

**INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL MINISTRY**

**TANGAZA COLLEGE**

(CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA)

**FACT-FINDING REPORT**  
**ON BARPELLO HELP-AGE PROJECT**

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## INTRODUCTION

The perception of old age is a period of decline in which human and social inadequacy is taken for granted. Older people suffer not only by being deprived of human contact, but also from abandonment, loneliness and isolation. As their interpersonal and social contracts are diminished, so their lives are correspondingly impoverished; they are deprived of the intellectual, cultural stimulus and enrichment they need. The question of who is old has different perceptive in Kenya. Indeed, when we talk of an old person immediately we think of our grandparents or any old looking person. For to many of us, an old person is anybody with grey hair, wrinkled face, difficulties in walking, talking, eating and getting sick quite often. They tend to have eye problems and at times become blind and have other old age complications.

In order to ensure the political, economic and cultural recognition of old people it has been necessary to bring to the fore their issues and hence the present attempts to raise sensitivity. My experience among the Pökot community gave me an opportunity to realise elderly people's situation. My area of interest was to see and participate in the involvement and the transformation of the old people's lives in the East Pökot. After interviewing several people in the area, they told me that an old person in Pökot is a person who has lived or existed for a relatively long time or advanced in years. He or she has wisdom and knowledge about the society.

In African traditional setting, the elderly people had great respect, and care in their families and in the society at large. They were important and respected because they were closer to the ancestors. Everyone had the responsibility of caring for the old people. The extended families took care of them. Girls would stay with their grandmothers and the boys with their grandfathers. The whole community was very sensitive to the needs of the aged. It was considered as a serious offence, to abandon parents and elders, especially when they were old.

People believed that the words of the old people were potent, they could bless or curse. For that reason, the family continued to love and to nurture them until death. They did not regard being with them as wastage of time, but they showed them love and compassion respectively. All the

same, the older generation had some duties to perform in the society. They were considered to be a source of wisdom and they passed it to the younger generation. Their specific roles were :-

- Passing knowledge to the young people through stories, proverbs, tales and songs.
- Masters of ceremonies during important social events such as birth, initiation, wedding and death.
- Pillars of the family and of the ethnic group, not just because they knew it's history and culture but because they were a point of reference for the customs and secrets of life.
- Guardian of norms and taboos which brought harmony in the society.
- Memory of a people, those who guard the history and the many events and words received from the past. The death of an old person was like a library which is burnt down by fire.

Today's situation has tremendously changed compared to the past situation. The aged no longer enjoy their family and community support. Many old people are suffering in many ways such as:-

- Negligence.
- Poverty.
- Lack of basic needs like food, shelter, clothing and medical care.
- Financial insecurity.
- Loneliness and isolation.
- Disrespect and violation of human dignity from the youth.
- Weakening of traditional family care and structures.

Due to social and economical situation which Kenya is facing today, the above problems are encountered. Some of them are as a result of erosion of sacred respect for old people especially in towns, among the emerging elite. "Young people are loosing respect for the elderly persons and find that what they have to teach is old fashion."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Muriithi, "Between Tradition and Modernity,". The New people, No. 62 (Nairobi) Sept. 199, p.22

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- The trends of modernisation have already affected the aspects of population structure, social organisation, life styles and expectations of Kenyans with serious consequences for many old people.
- Due to migration and escalating urbanisation and changes in the functions and capacity of traditional informal structures, the growing number of elderly people now have to depend on themselves.
- The family ties of the young generation are to their children more than to their parents and the extended kin, who had an important place in traditional rural cultures.
- As African men and women move into modern towns, their relationship with their extended families are inevitably weakened to some degree. The grandparents are left alone in the rural village and are seldom visited.
- The innovation in modern life especially advance in technology has disrupted the old African traditional order.
- In urban societies, the family ties are often less meaningful than friends.
- Lack of adequate social policies as regards to retirement.

I spent two months in Barpello Help-Age project working and sharing with the elderly people. My methodology of getting information was through active participation, discussions, interviews and observations. I used very little information from the secondary data as there is no documented material about this area or a public library in this division.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

#### 1.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Barpello Catholic Mission was started on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1980 by Fr. Gerry Foley of the Holy Ghost Fathers. During that time, Barpello was a thorny bush area. The people were constantly at the mercy of Turkana raiders. They were wearing goat and cattle skins and a good number of them were naked. During the same year, the Incarnate <sup>W</sup>ord Sisters in collaboration with Holy Ghost Fathers got an opportunity to Evangelize the people. There was very little medical care, education and development in the area. These problems were addressed by the new Parish. To reach old age in Pökot land is a very hard experience especially for the women who belong to a polygamous family. Pökot society is Patriarchal, so old men are always accompanied by their young wives, usually much younger than them.

When women reach old age, they are put aside. Most of the time they are asked to move from their husband's compound to join one of their son's home or even to move from one son to another. This is a heavy burden to deal with. The gender issue is a problem in this area since girls receive less education or no education at all. Later on this affects their health status and earning potentiality in life. When they reach old age, they have particular health problems as a result of repeated pregnancies and childbirth that occurs early in their lives.

The Pökot people are nomadic Pastoralists. They move from one place to another searching for grass and water for their animals. This affects most of the old women who are abandoned and left to die helplessly because they can not be able to walk for long distances. The feeling of these elderly women in many cases is sadness, unhappiness, loneliness, <sup>being</sup> unwanted adding to it the illness of age, malnutrition, harsh environmental conditions like poor houses, water, medical assistance among others. Several women approached Sr. Malena and expressed to her how they were neglected in the society. In 1993, she started helping them in the community here in Barpello.

As she continued to work longer in the area, she discovered that the situation of the old people especially the women was not good. She gathered the elderly women who expressed to her how they were undergoing difficulties in the society. Moved by love and concern of the Incarnate Word, she came up with a good idea of applying to the Help-Age Kenya for assistance and by June 1996, she started the programme of 'Help-Age' with twenty eight cases. This project was started as a result of the expression of the felt need which the old women were experiencing. As soon as the activities started, more women came looking for help. The main activities were gathering them every week on Mondays to have a moment of sharing, reflection, encouragement and sharing a meal together

In 1998, she Sr. Malena saw the need of doing something productive that would restore in the old women self confidence and generate some income to improve their living condition. They proposed to open a honey processing project which was begun in the same year. Honey is a local resource due to many acacia trees and shrubs growing in this area. As time went on, three needy men approached the management team for admission. They needed help because they were blind. Due to this disability, they were not able to take care of themselves. Presently the number of people who benefit from the project is one hundred and fifty. International Help-Age sponsors fifty seven elderly women hence ninety three benefit from the project.

## **1.2 LOCATION DESCRIPTION/GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT**

Barpello Help-Age project is situated at Barpello Catholic Mission, Kolowa Division in Baringo District, Rift Valley Province. (See Appendix 1). Barpello Catholic Mission is in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru. It is run by the Holy Ghost Fathers and the Incarnate Word Sisters.

