

TANGAZA COLLEGE

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL MINISTRY

**COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS
AS SOCIAL MINISTERS
IN KENYA
FROM 1964 TO 1998**

By: Rita Esposto, CMS
Tutor: Francesco Pierli, MCCJ



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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material used here has not been submitted for academic credit to any other institution.

All sources have been cited in full.

Signed.....*S. P. S. L. T.*.....

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE	
KENYA AND THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS: A BRIEF SURVEY	3
1.1 THE COUNTRY AND ITS POPULATION	3
1.1.1 Geographical Data	3
1.1.2 The population	4
1.1.3 People: cultural pluralism	4
1.1.4 Religion	4
1.2 KENYA: SOCIO-POLITICAL AND CHRISTIAN HISTORY	5
1.2.1 Political history	5
1.2.2 Socio-political situation: achievements and problems	6
1.2.2.1 Achievements	6
1.2.2.2 Problems	7
1.2.3 The Church in Independent Kenya from 1963	8
1.2.4 The Church and new Nation building	9
1.3 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS IN KENYA	10
1.4 COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS IN KENYA: A LIFE EXPERIENCE	11
1.4.1 Comboni Missionary Sisters' involvement in health ministry	11
1.4.2 Comboni Missionary Sisters' involvement in women's promotion	14
1.4.3. Comboni Missionary Sisters' involvement in education	20

CHAPTER TWO

34 YEARS OF PRESENCE IN KENYA: AN EVALUATION	27
2.1 DEFINITION OF TERMS	27
2.2 FROM TRADITIONAL METHODS TO NEW STRATEGIES	28
2.3 FORMATION AND MISSION: EVER-CHANGING REALITIES	33
2.4 LISTENING AS A TOOL FOR EMPOWERMENT	36
2.5 RURAL/SEMI-ARID AND URBAN AREAS: FIELD OF OUR CONCERN	38
2.6 EVALUATION OF SOURCES	40

CHAPTER THREE

MISSION IN THE 21st CENTURY: THE CHALLENGES OF A MINISTERIAL METHODOLOGY	42
3.1 METHODOLOGY IN MINISTRY	43
3.2 INTEGRAL FORMATION: PROFESSIONAL AND MINISTERIAL PREPARATION	45
3.3 PEOPLE' CONTRIBUTION AND OUR HELP	48
3.4 COLLABORATION - PARTNERSHIP - NETWORKING	49
3.5 EDUCATION: AN A KEY TO HUMAN PROMOTION	50
3.5.1 Areas of commitment for education	50
3.5.2 Youth	52

3.6 JUSTICE, PEACE AND WOMEN	53
3.6.1 Justice and peace	53
3.6.2 Women in need of and promoters of justice and peace	54
3.7 MASS MEDIA	56
3.9 HEALTH MINISTRY	57
CONCLUSION	60
BIBLIOGRAPHY	62

APPENDIX: Guideline questionnaire about the Comboni Missionary Sister' involvement in social development (social ministry) in Kenya	66
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LIST OF TABLES AND MAPS

Map 1. Population and Geographical Data	68
Table 1. Education Statistics in Kenya at 1992	69
Table 2. Health Statistics in Kenya at 1992	70
Map 2. Comboni Missionary Sisters' Missions in Kenya	71
Table 3. Comboni Missionary Sisters' Communities in Kenya	72

INTRODUCTION

The thirty-four years of life the Comboni Missionary Sisters have lived in Kenya, their involvement in the fabric of life of many Kenyans, their methodology of mission, the objectives and future goals as well as some suggestions for a better approach to mission, are part and parcel of this paper and the very reason for its existence.

This essay is divided into three main chapters based on the see-judge-act research methodology. The sisters' commitment in health, women's promotion and education has been described, evaluated and some new proposals given as new ways to bring about a more contextualised ministry and relevancy in today's Kenya.

I believe this to be the first scientific attempt to research and analyse the style of presence of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in Kenya, and furthermore, to be the first concrete application of the teaching dictated by the principles of social ministry into real life situations. Moreover, the novelty and beauty of this essay is that it is an *experiential* one based mostly on the lived praxis of the people it deals with. A questionnaire was used to gather the initial data. Twenty-six of them were sent out to various sisters involved in different ministries. Interviews were carried out as a means to collect first hand verbal information about the data researched. A great deal of the information making up this paper is also coming from the knowledge I gathered during my two years as a student of Social Ministry as well as from my personal reflection derived from belonging to the community of the Comboni Missionary Sisters.

I have chosen to delve into the various aspects characterising the presence of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in Kenya primarily driven by the fact that this missionary family holds as a major priority the commitment to the integral development of women. The founder, Daniel Comboni, strongly believed in the presence and role of women in mission. Women were given a place of relevance in his *Plan for the Regeneration of Africa*.

Comboni "*was in fact convinced of the importance of education, particularly of women and young girls, and emphasised the necessity for lay women and missionary sisters to bring*

about a change in the condition of the African woman. For Comboni, consecrated women in Africa could help the African woman to be freed from poverty and oppression. In welcoming the light of the Gospel message, the African women would receive the power to lead their own people to freedom.”

