Mercy Amba Oduyoye has written that:

Traditional marriages are political alliances between groups instead of between two individuals and, as such, the issue of choice on the part of the prospective husband and wife plays a minor role... In marriage, the private and the public meld together (Oduyoye 1995: 132-133).

In Katete to marry is the prerogative of a man. It is known by everyone that it is only men who initiate a marriage. Women are simply ‘married’. The idea of lobola has been exploited by men to influence women’s behaviour into submission. After lobola has been paid a woman will be taken away from her family and her village to join the husband’s family. A woman is literally told that she is no longer part of her family but she is now part of the new family, which is that of the husband. The Tumbuka way of looking at a woman in a family can be compared with that of the Chagga tribe of Tanzania in the way they prepare a young woman for marriage. Sebalda Leshabari has reminded us about the Chagga tribe, living on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro in Moshi District, most of whom are Christians:

Before marriage, there is an initiation ceremony to prepare the girl to accept without questioning the responsibilities handed down to her by her husband and the law. Girls are also taught about the joys of marriage and motherhood and how to keep their husbands happy. These lessons are silent about their rights as women, mothers or wives. As a result, mothers turn out to be very passive. Anyone who tries to fight for her rights is seen as rebellious, unladylike and aggressive, and will lose respect and credibility among her peers, elders and relatives. A good mother is the one who is passive, tolerant, and obedient to whatever is required, quiet, not questioning, hard working and faithful (Leshabari 1994: 35).

The character of Tumbuka marriages is that men dominate women in family issues that include general discussions, decision-making, and the leadership roles. This is the same in Katete and most of the victims are the rural women and less educated ones. In other

words patriarchy characterises marriage where men dominate women in a Tumbuka area. Once the wife joins the husband's family she becomes the 'property' of the husband's family. She is stripped of her family name and adopts the name of the husband. Therefore, "marriage, then, locates a woman in a socially validated relationship that enables her to procreate to the advantage of either her matrikin or her affinal kin" (Oduyoye 1995: 134). Once the husband dies his brother or his uncle will inherit his new wife in order to keep her in the man's family.²⁹ This has brought down any economic muscle that women have, since people tend to grab property of the deceased husband without considering the widow's and the children's livelihoods. Many people especially women have contracted HIV/AIDS because of such customs and traditions.

Women's marginalization is also evident in how the villages of Katete organize their recreational activities. It is very evident that girls are trained to serve men because their recreation is often cut short to go and do the house chores. Most recreational facilities focus on boys. For example there are a number of makeshift football pitches where boys play. Girls in Katete cannot play football for it considered a man's game. A girl must always explain and give a proper reason if she comes home late. According to Isabel Phiri:

These male stereotypes about women are present in all cultures of the world. What is being said here is that culture decides what is women's work and what is men's work. As girls grow up they are taught at home and through *chilangizo* what women's work is. Cultural demands are interpreted as God's will for women. The place of a woman is in the home, giving birth and rearing children. It is as if God willed it that way. Although God can call a woman to a leadership position in church, housework is more important. If she is faced with two jobs, she should always stick to the home (Phiri 1997: 100).

In Katete, girls in most households have to be home before sunset as they are expected to help out with the cooking and doing final touches before suppertime.³⁰ The boys are invited to meals when they are ready, parents worry little about the type of recreation

²⁹ This is common in Katete and many people tend to agree with this as they call it 'kuhala chokolo' and they believe that children and the widow are going to be protected, but due to HIV/AIDS, some families these days do not allow.

³⁰ This was a feedback from the focus group discussion that was held on the 15th January 2004 in Katete mission center. There were six girls, three women, two boys and two men and the researcher as the topic on family and women was been discussed.

that boys do even at odd hours hence the danger of mischievous behaviour among boys.

3.2.1.2 Land and Agriculture

In the Tumbuka tradition, men own land. A woman is not allowed to possess land at all. Although most of the work is done by women who develop the land, the benefits go to the landowners (men). The majority of the women in Katete are peasant farmers working on the pieces of land that belong to their husbands, uncles or brothers.

The irony about land and agriculture in Katete is that once the harvest is ripe the husband takes charge of the economic issues of selling the produce and sharing it among close friends and family. Due to this phenomenon, patriarchal cultures become oppressive systems because they support injustices that lead to men's dominance and to women's economic oppression. During the research, we observed some women begging money from their husbands to buy clothes and we also witnessed a woman fighting to have her husband's bank account changed after the death of the man. All the money recovered after the harvest was put into the fix deposit of the husband, yet the wife did most of the activities at the farm. "As a result women, especially married women, are forced to depend on men for survival" (Shirima 1994: 29). And this is the case for many women of Katete Catholic Parish.

3.2.1.3 Religion and Women in Katete

In Katete there are other religions as well as Christian denominations but our focus will be based on the Roman Catholic Church and see how the Catholic faith has indirectly and directly contributed into sidelining women of Katete and failed to recognised their potential. The coming of the early Catholic Missionaries (White Fathers) found out that patriarchy was a system and men were marginalising women. They probably failed to condemn the system directly because of the minimal knowledge they had about the Tumbuka people. These early missionaries could also have been influenced by the way early Church Fathers lived. The majority lived in monasteries and in institutions where they had little contact with women or the community through whom they would have

been challenged or tested with regard to the reality and truth of their perception and studies of who a woman is.

Their studies were also influenced by Philosophers such as Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas Aquinas who understood women as inferior to men and less capable in reason (Charles R. and Maclaren D. 1982: 9).

And also patriarchy was very much present in Western Cultures and the Bible. As the Roman Catholic leadership favours male domination this meant that Katete women would face oppression from two distinct quarters – the Church set-up and the Tumbuka culture. The head of any given Roman Catholic Parish is a priest (male) and he has the power over all his people. Just like the head of any Tumbuka household is the husband. This is the reason why women like Mercy Amba Oduyoye sees the Church and African culture as partners in the oppression of African women. She contends:

On the whole, we can say that Christianity has converted the African people to a new religion without converting their culture. It has simply appropriated parts of that culture and attempted to blot out other parts without understanding how the total culture functions as an integrated world view and system of human organisation. One can understand how Western missionaries in their eagerness; unfamiliar with African culture and clothed in ethnocentric pride, snatched converts from an unconverted culture... (Oduyoye 1995: 176).

This implies that, since Christianity failed to openly criticise and facilitate the change of African culture that is oppressive, it has added to the further marginalization of African Women. The Roman Catholic Church has for decades used the scriptures in the bible to justify its negative stand on the position of women in the running and organisation of the institutional church. This is the reason why, “this perspective has many consequences. Above all it strengthens the idea that the liberation of women entails criticism of Sacred Scripture, which would be seen as handing on patriarchal conception of God nourished by an essentially male dominated culture”.³¹ We see this as the basic element of the biblical vision of the human person, which tends to place male domination over women in the church. Women of Katete are not exceptional;

³¹ See: The Vatican Information Service at <http://www.vis.pcn.net/doc/040731x-en.htm>, (31.07 2004), 2.

they are also marginalized and suffer this oppression. This is one of the reasons why Phiri elaborates by going in line with Nyambura that:

Patriarchy is a destructive powerhouse, with systematic and normative inequalities as its hallmarks. It also affects the rest of the creation order. Its root are well entrenched in society as well as the church – which means we need well equipped and committed women and men to bring patriarchy to its knees (Phiri 2002: 19).

This is true and the church should seriously take note in order to harmonize the relationship between men and women in the society and the church as whole. A wind of change can only come through the teachings of the church and the position of the leaders in the entire Roman Catholic Church. There is another way that women in the church, especially Roman Catholic, are prevented women from holding positions of leadership. In a recent letter from the Vatican, it stated:

Male and female are thus revealed as belonging ontologically to creation and destined therefore to outlast the present time, evidently in a transfigured form. In this way, they characterize the “love that never ends” (1 Cor 13:8), although the temporal and earthly expression of sexuality is transient and ordered to a phase of life marked by procreation and death...From the first moment of creation, man and woman are distinct, and will remain so for all eternity. Placed within Christ’s Paschal mystery, they no longer see their difference as a source of discord to be overcome by denial or eradication, but rather as the possibility for collaboration, to be cultivated with mutual respect for their difference. From here, new perspectives open up for a deeper understanding of the dignity of women and their role in human society and in the Church.³²

This is an indication that patriarchy is not good and the church, through what it teaches should know this fact. The women of Katete Catholic Parish need to be given appropriate freedom especially by the society and the church so that they can bring about harmony in the Tumbuka land of Malawi.

3.2.1.4 Church Leadership

The majority of members of Katete Catholic Parish are women yet their leadership is not recognised in the actual running of the parish. People of Katete call their parish

³² This was a section of the letter to, “The Bishops of the Catholic Church on the collaboration of men and women in the Church and in the world”. See: Vatican Information Service at http://www.vis.pen.net/doc/040731x_en.htm, (31st July 2004), 7.

priest 'Abambo Mfumu' meaning, the leader or king of the mission. His assistant will always be a priest. Although once in a while women might lead the local church council, men usually suppress their voices. Because of the patriarchal culture, women tend to leave all the decisions to be made by men at every meeting. This has led to male dominance in the administration of Katete Catholic parish. One could argue that patriarchy pervades all African society, but the church should stand against this stereotype give women an opening to participate in leadership so that their potential is utilized and appreciated by the society. It should be noted that a sound leadership should demand that men and women are equal partners that will result in their mutual benefit and understanding. If the Catholic Church's social teaching is based on equality according to the word of God, biological differences should never be used as a springboard of oppression of either sex. According to the Genesis 1: 27 account, God created male and female in God's image. Katete Catholic Parish should show this in acts and deeds. In his words, God said "let us create human beings in our likeness"(Genesis 1: 26). According to the bible, God is pleased with whatever he creates. Thoko Mpumlwana has openly remarked:

I do not believe that God is so sexist that she only calls men. Many women may have been called to ordained ministry but prevented from responding to it by sinful world of stereotypes... Women should be able to do everything they are gifted and called to do in the church without being hindered by biological factors (Mpumlwana 1991: 374).

Women of Katete Catholic Parish are also capable leaders in the church, looking at the leadership skills they naturally demonstrate. During the research in Katete Catholic mission centre and the outstations of the parish, we discovered that women have a keen interest in working for the betterment of the people. Some of them expressed plainly to the researcher that their potential to contribute to the welfare of the church is been hampered by their male partners in the community. When we heard this, we concluded that amongst women, there is enthusiasm and a strong feeling within them. Isabel Phiri has written that:

A wind of self-awareness is blowing among Christian women in Africa. African women are becoming conscious that they have been on the periphery of church and society for too long...they have come to the realization that sexism in church and society is sin. This has made them break the silence and speak out in protest. They have also realised that their strength is in the mobilization of ecumenical sisterhood organisations. This has meant going beyond

churchwomen's groups. Through these organisations, they are beginning to re-read the bible and discover that society and the church is today not what is intended by the gospel (Phiri 1997: 119).

To concur with Phiri, we saw during the research Katete Catholic Parish women getting involved in many church activities such as sharing their ideas with the community and holding meetings concerning issues of justice and social and developmental programs in Katete Catholic Parish in opposition to their male dominated leadership. This is a clear indication that women have the potential to serve the people of God, so there is no reason to deny the women the ability and capability of rendering the most needed services to the community and helping to sustain the livelihoods of the people. One way of awarding these opportunities is collaboration.

3.2.1.5 Development Biases

Development seen as progress aimed at catching up with developed nations, started in Katete with the arrival of the missionaries. The first thing the missionaries did was to start various projects, which ranged from agriculture to education. In Katete the first thing the missionary did was to establish schools. The first schools were all for boys only and not a single school was built for girls. Combined with religious principles of not mixing boys and girls, the latter were completely excluded from education. It was only when the Sisters of Mary Immaculate Conception (M.I.C) came to Katete that the first school for girls was opened in 1948 (Coolen: 1989: 57). The coming of the sisters influenced the inclusion of girls in 1952 in the Teachers Training College, which was manly for male students. The most unfortunate thing is that the Teachers Training College has been turned into a Boys Secondary School (St. John Bosco) with 272 boys and the Katete Girls Primary School has never been upgraded into a secondary school. This move has disadvantaged girl education. Girls from Katete go to some boarding schools once they complete their primary level. The nearest boarding school is about 40kms away (Nkhamenya Girls Secondary School). There is also a Catholic school in Kasungu District, Central Region of Malawi. Others would go to Mzuzu where the MIC Sisters have their school (Mary Mount Girl's Secondary School). The marginalization of women in the education sector continues up to now with the low number of schools that are available in Katete. For rural women to progress, there is

need for Katete to either establish a girls secondary school or make St. John Bosco Secondary School a co-educational, where boys and girls can mix and attain equal education.