There are several activities going on in the Mission. There are nursery and primary schools which were started in the beginning of the 1980's. There is also a dispensary that was started in 1981 for preventive and curative health care and health education. Two projects of women in this locality are "Maendeleo ya Wanawake" and the Bakery. The Bakery was begun in 1987 and "Maendeleo ya wanawake" in 1984. These projects are for educating the community on sustainability and self



reliance. In 1999, a garage and a workshop were started with the primary goal of helping the local people with skills that would develop the area and become a viable means of earning a living. There is a church and an Incarnate Word Sisters convent adjacent.

"The climate being semi-arid, the rainfall is classified as erratic and unreliable ranging from 400-900 mm per year. Daily temperatures are usually 35oc-45oc throughout the year and thus there is a high evaporation rate of over 2.5 meters per year."<sup>2</sup> There is inadequate water and overgrazing. In recent years there is a reduction of the grass cover. In some areas there are seasonal rivers which make cultivation along the banks possible throughout the year.

The majority of Pökot land is range mainly for grazing, hunting and gathering fruits. Most of it is harsh and inaccessible. The area is covered with complex soils of various textures and drainage conditions which have developed alluvial deposits. Some of the soil is saline and a large area is characterised by shallow stony soils with rock outcrops and lava boulders. Rearing of goats, cattle, camels and bee-keeping are the main livestock activities.

"Baringo district receives two seasons of rainfall, the long rains start from the end of March to the beginning of July and short rains from the end of September to November. The hottest months are from January to March."<sup>3</sup> The climate condition of this area is changing drastically due to cutting of trees, overgrazing and soil erosion.

This project occupies one and half hectares of land. There is one house for the aged which is divided into four rooms : a store, kitchen, a large room where the old people meet for several activities such as prayers, meals, lessons and recreations among others. It is also used for weighing the honey which is bought from the local people. The fourth room is used for processing the honey. Beside this house, there are two gardens, two water tanks and a small sisal plot.

The research was carried out Kolowa division, in East Pökot. "Kolowa has a population of 20,491."<sup>4</sup> The Pökot land is semi-desert and communally owned. Their community is a strongly traditional society living in scattered homesteads which form neighbourhoods which are autonomous

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Kositei Catholic Mission records, 1979-1996

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Baringo Development Plan 1999-2001 p. 5-6

political units. Decisions for the neighbourhood rest with men whose traditional gathering place is "Kokwa" a centrally located spot elected by the community. Communal consensus is the norm for any important matters. The Pökot are polygamous thus households are made up of several nuclear families.

Moral values, social practices and beliefs are strong. They form an important part of their lives. Women and children have a lower social status as compared to men who are the decision makers. Women do have a strong but subtle influence in certain household and communal affairs. Household and family tasks are divided among the members of the family. The Father is responsible for deciding the grazing areas for the various livestock, assigning jobs to family members, keeping watch on the health of the animals and generally organizing the family unit. The women have the duty of raising up children, collecting food, firewood and water, building the houses and the daily activities of keeping a family going.

The older children, young men and girls have the responsibility of herding the animals. The younger children act as caretakers of the infants while the mothers goes about their daily chores. Within a polygamous household the co-wives help each other in various intra-household tasks. Since 1992, the Pökot area has been in turmoil with serious cattle raiding taking place among the Pökot, Turkana and Marakwet tribes. These raids have ultimately had long lasting negative effects on the communities. This reflects the political turmoil that is gripping the whole country as the current government struggles to maintain power.

The literacy rate for the people of Kolowa Division is very low. "There are fewer girls than boys enrolled in schools. The percentage of boys is 67% while for girls is 33%."<sup>4</sup> Kolowa Division has seven primary schools but no secondary schools. (See Appendix 2) Being a pastoralist group, the value attached to the animals is very great. Traditionally, livestock have been the main source of food, income and security for the Pökot people. Animal wealth determines social status, thus it plays an important role in social life. The staple food of the Pökot has traditionally been milk, meat, blood,

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. P.14

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Peter Kiptalam, Interviewed, by Author, 16th July 2000, Barpello, Dialogue

honey and maize meal, which has been obtained by trading with the cultivating Marakwets and Tugens or bought from local shops from the larger centres.

### **1.3 THE PURPOSE**

The main purpose of the project is to sensitize the local community on the situation in which the old people are living and to involve them in social transformation. As many of the old women are neglected, the Incarnate Word Sisters continue to show their love for the aged. One single experience of love can transform the life of a person and give meaning to everything we have to do. As the Incarnate Word Sisters proceed with their mission of EVANGELIZATION, that is proclaiming the Good News of Incarnation among the Pökot people, there is an assurance of promoting the human dignity through this project. This is a very good follow up of Christ who asked us to love as He did. "He used to examine the cases of poor and needy, then all went well. Is not that what it means to know me? Yahweh demands. (Jeremiah 22:16).<sup>6</sup>

### **1.4 OBJECTIVES**

In order to meet the purpose of the Project, the following objectives are set to be achieved.

- To search with the Pökot community the best way of improving the life standard of the old people.
- To strengthen the role and contribution of the old women in the Pökot community by creating a channel through which this project can reach each person in order to share ideas, knowledge and experiences geared towards improving the condition of Pökot old women.
- To maintain close working relationships and foster partnerships directly or indirectly with non-governmental organizations. For example, Help-Age Kenya, International donors agency such as Adopt-A-Granny programme-London, and other bodies with similar objectives.
- To prolong the life of the aged by offering basic needs to them so that their life may not be cut short due to lack of basic necessities.

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<sup>6</sup> Henry Wansbrough, The New Jerusalem Bible (New York: Doubleday, Longman and Todd, 1985) p. 964

- To promote Christian spirituality among the elderly people through prayers and catechism.
- To involve the elderly women in active work in an effort to generate some income for their sustainability.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2.0 ACTIVITIES**

The activities in the project starts at 8.30 am according to the plan of the Help-Age programme. The workers arrive at 8.00 am in the morning and start watering the vegetable gardens and preparing tea for the old women. The elderly women start arriving at around 10.00 am. Since most of them come from far distances, the normal time to start the activities is at 10.30 am. The project is attended by women from seven different localities with one goal of improving their lives. They come to the project once per week and each group has a specific day. Some of the women are grouped together because they have few members. There are three categories: active, in between and frail. After the women arrive, they gather for a moment of prayer. They also sing and dance. This aspect is very much encouraged in order to find joy and happiness. Pökot people enjoy singing and dancing, it is fun to be with the old women when they are dancing and singing.