This has been also my desire as I went about doing my research and I truly wish that my work and efforts will serve the cause of further reflections aimed at bringing about an always fuller life both for the Comboni Missionary Sisters in Kenya and the Kenyan women as well.

¹ Maria Teresa Ratti, “Missionary Women in the Evangelization of the Sudan”, In: Francesco Pierli, Maria Teresa Ratti and Andrew Wheeler, eds, *Gateway to the Heart of Africa: Missionary Pioneers in Sudan*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998), 74.

CHAPTER ONE

KENYA AND THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS: A BRIEF SURVEY

This chapter, geared to *the see part* of the entire research methodology, has been divided in four parts. In the first part I gave a brief survey of Kenya: its geographical data, population, cultural pluralism and religions. The second part I investigated Kenya's political history, the socio-political situation at Independence time and nowadays. I also described the situation of the Church at Independence time and its intervention in the national-building. Then I made a synthesis of the actual problems that this country is facing. In the third part of this first chapter I described the reasons for the establishment of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in Kenya, while the fourth part is an illustration of the Comboni Missionary Sisters' involvement in health ministry, women's promotion and education. For each of these areas I took two or three concrete examples which reflect the real and actual activities and projects of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in the various parts of Kenya.

1.1 THE COUNTRY AND ITS POPULATION

1.1.1 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

The Republic of Kenya is placed across the Equator on the East African coast and has an extension of 582.646 square kilometres, "bounded by Ethiopia and the Sudan on the north, by Somalia and the Indian Ocean on the east, by Tanzania on the south and by Uganda on the west."² In the north and east parts of the country, the land is mostly semi-arid; while the central part is quite fertile and much of the land is arable. One of the beauties of Kenya is Mount Kenya situated at 160 kilometres north-east of Nairobi which is the capital city of Kenya. Mount Kenya is the nation's highest mountain, reaching 17.058 feet (5.199 metres) and carries about 12 glaciers beneath the twin rocks of Batian and Nelion. The snowline is perennial above 15.000 feet.

The great Rift Valley cuts through the country from north to south and its terrain is dry and scarcely fertile. Nearly 75% of the land of Kenya is semi-arid and of the remaining 25% only 9.5% is agricultural land. The other 15.5% is used for grazing cattle, goats, and sheep and 8.5% for modest cultivation.

² "Kenya", In: *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 6, 15th edition (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1993), 806.

1.1.2 THE POPULATION

The Republic of Kenya's population is about 26 million.³ The rate of population growth is around 2.9%⁴ There are 58 different ethnic groups. The people living in the urban centres like Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru, Eldoret and Thika are about 20%, while 82% of the people are concentrated in rural areas.

The most numerous ethnic groups are the "Kikuyu 20.78%, Luhya 14.38%, Luo 12.38%, Kalenjin 11.46%, Kamba 11.42%, Kisii 6.5%, Meru 5.07%, Mijikenda 4.70%, Maasai 1.76%, Turkana 1.32%, Samburu 0.50% Boran 0.37%, Somali 0.21% and Gabra 0.17%."⁵ These tribes are divided into the linguistic families of Bantu, Nilotic (the Luo), Nilo-Hamitic (the Masai) and Cushitic groups. The non-African minorities are constituted by Europeans, Asians and Arabs.

1.1.3 PEOPLE: CULTURAL PLURALISM

In the Republic of Kenya there is a variety of cultural traditions. Around four thousand years ago, hunters lived in the plains. After 1,000 years, Southern Cushites moved in from the north. These people were farmers and tended cattle. Also Nilotic and Nilo-Hamitic people moved into the northern region. At same time, there was the Bantu migration, probably from the south, moving up along the coast. Soon after, Eastern Cushites moved into the northern region. All these ethnic groups lived together interacting and influencing one another. The next to arrive were the Arabs and then the Europeans. Between 1896 and 1902 Indians and Goans also arrived. Today, Kenya welcomes people from all over the world: Americans, Scandinavians and others who are coming for business or modern technology, as well as for tourism.

1.1.4 RELIGION

Traditionally, Kenyans were known as very religious people. Followers of "Traditional Religions are around 35%, Protestant 26%, Catholic 23%."⁶ Christianity today is accepted by people in almost every ethnic group. Christians are 52.30%. The other religions comprise more than 200 different "African Independent Churches 10.4%, Muslim 5.6%."⁷

³ *The Economist: Pocket World in Figures* (London: Profile Books Ltd, 1997), 150.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ "Kenya: Who is behind the Violence?", In: *New People Feature*, No. 66, 1st September, 1997, 2.

⁶ "Special Kenya", In: *Word Mission*, Vol. IX No. 2 (February 1997), 23.