In the area of agricultural development, the first people that got involved in the projects that the early missionaries initiated were men of Katete. The men were able to get financial assistance from the mission centre since they were perceived as the head of any household. The missionaries were somehow afraid of breaking the patriarchal system that was heavily rooted in the people of Katete and the Tumbuka tribe as a whole.³³ The change began when the M.I.C. Sisters settled in Katete Catholic Parish although most households look at women as second-class citizens. The Church is reminded and challenged by Peter Henriot, when he recalls the saying that “a man of quality is not threatened by a woman of equality” (Henriot 2002: 7).

3.3 Summaries and Conclusion

We have clearly demonstrated that in Katete, women have been marginalized and deprived of their capabilities. Their freedom to participate in bringing about development has been hampered by patriarchal culture, religiously reinforced male domination and by development programs that give pre-eminence to men rather than women. Yet most women are willing to freely exercise their talents and contribute their skills for the betterment of sound livelihoods of Katete Catholic Parish. In the next chapter we explore the potential of rural women by listening to their voices through some case studies, which were selected during the research, and highlighting their participation in a development process based on freedom. We will also note in one of the case studies that women are capable of working effectively in the fight against HIV/AIDS. We will agree with the voices that the women gave when they shared their stories and support the notion of awarding freedom to women in order for them to participate fully in development. It is through or by listening to the women's stories

³³ The Vicar General of Mzuzu Diocese gave this remark to the researcher on 5th January 2004 during the working breakfast with the researcher at the Bishop's House in Mzuzu. The Vicar General also expressed to the researcher how in his own family, especially his father preferred boy education to girls.

that society will know that women have the potential to sustain life worthy of value and respected by all.

Chapter Four

Focus on the Potential in Women of Katete Catholic Parish

4.0 Introduction

In chapter 3 we have demonstrated that women in Katete have been marginalized and denied an opportunity to have a life with equality and freedom to participate in many developmental programs. In chapter two we rejected the development approaches that have been implemented so far saying they have not improved people's lives particularly those of women. We proposed expanding people's freedom as the key focus for development. Drawing on the theological vision for development we will explore women's potential in Katete. We will do that by telling stories of women who have created a life worth living for themselves. We then conclude that what we need is to develop inclusive programs do not segregate women but develop their potential to the full. We will learn three main lessons from the stories; firstly that women are poor because they have no access to the means of production and markets, secondly that education is the prerequisite for enhancing women's potential and finally that women, when given a chance can challenge systems and introduce different ones for the betterment of all.

4.1 Understanding Women's Potential in Katete.

By women's potential we mean the capabilities, skills and assets that are at their disposal and which can enable them to make choices, plan their lives and engage in activities that are aimed at sustaining their lives³⁴. This is based on the understanding that women are human beings created in the image of God, born free within the confinements of creation. Their identity as children of God gives them claim to the benefits of creation as authentic members of it. It is that identity which makes them subjects and not objects to be manipulated or misused to the ends of other people's selfish interests. Women are human beings. They are people of praxis because they act

³⁴ See: The general introduction on page 5.

and reflect on their actions. They talk. As Paulo Freire would put it, “what makes us human is that we have a word” (Freire 1993: 106). Women, just like men, talk and through a word, they can name the world and shape its destiny. By implementing their vocation as doers women participate in augmenting the goodness of the earth as was envisaged by God at creation.

4.2 Listening to Women’s Stories

There are so many issues that women have to share with the society, stories of marginalization, injustice, poverty, abuse, wife battering, single parenting and so forth. After all, these women ‘s stories:

Tap into a global consciousness of the need for social transformation for women. This is reflected in the central aim of the stories – a search for justice, equity and love. These stories remind us that we share in a common bond of pain and joy, of struggle and triumphs...they may be stories of dissent; but undoubtedly they are also songs of ascent... (Phiri 2002: 3).

In Katete Catholic Parish there are women who have lived their lives different ways. Some of them have maintained their livelihoods because they have proved to the society that they are people of potential.

Appreciating women’s potential in Katete Catholic Parish therefore we will focus on how women have utilized their capabilities, assets and skills to improve their own lives. In this chapter there are three case studies that highlight three different scenarios. The first one is a story that highlights how women’s skills can be transformed by not having a husband. It focuses on the widow who says, “If my husband was here I could not do what I am doing now. I have always enjoyed farming particularly growing coffee but marriage was a hindering block.” The second is a story of a woman who stood against all traditional odds to go to school during the period when sending a girl to school was taboo.³⁵ She managed to outwit all traditional elements to become a teacher and a social worker who impacted on many people’s lives. Her involvement in HIV/AIDS programs at the hospital where she is working has helped people of the area to change

³⁵ Very few girls between the First and Second World in Katete area went to school. Most of the girls were forced into early marriages. This was what the researcher found out from some elderly people of Katete area December 2003 and January 2004.

their attitude towards people living with the disease. The third story is about a woman who had to resign from her job in order to go home and take care of her aging and ailing father and at the same time living away from her abusing husband. She had to face the challenge of living without a husband and acquire her identity in her own home. Her humility gained her respect and honour from the church and the community. She is now rendering her service to many people of her village and Katete area in social and life skills.

4.3 Case Studies

Case studies help us to go deeper into the livelihoods of the society, in this case, the rural women of Katete. They help us to be focused and rethink our attitudes toward some cultural beliefs that sideline women in the society. This is why we concur with Phiri (2002) as she agrees with Musimbi Kanyoro that:

Culture is the leading issue, which has pre-occupied the theology of African women. Culture has silenced many women in Africa and made us unable to experience the liberating promises of God. Favourable aspects of our cultures, which enhance the well being of women, have been suppressed. Those that diminish women continue to be practiced in various degrees of our societies, often making women objects of cultural preservation (Phiri 2002: 20).

Case studies can also be a source of empowerment. It is through stories that many societies have gained a proper understanding of the needs of the communities and hence taken action to change and admit past mistakes. It is very rare that people take offence when stories are being told in the community. They also help people to improve their livelihoods and take hold of the positive aspect of culture in the society at large.

4.3.1 Case Study One

“My husband was a heavy stone on my back”

This is the story that made the researcher almost shed tears when he was listening to this rural woman of Katete. The story reminded the researcher some of the incidents during his early childhood when he would see some husbands putting lots of pressure and hardships on their wives. Some women never opened their mouths against

brutality inflicted on them by their husbands. As a child, he thought it was normal for women to just listen and do whatever their men did and said. Since he is not going to tell a story of his own experience, he feels that the following case study might have a similar impact on those who will read it. This is a real and true story of a widow whose stone on her back was lightened after the death of her husband. However some of the details and identity have been changed so as to protect the identity of those involved.

Family and Marriage

Nthandose Ngwira comes from Msese³⁶ village and she got married at an early age (17 years) to Mweende Gondwe of Unyolo village, both of Mzimba district, in the Northern Region of Malawi. As a Tumbuka girl, she had to undergo all the rituals of a Tumbuka young wife. At marriage, she ceased to be a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ngwira and she became the property of the Gondwe clan. Immediately after her wedding, she was given the name of Mama Gondwe. Her husband was a newly qualified primary school teacher at the time they got married and Nthandose had just finished her secondary school education and was waiting to go and start a teachers training college as Mrs. Mweende Gondwe. Nthandose's father did not want her to go to a teachers training college as a single woman fearing that she might mix with non-Tumbuka men there and they would marry her without paying 'lobola' (bride price), which would be a loss of eight cows that a Tumbuka man pays for lobola. Gondwe promised Nthandose that they would not have a child until she finished her training program but that did not work. She had only registered but was then found carrying a baby and that meant her becoming a housewife for a while. When the baby boy was born, and turned two years old they arranged that she would re-enter the college but again she was found with another baby. "I was forced by my husband to have three children before going to a training college".³⁷ Nthandose ended up having six children and never got into a teachers training college. The experience of Nthandose would just be that of the notion that, "African society expects childbearing and homemaking of its women" (Oduyoye 1995: 81). As a housewife they managed to have a maid. Mr. Gondwe became an alcoholic and slowly began misbehaving. Rumour had it that even

³⁶ Msese and Unyolo are the outstations of Katete Roman Catholic Parish, near Mabalabo, see map of Katete (Map 3, of this dissertation), page 40.

³⁷ Interview with the researcher on 20th January 2004, at Unyolo area, Katete Catholic Parish.

their maid was made pregnant by Gondwe. Whenever Nthandose tried to find out about the maid's child, Gondwe always protected her and he would even threaten Nthandose and even beat her for being curious over what he called useless matters. All that Nthandose had to do was to wait and watch since Gondwe was the breadwinner and she could not do otherwise. Her husband spent most of his money on drinking. Whenever Nthandose reported the matter to her mother-in law, the husband would end up beating her and warned her not to spoil his name outside his home. The story of Nthandose makes us reflect on Isabel Phiri's questions when she asks:

Why does God allow our husbands to hurt us? Is there a special punishment for them on the judgment day (Phiri 2002: 24)?

In the area where Gondwe was teaching the soil was good for a coffee plantation and the government encouraged teachers to get loans for starting up smallholder coffee schemes. Gondwe and his wife decided to get that loan and worked hard and became successful coffee farmers or growers. Nthandose did a lot of farming and she would wake up early in the morning to water and look after the coffee plantation. The agricultural skills that both of them learnt during secondary school education helped them to grow coffee better than the locals and their livelihoods changed and they managed to sustain their children better than before. The only problem that the family encountered was that Gondwe used to manage all the finances after the sale of the coffee and most of the times misused the money. The wife had no say when it came to money issues. This used to frustrate Nthandose and the children. Nthandose and her children looked as if they were people living on slender means. Whenever Nthandose complained to her husband's relatives, she was always told that the husband is the head of the family and there was nothing she could do but just to listen and follow. They would even remind her about the importance of subordination of women in the bible. Phiri says that an additional source with regard to the subordination of women is 1 Timothy 2:11-14:

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was not the one deceived; it was a woman who deceived and became a sinner (Phiri 1997: 50).

Some women would even advise her that Tumbuka men were like that, that they own land and women have no rights to land ownership, therefore complaining is just a

waste of time and energy. They also warned her that most women had lost their marriages because of complaining too much. Some people noticed that Nthandose was becoming unhappy and her farming interest was never the same. Nthando, as other people called her, suggested to her husband that they should build a house for the children but Gondwe openly told her that it was for women to think about building a home, he was the one to plan to do it. Nthando also suggested sending their children to better schools since they had the money but all her plans went into deaf ears and any suggestion coming from her would bring about fights and sarcastic language in the home. "As a Tumbuka woman, I had to safeguard my marriage and so just kept quiet", with drops of tears coming out of her eyes Nthandose told her story.

As a widow

Nthandose told her story when the researcher asked about the big house that was still under construction that was one of the most valuable family asset besides coffee field and she said:

When my husband passed away after drinking 'kachasu' a locally brewed illicit beer, I found myself stuck and stranded. I was afraid that the relatives of my husband would come and confiscate the coffee field and take my late husband's land or inherit me as per tradition. That did not happen, thank God. So I told my six children that we have to live but different from the way we used to stay when their father was still alive. We need to work and pray hard that God should help us to sustain our livelihoods. My children have been supportive and every time they come home during holidays, they spend time with me working on our coffee plantation and rear our poultry that we begun just after the death of their father. I even called the Mzuzu Small Holder Coffee Authority to my place to teach all of us how to take care of our trees, i.e. planting seedlings for sustainability, pruning, harvesting and marketing. Even my friends in the area would come and learn how to grow coffee nurseries and have started their small plots in their respective villages. I am a 'contact farmer'³⁸ now and a good coffee grower this time and most of agricultural field days take place on my farm. I feel good and happy. I have even opened an account for my first-born son since he is eighteen now and am planning to send him to an agriculture college when he finishes his form four (grade twelve). He is such a nice young man, different from his late father, am sorry to say so, 'may he rest in peace'. I would like my girls to choose their own husbands once they grow and make sure that they do not suffer oppression the way I have suffered as a married person. I think we can change this attitude that we Tumbuka people have towards women. Whenever I go to church, I, at times, tell our Parish

³⁸ In most places in Malawi, some people especially those of rural areas work hand-in-hand with Agricultural Extension Officers. They help to provide grass root information about the rural agricultural development. Contact Farmers are commonly known as coordinators.

priest to say something about the injustice that many of us women who come and sweep the church go through in our homes. Liberation should not come in after the death of a husband. Marriage is about doing things together, enjoying, recreating, praying, rearing children and feeling good...what does it mean in the bible where it is written that we are one body in Christ?³⁹

This was the question that the researcher was left with when the Mzuzu Coffee Authority came to visit the coffee plantation of Nthandose, at Unyolo village.