The following are the activities of the project:

### **2.1 PROVISION OF BASIC NEEDS**

The needs that are administered to the aged are providing them with food, clothing, visiting their homes, bathing, building and repairing of their houses, and medical attention. As regards the food for the women, there are two women assigned in the kitchen to prepare it everyday. They attend the project four days per week: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. On Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, the sisters accompanied by one care worker go for catechesis in a place which is far from the project. The rest of the care workers take the advantage of doing thorough cleaning of the house and watering the vegetable gardens. They also do some other tasks assigned to them. Each day the women come to the project, they are provided with tea, biscuits and lunch. Rice, vegetables, beans and tea is their main food but mostly they take rice and vegetables. Many of them do not have teeth therefore they prefer soft food. Meat is also provided but rarely. ( Appendix 3 1)

The elderly women also help in preparing food. They select the rice but only those who have good eye sight. All the meals are taken in the house. The women are very grateful with what the project is offering to them. This is expressed through the joy that they have. The little they receive is of great help as far as their health is concerned. All the food prepared is shared equally and finished. After lunch, the women are given some food to keep them going during the week. ( see Appendix 3.1). It seems to me that the food provided is not enough because they go to share with their own families back at home. Many of these women find themselves in the situation of gathering wild fruits from the bush such as "lakatet" (a sweet fruit with milk and red sap). They also gather another fruit called "kinyat" which is sweet and sour and "loma" an extremely bitter fruit which has to be boiled the whole day.

Apart from food, the aged are provided with shoes, skirts, blankets, kangas, boxes and sheets. Utensils such as kettle, cups, plates and many others are also offered to them. All these things are given according to the specific needs of each person. There is no favourism or discrimination in the provision of things since they are shared equally.

### **2.1.1 VISITATION OF THE HOMES OF THE AGED**

Reaching old age may bring difficulties especially in taking care of one self due to feebleness. Due to lack of water in this area many old people do not have chance to bathe. The manager with one of the care workers visits each one of the old people's home every month. Special days are planned in the programmes in order to know their situation of living. During their visits, the manager tries to speak with them, pray together and encourage them to live in the hope of God. Although most of them are not Christians, they still believe in God whom they call "Töröröt." In some occasions, they take the responsibility of bathing those who are not able to bathe themselves and prepare some food for them. They also teach them hygienic and health requirements such as up-keeping of the house, how to clean the dishes and taking care of themselves. It is not easy to fulfil this task but because of love and concern for the aged, the two need to reach out to them on a monthly basis.

This area has very poor roads which makes the visits to take two days in some places.

( see Appendix 3.2 ). Since the vehicles cannot reach such places, the only means used is walking. They always carry some food to offer to the old people. The project also builds and repairs houses for the aged. During this year, 2000 ten houses have been built and more than fifty houses repaired. The elderly people contact the manager incase of any need. She in turn identifies the problems during her visits facing them. The management normally employs lay people to do this task. ( see Appendix 3.2).

### **2.1.2 MEDICAL ATTENTION**

Old people need access to health care to help them maintain or regain the optimum level of physical, mental and emotional well being and to prevent or delay the onset of illness. Since the aged in the project need constant observation as regards their health, the manager is responsible for that. The project provides free vouchers for medical treatment in the local dispensary. Visual impairment and vision loss increases with age, this community is no exception. Many of the old women have eye problems. Ten of them have lost their sight completely. Urgent cases are referred to eye clinics in Eldama Ravine and Nakuru eye Hospital. Blindness is a common sickness in this area even among the young people

## **2.2 THE CATECHISM AND PRAYERS**

Every day, the aged have a moment of listening to the Word of God. They are invited to accept their reality and not to have negative attitudes about their society. They are also encouraged to love as God loves without any discrimination and to respect the young generation since both groups need each other. At the same time, the women are taught several prayers like our the 'Our Father' and encouraged to love Mary as the model of all women and the mother of God. A young Pökot woman who is their teacher invites them to share what they have learnt during that day and do it with enthusiasm. Most of them share about their daily experiences in life. The topics are prepared differently for each week and month.

Catechesis is done three days per week, namely: Monday, Wednesday and Saturday.

They always start with a lot of joy, singing, dancing and prayers. The sisters have been introducing them to the Christian doctrine of the Catholic church. There is one group of old people who out of their own interest asked for the special preparation of the sacrament of baptism. It is surprising to note that the same group is faithful in attending the Sunday service. This is because most of the people in the project are still in their traditional beliefs and they need more time to understand the Christian faith. This preparation has taken three years. Since it is not easy for the aged to understand, the sisters try to be patient by reminding them constantly. They do not mind even if they repeat several times. The instruction is done in form of stories because they are able to remember and it attracts their attention more easily.

(see Appendix 3.3 ).

### **2.3 THE GARDENS ACTIVITY**

This was started in May last year, 1999. Although the Pökot are not farmers, the project has two small farms. Various kinds of horticultural crops such as sukuma wiki, spinach and sweet potatoes are planted. Creativity has been used because the place is very dry. They normally practice artificial gardening whereby they use poly-thene bags for planting sukuma wiki and spinach. This method is doing very well at the moment. One of the gardens is for improving the women's diet and the second one for generating some income. Usually they prepare a nursery and transplant them later on

This was a collective effort from the old women who contributed a lot for the commencement of the activities in these two farms. They helped in bringing some sticks, and carrying soil because where the project is situated the soil is not proper for agriculture. The workers and the women who are energetic helped in digging the soil. The feeble ones helped in collecting stones for putting in the poly-thene bags. They also cooperated in mixing the soil with the manure. The workers do the planting, while the women help in weeding and removing small stones which might affect the vegetables.



Each day, the women fetch water from a nearby well for watering the vegetables. The tanks have been out of order for almost a month and very soon they will start using water from the tanks for watering and make the work easy. The feeble ones prefer to weed while sitting because they are not able to bend. The gardens are very productive. They have bought three goats from the income of their market garden. ( see Appendix 3.4).

## **2.4 HONEY PROCESSING**

This project of processing honey was started in 1998 with the purpose of alleviating poverty and bringing self reliance to the old women. It was the first proposed activity that would avoid loneliness which leads most women to depression. The honey is bought from the local people. Honey production is a very lucrative enterprise in the area and it is mostly harvested from pure Pökot acacia. For the processing of the honey, there are some steps which are followed. The honey processed differs in colour, flavour and density. It may be watery or thick such that it can not flow easily. The first thing which is done is to separate light coloured honey from the dark one. The following method is used in processing it.

**Weighing:** A scale is used for weighing honey combs brought by the local people. It is weighed in a bucket which is clearly marked with a net weight.

**Separation of honey from the wax:** The contents of the receiving tank are properly broken up by means of a long handled ladle and the tank closed so that additional moisture can not be absorbed during the night. The next morning most of the wax floats near the top of the tank.

**Skimming of wax:** The wax which has floated on top is collected by hand. Should the separation be insufficient and the wax still contains some honey the wax is passed through the honey press.

**Settling of honey:** The honey from which the wax has been skimmed is drawn off through the bottom cock, then through a wire gauze funnel into settling tank.

**Packing of honey:** The settled honey is then drawn off directly into containers and later on to the bottles. To prevent the honey from absorbing moisture from the air, it is kept in air tight containers.