⁷ *Ibid.*

The Muslims in the country are around 1 million, constituting 5.6% divided in Sunnis, Shias, Ithnasharis, Ismailis, Bohoras, Amhadiyya and Adiani. Most of these people live along the coast, where Islam arrived in the VIII-IX century, although a certain Muslim presence is felt also in the north-eastern province.

The relations between Muslims and Christians are in general not hostile; in fact, each community accepts the existence of the other peacefully.

1.2 KENYA: SOCIO-POLITICAL AND CHRISTIAN HISTORY

1.2.1 POLITICAL HISTORY

In 1895, Kenya was declared a British Protectorate and then a British Crown Colony till 1963, the year of independence. From 1901 to 1963 there was land alienation and the promotion of white settlements with the consequent confinement of the local people into native reserves. The alienated settlers were generally islands of fertility and prosperity in a sea of poverty and backwardness. It is for this reason that the 60 years of settler domination of the Kenya political scene were characterised by continual disputes over land issues.

The land problem remained central and refuelled the system that maintained patriotism and nationalism. Consequently, these found their expression in the Mau Mau rebellion in the early fifties. This armed struggle for freedom won independence in 1963. Gradually, "Britain accepted the shift in emphasis in the colonial state from total settler control to nationalist self-government."⁸ Kenya got the first taste of limited freedom in 1957 and Kenyans were elected to the legislative council and offered ministerial posts.

In 1960, Britain agreed to a round table conference with Africans to decide on Kenya's future. In the same year, a new constitution gave Africans a majority in the legislative council and a new party. Moreover, the Kenya African Nationalism Union (KANU) was set up, with a strong Kikuyu and Luo membership. Kenyatta became president of KANU and leader of an all African party government. KANU won a general election in 1963 and in June of the same year Kenya achieved internal self-government. On the 12 December, 1963 the country attained independence. Kenyatta became Prime Minister, and in 1964, President of the Republic of Kenya.

⁸ Colombo F. & Moretti F., *Introduction to Kenya* (Nairobi: 1995), 4.

The new government announced its alignment with the Western countries and the private enterprise system because it was hoped this would stem the outflow of European capital that had been under way since 1961. Very soon there was a split in the ranks of the ruling group who were a coalition of the nationalists of the '40s and '50s.

Oginga Odinga with other people, mainly from the Luo tribe, formed an opposition party, the Kenya People's Union (KPU) that kept up a stream of criticism against the government. The most serious threat to the stability of the regime came in July 1969 with the assassination of the Luo government minister, Tom Mboya.

1.2.2 SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION: ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROBLEMS

1.2.2.1 ACHIEVEMENTS

In the last 35 years of independence, Kenya has accomplished remarkable achievements in a climate of substantial peace and progress.

1 - Education. In 1963 the primary schools were 6,058 with 891,553 students and 22,727 teachers. According to the latest statistic, the schools were 13,849 the students were 5,031,340 and the teachers 149,151.

At the time of independence the secondary schools were 154 with 30,121 students and 1,602 teachers; in 1992 the secondary schools were 2,614 with 540,078 students and 25,583 teachers. Instead, in 1963 students in technical schools were 2,066, while today they are more than 25,000.

In 1963, in Nairobi, there was only the Royal Technical College with 565 university students; today the universities are mainly four with 26,000 students, besides other private university institutions.

2- Industry. It was almost non-existent in 1963. Today there are about 600 big-scale firms, 820 small scale and 2,000 medium-scale ones.

3- Housing. The great majority of people in 1963 lived in mud-huts, while today many people have stone houses, electricity, telephone and drinking water even in some remote areas.

1.2.2.2. PROBLEMS

The main problems present in today's Kenya comprise:

1- Gap between rich and poor. The real problem of 'tribalism is not only based on ethnic origins, but also on the basis of two opposed "economic tribes,"⁹ namely rich and poor. The rich do not constitute more than a quarter of the population. The latter are the majority of the population who live in slums, or as squatters, in semi-desert areas, or surviving as permanent casual workers.

2- Financial issues. Wages are not realistic and do not match the cost of basic goods: food, health, clothing, housing, education and public transport, that make the fundamental budget for every family. It is matter of fact that when people cannot get by honest means a just salary the consequence is wide-spread corruption. In fact, corruption in Kenya has reached alarming proportions.

3- Agriculture. The agricultural sector contributes 50% of Gross National Product, providing a livelihood over 85% of the population, and still earns 70% of country's foreign exchange. Hundreds of Kenyans have been deprived of their land by the politically instigated clashes.

4- Social Services. Education, public security, health, public transport and communications are left in the hands of private business people alone. Among many others reasons, there is a progressive deterioration of public social services in Kenya due to the conditions imposed by financial foreign masters who control the Structural Adjustment Programmes.

Public Health. Kenyans die because of lack of the most basic and usual medicines in local dispensaries or for the lack of a bed in a public hospital. "Our population has increased, but the number of public health centres has not increased in the same proportion."¹⁰

Education. Education is not available to all especially to the poor. Public schools are sometimes entrusted to persons having just finished secondary school.