4.3.2 Case Study Two

“I am happy to be a teacher and a social worker”

This is a story of a woman of Katete who has served as a teacher for thirty-four years and now she is working as a psychosocial worker at St. John's Hospital, in Mzuzu City, Northern Region of Malawi.⁴⁰ This case study will be written and told the way the researcher heard her on 2nd January 2004. There are some Tumbuka words or expressions, which will be translated as the story, goes on. The storyteller allowed the researcher to disclose her name hence she is quoted verbatim.

Family background

I was born on 25th July 1936 as Nyembezi Elizabeth Chirwa, at Chapambuyo village in Lodjwa and one of the outstations of Katete Catholic Parish. I am the first-born daughter of Mr. Ignatius Henderson Chirwa and Cecelia Ellen Phiri. We were eight children in the family and the following are the names of the members of my family; myself (Nyembezi Elizabeth), Ernestine, Virginia, Boniface, Modesta, Anna, Marcel, Ernest. Our last born, Ernest died on 6th August 1999 at St. John's Hospital, in Mzuzu (R.I.P.). We thank God for choosing Ernestine into religious life. She belongs to the Sisters of the Holy Rosary of the Diocese of Mzuzu. My father went to work in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in search for a good livelihood. While in Zimbabwe, he was baptised in the Roman Catholic Church. When he came back home, he asked if a Catholic school could be built at his home. With the help of Father Zoetemelk⁴¹, a small primary school was set at our village. My father then became a Catechist and he was commissioned at Katete Parish. I would say my father was a man of God. My mother was a quite woman, hard working and ready to assist anyone who was in need. I am saying this because as we were

³⁹ This story was told to the researcher on 20th January 2004, at the homestead of Nthandose, Unyolo, Katete Catholic Parish.

⁴⁰ See Mzuzu City in the map of Malawi in the study (map 1). Mzuzu is about 160km from Katete Catholic Parish.

⁴¹ One of the early White Fathers in Katete Catholic Parish, see brief history of Katete (3.1).

growing up, our mother would always invite visitors for a meal and offered a bed if it was getting late. Our home was a home of many people and we felt we belonged to a community of loving people. As Catholics living at the mission centre, we got involved in most of church activities and made us look different from our peers in the surrounding villages. As our peers looked at White Missionaries as strangers, we looked at them as real companions. In spite of living on slender means, all of us were able to go to school. My mother died in 1969 and my father died in 1993. May their souls rest in peace.

Education and working as a teacher

I went to school at an early age of seven. It was difficult for me to go to school, as most of my friends in the village were never encouraged to go to school. Most girls in my village were being prepared to get married and bring cows into their respective homes as lobola. I thank God that my father believed in education first before marriage. Succumbing from insults from his friends at the village, my father sent me to a boarding school at Likuni Girls Primary School in Lilongwe. Language was a big problem for me since people in Likuni do not speak 'Chitumbuka' but 'Chichewa'. In 1946, there was famine and many schools including Likuni were closed so I was sent home. When the M.I.C. Sisters came to Katete in 1948 (Coolen 1989: 57), I was sent to restart my primary school. Thank God that the sisters opened a girl's school in Katete. Whenever I found time to pray, I concluded my prayer with words "God is Fullness" and this brought a lot of hope in my life. After completing my standard six, I started teaching as a T4 grade Teacher in 1956. I got married to Michael Edward and had my first-born son in 1957. While teaching as a lower grader, I did some private studies by correspondence and managed to finish my junior certificate and went to train as a T3 grade at St. John Bosco Teachers Training College, the present St. John Bosco Secondary School is for boys. After my upgrading program at St. John Bosco, I went to Domasi College in Zomba, Southern region of Malawi to do some in service programs for teachers. I am happy that I achieved this because I gained more skills as a woman and a teacher.

Working in the Malawi Government

In 1968, I was appointed a District Education Officer taking charge of Home Economics and Needlework for Mzimba District. My job involved traveling and supervising all primary schools of Mzimba and making sure that the girls had enough time to learn skills like knitting, crafting, cooking, and general home economics before going to secondary schools. This was part of girl-child education. My prayer life was "Fumu Yesu Zani mu mtima wane" (Jesus, come into my heart). This was an eye opener for me since I widened my knowledge on how culture affect and suppressed women's potential among the Tumbuka people. In case of lack of school fees, many families preferred boys to girls when it came to education. They would just leave the girls to grow and get married. Most of my peers never went to school because of such attitude toward girl-education and they are just housewives. I took this opportunity to ask head teachers to consider girls attending their primary education and learn

home economics. I am happy that many people listened to me and many girls in the district went to school. Being a mother, I too made sure that all my children went to school. This also was a testimony to some people who thought educating girls would be a waste of time. All my girls and boys have good education. Just like my sister in our family, God has blessed me with two children who have joined religious life in the Roman Catholic Church. Whenever they come home for holidays, I remind them to continue to be faithful to their vocation and pray for the people they have chosen to work for. I also provoke their minds about our Catholic Church attitudes towards women's ordination by telling them that it is high time that women were also ordained into priesthood to serve the church, after all, the majority of Catholics are women. They normally just smile and say nothing. But I know deep down their hearts, they see sense in what I tell them. I retired from government in 1989.

Psychosocial counseling

Having stayed home without formal employment, I began getting sick. May be this was because of boredom. I was then invited by the Bishop of Mzuzu Diocese to work in a pastoral office at St. John's Hospital. My work involved working and helping those people suffering from HIV/AIDS. The Bishop sent me to Tanzania to study psychosocial counseling and some life skills. This was a Clinical Pastoral Education (C.P.E.) offered at Bugando, Mwanza in Tanzania. People at Bugando, students, health personnel and my principal were very good to me. I was the only foreigner in a group of fifteen. To my amusement, these people took me as their mother and sister. My nine months program in Mwanza, challenged me to face the reality of those people that suffer and the only courage that kept me going was my prayer life, "Chiuta ndimwe mliska wane..." (The Lord is my shepherd, Psalm 23). I am now able to see Jesus in those who suffer and willing to help them cope with their emotions. The other thing that makes me grateful to God is that I can now speak Kiswahili and this language has made me to be fully involved with different people especially the patients (migrates from East Africa) at the hospital who speak that language. I am now here at St. John's Hospital giving spiritual and physical support to the sick people in and outside the hospital. I also visit those people who are suffering from HIV/AIDS with the Home Based Care Unit at the hospital. Whenever we visit these people, we pray for them and encourage them to have faith in God and live positively with the disease. Our work with these people who suffer from HIV/AIDS has helped people of the area to have fewer stigmas about the disease and some of the women that still have strength are able to support us and take care of those who are terminally ill. All what I have seen and done have helped me to grow. By visiting the sick, those with both temporal and terminal illnesses and assisting them spiritually, most of them have died peacefully with the grace of God. As I work here in Mzuzu, I am still proud of being a product of Katete Catholic Parish and it is my hope that most women's potentials can be revealed through my service and faith in God. I also know that there are many of us women in this city of Mzuzu that feel proud of being part and parcel of Katete. When I retire from this job, I can assure you that my next move will be to settle in

Katete Catholic Parish and serve my own people especially those who are affected and infected by HIV/AIDS pandemic.⁴²

There are many women who shared their lives with the researcher and their stories proved that women have the potential to change things and live a life worthy talking about and useful for the development of communities. Culture and tradition should never discourage women from doing what their hearts desire. It would be a sad thing to end up with words like... 'Had I known...' when God has given human beings freedom to reason and think. All things considered, "women also speak in words that we not hear them... they also speak in silence" (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 11).

4.3.3 Case Study Three

"Home is where am respected as a free person"

This is the story of Virginia Mtonga (real name), who has shown that a woman can also prove to be successful in a rural environment where culture, customs and traditions are very much against women's potential. In this case men do not like to see women doing things that are 'male centred development' like building a better house than they can in a village set up, mobilizing people for developmental meetings, decision-making, organizing church's social activities and leadership. Virginia is involved in all these things and she does it so well that many people are utilizing her skills in building the community. This is exactly what the letter from Pope John Paul II to the Catholic Bishops indicates:

Among the fundamental values linked to women's actual lives is what has been called a "capacity for the other". Although a certain type of feminist rhetoric makes demands "for ourselves", women preserve the deep intuition of the goodness in their lives of those actions which elicit life, and contribute to the growth and protection of the other.⁴³

The researcher met her upon her arrival from Lusaka, Zambia where she went to participate in a rural sustainable agriculture workshop. She was chosen by the locals to represent them in Zambia. For Virginia, land was the most important asset in her

⁴² Elizabeth Chirwa narrated this story to the researcher as she was nursing her daughter at St. John's Hospital in Mzuzu, Malawi on 2nd January 2004. Unfortunately her daughter passed away on the 22nd January 2004.

⁴³ See: Vatican Information Service, http://www.vis.pen.net/doc/040731x_en.htm, 7.

approach to rural development programs. For a woman to own land in a patriarchal system was a blessing from God according to Virginia.

Who is Virginia?

Virginia is Mama Mtonga as people of the area call her because to them she is their mother. So when they call her mama Mtonga, they want to share that motherly love that she has for everybody. A mother of seven children, she was born at Katete Mission hospital in 1940. She went to school there and finished her primary education before she went to a teacher's training college. Having taught for a while, she got married to Mr. Mtonga, of Malembo village, one of the outstations of Katete Catholic Parish. Her life became unstable when her husband started drinking heavily. There is a belief among the Tumbuka men that a man is, "a real man once he drinks alcohol". Whenever Mr. Mtonga came back from his drinking sprees, he would come and beat up Virginia and sometimes the children also. The children were never free with their father because of this habit of beating them together with their mother. Whenever Mr. Mtonga was sober, people would not know that he could be such a violent person. Some people who didn't know Virginia's husband blamed her for being beaten because to them Mr. Mtonga was a good man and quiet person. When her life became unbearable, she decided to separate from him and took all the children with her. Virginia narrated her story as follow:

When my father was getting old and all of us his children lived far from him, I decided to stop work and lived with my father at the village and take care of his land. Of course this was against our tradition for a married woman to go back to her original home and inherit the property of her father while the brothers were still there. Many people including my brothers did not like this move and I became a laughing stock because I separated from my husband and decided to stop work then to go back home. I do remember a very sad incident that had happened between one of my brothers and we the sisters during the day we were fixing the tombstones on some of the graves of our departed relatives. My brother, who is younger than me put it clear that we women should not even have a say about which grave should first be constructed because we were women and our homes were where we were married. This brought a big tension in my family because we had the money to build better tombstones than what our brother was trying to do. We ended up doing what he suggested because all the men in the village supported him and we had nothing to offer. I feel bad because some of the departed relatives helped me a lot when I was still a young woman and really wanted to contribute something so that their souls (spirits) would rest in peace. We Tumbuka people respect the spirits of those who have died and we feel good and proud to appease them. In our own

words, we call this moment “nyengo ya malitwiba” – the moment of fixing graves. Anyway this was just one of the many incidents that we women face when we decide to do things against our Tumbuka customs. But decision to come back home was important. For me it was important to take care of my old father since our mother died and he needed someone to live near him. When I got some money from the government after my resignation, the first thing I did was to sink a well in the village and then built the house. My father was kind enough to give me the land for cultivating and I begun growing maize, beans, Irish potatoes, cassava and some sugar canes. The first two years were tough because of change of livelihoods, from being a town person to a villager was a challenge on itself but I coped with the situation. At this time I was only living with two children at home and once in a while I would go and see their father.

Astonishment

The shock came into my life when my husband married another woman, and then I knew that he was no longer interested in having me as the wife. My separating from him was meant to give him a lesson but all went in vein. Then my husband died. My two children at home helped me a lot to cope with the hardship of village life. I saw this because both of them were working hard at school as well as helping me in the fields. My father eventually died and then that meant me taking care of all his land. I got involved in church activities, taking care of Sunday school children and preparing for liturgy whenever a priest would come to say mass at our outstation. My faith in God and as a Christian woman who prays a lot has helped me to be happy in the society. I was chosen a treasurer of the local church and a chairwoman for women’s organisation. My experience as a teacher helped me to organize the finances and human resources of the church in our outstation. A few men did not like my progress. The evidence was that most men who used to get involved in church activities, their attendance begun to reduce. The local church council that used to have twenty men has now only three men are there now. I think the reason could be that most of us women are doing better and we are showing our potential through greater involvement in community and church development. At times the priest would comment at the end of a prayer service that women are doing better than men in uplifting people’s spiritual growth. What prompts the priest to make such remarks is the way we visit the sick of our community, support each other during funerals and weddings. We even campaigned for a better political leadership when the rule of Dr. Hastings Banda’s dictatorship ended in Malawi and politically; we are well represented in the parliament. Even though we still feel there are some sort of marginalization after Kamuzu, at least our voices are being heard and there is frank talk when it comes to political development. It is my wish that next time we have any legislative elections, a woman should represent us in this constituency. Although the reason of coming to stay here in the village was based on two major things, to take care of my father and the marital problems, I still see that God had something great for me in my life. I am now a very happy woman and feel useful in my community. Probably this is the reason my friends and relatives chose me to represent them in Lusaka, Zambia. And now I

want to share with my community all that I learnt in Lusaka and then see how we can sustain our livelihoods in our village.⁴⁴

Virginia Mtonga has a lot of experience that reveals her potential and she can be a good model for many rural women if such qualities and capabilities could be tapped and exercised in building a sustainable community. What the researcher saw was yet another eye-opener that women can do great things if their freedom is accorded them and if some cultural barriers about gender are dealt with accordingly and fairly. According to Virginia's story, it is true that where people respect each other's dignity, freedom makes them progress and someone can work for the good of the community.