**Washing:** All containers are thoroughly washed on the outside after being hermetically sealed or otherwise they will attract moulds and will stick together and become unpleasant to handle.

**Labelling:** A label is stuck on with an adhesive to which some preservative has been added so as to protect it from mould.

**Packing in cases:** The bottles of honey are packed in corrugated fibre boxes.

**Closing of packages:** Stencils are used for marking the cartons with the size and number of bottles. Care is taken not only for the honey itself but also for the packaging materials. The packing materials are of good quality, hence the whole process involved is of high standard of cleanliness. This is a slow process and it needs more patience than strength or knowledge. The management has decided in the past that the old women should be involved in packing of the honey.

**The refining of wax:** The wax collected from the settling tanks is washed carefully with neutral water. Then it is remelted with water in a pan with twice as much water as wax. It is formed into a ball by pouring it into a vessel to set it into a cake. The refined wax is later used for producing body cream. The ingredients for the body cream are beeswax, glycerine and vegetable oil. It has been a very good natural honey product in the area. Most of the work is done by the care workers. The old women contribute in cleaning the bottles, skimming of wax and boiling water for cleaning the tanks and the containers. Although the refining of honey and wax seems easy, it is infact, an art which requires long experience, much time and special equipment. ( see Appendix 3.5)

## **2.5 HANDICRAFTS**

This activity was introduced in August 1999 with the aim of looking for ventures which would generate income apart from the honey project. The manager and the workers make bangles and necklaces made of beads. (See Appendix 3.6). They make these items on orders from Nairobi. They have also introduced rope making made out of sisal and those women who do not know, learn from those who know. They are very kind to one another encouraging each other to know how to make the ropes. There is no hurry in making them since it is done according to individual's strength and ability. The sisals are locally available in some areas and those who come from such areas bring

them. The others prepare the sisal for use. Since the supply is not enough, they have a small sisal plot near the honey house. The sisal is not yet ready for use because it was planted recently. It was planted in a small plot for an experiment purpose so that if it would do well they will enlarge the plot allocated for planting.

## **2.6 A GET-TOGETHER**

At the end of every month, the project organizes a gathering of all the different groups involved in the project. The old women start arriving at 9.00 am. They have some reflections about the Word of God and sometimes Christian videos which encourage them to accept their reality. The videos are based on the life of faith in God which gives them hope in their lives. Each group is given the opportunity to entertain the rest and they feel free to do it. In these gatherings, the old women are always enthusiastic to share and it is a precious moment for them all because they feel the support and closeness of their agemates. Special food is prepared and there is no work to be done on that particular day. They are provided with the necessary basic needs for their survival. By coming together, they share ideas and experiences which motivates them to live in hope. (See Appendix 3.7)

## **2.7 ADULT EDUCATION**

The aged have some literacy classes with one of the care workers who teach them how to speak Kiswahili and English. They are interested<sup>in</sup> learning the two languages. Since many visitors pay a visit to their project, they feel that it will be of great help to communicate with them. It is a pleasure for them to greet the visitors using these languages. Once per week, the women are also taught several exercises concerning their health. Such exercises help them on physical fitness and especially in relaxing their muscles. This has been a benefit since the Pökot women have the tendency of carrying heavy things on their back and walking for long distances. They are encouraged to take care of their bodies and to have the delicacy of protecting life which is a precious gift from God.

## **2.8 AWARENESS PROGRAMMES**

**2.8.1 Community:** This programme was started in 1996. The sisters have been visiting the families of the aged in order to make them aware of their importance in the families and in the society at large. There is a great need of creating awareness in the community in this regard in order to improve the situation in which the old women live and involve them in the transformation of their own people.

Moved by love and concern, the sisters gather members of the community who are living with old people. Their primary goal is to discover how the Lord is acting in this situation and at the same time to uncover the different social, traditional, cultural, personal and religious mechanisms that are against God's plan. The sisters are hoping that this will bring change in the coming generations since it is just on the process.

**2.8.2 School:** During the international year for the aged 1998, the manager had the opportunity to visit several schools in the area. She encouraged the children to take care of the old people and to respect them. Many of them have a positive response towards the aged. As one of the key tenets of Help-Age Kenya's objective is the need to campaign for public awareness on matters relating to aging, the management of Barpello project believes that a person's attitudes can best be transformed at an early age. The main topics of awareness were based on the old people and their rights. (See Appendix 3.8)

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3.0 FINANCES /ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

#### **3.1 SOURCES OF FINANCE**

This project depends on foreign donations, well wishers and it's income generating activities.

##### **3.1.1 CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS**

These are Help-Age London, Help-Age Kenya, Missio Germany and South Africa. Help-Age is an organization which was established in 1982. It is the first organization to receive the United Nations Award for service to the United Nations programme of aging. It has been the main support of the Barpello Help-Age project since it was started. The money is sent in quarterly remittances, four times per year after every three months. This amount is used equally on all the older people in the project. At the end of the year, the full audited annual account is sent to London and Help-age Kenya clearly showing how these remittances have been used. Missio in Germany helped in building the honey house. It also provided the first equipment while south Africa constructed two water tanks of 3000 gallons in 1998.

##### **3.1.2 INCOME GENERATING PROJECTS**

These include vegetable gardens, honey processing and handicrafts. Some harvests from one of the vegetable gardens are for old people's consumption since they form part of the menu. The money from these activities especially honey, pays the salary for three care workers and ninety three people benefit from it.

#### **3.2 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

The management of the finance is under the co-ordinator of the project who is the administrator. At the end of every year, she prepares financial statements and sends to Help-Age London and Kenya for verification. The manager and the co-ordinator normally assess how the

money has been spent. They also do periodical assessments of all the projects that are operating. The items spent in terms of money are very well recorded in the book of Accounts. The budget is prepared at the beginning of every year and presented to the Help-Age for approval. When more funds are needed, the management has to request from the project co-ordinator. For any consultation they refer to her. They also keep petty cash and balance sheet. (See Appendix 4).

### **3.4 ORGANIZATION**

The project is under the auspices of the Incarnate Word Sisters. They are being assisted by four workers who help in the running of the project. Help-Age London is on top and makes various decisions on how to run the project. The<sup>15</sup> main office of Help-Age in London, sends their funding to Barpello Help-Age through Help-Age Kenya, Nairobi. The needs of the people dictate the funding and assistance required from London. Therefore it is a dynamic model. (See Appendix 5).

#### **3.4.1 PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR**

The project co-ordinator is the administrator and the supervisor of all the project<sup>3</sup> activities. She checks with the manager the proposed budget of every month. Apart from managing the finances, she maintains proper and up to date accounts. Since she is not involved in the actual work, the manager is supposed to inform her of any changes at any time.

#### **3.4.2 MANAGER**

The manager who is an Incarnate Word Sister has several responsibilities to fulfill. These are:

- To handle the day to day running of the project activities.
- To maintain general correspondence with Help-Age London and Help-Age Kenya.
- To write newsletters and personal news about the aged mothers.
- To prepare personal histories of the old women.
- To send forms to notify Help-Age to London about people who have died or moved away from the area.