Public Transport. Road accidents, in most cases are due to careless driving or to poor condition of the roads or the vehicles. Drivers and conductors of means of transport "matatu"

⁹ Catholic Bishops of Kenya, *On the Present Situation in our Country: Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops of Kenya* (Nairobi: St. Paul Publications-Africa, 1990), 9.

¹⁰ Bishops of Kenya, *Our Social Responsibility: Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of Kenya* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1996), 10.

are enticed to make maximum profits by overloading passengers and overspeeding on the roads. The scarcity of means for public transport constrains the passengers themselves to overcrowd the vehicle.

Other problems are: unemployment; migration to towns with problems of urbanisation, family disintegration, women's issue, respect for human rights and justice subordinated to development, need for improvement in the educational field and the disorientation of youth. 71% of the population is under 25 years of age.

1.2.3 THE CHURCH IN INDEPENDENT KENYA FROM 1963

The last thirty years the history of the Church in Kenya have been characterised by two great events: the Independence of the nation and the renewal of the entire Church through the Second Vatican Council. When Kenya achieved its Independence, Vatican II was in progress, to end on 4 December 1965. Africa's Independence accelerated the Africanization of the Church's leadership. Although the strongest impact came from the Council, its decisions were influenced by the coming of the Third World firstly with the maturing of the former missions' Churches, which by now were on the way to become "Local Churches:" self-ministering, self-sufficient and self-propagating and secondly the political independence of their countries. For the first time in history, the Church had become a truly world-wide, universal Church, and had to do justice to all the nations and cultures involved.

New features of the Church in Kenya, mainly due to Vatican II, were the National Bishops Conference, the priestly diocesan councils and parish councils, which shared responsibility in the Church. Another important point was the esteem for African culture, expressed in the use of African languages, traditional melodies and local hymns in the liturgy; the re-evaluation of the Traditional Religion in a new African theology, and a new openness to our Protestant brothers and sisters, consequently sharing with them the common love of the Bible and Christian responsibility in national life.

Independence and Vatican II were also helpful in bringing about a more ecumenical climate in Kenya. "The spirit of the Independence insisted "Before we were Catholics or Protestants, we all were Kenyans. These denominational differences originated in Europe and were imported to us by the missionaries."¹¹ The Bishops at Vatican II taught that the Spirit

¹¹ John Baur, *The Catholic Church in Kenya: A Centenary History* (Nairobi: St. Paul Publications, 1990), 226.

of Christ works in the mystery of salvation also in the Protestant Churches. The hope was to have dialogue in order to learn from one another, common witness and service to all people, a prayerful longing for full unity and a change of heart. Though this has been difficult to achieve.

1.2.4 THE CHURCH AND NEW NATION-BUILDING

The church-state relations in the new nation in 1963 were good and harmonious and the representatives on both sides were Kenyans. Jomo Kenyatta, the father of the new nation, called the people in the country to join hands in building a better future and 'referred to the past with the words: "Let us forgive and forget."¹² The events to forgive and forget were the settlers and the missionaries who had adopted the colonial mentality.

The Government of Kenya recognised that education, health care, and economic development were its responsibilities and set apart a larger quantity of the budget for these tasks than the colonial administration had done. In the mean time, it tried to ensure the continued support of the churches in these sectors. Consequently, in order to increase the involvement of all the population, President Kenyatta called for co-operation in the building up of the nation, irrespective of race, religion or origin. In 1964 he enjoined the famous motto: Harambee (let us pull together). In this way, Kenya has obtained a higher level of co-operation than many other African countries. It is in this spirit that also Catholics and Protestants have worked together even in building churches. Perhaps the urgings for national unity from the side of the Government gave the strongest impulse towards religious co-operation.

In education, the Government nationalised schools, therefore, the previous system of subsidies to mission schools came to an end. Although the Churches still run schools up to university with private means, supervision rests with the Government. The Catholic Church has made a double choice, to help the population to build a lot of Harambee Secondary Schools in which the Government would progressively pay the salaries of the teachers. In the case of the primary schools, the Church has made use of the right of sponsorship, involving a certain amount of control and support.

Regarding health care, the Government has welcomed even more the continuation of church-sponsored hospitals, health centres and dispensaries, in recognition of the dedicated

¹² Ibid., 222.

service provided by them. "In response, by far the greater number of the 30 hospitals run by the Catholic Church have been opened in this period of Independence."¹³ The largest number of Harambee projects had been the building programmes of schools and dispensaries.

There were also many projects of development directed at improving living conditions and agricultural development. Consequently, for the churches this has meant a new orientation of its development activities. Previously, all efforts had gone into the building up of the missionary enterprise, for example: workshops, gardens and fields were for the support of the mission itself. So the people would profit from them only if they obtained work at the mission. At this time the projects were for the benefit of the all the people without regard to their creed. One example was the water projects among the non-Christian nomads of Northern Kenya, which is the one with most missionary presence among the churches of Kenya. At the same time, members of the largest Churches enjoyed for these projects the greatest support from abroad.