4.4 Lessons from the Case Studies

In the foregoing case studies we have demonstrated that women have the potential to develop a life that is worth living, full of dignity and well-being. Let us now reflect on what some of the lessons that we can learn from these cases. There were many stories that were gathered during the research but for now let us concentrate on the above case studies and from what the women shared. We will conclude that the women of Katete Catholic Parish have the potential to sustain livelihoods in any given situation. We will start learning from the first case study as we proceed. In this case, we are reminded by Mercy Amba Oduyoye that:

The literature is vast and yet it seems as if nothing has happened before. Attitudes and hierarchies die-hard. When women have made progress, it has usually been by their sheer efforts and against all the odds. One thing is clear: sisterhoods (whether of market women, church women, or professional groups) have been the backbone and source of energy for women's economic and social change. The very least the church can do is to make a conscious effort to promote and support women's study meetings as well as refresher courses for clergy and lay preachers on women's issues in order to enable the church to understand and to take effective steps against sexism (Oduyoye 1995: 185-186).

Women should be granted access to and ownership of means of production: It is clear from the case studies that what makes women lag behind is not because they are women but because they are deprived the opportunity to own and have access to the

⁴⁴ Narrated to the researcher on 18th January 2004, Lodjwa, Katete Catholic Parish.

means of production. Many people's livelihoods have been overshadowed because women's potential has been ignored and if any, under-utilized. Talents of women have been overlooked by cultural biases against them. Women have the capacity to transform a society because of the attitude that they have toward work. Nogget Martha Muchenji has reminded us that:

Women need to learn about their rights. Women don't know they should participate equally in rural development to obtain equal access to economic opportunities. They need to recognize their rights to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities and appropriate technology. They need to recognize their right to enjoy adequate living conditions with proper water, sanitation, transport and communication systems. The absence of women at policy-making levels, however, means that women's needs are often forgotten (Muchenji 1994: 82).

Women by nature are mothers and their motherly care is manifested through their actions and deeds. But in this study we see these women through case studies that they have become powerful leaders in the community precisely because they transcended the imposed role of 'mother'. This is proved through the case study of Nthandose of Unyolo village, who has succeeded in growing coffee and manages to sustain her family even better than when she was married. The freedom that she has to utilize the land and take care of her children in the midst of a patriarchal system has brought about development in Unyolo. People of Unyolo are looking at Nthandose as not just a mere village woman but also as a woman with potential. This is the reason we agree with Thoko Mpumlwana that:

Women should be encouraged and supported to play a visible role in society. Women with potential should be tried out so as to be models of society (Mpumlwana 1991: 378).

Nthandose is a good model for women of Katete Catholic Parish. We learn from this case study that people should have access to means of production. This is exactly what David Korten (1990) says in his *A People Centred Vision*, when he talks about the importance of justice, sustainability and inclusiveness as the defining principles of authentic development.

This vision is important because it views development as a people's movement more than as a foreign-funded government project... It seeks a synthesis of the change objectives of environmental, human rights, consumer protection, women's and peace movements. It seeks a new human consciousness in which the more nurturing, enabling and conserving dimensions of female

consciousness gain ascendance over the more aggressive, exploitative and competitive dimensions of male consciousness that have so long dominated the social and economic life of human societies.⁴⁵

This is also important, as it is part of equity and basis of production and necessary for human growth in any society, including the Katete Catholic Parish.

Let us now look at the second case study and learn from it. In this study we will look at the importance of education. We conclude that education is one of the tools for women to prove their potential in the society.

Education as a prerequisite for women empowerment: education understood as both a process of sharing and acquiring information and knowledge is the prerequisite to human growth. Therefore, “through awareness and education women can be empowered with knowledge and skills to help them break through the cultural and traditional attitudes which keep them from participating fully in the development process” (Muchenji 1994: 82). One of the disadvantages of a patriarchal society is that it denies women a proper education. It does not consider women’s ability to learn and widen their scope of thought. This system does not give freedom to women to plan their education; hence disempowerment of women is pronounced. In the second case study we learn that once a woman is empowered with education, she can become an asset to the entire community. We see how a Tumbuka woman of Katete Catholic Parish managed to attain education and was able to share all she learnt as a teacher through her service with and to many people. Then it is true that, “women as mothers can influence the situation by instilling proper values of respect for and equality with others people regardless of race, sex, religion and culture” (Mpumlwana 1991:383). In this study, we see this woman serving people without biases. Her work as a social worker touches all spheres of the society. At the hospital, she deals with HIV/AIDS programs, has even helped people to minimize the stigma about HIV/AIDS and her psychosocial programs involve women and men of the area. Her communication skills show us that she has the potential to uplift the society in a positive way, where people

⁴⁵ This is where David Korten challenges the critical development issues of the 1990. See Korten, David. *Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and Global Agenda* (Connecticut: Kumarian Press: 1990), 5.

would value life. As a woman from Katete, which is a patriarchal society, she has the ability to learn other languages and uses this to perform her services to the community. This woman is capable of fighting gender biases in all aspects of life. This is seen in the way she worked hard to enhance girl- education in her area. She also remembers God in all her endeavours. Her spiritual life show us that, “prayer and practical strategies go hand-in-hand and expresses her lived reality of survival faith” (Haddad 2001: 6). Her work in Mzuzu also shows us that Katete women have the potential to influence other developmental programs everywhere. Elisabeth Chirwa is a good lesson to us and we have shown through her story that women do have potential in society, including Katete Catholic Parish. This makes us reflect on the importance of education as portrayed by Freire who emphasizes the importance of education through dialogue. Freire says that:

Dialogue is the encounter among women and men to name the world and is a fundamental precondition for their humanisation (Freire 1993: 118).

Dialogue through education can influence people to transform their living standard and sustain their livelihoods.

Finally, let us look at the third case study and the lesson to be learnt is that women of Katete Catholic Parish have skills that would enhance their potential in the community and church development. This is possible once they have the freedom to collaborate well with any given leadership in a patriarchal society.

Regardless of who they are, women can also challenge a system that seems hard to crack if they have freedom to choose the life they value and point out the injustices that are being done to them. Some social and life skills have helped women to achieve their freedom. Faith has no limit and knows no boundary... this is the lesson we are learning from the third case study. Virginia’s story reminds us that the church should take women’s involvement in development seriously and should respect it at all times, thus showing why women are essential as “they provide the necessary support and enable the male workforce and society at large to function” (Haider 1996: 39). Her potential is seen through the love that this woman has for her ailing father. She does not want her father to die a sad man. She values happiness more than anything else.

She can only gain her dignity by separating from her abusing husband and break all Tumbuka barriers that prohibit married women to earn and leave their husband's villages and resettle into their original homes. When she gets back to her original home, she is able to resist all pressure from those people who think she has made a wrong choice and she becomes an asset in her village through her involvements in all sorts of developmental programs including church activities. She proves to us that a woman can also own land in a patriarchal society when her father gives her freedom to utilize the land. Her humility to accept living in a village set-up and building her own house without the help of her husband is enough to show that she is a woman of great potential. Virginia Mtonga is a good example of a woman whose potential is extended to other women of Katete. We see how she is able to represent her friends in a foreign land, Zambia, and come back to share her sustainable agricultural skills that she learnt in Zambia with others, including the men of her village. At the end of the day, we are reminded by Oduyoye that:

Women's voices should be listened to when they speak about the God ordained dignity of every human person and the consequent need of each for respect. To expect women to uphold all that is humanising in African culture and yet deny their participation in politics of family and nation is like asking them to make bricks without straw. In the end, even if this means challenging much that is ingrained in our religio-culture, we need to acknowledge that women are not mere symbols of morality, but that they are equally human. Perhaps, then, we can remove the obstacles in women's paths to self-actualisation and moral being and continue on our path to democratisation based on the full participation of all women and men (Oduyoye 1995: 171).

We can also align with the South African president during his speech on the tenth anniversary of South African non-racial independence when he said, "No government in South Africa could ever claim to represent the will of the people if it failed to address the central task of the emancipation of women in all its elements and that include the government we are privileged to lead" (Thabo Mbeki's Speech, *This Day Newspaper*, 28, 4, 2004).

These case studies have enabled us to reflect on the potential that women have and it is important that the society value these potentials. Out of these case studies, we therefore concur with Sue Delaney when she puts it openly and truly that:

Spiritual quest can take on a new intensity. The little moth can at least break through the casing and take off in joyous flight in search of the searing, consuming flame of the beloved. The child-rearing years have been the cocoon in which the slow but inevitable process of spiritual transformation has taken place. Nothing is wasted. All years of preparation and training are needed so that this might happen. Motherhood can truly be a time of intense spiritual practice for women engaged in a spiritual quest. Perhaps it is time to recognize motherhood as a spiritual path in its own right (Delaney 2003: 20).

Before we wind up this section of the chapter, we are reminded by Phiri about her own Chewa people that:

A person finishes telling a story by commanding someone to remove a roasted potato from the campfire (kachotse mbatata pamoto). The person who responds 'it is burnt up' (yapsyelera) is the next one to tell a story. As you finish reading the stories...let your response be 'the potato is burnt up' so that you should be the next one to tell stories of women of faith in Africa (Phiri 2002: 12)!

These lessons should be taken seriously in improving women's lives in Katete Catholic Parish. They should form part of the development agenda that is focused on women's potentials. How to do that will be our focus in the next chapter.

4.5 Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at the potential of women of Katete Catholic Parish through understanding the meaning of potential and then this meaning helped us to listening to their stories through case studies. Through these case studies, we have learnt that women have the capabilities to enhance and sustain livelihoods in a community. Through these stories, we have also concluded that faith in God helps people to render their services freely. We have again understood that cultural barriers can also be challenged and bring about a positive change in the mindset of the people who are very conservative in their culture and customs, in this case, the Tumbuka people of Katete Catholic Parish in Malawi. The stories of women of Katete have helped us to see God's love in the works that the women of Katete do. It is therefore our belief that the women of Katete can help to sustain the community. In order to pursue our study on the potential of rural women of Katete Catholic Parish in Malawi, we will show that Katete community can be successfully developed through what the

people have and hence the need to utilize the available resources that are in Katete. We will show this by demonstrating how an asset-based development can influence sustainability in people's livelihoods. We will therefore start by understanding the meaning of sustainable living from a Christian point of view in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

The Asset Based Development, A Need for Healthy and Sustainable Livelihoods in Katete Catholic Parish

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter we focus on how the potential of women that we have identified in chapter four can be tapped and put to good use. We respond to the questions: what sort of development theory should we be utilizing? What sort of policy should inspire the people of Katete? In doing so we will rely on the work by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993). We will try to build Katete Catholic Parish from the inside and find a path toward mobilizing its assets for the enhancement of women's potential. This approach will help the study to facilitate healthy and sustainable livelihoods for the people of Katete and we will conclude that in all that we do, God should be playing a role in the midst of our development. The last part of this chapter will look at the concrete examples of assets in Katete that could be utilized to build a sustainable community and the importance of understanding the theology of AIDS through what the Roman Catholic Church should be doing in Katete with the help of the potential of women of Katete Catholic Parish. To do that, let us first understand what it means to live in a sustainable way in a Christian context as we look at humanity and the community of creation.

5.1 Sustainable Living, a Christian Point of View

In the first chapter, we assumed that sound social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church Doctrines would enhance the potential of women for their sustainable livelihoods. This is because, “ the foundation of this Catholic social teaching is the basic human dignity of every person, as a loved creature of God” (Henriot 2002: 4). There are many people in the Roman Catholic Church who have written books, articles, documents, letters and so forth that help the church to grasp the teaching of the Gospel. During this research, we came across an article written by The Right Rev.