- To do the shopping. Normally, she is given money by the administrator to purchase the foodstuffs and other contingencies. She has to account how she has spent the money, then hand over the accounts to the administrator for recording.
- To visit the homes of the old women.

### **3.4.3 PROJECT CARE WORKERS**

There are four care workers in the project. Two women are maintaining the kitchen. They cook food for the women and they are also in charge of the food store. They have to consult the manager to handle any matters arising before referring problems to the project co-ordinator.

One of them is also incharge of accompanying the women when they are assigned to do some work in case of any problem which may arise. For instance, when going to fetch water from the well, collecting firewood, stones or any other work that is to be accomplished. Among the four careworkers, there is one man who is in charge of working with the women in the gardens. He makes sure that the gardens are well fenced and they are in a good condition. He does repairs and maintains the project facilities such as stools, drums for honey many others.

The last fourth care worker's responsibilities are:

- To provide the old people with food.
- To teach them English and Kiswahili.
- To keep the dialogue by encouraging the aged.
- To visit the elderly people's homes.
- To translate Pokot to English when visitors come to the project, during the instructions of the Catechesis and also between the manager and the residents. Any need that arises the care workers help each other.

### **3.5 HOW THE POOR AGED ARE IDENTIFIED**

Empowering the marginalized to take up their rightful place in the African society is not an easy task. It calls for genuine concern for these people from everyone. The Incarnate Word Sisters

have contributed a lot in identifying the aged poor in this community. After realising the situation of the aged, they visited several homes around the mission. This made it easier for the sisters to identify those marginalized people because they became more aware of the situation of the aged in the area. This experience inspired them to know the condition of the aged and their homes as well. Everyday the sisters would write the reports on what they saw.

For several years during the months of April and December, the sisters, accompanied by the youth from Barpello Mission, would go for a mission week in order to prepare the people for Easter and Christmas celebrations. This was a good moment to be with the people and experience their way of living. Having the great desire to evangelize, they would go to different places. This helped in identifying most of the old women's conditions. The relatives also played an important role of identification of the aged poor. A few of them brought some cases of the aged in their families to the Mission. Due to their concern, the sisters would go and visit their homes as well.

Nowadays the identification of the aged have changed. Since the project is well known by the community, some of the members contact the management in case they come across an old woman in need. The aged poor also come to ask for assistance. Most of them are desperate. The manager pays a visit to their homes to see the situation and to get the necessary information. It is sad to see many of them walking far distances seeking assistance for themselves.

### **3.6 CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION**

The criteria used since the beginning of the project is the same used today. The management has laid down some rules to be followed which are as follows:

When the management is aware of some one who would like to join the project, the manager goes to assess the case. The historical background is very important. She takes the responsibility of visiting their homes in order to dialogue with them. Most of them are accepted because the sisters are aware of the situation of the old women in the community. The project admits people who are at least fifty five years old. Women who are between fifty and fifty five years old are also admitted especially those who suffer from old age related disabilities. After being accepted, the women have to undergo a



brief orientation. They are invited to follow the rules of the project. They must be willing to co-operate in all that goes on there, especially in doing some work for the upkeep of the project. The women are expected to love, respect one another and the care workers as well. Lastly, the aged mothers are supposed to come to the project but not to send their relatives on their behalf. It has been noted that food given to such people does not reach the aged.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 STRATEGIES

Since the project was initiated, they laid down some short and long term strategies that they hope will be for the good welfare of these aged women and for the management of the project as well.

#### 4.1.1 SHORT TERM STRATEGIES

- To create awareness and sensitivity on the aged so that they may use the local resources to bring development in the area.

This would bring the old people together, help each other and generate some income for themselves. By using local resources such as honey, sisal among others the aged may achieve their self esteem. This would lead them to revise their opinions, gain more confidence in their abilities and skills and change their image within their family and community.

- To offer medical services: In old age, some common problems have been loss of eyesight and hearing defects. In order to fight this, the project does not hesitate in providing the old people with the necessary medical care. It has been very sensitive as pertains their health.
- Provision of basic needs: For the aged people living in the <sup>age it</sup> object poverty, with neither any sources of income nor food, the provision of food, clothing and shelter was just a dream to them. This has helped them to live longer.
- To raise awareness to the younger generation and the community on the importance of elder people in the society.

Many of the issues of aging are complex, but there is also one simple issue: everyone old and young has a right to live a full and active life and to be treated with consideration. Old people possess a resource of great potential. In any society, they not only need care and food but a community where everybody has interest on them. The old people who need support can be valuable resource for communities. These programmes were specifically for creating awareness to the community. The aged need special care from the society. The programmes would offer a great opportunity to speak on behalf of the older people and remind the community of their contribution and their needs.

Bringing the old people together hence creating an environment of mutual dialogue and self awareness: These gatherings are very important because the old people are able to socialise, to confront their problems and to realise that each one of them is in the same reality of life. The aged also will experience the need for support and companionship. They will have the opportunity to enjoy their traditional social activities such as singing or dancing. By coming together and socialising this way will help them to be happy as one Pökot family.

#### **4.1.2 LONG TERM STRATEGIES**

- To make the women more productive
- To buy beehives
- To bring self-reliance through several projects
- To prolong life for the aged

Since honey is a security food programme for the people to be self-sufficient, they would like to buy ten beehives. When there is plenty of water, honey can be harvested twice per year. This would bring more income to the project because this area is surrounded by acacia trees which the bees are attracted to by their colour and scent of the flowers. The Project has come up with many productive activities. Some of the women who are more energetic are already involved. They have been introducing some handicraft ventures such as necklaces, ropes among others. They are looking forward to make the project self-supportive. This is because they cannot rely on Help-age organization only but they need to introduce more incentives of bringing more income to the project in order to help the disadvantaged people in the area.

The women's hard work has prolonged their lives. In fact there is a current survival of the aged. This is as a result of the help that they get from the project and their own effort in co-operating for the upkeep of all the activities. The management hopes that these aged people's life will continue to be prolonged and to be more productive. Since the aged people are less cared for in this community, its main spirit is to add more years to the aged. Even the labels put on their products is mainly raising awareness to the customers so as to promote the life of the aged by buying them.

## **4.2 WEAKNESSES**

The information as pertains the activities is not recorded properly and there is poor follow up of the planned activities. Sometimes there are difficulties in trying to fulfill some tasks or responsibilities at the same time, especially for the manager who has many responsibilities to do.

Due to lack of trained personnel, a lot of resources are not used in the proper way. For example, the wax which could bring more income to the project is just reserved. This is because there is no one who has skills on making use of the bees products such as cosmetics, candles or body perfumes.

The staffs are not trained as far as handling of the aged is concerned. This is vividly clear as they seem not to know the mentality of the old women in general especially in relating with them. Some of the aspects like counselling which is of great paramount for the aged is lacking.