1.3 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS IN KENYA

The Comboni Missionary Sisters arrived in Kenya on the 15th of October, 1964, just one year after the great event of the Independence of the nation. The reason behind their decision to come to Kenya was the political and civil storm of Southern Sudan, which by early 1964 forced many Comboni Missionaries to leave the country.

As soon as the Bishop of Nyeri (Kenya), Mgr. Carlo Cavallera (Consolata Missionary), knew about the expulsion, he proposed to the Comboni Superior to send sisters to work in his diocese. He underlined that the Northern part of his diocese was an area of first evangelization and social development in accordance with the charism of the founder, Daniel Comboni.

"Our choice is particularly for those people to whom the Gospel has not yet been announced who live in real situations of poverty and abandonment, and where the missionary work is often difficult and arduous."¹⁴ This proposal was seen as a challenging opportunity for missionary apostolate and therefore the first "four sisters"¹⁵ were sent as pioneers in Kenya.

The first Comboni Sisters' residence in Kenya was Karatina, situated between Nairobi

¹³ Ibid., 225.

¹⁴ Comboni Missionary Sisters <<Pie Madri della Nigrizia>>, *Rule of Life*, Rome, 1987, 52.1.

¹⁵ Comboni Missionary Sisters <<Pie Madri della Nigrizia>>, *Draft History of Kenya Province* (Nairobi, 1998), 18.

and Nyeri. On the 12th September, 1970, Kenya was erected as a Delegation of the Comboni Missionary Sisters.

1.4 COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS IN KENYA: A LIFE EXPERIENCE

1.4.1 COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS' INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH MINISTRY

One of the services offered by the Comboni Missionary Sisters in Kenya has been the health care ministry, specially with pastoralists, in rural/semi-arid areas where there are few or no structures or other specialised people to the care for the needy. In Kacheliba, Amakuriat, Kariobangi, Tingang'a and Dol-Dol, the Comboni Missionary Sisters are working in dispensaries and go to the villages around with mobile clinics. While in Sololo and Laisamis the work is basically in the hospitals.

When the Comboni Missionary Sister arrives with her team of nurses in a village she already finds many people waiting for her. After going around and asking how they are, there is a short moment of prayer. A nurse begins a lesson on a specific health topic, such as malaria, hygienic measures in order to prevent diarrhoea, dehydration and other childhood illnesses. Family life education, comprising family planning and sexually transmitted diseases are also addressed. When this section is over, the small babies are weighed and receive immunisations and medicines if needed. All this is recorded on a small card given to the mothers and recorded for the centre. The pregnant women are followed by the mid-wife and given some instructions about their health situation, and they advised if in need of iron, vitamins or especial care in the hospital. The undernourished babies and the people seriously sick are sent to the hospital.

The methodology in the dispensary is more or less the same. The persons who go to the dispensary are asked about their symptoms, their temperature is taken, and tests are carried out in the laboratories, if available. After that, the sick are examined and the type of sickness is recorded followed by distribution of medicines required with instructions about dosage, etc. Usually, there is a brief lesson on alimentary education and the recommendation to come back in case of need.

The work of the sisters in the hospitals is mainly of co-ordination and supervision beside psychological, spiritual assistance and listening.

Among the various experiences of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in this sector, I am going to write about the projects in Laisamis and Kacheliba.

Laisamis. About 250 km from Isiolo is the Laisamis Division of Marsabit District which is situated in the Kaisut Desert, with the Somalia border to the east, Samburu District to the south and Loyangalani to the west. The extension of Laisamis is approximately 80.000 sq. kilometres. The altitude is about 1.000 m. above sea level.

The population is nomadic or semi-nomadic so it is difficult to estimate their actual number, but between Laisamis Parish and the villages there are about 40.000-50.000 inhabitants. They belong mainly to the Samburu and Rendille ethnic groups, the Samburu being the majority. Then there are groups of Borana, Somali and Turkana. Their resources come from cattle, goats, sheep and camels.

The parish of Laisamis was opened in 1964 by the Consolata Fathers who handed it over to the Fidei Donum Priests of Brindisi on 30th June, 1991. On the 24th January, 1966 one Comboni Missionary Sister started her nursing service in the dispensary of Laisamis in order to try to improve the health care of the people. At that time, the hospital was still under construction. The status of the hospital was that of Health Centre. In 1986 it got a full-time doctor and two sister nurses. In the same year, the Preventive medicine programme and vaccinations were started, covering the six villages around Laisamis. These two services are carried on by many of the dispensaries run by the Comboni Missionary Sisters in Kenya.

Generally the sisters feel well prepared for this work, although some feel that they need to know more thoroughly the customs, traditions and use of local medicines where they work.

Kacheliba. Kacheliba Parish is in West Pokot District, north-western Kenya, bordering Uganda. The parish is about 3,200 km and is one of the remotest parishes of Eldoret Diocese. The place where the mission is situated is considered semi-arid and the whole place is a savannah.