Fr. Colm Brophy,⁴⁶ S.J., the Provincial of Zambia and Malawi Province. This is important because it will guide the study on the issues of sustainable livelihoods of the women of Katete Catholic Parish. Brophy, in line with an article in the Tablets Series, *Caring for our Planet*, by Kumar (27th September 2003), has written that:

We care and we do not care, depending on the time of day or the day of the week. We all go about our daily business of living in a utilitarian manner, unnecessary consuming and destroying the goods of the earth at an alarming rate... then we rest... We admire the wonders of nature, reflect in a concerned manner about the environment and self-righteously give out about the terrible deforestation done by many charcoal burners. Kumar suggests that a look at our own habits might make us a little less judgmental. He offers a list of possible ways we could begin to change our lives and make amends for our sins against the earth. Here are some of them. Could I choose one or more of his suggestions to help me move from sin to grace? Change my attitude from: "The earth, nature and all its products are for my use the earth is not affected by what I do or consume"; Live more simply: Wealth and material acquisition is everything; Consume less: I must try to consume less; Reuse, Recycle: I must reuse, mend, and recycle as much as I can has not my own carelessness towards the earth been one of the thorns in the crown of Jesus? Love nature: If we do not love nature, how can we protect it? Time for stillness: Our lives are too busy, too stressful, and too full of the pressure of work. Could I take more time for stillness, silence, tranquility, prayer, for the development of soul qualities in order to restore the balance and allow a proper relationship with Creator and the natural world grow? Time for relationships: Could I allow more time for relationships, celebrations and joy and be less of a workaholic? Read more: Could I read more of the new thinking in the field of earth's life and my environment (Brophy 2003: 8-9)?

Brophy concludes that, "we can heal the earth by choosing some of these or many other personal responses to the plight of our earth's pain" (2003: 9). One can take a step ahead by realizing the importance of sustaining our livelihoods. Some of the steps to be taken include the asset based development approach to our way of living. We will see this in the following section of the chapter.

5.2 Asset Based Approach to Realizing Women's Potential

The starting point for an asset-based approach to development is to appreciate that "successful community development grows out of policies and activities based on the

⁴⁶ Colm Brophy is a member of the Society of Jesus in Zambia and Malawi province. At the moment, he is in charge of more than 150 Jesuit Brothers and Priests in Zambia and Malawi. Jesuits or Society of Jesus is a male religious order in the Roman Catholic Church founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola.

capacities, skills and assets of the poor people and their neighbourhoods” (De Gruchy 2003: 33). We cannot liberate women of Katete Catholic Parish by starting from without; we can only start with what women have in their skills and abilities to live and live sustainably. This is where the importance of assets stand firm in the community. In order to facilitate people to bloom and create their own lives as they see fit, we need to juggle around with our approach to reality by refocusing our programs on those that do not endorse a dependency syndrome between poor needy people with lots of problems, and non-poor providers of services with lots of solutions. We must circumvent what John McKnight and John Kretzmann call a “need-driven dead end” and embrace what they call capacity based approach to development. The needs driven approach to bringing about development puts an emphasis on deficiencies, gaps, tribulations that are being experienced by individuals and communities while capacity focused approach focuses on capacities, talents and skills that individuals and communities posses. Focusing on problems obscures people’s own vision of what they are competent of and over and over again inculcates a paralysis attitude of “what can we do if we are that bad”. Unlike the needs driven approach the capacity driven approach starts with simple truth that one cannot build a community on what people do not have.⁴⁷ What we should know is that Katete Catholic Parish has different assets, and women and men are the custodians of such assets. In Katete we find schools, hospitals, churches, unused dams, recreational facilities such as soccer fields, netball grounds, community halls and so forth. Katete itself is a land of agricultural potential as we have also heard from the case studies in the fourth chapter. In all, we can comfortably say that Katete women are exposed to many assets out of which their potential can be utilized provided they are given total freedom to do so. With such a background of Katete, we therefore look at the steps in asset-based development that would enhance the potential of Katete Catholic Parish and the women of Katete.

⁴⁷ This is an approach that John Kretzmann and John McKnight proposes in their hand land mark book entitled *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*, (Centre for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Evanston, Illinois, 1993). This approach is what I think Katete Catholic Parish needs to focus on in order to appreciate community development.

5.2.1 The Steps in Asset Based Development

In order to succeed in asset-based development, which would help in sustaining a healthy livelihoods of Katete especially for the women, we need to consider some steps that include mapping assets, building relationships, mobilizing for economic development and sharing information, convening the community to develop a vision and a plan and finally leveraging outside resources to support locally driven development (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993: 345-353). Now let us look at some steps briefly as we continue to harvest the potential in the women of Katete Catholic Parish.

5.2.1.1 Mapping assets

Mapping the Katete Catholic Parish with its assets is the beginning of locating and making inventories of talents, of the gifts and capacities of women and other individuals. A fully mobilized parish often addresses its agenda with the question, "What resources do we have to solve this problem ourselves?" This question causes every person who is interested in building community to constantly update resource maps (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993: 346). This cannot be successful if there is no good relationship in the area. This is the reason cultural, religious and gender barriers have to be outlined and solved at all times in a community. Some of these barriers have been noted in the previous chapters.

5.2.1.2 Building relationship

For good problem solving, Katete Catholic Parish must learn to build a strong and solid community. This is one way of encouraging sustainability and it helps people to be self-reliant as they link to one another in doing development things. One of the examples would be that the Parish might collaborate with different levels of people of Katete, the working class and the those in different outstations, be it farmers, youth clubs, teachers, chiefs and so forth. This has an added advantage in that the local people gradually, "cease from looking towards outside help in addressing the most important local concerns" (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993: 346). However,

Kretzmann poses a question about the word 'stranger', "who are the strangers in this community"? And then he gives an outline:

A community which pays particular attention to locate and mobilizing the gifts of the strangers in its midst is one which clearly welcomes the contributions of all its members to the community building process. Whether these marginalized citizens are young people or older residents, or various kinds of labeled people, the fact that they too are involved not as clients or recipients but as citizens and contributors can help to define this path as one which everyone can travel (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993: 347).

Therefore it is of great help to list community assets, capacities of individuals, gifts of those who come from outside i.e. missionaries, associations, and institutions, the physical assets of Katete and the capacity of those who are involved in development.

5.2.1.3 *Mobilization*

A mobilized community normally has the capacity to grow and sustain its own local economy. We would say that the path toward mobilizing the community, in the words of Kretzmann, are that "it involves mobilizing all of community's assets for two important purposes, developing the local economy and strengthening the neighbourhood's capacity to shape and exchange information" (1993: 350). Once well mobilized, Katete Catholic Parish will not sustain its livelihoods on hand outs, just like the way the early missionaries wanted it to be; it will start producing and probably export what it produces to other areas. In mobilizing, consideration must be given to developing the local economy and controlling community information. This is where structures like roads, water reservoirs, and abandoned buildings can be restored into useful assets for Katete.

5.2.1.4 *Vision and Plan*

Katete Catholic Parish needs vision and plan; otherwise it will be difficult to develop Katete. Therefore, before anything else, it is important to consider, 'what are we in Katete'? 'What do we value most'? 'Where do we want our Parish to be in a particular period of time?' A community plan provides means for defining and developing a local vision (Kretzmann 1993: 351). Planning and visioning go hand in with a thorough

inventory of the community. This is a process where we begin with assets, and then we involve every person, including the women of Katete in development. The importance of this is that the community achieves and gains different opinions that people contribute. It also helps the people to discover other potentials in the community especially those found in women. At the end of the day, such a participatory approach helps when problems occur in a community. Every person feels responsible to protect and support the development of the area. In other words, "the community planning effort becomes a magnet which attracts and coordinates the full array of local capacities" (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993: 352). The people of Katete Catholic Parish are the custodians of the entire Katete and therefore their capacities are needed most in developing the community.

5.2.1.5 Leveraging Outside Resources

Leveraging outside resources should only come when it is really necessary. It does not make sense to receive outside help when all local assets are not utilized. What Katete Catholic Parish should bear in mind is that leveraging outside resources is the last solution in any good development program. Kretzmann and McKnight have reminded us that:

Only when all of the capacities of local individuals, associations and institutions have been inventoried thoroughly; only when these local assets have begun to look first to their relationships with each other for solving problems; only when the local economic development potentials have been released and information is flowing freely; ... then should the community begin to consider leveraging resources from outside (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993: 353).

Some of the projects have failed in Katete Catholic Parish because people got used to receiving help from the early missionaries, hence their potential to work retrogressed and a dependency syndrome developed among many people.

Katete as a community, once having properly mobilized, its assets, will not be a recipient of charity, it will rather be a community that offers opportunities for real partnerships, for those who would like to invest in it. People who would come and invest in Katete area will therefore be prompted by the willingness of the people, and then there will be sustainability in the entire Katete. Being a Catholic Parish and a

church based area, it will be important that all development is seen as a gift from God. To show that the acts of God go hand-in-hand with the people he created, we therefore look at how theology can be attached to development. We do this in the next section when we will be talking about theological affirmation.

5.3 A Theological Affirmation of Asset Based Development for Katete.

Being human is being in the community. By nature and by God's design human beings are meant to be in the community whose essence is the fact that individuals are designed and "intended not only to be with one another but to be for one another" (Cooke 1986: 9). Being for others, as it is exemplified in the book of Acts 5: 1-11, is to share everything one has for the betterment of others so that no person shall want. Community building is about putting ones talents and skills to the service of the community. The parable of the talents in Mathew 25: 14-30 illustrates the importance of putting what we have received as gifts from God to the service of other people. The ability to put ones self to good use in the service of others is what it means to die to self in order to be glorified.

The asset based approach recognizes the value of individuals and does not look at them as black or white, disabled or able, old or young, women or men it rather looks at them as equal beings created in the image of God and gifted with all sorts of skills. The point is not what is wrong with them but what can they do? After all, " it is a path where local people must take the first step" (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993: 376). The community only becomes community when people are engaged in the process of building it through sharing and loving one another, as God wants us to do and enjoying every individual's potential and talents. A good and solid community should never be looking at things like 'needs driven' which sees "difficulties, problems, lacks, and needs of the community more than the potential in people, their resources, organisations, and institutions" (Kretzmann 1993: 29). We can therefore safely say that a real community exists when people are sharing something with one another and appreciate the potential that one contributes. Katete women have the potential that comes from God. This is proved through the women's stories, that they put God first in their different apostolic works.

The feeding of five thousand in Mark 6: 30-44, serves as a good reminder to us of the importance of looking at what we have as the source of community development. When the apostles saw that 5,000 people were hungry they had only one thing in mind, to send them away and let them go and buy food. Using the deficient approach to development, the disciples of Jesus could not imagine that a crowd such as that one could actually solve its own problems. Jesus using the asset-based approach asks them to identify the assets, the possibilities that are around them. The multiplication of the bread can also be understood in the sense of sharing and the ability to say, this is what we have and this is what we can use. We will not entirely rely on the outside help. The result is of course that because people have identified the assets and skills they have, because they have shared the resources amongst themselves, there is happiness and a sense of freedom. And also women's sense of belonging and their sense of self-esteem would be enhanced through asset based development and the use of available resources.

The wedding at Cana, John 2: 1-11 is another example of how Jesus is interested in what people have. The fact that he uses what people have, and being the first miracle in his ministry, Jesus acknowledges that assets-based action and the use of available resources is very essential in any given development. What we should also remember is that it was Mary, the mother of Jesus who asked her son, and Mary's potential is seen in recognizing that her son was not just ordinary, but the child of God, hence she asked him to perform this first miracle. According to the letter to the Catholic Bishops, Pope John Paul II reminds us that:

It is from Mary that the Church always learns the intimacy of Christ. Mary, who carried the small child of Bethlehem in her arms, teaches us to recognize the infinite humility of God. She who received the broken body of Jesus from the Cross shows the Church how to receive all those in this world whose lives have been wounded by violence and sin. From Mary, the Church learns the meaning of the power of love, as revealed by God in the life of his beloved Son: "he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their heart... he has lifted up the lowly" (Lk1: 49).⁴⁸

⁴⁸ See: Vatican Information Service, http://www.vis.pen.net/doc/040731x_en.htm, 9-10.

Mary is a good example to society that women have potential and that they can use their potential wisely. Women of Katete have the potential to develop Katete and sustain it for the good of the society.

We have reflected on development through Kretzmann and McKnight (1993: 345-353) and analysed the two approaches to it. We have stated that the Asset Based approach is the most appropriate approach because it aims at bringing out the best of the community's resources (1993: 345). We have emphasized that assets should be regarded as a pride of a community and we believe that it is the people's responsibility to safeguard their assets by being ready to make use of them and achieve their potential through what they have (1993: 353). Once all these assets are put together and made use of, with the loving care of God, they will be of great benefit to Katete Catholic Parish and sustain the livelihoods of the people of Katete including women. Nevertheless we cannot conclude this section without outlining the things that would enhance a sustainable community like that of Katete. Katete as already mentioned earlier, has different assets and because of the decline of some of these assets, livelihoods amongst people of Katete has been unsustainable. We therefore show how Katete can be a sustainable community in the next section of the chapter.