Marketing is another problem that the project is experiencing. They have not yet got a place where they can sell some of their products like body cream at a good price. The local people do not know the use of it. The management is still looking for ways on how to solve this problem.

Lastly, there is lack of co-operation from the community itself. This is noticeable in that they are not willing to contribute money towards the aged welfare. It is sad to say but they are happy with the project because it is a relief for their families. During this time of my experience, I realized that even when the two tanks of water were out of order, the community did not want to contribute towards their repair. This led to some problems and hence some of the community members were involved and others were against the management team.

## **4.3 STRENGTHS**

Despite the weaknesses that may hinder their quest to serve the aged, they have also some strengths that keep them going. The project has very good incentives of helping the aged people. As I stated earlier, the Help-age sponsors helps only fifty seven aged people but ninety three benefit from the project. This means that the income generating projects especially honey house has been a

strong strength to the poor aged. It has contributed a lot to the progress of the project. Three care workers are paid by the project's income generating activities while one is paid by the Help-Age Kenya.

The management has a very strong contact with the diversified 'funders' especially Help-Age. They have been following very carefully their conditions and requirements that are put across by such organization. All the income generating projects are a fruit of Help-Age assistance. Communication and faithfulness has brought a lot of hope and joy to the aged. They are a source of happiness and entertainment not only to themselves but also to the community at large. The aged are energetic because of the health services that they receive freely and also food offered make them to be healthy. Furthermore, there is a very good follow up of the aged.

The management is very sensitive to the needs of the aged and this is noticeable in their self giving of visiting their homes monthly despite the long distances and rough roads. Care and concern of the needy elderly is their first priority. There is also a good supervision, evaluation and monitoring within the project and by the Help-Age London twice per year. The staff of the Help-Age also pay a visit to the project in order to evaluate the project activities. This has attributed to the good stewardship in the use of finance. Proper use of local materials from the area has brought more income to the project. The old people are happy to discover that their local resources which they tend to ignore can bring change when utilised in the best way. They have been able to produce and sell products. This is because of their hard work, in harmony and mutual respect.

In spite of all the weaknesses, there is a spirit of love and generosity. The concern of the management in their service to the aged, the participation and dedication in trying to promote human dignity is actually felt. I realised that all those who are involved in the project are happy for what the project is providing and it has been a strength for the continuation of the work.

#### **4.4 CHALLENGES FACING THE PROJECT**

There are many old women in this area who have difficulties and problems in life. This project cannot be able to cater for all of them. Most of them come to seek for help. It is a challenge

to the management and the community to see how this problem can be solved because the majority of them are living in terrible condition. It is very sad to recognize their felt needs by looking at their physical appearance

Due to poor infrastructures in this area, it is not easy to reach some places in which the old people live. It has been very difficult to identify them. It takes two days in some cases for the management team to reach out to such places during their visits. The vehicle cannot reach some places hence they have to walk along the hills and thorny bushes to reach those places.

The modern telecommunication means have not reached this place. This hinders the management team to communicate frequently with the donor's agencies. There is no post-office or telephone booth in the divisional headquarters. One needs to travel for about three hours to collect the mails or to post. It is also hard for the marketing of honey because one cannot communicate frequently with the consumers who are living in Nakuru and Nairobi. Sometimes those who sell the honey for the project may run out of stock like Nakumat, Gilanis supermarket among others. Due to communication hindrances it becomes impossible to supply the honey in time.

#### **4.5 ARE THE OBJECTIVES MET?**

Through the activities and the contribution of the helpers, the objectives are being met. The life standard of the old people is already improved. Many of them are rejoicing because of being recognized and valued as human beings. Seeing people who volunteer to go and visit them in their homes is a sign of appreciation of whom they are in the society. The gatherings that are held every month have created the channel of sharing ideas, knowledge and experiences geared towards improving the condition of Pökot old people. This has been a very good moment of coming together as a group and bringing some inputs for the well being of the aged.

The community based organization (CBO's) has also contributed on this aspect because many insights about how to improve the life standard of the aged is through these gatherings. It is through maintaining close working relationships and fostering partnerships directly or indirectly with non-governmental organization that the projects is progressing at the moment. The transparency of the

management and relationships has brought a lot of strength, trust and hope to the project. The communication with the sponsors has been very well maintained and fostered.

The life of the aged is being prolonged because of the provision of basic needs that they are offered every week. Many of them are strong and healthy and this is why they are able to reach the project centre despite their age. Spiritual nourishment is given to them every week. Some of them are looking forward to receiving the sacrament of reconciliation, holy communion and confirmation soon. There is a spirit of co-operation in working, the little they do everyday is of great importance. They are very happy to realise that something good can come out of their own efforts and determination.

#### **4.6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The management is doing a lot towards the lives of the aged. However, I would like to give some suggestions which may better the project if considered positively. The mission and the management have a great responsibility of motivating and persuading the local community to be more concerned about the aged people in their locality. Although they have been doing it, there is still a need for more emphasis in creating awareness on the plight of the old people and to mobilise the community in supporting them.

Many of them lack old age behaviour changes awareness. I feel that more public awareness should be introduced so that the aged people may live their life in a more optimistic manner.

A committee should be set up to oversee the running of the project. They should be meeting to discuss issues relating to the project, organising the labour and distribution the benefits of the old people. It would be good for some of the old people to form the committee. The management should also take some of the staff members for training. It is important to note that as individuals approach the state of independency, special care and attention is very important. Therefore, in order to contribute to a meaningful life for the elderly the management staff should be taken for training in various fields for example management, counselling and stewardship. They should also establish more activities on handicrafts to generate more income.

The management should accommodate local benefactors so that if the foreign donors withdraw or there is inaccessibility the local people will have understood that the project is theirs and it is geared towards supporting their old people. At the end the people will rejoice about their project and even if the administrators are transferred the project will continue operating.

The management need to sensitise and conscientize the local government to assist in the development of the project. There is a need to identify a large market for the products of honey and handicrafts in order to allow the aged to benefit from the project and to have a good attempt given to the local resources available.

The aged need as well to be educated about the root causes of their problem. There should be organized seminars involved in this project which could conscientize them about their rights, duties and obligation.

Focusing on Kenya and the world at large, there is a very great need of improving the life standard of the elderly people in our society. Special measures have to be taken in order to overcome the difficulties the elderly people are facing at the moment. Old people need spiritual care because through prayer and communion in faith, they will testify to the inalienable value of life, even when it is reduced to a terminal condition. They also need to live in environments that are safe, adaptable to personal preferences and changing capabilities. This will enable them to fulfil their need of living in human dignity and security.

#### **4.7 CONCLUSION**

Aging is a crucial subject for the world today. In almost every country in the world populations are aging. Old people are often seen as a burden, particularly in financial terms. There is a lot of discussion about how countries and communities will be able to afford more care, particularly health care for older people. What is forgotten is that older people also have an important role to play in most societies and that even older people who need support can be valuable resource for the communities. I congratulate the Incarnate Word Sisters for being the voice of the voiceless in East Pökot. The Barpello Help-Age



project has brought integral development to the aged. It makes them happy to know that even the old people can do a lot despite their old age.