Most of the people of the area belong to the Pokot tribe who are divided into two groups: pastoralists and farmers. The people of Kacheliba are pastoralists because the soil is difficult to cultivate due to the instability of the rain. As a consequence, their daily diet is based on very poor crops.

There are many diseases in the area due to poverty and malnutrition: such as malaria, respiratory infections, intestinal parasites, pneumonia, diarrhoea with dehydration, anaemia, meningitis and skin diseases. The places that are visited are very far and the people are scattered, making it difficult to reach everybody. The objective of the mobile clinic is first “to meet people’s needs, especially those very far and who cannot reach any health centre, second, to teach them how to prevent diseases and how to remain healthy.”¹⁶

The people are not very open to changes and this creates some difficulties in training leaders, specialised personnel, in the acceptance of medical assistance. As a result the mortality rate in general is quite high while that of children is very high. The main obstacle to the project is people’s strong belief in the local medicines prepared by non-professional medical personnel. In fact, “people who are get sick, first take the local medicine and after go to the dispensary or mobile clinic.”¹⁷

The Comboni Sisters are running the project with six locally prepared people. They are qualified, and periodically attend further training workshops. These encourage the young health care workers to further their education. The project is sustained by benefactors and in small part by the people. In fact, most of the people pay for each treatment. They have been made aware of the importance of paying, even if it is little. There is also greater acceptance of the benefit when they pay. Due to the harsh living conditions of this area and the constant increase of the prices of basic commodities, it is difficult for the people to sustain even partially the project.

Preventive health care is an important priority especially in rural\semi-arid areas. As a result, before distributing medicine or immunisations, the mobile clinic personnel give health lessons with questions and answers to help the people understand the importance of preventive medicine, how to keep the house clean and how to act in case of any sickness. People have become more aware of the meaning of preventive medicine and now they go to the dispensary and mobile clinic in large numbers.

As a result of teaching hygiene, “pit latrines have been built by the locals and in most places, improving the living conditions.”¹⁸ Also there are less children dying from tetanus

¹⁶ Sr. Daniela Trentin, Appendix I, Questionnaire, Question No. 2.

¹⁷ Ibid., No. 3.

¹⁸ Ibid.

infection due to better instruction given to the midwives. Great importance has also been played by the immunisation programme carried out by the sister.

The hope for the future is to develop the present structure.

In some of the dispensaries run by the Comboni Missionary Sisters, such as in Kariobangi, there are also social workers from the parish who are doing counselling in order to follow young girls who are in trouble with a whole series of social problems, with their own sexuality and with acute crises, such as unwanted pregnancies.

Family Planning is another task carried out in most of the dispensaries. The *Natural Family Planning* is a scientific method discovered by Mr. and Mrs. Billings, both medical doctors. As its official name describes, this method is based on the knowledge of the woman's fertility cycle in order for the couple to decide the spacing of their offspring. It is "natural" because it implies the physiological process of the ovaries, the primary organs related to human fertility. The *Natural Family Planning* is also a powerful method, aimed at uniting the couple base on a deep foundation built on interpersonal respect, mutual acceptance and profound love for the partner.

1.4.2 COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS' INVOLVEMENT IN WOMEN'S PROMOTION

The involvement of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in Kenya in the field of women's promotion began in 1966 with the opening of a community in the Laisamis area. Other experiences in this field have taken place in Amakuriat, Dol-Dol, Kacheliba, Kariobangi and Marsabit.

In this ministry, many women from different religions, tribes, social classes and ages are catered for. There are various activities such as "Mandeleo" Schools, teaching of elementary education, hygiene and nutrition for mothers and children. Moreover, self-supporting projects are very important and help the development and personal growth of women. All of these aim at helping women to become more aware of their role and dignity in the society. Consequently, women are helping each other, even in building strong family relationships. Community sharing through the spirit of "harambee" is very visible in many different communities where we are working.

As for the methodology followed with the women's promotion, the sisters who are involved generally follow many steps. The sister and the women have previously agreed on

the date to meet and how often this is going to happen within a certain period of time. Usually, the sister carries the material necessary for the activities of the day, such as: cloth material, posters, a portable sewing machine, a writing board, etc. The women know that they have to provide for the place to meet and that this be readied for the morning.

When both the women and the sister meet, they first spend some time in greeting one another and in finding out what has happened since the last time they met. At this point, the sister starts the lesson, be it on sewing, writing, cleaning, etc. Time is given to questions and answers, as well as to role play. After the lesson, a good amount of time is given to the women to implement the notion, or the teaching they learnt during the lessons. Here again, the sister and her collaborators are present to help with any problem or question raised by the women.

When this section has come to an end, the sister announces the date of the next meeting and the topic to be covered. A period of break is then taken before the group gathers together again for a short period of Bible teaching, prayer sharing, or any other discussion related to the life of the women. Often, the sister's lay collaborators play a vital role in translating what is being said, either by the sister or by the women themselves.

In some of the places mentioned in this paper, the projects also contemplate a final examination whereby the women are asked to report and display some of the work accomplished. In this way, there is a certain competition among themselves to do well and keep on learning from one another for the good of all.