5.4 Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods in Katete Catholic Parish

Since the beginning of this study, we have used the word 'sustainable' as part of the focus of the dissertation and the area in which we want the women of Katete to value life through their potential in the society. Now we try to look at some practical areas of development in Katete that enhance this sustainability amongst women and the area of Katete. As we have already affirmed in chapter two that the notion of freedom and sustainability go hand-in-hand since both elements are important in any sound development of human beings, we therefore look at a concrete way in which sustainable livelihoods can help to achieve the potential in women of Katete. With the proper use of the available assets of Katete, the people's lives can be sustained and Katete can be a good example of a sustainable community.⁴⁹ Therefore the starting

⁴⁹ See the 'definition of the terms' in the general introduction chapter one (1.9) of the study.

point of promoting sustainable livelihoods through the women of Katete will be to understand the meaning of a sustainable livelihoods approach in general terms.

5.4.1 Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

In Katete, for a sustainable livelihoods approach, the emphasis will be on the people since all skills, knowledge, ability to work depend on them. Of course to achieve livelihoods outcomes depends on people's use of the range of assets in a community and these include the people themselves (human capital), social capital, natural capital, physical capital and financial capital.⁵⁰ As we turn to examine sustainable livelihoods, we align ourselves with Steve De Gruchy's⁵¹ draft paper (The Contribution of Universities to Sustainable Livelihoods) when he states that:

The sustainable Livelihoods do this by working with the already existing assets of the household and the community, as well as the livelihoods strategies that are already in place. In the language of Kretzmann and McKnight, it helps us to move from a deficit based development approach, to an asset-based approach (1993: 1-11). It recognises that you cannot build a community on what people do not have. Starting with people's needs, deficiencies and problems end up creating client communities that are consumers of development services. On the other hand, in working with the assets and relationships that already exist, in development efforts "a key objective is to remove the constraints to the realization of potential. Thus people will be assisted to become more robust, stronger and better able to achieve their own objectives" (Butler and Greenstein 1999: 46).⁵²

Therefore Katete Catholic Parish should look seriously at the assets that make ends meet and work on sustaining these assets. To do this, we will look at the way some developmental programs of Katete can be sustained and help to bring about the

⁵⁰ See 'definition of terms' in chapter one (1.9) of the dissertation.

⁵¹ Steve De Gruchy is the Director of the Graduate Programme in Theology and Development at the University of Kwazulu Natal. His research, teaching and publications concerns both the theory and practice of social and community development in Africa, and the contribution of the Christian faith to this. Previously he was involved in rural community development programs on the edge of the Kalahari Desert.

⁵² See also De Gruchy's paper "A theological appreciation of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework which he presented at the inaugural meeting of the Society for Urban Mission, hosted by the Institute for Urban Mission, Pretoria South Africa, July 2004, 1-18. For further readings, see, Mark Butler and Ran Greenstein, *Sustainable Livelihoods: Towards a Research Agenda for the Church Land Programme*. (Johannesburg: Community Agency for Social Enquiry, 1999), 57

potential of rural women, especially those of Katete Catholic Parish of the diocese of Mzuzu in Malawi.

5.4.2 Sustainable Programs of Katete Catholic Parish

We observed during the study that most women sell their agricultural produce along the main road (M1) between Lilongwe and Mzuzu. Most of these products are vegetables and fruits grown by the women in their respective villages and their skills of growing them were imparted to them by the early missionaries especially the White Fathers (Coolen 1989: 55) and the M.I.C. Sisters (Coolen 1989: 57) at the mission centre of Katete. At the mission centre, the sisters grew and maintained their vegetable gardens very well and many young women would be seen doing piecework in the production of those vegetables. It was the same with the White Fathers; they too maintained their fruits and vegetables although in their gardens, young men did the work (Coolen 1989: 58). In spite of the women working hard in their fields and then selling the produce, there is a lack of agricultural skills. Therefore Katete Catholic should come up with skills education especially that of sustainable agriculture,⁵³ because:

Improvement in agricultural performance is a prerequisite of economic development on the continent. The resulting increase in rural people's purchasing power will also lead to higher effective demand for African industrial goods. The induced dynamics would constitute a significant source of economic growth" (NEPAD, 32).

And that would help the women to utilize their potential through what they are already doing. An adult education program especially for women would enhance such potential. This should be a program that is on-going and the focus should be on those women who show keen interest in working and selling their produce. A sustainable program of sorts succeeds with the collaboration between the community and the church, men and women, the government officials and the locals and so forth. Such a collaborative way of doing things satisfies the social, economic, cultural, and spiritual needs of all the people in any given community and it does not die, but continues to

⁵³ A method that encourages continuity of animal and vegetable production etc

women. This is when we will see that a parish like that of Katete Catholic can help the community and the people of Katete to recognize the importance of social and economic development of the entire area and make a difference. It is therefore clear that:

Religious leaders often provide the community with a visionary framework for the development of programs promoting greater social and economic justice. While at the present time all too many organizations and institutions are placing their major emphasis on competition and 'self-interest,' religious institutions almost always stress altruism and doing good deeds for the sake of others and the entire community (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993: 144).

As we noted in chapter three, let us answer to such challenges by looking at how an HIV/AIDS program can provide service to the people of Katete Catholic Parish and help to sustain healthy livelihoods for the people. This is where the church can be the facilitator in promoting the programs of HIV/AIDS in a community like that of Katete. Phiri reminds us that:

The church is being called to account for its actions towards women and children. Church doctrines and teachings on the humanity of women are questioned. The church is being asked to practice justice and side with the oppressed, especially women with HIV/AIDS (Phiri 2003: 16).

HIV/AIDS program in this study is important because of the impact that the disease has on the community of Katete⁵⁹ and we want to help out with how an asset based approach could assist that community to enjoy a healthy and sustainable livelihoods. We have also been reminded by UNAIDS reports of 2003 that show the statistics of HIV around the world:

People living with HIV/AIDS worldwide at the end of 2002: 42 million; - people newly infected with HIV worldwide during 2002: 5 million; - cumulative AIDS deaths worldwide by the end of 2002: 28 million; - AIDS deaths worldwide during 2002: 3.1 million; - new adult/adolescent during HIV infections among women, worldwide at the end of 2002: 48%; - adult/adolescent living with HIV/AIDS who are women, worldwide by the end of 2002: 50%; - people newly infected with HIV who are under age 25, worldwide at the end of 2001: 58% - young people living with HIV/AIDS, ages 15-24, worldwide the end of 2001: 12 million; - children who have lost one or both parents due to HIV/AIDS, worldwide by the end of 2001: 14 million (Vorster 2003: 1).

⁵⁹ During the research, we visited several homes that the Home Base Care Unit performs some of their programs. Most people that were able to comment about their HIV/AIDS status were women.

With all these figures, the Southern African countries have the highest HIV/AIDS infection rates of men and women total population between the ages 15-49. In her book, Phiri put Malawi “at 15.96%” (Phiri 2003: 12).

5.7 Katete Program of HIV/AIDS for Sustainability

Talking about HIV/AIDS, “ten thousands of Malawians die of HIV/AIDS every year. After years of silence, the authorities spoke of the crisis in late 1990s. An official program to tackle HIV/AIDS was launched in 2004, with the then, President Muluzi of Malawi revealing that his brother had died from the disease” (BBCNEWS: 2004/05/24). Being part of Malawi, Katete Catholic Parish also suffers similar consequences of the disease and accordingly we think it proper to add this programme in this part of the chapter. To achieve a sound development we need healthy people, not sick ones. Women of Katete can fully partake in development if they are living a life that is guided and protected from elements that would deter them from work. We concur with Ann Smith when she says:

The Catholic Church is deeply rooted in local communities throughout the developing world and is a major contributor to the struggle against HIV/AIDS in countries worse affected by the pandemic. Cafod believes that the Church is therefore well placed to promote this holistic understanding of prevention and to foster reconciliation between opposing factions, drawing these towards an attitude of mutual acceptance and collaboration (Smith 2004: 8).

HIV/AIDS is one of the problems that the community faces and a proper program must be put into practice. In one of the case studies we learnt that some women of Katete are already getting involved in social and life skills that aim at preventing and protecting people from HIV/AIDS.⁶⁰ Those people who have understood the work of these women have now accepted the reality of HIV/AIDS and the elements that accompany the disease. Therefore Katete Catholic Parish should make it a point to come up with programs that would enhance the awareness of the disease such as, formation of support groups for people Living with HIV, Retreat programs for Care Givers, empowerment workshops for men and women, creation of gardens to grow nutritious food, income generating projects and social life skills programs out of which,

⁶⁰ See, the story of Elizabeth Chirwa, case study two, and chapter four of the dissertation.

communication skills, assertiveness, self-esteem, self-awareness, decision-making, self-actualization and so forth could take place. These programs would also help the people to understand the theology of HIV/AIDS. Let us now look momentarily at the theology of HIV/AIDS, a subject that would help women to put into effect their potential in Katete.

5.7.1 *Theology of HIV/AIDS*

A theology of AIDS should be person-centred focusing both on the individual and the community as cherished entities by God. In its comprehensiveness it should reform and inspire the proper understanding of both human sexuality and Christian compassion and care.

Ronald Nicolson (1995) argues that since the majority of people in the world contract HIV/AIDS through sex (be it by same sex or opposite sex), it is imperative that a theology of AIDS bring about not only enlightenment in the understanding of sexuality as a fundamental human phenomenon but also emphasise the fact that promiscuity and misuse of sex are universally, spiritually and humanly not desirable at all. The church should be helping people to understand that sex “in all its aspects, pleasurable, social, as well as procreative, is in itself a good gift from God” (Nicolson 1995: 21) and that it is only by its proper use that we can enjoy and celebrate its existence. Theologically the proper use of sex is in the fulfillment of its designed purpose. God intrinsically intended sex to be lived in a fulfilled way through abstinence and faithfulness, which are embedded in self-control as a spiritual gift. Armed with the truth that “...the only sure way to control the spread of HIV/AIDS is by sexual abstinence or absolute sexual faithfulness”(1995: 19) it is important to abandon the simplistic and legalistic moralist approach to dealing with sex. Sex should be discussed, taught and preached as a gift that should be used in a “loving relationship” based on gender equality and equity. In that sense sex should not be seen as “a man’s right and a woman’s duty, something which men have a right to demand of women” (1995: 21) but as a realm of the expression of love that appreciates the other as a subject, the significant other created in the image of God.

The other aspect of the theology of AIDS is the fuller and proper understanding of Christian compassion and care. As people contract HIV, they eventually start suffering from AIDS, which is a gruelling illness. Instead of abandoning them and blaming them based on a misconception of God's punishment, the Christian should get closer in an act of compassion to deliver care and support and as Nicolson puts it, "the terrible suffering of those with AIDS should awaken that compassion" (1995: 22). The Christian compassion to care for the AIDS patients is inspired by the act of Jesus when he is dealing with the leprosy cases in the bible. Although the Jewish society at that time found it normal to exclude and quarantine the leper, Jesus turned such a theory and practice around. Instead he touched them and welcomed them in society. Although in one way or the other we humans tend to be judgmental and look at people with AIDS as those that are paying for their sins, a theology of AIDS calls us to forgiveness, compassion and care. It is an opportunity for humanity to be in concord with the demands of the kingdom of God where the neglected and the poor are paid attention to and cared for.

The Catholic Church in Katete should be taking this theology seriously and encouraging women of Katete to participate fully in helping the community of Katete to understand it. Once people understand this theology, there will be lesser stigma, less gender biases against women, and mutual understanding in loving relationships, awareness of the disease and Christian compassion about the people who suffer from the disease. We have just learnt that religious leaders often provide the community with a visionary framework for development for greater social and economic justice... (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993: 144). So the Katete Catholic Parish Leaders can do like-wise in the programs dealing with HIV/AIDS in the community, but in a voluntary aspect. It can do that by reclaiming the abandoned buildings of Katete, which are a liability to the society and turn them into useful assets. One way would be to come up with a hospice program in Katete. One of the abandoned buildings can be restored and turned into an office for the hospice and involve women of Katete to support their community. The other viable project would be the proper repair of a dam near the mission which has been abandoned, and come up with vegetable gardens for people living with HIV as a source of nutrition and income generating projects, which at the end of the day will help the people to learn agricultural skills, marketing of the

produce and learning dietary programs. Let us now look at how the hospice could help the people of Katete and sustain their livelihoods through HIV/AIDS programs and taking care of those who are terminally ill in the Katete area. We will look at the meaning of a hospice as we proceed with the study in the following section.

5.7.2 Use of the Reclaimed Buildings into a Hospice Program in Katete

A hospice is important because by its nature, it provides service of care and support for patients and the families of patients who have a terminal illness and a short life expectancy and to demonstrate, teach and promote values, skills and knowledge to the betterment of the community like that of Katete. The church being an instrument for salvation and having a holistic mission should be able to work and collaborate with other sectors in the society. The Church should help form and create groups/organizations to work and stand for justice in order to challenge cultural customs to get rid of misconceptions about HIV/AIDS and the stigmas attached to it. A hospice program can be a practical tool for the church to use in Katete since it supports those people who suffer different types of marginalization including rural women.