Since this project was initiated, there is a lot of hope for the aged and they have recognized that they have a lot of resources in themselves. Many of them have acquired self-esteem, dignity, community building, relationship and a sense of sharing. The old like any other age groups require motivation and recognition. The pride of belonging always leads to dignified lives. To crown this issue of the aged there are no better than these words quoted by Mrs. Sirengo of Nairobi Hospice, "You matter because you are, you matter to the last moment of your life and we will do all that we can not only to let you die peacefully but to live until you die."<sup>7</sup> The family, community and state must all contribute to the welfare of the elderly who have contributed so much as a whole, to the society. No matter how badly a family may be there should be always a place for the old people.

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<sup>7</sup> Help-Age Kenya: Situation Report, No.4 Nairobi: 1993, p.18

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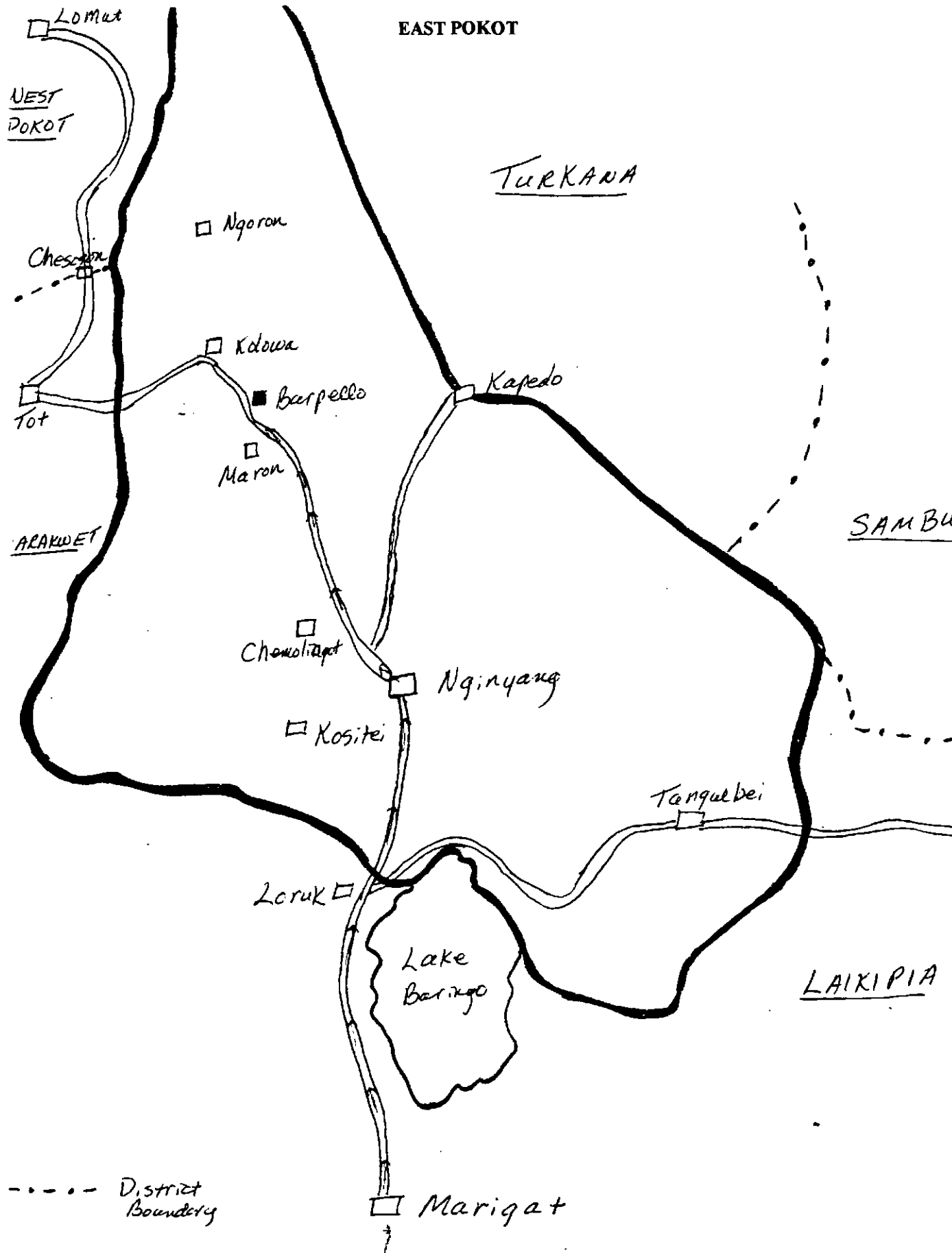
The New Jerusalem Bible. London: Darto, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1985.

Interviews

APPENDIX 1

**LOCATION OF THE PROJECT**

**EAST POKOT**



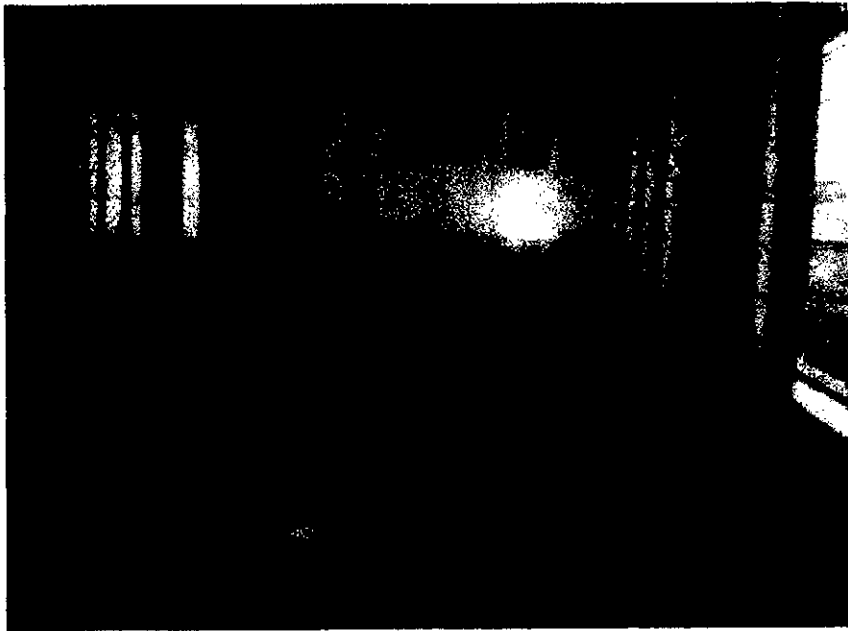
**Appendix 2 KOLOWA DIVISION PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