A great relevance in the women's formation is left to the role of counselling. Whenever the group is held, there is always time left for a personal encounter with the sister or her collaborators. In this way, the work done really becomes holistic in the sense that it addresses the spiritual, psychological, and social needs of the women.

The Comboni Missionary Sisters are also present in the urban area of Kariobangi, the slum of Korogocho and in the rural\semi-arid area of Dol-Dol among the Masai.

Kariobangi. Kariobangi is situated on the northern side of Nairobi, 15 km from the city centre. The inhabitants come from a variety of ethnic groups with different languages, cultures and religions. Kariobangi is one of the densely populated outskirts in Nairobi with close to 60,000 people per square kilometre with a total of around 250.000 inhabitants who are constantly increasing due to the phenomenon of urbanisation, refugees, etc. The GNP per capita is of US 250 or less.

The rate of unemployment is extremely high. Education, social and sanitation facilities are poor and inadequate. Morality is also very poor; in fact alcoholism, drug addiction, robbery, violence and prostitution are very diffuse phenomenon. The most affected are the young women who have fewer chances to be educated and employed than men and are exposed to a greater risk of sexual exploitation. Girls of 9 or 12 years old are already exposed to street life as a means of supplementing the family income. The only other alternative occupation would be selling vegetables by the roadside or the risky trade of illegal brew.

As a response to these situations in Kariobangi, the Comboni Missionary Sisters opened a community of 3 sisters on the 11th December, 1976. In January, 1987 one of the sisters started to gather young women, pregnant girls in desperate situations, street girls and single mothers. She taught them different skills and gave medical assistance.

As part of their ministry, the Parish Pro-life members of Kariobangi Catholic Mission were involved in counselling women facing various crises. After a while it became apparent that counselling alone was not enough because as soon as the counselling sessions were over, the young women would resort back to their “old” ways of life. The Parish Pro-life members discussed the young women’s plight with Fr. Pino, the Parish Priest, and in 1990 the Anuarite Centre was initiated, to offer post-counselling training in dressmaking and tailoring to deserving cases. The first group of trainees was admitted in 1991. All the instructors were Pro Life members, who donated their time and expertise for the well being of the marginalised women.

In 1992 a Comboni Sister became the director and changed the name of the project into “Kariobangi Women Promotion Project” (KWPP). It meant to serve “young poor women who were dealing with pain, sorrow, rejection, poverty and other forms of crises, aiming at empowering them to move towards economic stability.”¹⁹ At this time the number of skills increased to include tie and dye and batik. The style of ministry went on with few changes up to 1997. Then a transformation of Kariobangi Women Promotion Project was initiated. New and more marketable skills have been added to the training. These are cookery (domestic science), housekeeping, hand and machine embroidery, literacy, countability and entrepreneurship. Within one year, the women are offered training in different skills. At the end of their course they were helped to find jobs or supported to start businesses.

¹⁹ Sr. Adriana Squarzon, Appendix I, Questionnaire, Question No. 1.

Up till now, the project seems to have achieved its objectives. In fact, over 94% of the women who were in the project in 1996 passed their Government trade tests in dressmaking, while 100% passed in the tailoring trade test. 75% of them have been contacted and 60% have reported that they are employed in the informal sector, earning between Ksh 1,500 and Ksh 3,000 or running their own sewing businesses. Today, over 360 young women have passed through the project. This does not include the present intake. "There is no report or indication that any of these women has resorted to their old ways of street life, etc."²⁰ Their self-esteem has increased, thanks to the counselling and emotional support which they have received. The annual intake has also increased to almost double the number of women enrolled in 1996/97.

"The Assistant Director, a Kenyan lay woman, is involved, as much as the Director, in the day to day running of the Project."²¹ Also the Parish Chairman is committed to it. The number of staff has also increased. Now there are two directors, a sister and a lay woman, the project has two full-time skills teachers, a Job Placement Officer, a knitting instructor and four part-time skills instructors. The Assistant Director doubles up as counsellor. Donors, benefactors and the association Misereor sustain the project. The beneficiaries are encouraged to contribute with a very small percentage of the monthly fee. Because of the extremely poor situation of the women the project cannot sustain itself.

The young women see the project as a means to change their lives into more decent and stable ones. Their standard of life is improving as evidenced by the fact that these women and their children are no longer suffering from malnutrition and related diseases. However, if the Project expects to be more effective than it is now, it must expand its learning facilities. In fact, the physical expansion would enable the project to assist more needy women facing crises. Greater knowledge about management and projects would be useful in order to run the project more effectively and efficiently.

Korogocho. Korogocho is situated in the eastern sector of Nairobi and is part of Kasarani and Kariobangi divisions. Although it is very difficult to make an accurate population estimate, "it seems that there is the presence of more than 100,000 residence units."²² Korogocho is divided into different villages and ethnic groups: Luo, Luhya, Kikuyu, Somali, etc.