5.7.3 Stereotype

To fight the epidemic, we should refrain from the stereotype that people suffering from HIV/AIDS are merely paying for their sins. Instead, this should give us an opportunity to conform to the demands of the Kingdom of God where the neglected and the poor are paid attention to and cared for. This is the true Christian concept of the loving God.

5.7.4 Misconceptions

We concur with Nicolson when he says that:

It is not helpful to think of AIDS as a punishment sent from God upon individuals for any reason. The Christian concept of God as loving and just will not allow such a theory (Nicolson 1995: 18).

We should never use cause- effect human means to explain suffering. Scriptures such as those from the book of Job should help us to illustrate that not all sufferings are linked to any wrong doings at all. The book of Job in the Old Testament argues that it was wrong to assume that the misfortunes which Job suffered were in any way a punishment for sin, for Job was an upright servant of God who deserved no such punishment. To the suggestion that perhaps it was sin even an unknown sin, which caused his misfortune (Job 11:6) Job replies that he is guiltless (Job 13:18). Although Job complains bitterly to God about how unfairly he has been treated, in the end he accepts that the matter is a mystery beyond understanding. Job says, "I have been holding forth on matters I cannot understand, that are beyond me and my knowledge (Job 42:3)."

Nicolson, who reflects on Daniel Louw, based on Moltmann's model of Christ the crucified God, says:

The AIDS crisis forces the theologians not to concentrate only on God as judge. We should also reconceptualise God as a compassionate presence in suffering, along-side those in pain" (Louw 1990:42).⁶¹

This is very important and understanding this will help us to avoid misconceived ideas.

5.8 Lessons for the Katete Catholic Parish

We believe that the church should play a big role through a collaborative approach with other sectors in the society. The church should never leave issues concerning HIV/AIDS for organisations like hospice only. As they attend to spiritual matters in whatever form, the churches should always embrace the holistic approach. The church's mission is to be an instrument for salvation. The message of salvation that the church conveys should include the status of women and gender imbalances knowing that the majority of the poor are women and:

HIV/AIDS has a disproportionate effect on the lives of women. On physiological and health grounds they are at a greater risk of becoming infected with the virus. On social and economic grounds they are more vulnerable to

⁶¹ See: Nicolson Ronald. AIDS. A Christian Response. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1995) pg. 31

infection. And when HIV/AIDS is present in a household, women are likely to carry the larger share of the burden and to be more extensively affected.⁶²

Therefore, the church must stand for, and by all means defend the issues of justice for all, so that the Gospel may be preached without bias.

5.8.1 *Justice and love*

The church leaders must know that they have an opportunity to visit and support patients in hospitals and can make difference so that every person can be noticed and loved. Based on justice, the church can always challenge some government policies that segregate those who are suffering from AIDS, through fighting for equal rights. The voiceless can be heard through the work of the church. Talking about the ministry to the individual, Nicolson says, "Churches must challenge health authorities who become impersonal in dealing with AIDS. They must try not to become impersonal themselves but to maintain as far as possible an individual care for each person with AIDS" (1995: 37). This is beyond individualism. Individuals cannot love; persons can and must love. A person is a person through other persons (Worsnip 1991: 124). We believe that the church should learn that issues concerning AIDS require that the Gospel be interpreted from the point of those in need, especially the poor in our societies.

5.8.2 *Asset Based Programs*

Based on John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, (1993) 'building communities from the inside out', a path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets as discussed earlier, is that the church can learn that people are producers, actors and agents.

The church should get involved in organizing the community to utilize their own resources for sustainable growth. The church can incorporate local institutions for community building. For example a member of the church, probably a hospital staff

⁶² See: Michael Kelly. "The Ethical and Theological Challenges Presented by HIV/AIDS" at www.jctr.org.zm, 3.

member can volunteer to participate in the chaplaincy program administering pastoral care to patients. The church can also sponsor community meetings with ministers from other churches and various faiths to discuss issues of relevance to themselves and the community and to collaborate on solutions by sharing their resources.

The church through hospices or hospitals can train people from their community to be HIV counselors. A practical example is case study Two, where the Roman Catholic Church of Mzuzu⁶³ Diocese empowered Elisabeth Chirwa from Katete, Malawi who was sponsored by the bishop to do a nine-month training in social life skills in Tanzania. She is now working in her diocese to help the families and relatives of AIDS victims. This is as already said, another aspect of the potential of rural women of Katete Catholic Parish. The asset-based approach helps people to challenge the community to stand tall and accept responsibility for its own future; a good lesson for the church.

5.8.3 *Volunteerism*

The way most hospices are managed is through volunteerism. People from the area in which the hospice is located come up and do some work. The church, through the teachings of Jesus, stands a better chance of helping people in the community since it understands the needs of the neighbours (cf. Luke 10: 29-37). Youth programs or clubs in different churches succeeds because of the willingness of the members to do charitable works. Since HIV/AIDS has become a concern for every person in the community, volunteer services are much needed. Beyond boundaries, HIV/AIDS has made people of different religions work together. AIDS affects the whole community; Christians must be prepared to work alongside those of other religions. In Katete area there are other denominations and religions just as in the whole of Malawi regarding religions and therefore there should never be boundaries in the fight against HIV/AIDS if we are to reduce the pandemic in the country. Every person should be free to volunteer regardless of religion, sex, race, colour and so forth.

⁶³ Mzuzu is the Capital of Northern Malawi, and 'Mzuzu Diocese' is the largest in size in the Country. See Map 1.

5.8.4 Hope

People should be encouraged to choose life in spite of the circumstances in which they are. People with illnesses like AIDS need psychological support in order to cope with the epidemic. The church should be constructive when delivering the message of hope to the people. The message of hope should be within their grasp. There must be mention made in social, cultural and economic circumstances so that the people can attain behavioural change. Philippe Denis puts it clearly when he renounced the statement by the Catholic Bishops of Southern Africa. He said, "As they talked about abstinence and conjugal fidelity, the Bishops deepened the phenomena of silence in the people who already find it difficult to discuss sexual matters openly" (Denis 2003: 74). Choosing life is hope for those who are HIV positive.

5.8.5 Collaboration

The church should be ready to work hand-in-hand with other sectors in the community in order to combat the epidemic. Creation of community-based organisations (CBO) should be on the agenda of the church programs. The church can help plan the running of these organisations through fund-raising campaigns and lobbying government support for the social welfare of the people. It is through participatory methodologies that the churches succeed. Briefly, the church should be doing pastoral response through training and supervision, caring for Caregivers and emphasizing the importance of accountability among those involved in developmental work. The women's potential can be realized through collaborative services in the community and this collaboration would be pronounced if the church challenges cultures and customs that sideline women.

5.8.6 Creation of Participatory Parish Programs

The church in Katete can influence the entire community through initiating programs that involve people with different skills. These people can utilize their abilities in the formation of support groups for People Living with HIV, they can get involved in learning how to run programs for Caregivers, they can help the church to run

empowerment workshops for the men and women of Katete. Some of these people can help to enhance agricultural programs like growing vegetables for income generating purposes, nutritional values and basic training in marketing and book-keeping. After all:

Delivering HIV/AIDS education through community mobilization and outreach activities has the potential for reaching more at-risk young people through scale and ensuring the sustainability of such interventions (Kanyoro 2002: 74).

Katete Catholic parish, with its population, can easily facilitate such participatory programs and the youths of the area can benefit from it since they are the future implementers of the church's programs.

5.9 Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at the importance of asset-based development as a way to sustain healthy livelihoods for the women of Katete Catholic Parish. We have affirmed that through asset-based development, women of Katete Catholic Parish can provide evidence that they have the potential in a community that perceives that women have lesser capabilities than men. We have also noted in the chapter that for the women in rural areas to appreciate life, they need to live a sustainable livelihoods through practicing healthy programs such as those dealing with HIV/AIDS and learning about the theology of AIDS and getting involved in voluntary programs that would help them work within the structures of their neighbourhood. The church leadership and the community at large can support such programs. Finally we gave a paradigm of turning an abandoned structure in Katete and making it into a useful asset, such as a hospice building whose purpose is to serve the people of the area. But we cannot sustain a livelihood without a proper parameter to development. We need a proper framework that would assist women to get fully involved in a community development. To do this, women should never be pushed aside by culture, tradition, and religion and gender biases. To achieve sound livelihoods, we will therefore look at a way forward in the next chapter that will enhance women's realistic theology and development in Katete Catholic Parish.

Chapter Six

Conclusions

6.0 Introduction

In this chapter, we will give the purpose of the antecedent chapters to outline the potential of women of Katete Catholic Parish. This will begin by summing up the preceding chapters and showing a way forward that will help to enhance the potential of rural women of Katete Catholic Parish.

6.1 Summary

To summarise this study, we begin with what we have so far put together in the dissertation. To do this, we will look briefly at what each chapter stressed in the whole study where we have been looking at the potential of women in a society that is very patriarchal.

In chapter one, the format for developing the picture about the potential of women of Katete Catholic Parish in Malawi was recognized. In this chapter, we gave the background to and the motivation for the study and then the procedure that the research followed in preparation of the findings of the study.

In chapter two, we looked at the theological vision of development starting with the critique of development and argued that development, as it was perceived by many, failed to bring about a sound livelihoods for the people especially the women of Katete Catholic Parish, Malawi. We then said true development must be based on the love of God. We affirmed that by paying attention to the importance of freedom based on thinkers like Amartya Sen (1999), David Korten (1990) and Paul Friere (1993). We then focused on what the Bible says on the issues of freedom.

Chapter three looked at the historical and social analysis of the women of Katete Catholic Parish. We outlined the life of the women of Katete and put it clearly that the

women of Katete live in a patriarchal system hence their potential was being marginalized by the male denominated culture. We gave a picture on how gender biased development oppresses the women of Katete by outlining the family structures of Katete with a Tumbuka culture. We discussed how land and agriculture is perceived in Katete and concluded that women do most work yet the profits go to men due to the patriarchal system. We briefly looked at the church leadership in Katete and we discovered through the study that there is male domination in the leadership yet women get most of running of the church programs in Katete. We also examined the way the early missionaries established their schools in Katete. We then noted in the chapter that education favoured boys more than girls. The change came about when the women missionaries came and some sense of girl-child education began. In all, we concluded in this chapter that women have been marginalized and their potential overlooked.

In the fourth chapter we expounded on people's freedom as a key for development. We did this by understanding the potential of women, through three case studies of women of Katete by listening to their stories. The three case studies were chosen out of many stories of the women that were interviewed in Katete. These stories were chosen because they gave the study an example of three dimensions of how the potential of women can be realised. For example, the first case study focused on an ordinary woman who, in spite of her being denied the opportunity of going further with her studies, proved that she had the potential to change the livelihoods of her household through the skills she had in growing coffee and hard work. She managed to do without the power of a husband and even progressed better after the death of her husband. The second case study taught us about those women, when once educated, are able to utilize their knowledge without bias and help change the society at large. In the third case study we learnt that rural women could still stand for their rights and challenge the patriarchal culture or system that puts women at a lower level in the community. We also learnt that the church could benefit from such women in the area of economic and social development. It is through these case studies that we were able to show the need of asset-based programs that would enhance and sustain women's potential in any community.

In chapter five, we came up with asset based development and made it clear that we cannot liberate the women of Katete without utilizing their skills, capabilities, talents, and available resources of the area. The study gave some steps that would help the women enhance their potential when dealing with asset-based development programs. The chapter also paid attention to asset-based development in Katete and then affirmed the theological components of it through examples from the bible. This aspect of asset-based programs helped the study to view the promotion of sustainable development of Katete Catholic Parish and gave a practical example of turning liabilities into useful assets in a community. We concluded that reclaimed assets help the church to provide the community with a visionary framework for development programs that promote social and economic justice. The final section of the chapter brought us to considering a healthy livelihood for the people of Katete when we dealt with HIV/AIDS. The study looked at the theology of AIDS, knowing that Malawi in general has the problem of HIV/AIDS and many people die because of the disease; hence it is hard to sustain a good livelihood. The study also suggested a hospice out of reclaimed assets so that the women would show their potential through hospice programs that mostly target the poor in the community especially those with terminal illnesses.

6.2 A way Forward

The potential of Katete women has been shown in this study and through the findings of the study, we have learnt that women can get fully involved in developmental activities in the society. We therefore feel that cultures, customs, traditions and stereotypes of different kinds that sideline women in development should be stopped at all costs. A sustainable community will never be sustained without the co-operation of women. With this in mind, we need a way forward for the community of Katete Catholic Parish and the community of the entire Katete. We can therefore look at some areas where we think women would benefit in developing Katete Catholic parish.