**PUPIL'S ENROLMENT**

SCHOOLS	NO.OF BOYS	NO.OF GIRLS	TOTAL
KOLOWA	81	42	123
NGORON	57	48	105
BARPELLO	51	13	64
KIPNAI	36	25	61
TILINGWO	51	9	60
LOIWAT	38	18	56
CHEPTURU	16	9	25
TOTAL	330	64	494

## ACTIVITIES

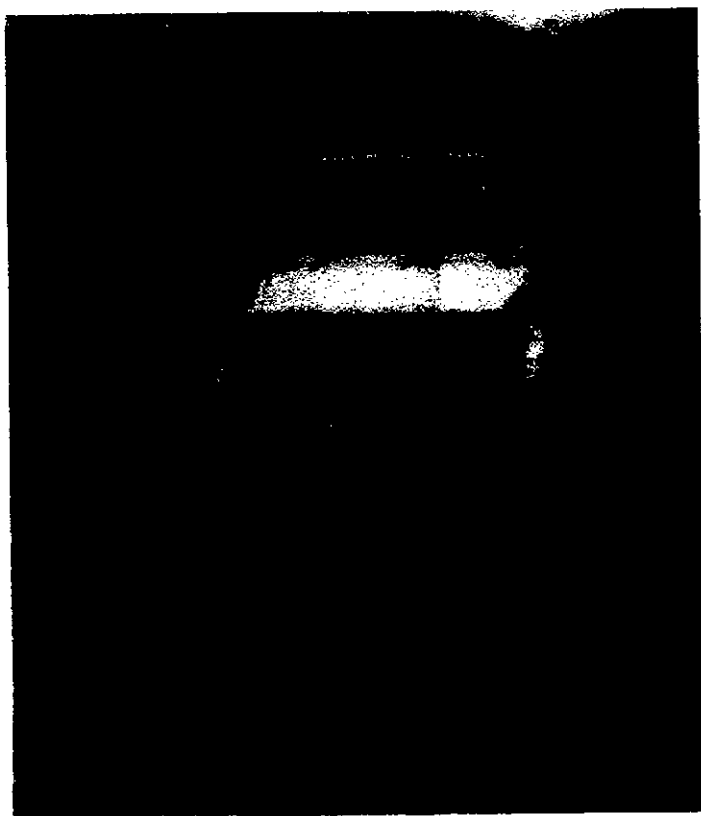
### APPENDIX 3.1



Lunch time: The women enjoy their meal (above).  
Below, the elderly people are receiving food.

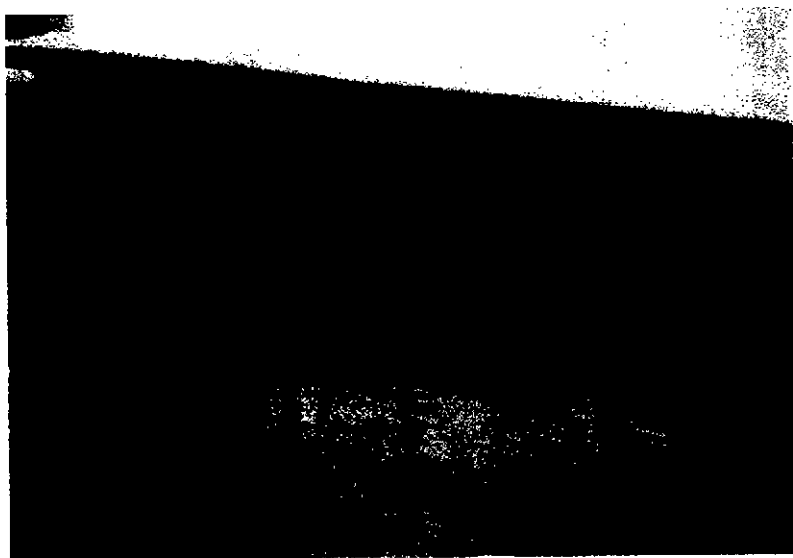


**APPENDIX 3.2**



One of the sisters during her visitation to some communities.  
The roads are really poor.(above).

Below: Is Maria a disabled woman with a researcher in  
a jovial mood after the project built for her a house.



### APPENDIX 3.3

A moment of joy: The first group of elderly people to be baptized.



Below one of them is receiving the sacrament of Baptism



**APPENDIX 3.4**



The two pictures show the elderly at work. Despite their age, they are able to weed.





**APPENDIX 3.5**



Above: The elderly women are proud of the honey which is processed for their benefit, while below is the house where the honey is being processed.



## **APPENDIX 3.6**

Some of the management team assisting in making the handicrafts.



APPENDIX 3.7



Elderly people pose for a group photograph during their get-together.



## **APPENDIX 3.8**

### **Topics of awareness**

#### **Independent**

- Adequate food, water, shelter, clothing and health care
- Self help
- The opportunity to work
- Education and training

#### **Participation**

- Integration
- Active participation in politics which affect well being
- Knowledge and skills shared between generations
- The right to contribute
- The right to form groups or associations

#### **Care**

- Family and community care and protection
- Health care
- Physical, mental and emotional well being
- Social and legal services
- Social and mental stimulation
- Human rights and fundamental freedoms, including full respect for dignity, beliefs, needs and privacy
- The right to make decisions about care and the quality of life

#### **Self-fulfilment**

- The opportunity to develop potential fully
- Access to educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources

Dignity

- Security
- Freedom from exploitation and abuse
- Fair treatment

## Appendix 4 FINANCIAL REPORT

1. 1/1999 Through 15/7/2000

Category	Kenya Shillings
Income/ Expenses	
Honey sold	43,370.00
Donation from Help-Age London	735620.39
Things sold e.g. bracelets, ropes etc.	680.00
Income	<u>589,200.29</u>
Total Income	1368870.68
Expenses	
Administration	60,357.00
Buying honey	800.00
Clothes	8,570.00
Emergency Fund	870.00
Food	459,086.00
Home Repair	19,090.00
Items	22,079.50
Equipment	201,671.09
Material	8,178.00
Medical	3,900.00
Project care workers	59,500.00
Pay debt	500.00
Transport	20,000.00
Expenses-other	207,980.00
Total Expenses	1,152,581.59
Balance brought down	205,089.09

Balance Sheet as of 15/7/2000

Accounts	Balance
Assets	
Cash and Bank Accounts	
Help-Age	227,826.09
Honey House	<u>-22,737.00</u>
Total and Bank account	205,089.09
Total Assets	205,089.09
Liabilities and Equity	
Liabilities	0.00
Equity	<u>205,089.09</u>
Total Liability and Equity	205,089.00

# THE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE CHART

could have been inserted between the text

## HELP AGE

HELP-AGE LONDON



HELP-AGE KENYA



BARPELLO HELP-AGE



PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR



MANAGER



CARE WORKER

CARE WORKER

CARE WORKER

CARE WORKER



OLD PEOPLE OF SEVEN DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES



INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES

HONEY PROCESSING

HANDICRAFTS

VEGETABLE GARDEN

code:

Funding ↓

Needs ↑