6.2.1 *Empowerment of the Katete Church Leadership*

The leaders of Katete Catholic Parish need to be empowered in different social skills that would assist them in the daily running of the parish in their respective outstations.

This would enhance the leaders with leadership skills such as, decision-making, assertiveness, self-control, self-esteem and managerial skills.

6.2.2 *Participatory Methodologies*

It is important that the parish develops a sense of involving everybody in community development so that at the end of the day, all members, including the women of Katete will appreciate each other's effort in enhancing the livelihoods of the people of Katete. When people participate in their own development, they develop a sense of ownership. This is when the parish could support the spirit of volunteerism in Katete.

6.2.3 *Promoting the Women's Activities*

Women are very important as the study has already investigated and their potential needs to be cultivated in all areas of development. The parish should at least open up activities that interest women. These activities could even take place in restored buildings of the parish that were once seen as useless and an eyesore for the parish. The women's activities would include sewing, home crafts, peer education, adult education programs, music and drama lessons, family life skills, HIV/AIDS Awareness⁶⁴ programs and psychosocial counselling. Even those young women who have dropped out of school and are single parents can benefit from such activities. It is through such activities that the society can listen to women's stories and be challenged.

6.2.4 *Promoting The Status of Women*

Katete Parish must introduce sustainable community-based projects for women. This would bring about a sense of independence among the women. The parish would also develop values of life and social skills that foster healthy life styles. The life style would help women of Katete and the rural areas acquire leadership positions be it in the

⁶⁴ If the women of Katete would protect themselves from contracting HIV/AIDS, the parish would have a good future and sustainability would enhance the potential of the women and the church at large. This is the reason for the women to get involved in HIV/AIDS awareness programs, because from such programs, they know that they have the right to say no to all sorts of intimidations that culture brings about onto women.

church or the community. Some of the issues of marginalization can easily be discussed once the women are in leadership positions in the society.

6.2.5 *Local Resources*

For the women of Katete to advance in their rural development programs, Katete Parish should facilitate the use of available assets before soliciting outside aid. Training workshops could be organised by the church for the people so that they learn how to identify local resources, including human skills that could help people to know how to utilize and rehabilitate abandoned assets of the area.

6.2.6 *Ecumenism*

As a Catholic mission area some people who are not Catholics might feel left out in developmental programs of Katete. To help them know that Katete belongs to all Malawians, the church should make it a point to tell the people that the development of the area, women included is there for everyone to participate. One of the unifying factors is to conduct inter-denominational prayer sessions at all cost and then take advantage of addressing community development issues. One of the factors that unite people in Katete is sport such as soccer, netball and sometimes-traditional dances. A Parish centre can easily provide the venue for such activities and then the people from different churches would come and share their joys together. Nowadays funeral services take place in many places and different church groups come up with songs and prayers for the departed ones, this also enhances ecumenism.

6.2.7 *Collaboration with the Government Sector*

One of the important issues that the Parish should never overlook is working hand-in-hand with the government of the day. It is important to have or establish some coordinators whose duties are to bridge the parish projects with the government ones. The government has a duty to assist the people with community development, including those of Katete in terms of loans, (as we heard from the women who succeeded in growing coffee), as well as transport and materials that the local

community government wants the community to use. If there was no collaboration between the parish and the government, then the local people would lose out and this would include the women of the Katete Catholic Parish. It is through such community assistance that the government gives to the local women that their potential is enhanced.

6.3 Conclusion

In drawing the study to a conclusion, we must say that the process of enhancing women's potential through theology and development of Katete Catholic Parish is a long process and it requires all the people who are interested in developing women's skills, talents, capacities, and abilities to be willing to enhance and facilitate the potential of women in all spheres of our livelihoods. The major focus should be based on freedom, an element that brings about the inner peace of the women in the society and the community. There is need to develop women's sense of belonging so that they feel delight and value in all that they do in the society. The patriarchal leadership of the church and the local society should at all times get rid of the oppression of women at all costs and help bring about a woman as a free being, created in God's image.

A.

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benefit the future members of the community, in this study, the present and the future of Katete is protected and safeguarded.

5.5 Building Katete from Asset Based Community Development

The study noted that Katete has some infrastructures that reveal a sense of social and economic decline.⁵⁴ This is evident by what roads, water reservoirs (dams), houses and some primary schools in the outstations of Katete look like. The danger of this is that it becomes hard to build a sustainable community when things are falling apart. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) propose a four-step process of going about rehabilitating and rebuilding the community (1993: 311-320). These steps can also benefit Katete Catholic Parish. We therefore briefly outline some of these steps that may help to sustain rural women especially those of Katete Catholic Parish who are the main core that this study is trying to focus on and bring it to the attention of the church.

5.5.1 Making an Inventory of Vacant and Abandoned Buildings

This is beyond simply noticing that there is a building that has been abandoned. It involves clearly understanding the story and the details behind it. It is not enough to just identify a building, it is important to clearly see the opportunities such buildings offer (1993: 314). In Katete we have seen that the land, the church complex, unfinished houses and abandoned halls and schools buildings could be used for various other things ranging from providing housing to developing agricultural programs.

5.5.2 Acquisition of Space or Building

Steps should then be taken to ensure that such building and or space is acquired from the owners. Acquisition of property often demands a lot of legal procedures, which the local community such as local women's clubs of Katete may not have. It is therefore

⁵⁴ See: abandoned houses that give an impression of social and economic decline on the background to and motivation for the study in chapter one of this dissertation on page 7.

important to build partnerships with organizations and institutions that specialize in such issues, such as the government, the Churches Land Project and many other organizations (Kretzmann 1993: 315). The Katete community is also lucky to have the Parish Centre that could play a major role in property transfer, since the parish, through the Diocese of Mzuzu, is the custodian of land and people owe a lot of respect to the diocese. Drawing the parish into the development process would be the correct thing to do for the community of Katete.

5.5.3 Initiating and Developing an Appropriate Project

Once the buildings and spaces have been acquired then projects to make such buildings useful to the community should be developed in conjunction with the community. Projects should be designed with the participation of everybody in the community both male and female and young people included. Women should play a major role in this aspect since their potential can be realised from their participating in such projects.

5.5.4 Sustaining a Viable Project

Projects are not only to be initiated to see them flop in a short time. Utilizing skills and capacities of people at community level is important; therefore we need to choose projects that have a sustainability loop built in them. Community members and leaders should find creative and ongoing ways of ensuring that the projects that have been initiated stand the test of time. Unlike the deficiency approach to development where projects are done simply to respond to the problem, turning liabilities into assets demands turning people's livelihoods into sustainable ones.

Therefore it is possible to turn Katete Catholic Parish liabilities into community assets and the women of Katete can show their potential through the abilities and capacities that they have in the social and economic development. "The key is in partnership at each step of the way" (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993: 318). This process of partnership-building in community reconstruction leads us to reflect theologically on the issue of reconstruction and the book of the Prophet Nehemiah in the Bible will be our guide (Chapters 1 – 6). It is important to acknowledge that the creation is God's

(Genesis 1 – 2). What God has created should be used for the good of all the people God made and it is up to us to show that we have the skills that God has given us to use in order to sustain our livelihoods.

5.6 Theological Reflection: Rebuilding and Reconciliation

As we have already said that a patriarchal system hampers the development of women socially and economically, as Christians, we should learn to not to tolerate such aspects of oppressive cultures. It is sinful to oppress one another and sin is an estrangement of relationships - relationships between people and with God. Sin is the fundamental departure from what is good. When relationships become bad, people feel lonely and isolated. There will be no room for recognizing the potential that others have once we are shattered by sin in any given community, including Katete Catholic Parish. Papal Documents from *Rerum Novarum* through *Centesimus Annus* state that:

True, all men (people) are not alike from the point of view of varying physical power and the diversity of intellectual and moral resources. Nevertheless, with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent. For truth it must still be regretted that fundamental personal rights are not yet being universally honoured. Such is the case of a woman who is denied the right to choose a husband freely, to embrace a state of life or to acquire an education or cultural benefits equal to those recognised for men (Walsh 1991: 176).

True as the documents states, we still see that with all the changes that the society has undergone in the 20th century, many women in church, especially the Roman Catholic, still suffer the consequences of patriarchy because some Catholic theological documents argue that it is God's will for humanity. The latest Vatican document on the relationship between male and female seems to support patriarchy since it does not mention directly the biases that the scriptures have in the Bible towards women in general. The documents state that:

God's decisive words to the woman after the first sin express the kind of relationship which has now been introduced between man and woman: "your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3: 16). It will be a relationship in which love will frequently be debased into pure self-seeking, in a relationship, which ignores and kills love and replaces it with the yoke of domination of one sex over the other. Indeed the story of humanity is

continuously marked by this situation, which recalls the three-fold concupiscence mentioned by Saint John: the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life (cf. 1 John 2: 16). In this tragic situation the equality, respect and love that are required in the relationship of man and woman according to God's original plan, are lost.⁵⁵

This part of the document, "does indeed contain common sense and insight, but it is one-sided in its representation of feminism and makes a number of problematic claims. It also risks making the Catholic hierarchy seem ever more anachronistic as far as women are concern..."⁵⁶ But on the level of theology, we have been reminded that:

There has been a devastating catastrophe. There is an urgent need for the Pope to tell us in what way the female body has sacramental significance, so that the embodied personhood of both sexes is affirmed, not just at the social and biological level, but also most importantly at the sacramental level. Otherwise, some of us might fear that we have become nothing more than reduction bystanders at the gay nuptials of the modern Church.⁵⁷

The Roman Catholic documents talks about relationship, and this makes us reflect biblically. This experience of estrangement of relationship was felt by Israel when due to war their temple was destroyed and its people taken into exile and as it is said in book of Nehemiah 1: 3, about the people who remained in Israel: "the survivors remaining there in the province since the captivity are in a very sad and demoralised condition: the walls of Jerusalem are in ruins and its gates have been burnt down" this showed that there was no peace and no joy in the people who stayed behind and continued looking at the ruins of their city and temple. This is the same with any ruined structure in a community; it either brings about sad memories of how the structure was damaged or a feeling of hatred toward who ever might have caused the destruction.

Reconstruction and rebuilding is essentially the symbol of restoration of a community in order that people can then feel part of the community again. The reconstruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in the book of Ezra and the rebuilding of the Walls of Jerusalem by Nehemiah did not only bring beauty and architectural independence but rebuilt and reconciled the community of Israel. There relationships were restored and

⁵⁵ See: Vatican Information Service. <http://www.vis.pn.net/doc/040731x_en.htm>, 4.

⁵⁶ Rome's new document on men and women shows that feminists and the Church have more in common than perhaps either realizes, but Catholic theology has yet to describe the sacramental nature of women. See: <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/cgi/archieve_db.cgi/tablet-00923. (07.08.2004), 1.

⁵⁷ See: http://www.thetablet.co.uk/cgi-bin/archive_db.cgi/tablet-00923, 4-5.

there was jubilation and merry making. The joy of God's people is about restoring and rebuilding relationships. There could be reasons why some infrastructures of Katete Catholic Parish are left abandoned, but restoring them to good use would bring about happiness among the people of Katete and their potential could be seen through the activities that they would be using these assets for.

It is a duty of every Christian to protect and safeguard what God has given and helped to acquire. Human beings are supposed to take full charge of God's creation and sustain the existing assets. We are living in a changing society, therefore we also need to keep on renewing the earth through reclaiming what is being abandoned or ignored. Nehemiah the prophet is actually challenging us to rebuild and repair our inner walls within our hearts by reconsidering our cultural constraints. "Jerusalem lies in ruins, its gates destroyed by fire. Come let us rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and be rid of the reproach" (Nehemiah 2: 11-18). The social and economic decline of Katete Catholic Parish can also come back to life once rehabilitation has taken place. The people will then be sustained with the projects that could come out of this.

During the study, we came across many structures that are not in use in Katete. These structures include: old warehouses, unused dormitories, ruined vacant houses, the old residence for the early missionaries, an old generator house opposite the church, the old and unused school teacher's houses, dried up dams and so forth. These structures can easily be reclaimed and proper use could facilitate some developmental programs of Katete.⁵⁸ There used to be a dam, now dried up, people used to call it 'Lake Lanters' named after the priest who facilitated its building (Coolen 1989: 62). These are available assets for the area and reclaimed assets such as buildings and water reservoirs can be used to carry out health programs like Home Based Care Offices for the people suffering from HIV/AIDS, orphanages for the children whose parents have died of HIV/AIDS, community schools for vulnerable children, water supply and fish ponds for Katete. These projects can also help the women to show their potential and brings about the change in gender attitudes that the Tumbuka people have against

⁵⁸ This was observed during focus group discussions and meetings with people in Katete area between December 2003 and January 2004. Some of the buildings reminded the researcher during his childhood in Katete when such structures were being used by the early missionaries (1960-1970).