²⁰ Ibid., No. 8.

²¹ Ibid., No. 4.

²² Sr. Marta Citterio, Interviewed on Korogochio's population on 22nd February 1998.

The conditions of the dwellings are usually very poor with no ventilation and are generally overcrowded. The average income in the slum is Ksh. 1,000-1,500 per month. The residents use incredible fantasy and creativity in order to survive in Korogocho with small scale activities, such as hawking, petty commodity trading and small services provision, illegal activities such as prostitution and illicit distilling of alcohol. The result is a life of insecurity, precariousness, tension and suffering with an incredible poor versus poor exploitation. The rate of unemployment is high as the majority of them are women and youth.

In this context one of the Comboni Missionary Sisters is fully involved with many types of ministries. She is part of a Project called "Kutetea Uhai" Protecting Life, which cares for girls from 8-20 years old who have been sexually abused or raped. Some are pregnant, many have tried to abort, to throw away their baby or attempted suicide. Their basic needs are to be accepted and welcomed as persons and to find someone whom they can trust in order to regain hope and motivation for life. Besides these, they need to find shelter, food, medical treatment, care for their babies and the possibility of job skill training.

A course in hairdressing has been found to offer a very good market. They have the possibility to learn the skills of hairdressing and therefore find a job to survive. The project also provides follow-up even after the course, to make sure that they are progressing well and to help in case of any other need or problem. The project also includes financial support when the pregnant women have to deliver and in the first days after birth. Moreover, a number of seminars every year are directed to prevent pregnancy prevention.

One the main objectives through job skill training and job placement is to make them economically more self-reliant and able to care for themselves and their offspring. Moreover, the women beneficiaries are then ready and able to help others in distress.

The project seems to achieve its objectives:

The women who finish the course are followed during the first months of their working profession. They are both subjects and beneficiaries of the project. In fact, seven women are trained as family life educators, counsellor and social workers. Some of them are tutors in the teaching of natural methods of Family Planning.

The main financial resources come through a Marianist Brother who is dealing with donors. Other contributions are coming from benefactors and Associations known by the Comboni Sister working in the project. The contribution by the local people is a small fee

paid by the girls attending the hairdresser course. The work done by the girls is paid by the clients, but it constitutes a very small fraction of the total cost, so the project cannot sustain itself. The women perceive the project as theirs since they are fully involved in it.

The sister involved in the project feels quite prepared for her task of overseer and co-ordinator of the project. In this regard, I believe she represents the Comboni Missionary methodology of preparing leaders and of “saving Africa through Africans.”

Dol-Dol. From the slum we will pass to Dol-Dol which is in a rural\semi-arid area in the Laikipia District, about 60 km north of Nanyuki and 30 km from the Equator. Its altitude is 2.000 m. and the land is both arid and semi-arid. Quite often droughts create food shortages and famine and dryness withers the little grazing grass. It is a village situated on a hilly highland in the Rift Valley, with scattered rocks. The population is around 20,000, most of the inhabitants are nomadic shepherds, living on cattle. There are a variety of ethnic groups, but the largest ones are the Masai and Samburu.

Around 1990 the parish priest of Dol-Dol felt the necessity to strengthen the Church’s activities and asked the Provincial Superior of the Comboni Sisters to open a community there. The Comboni Missionary Sisters arrived on the 1st August 1991 and involved themselves in women’s promotion, health care and pastoral work.

Two years ago, one of the sisters started a small programme of Women’s Promotion for the poor women of the area. The main objective of this programme is to make the women aware of their talents, rights, obligations, development and financial help through small projects. The sister is teaching the women how to sew and make clothes, some elements of hygiene, first aid, how to keep their huts clean and to cook some nutritious dishes, utilising the local products they have. This is useful, specially as a means to avoid malnutrition and illness.

When the Comboni Sisters arrived at Dol-Dol, she tried to help the poor women and their families to buy goats. For the Masai people, they are the most appreciable resources because they are semi-nomadic shepherds. The initiative was unsuccessful because the goats belong to the man only. Another initiative was to buy hens for one woman and in this way the family started to eat eggs (which were considered before like a taboo), and to sell the eggs and earn some money.

The other activities were soap making, cream for the skin and dress making for profit. The women form clubs, with a nominated chair lady and a treasurer. The sister-in-charge helps the women with the management of the income and expenditures of the raw materials, as most of the women are illiterate. The income from sales goes into a common fund. When the fund has reached a certain amount of money they decide to divide the money, to buy something for their houses or something in common, like a grain mill that can serve those around the area and be a source of additional income.

Some of the money to support these small initiatives comes from benefactors and the Spanish organisation "MANOS UNIDAS." They are not yet able to sustain themselves. "The women feel the small initiatives are theirs."²³ The women who have been coming once a week to learn the various skills and to work together have certainly improved their economical and personal situation through more self-reliance. The objective for the future is to make the groups fully self-reliant without any supervision on the side of the sister-in-charge.

In some areas, like Kacheliba, the sister in charge of Women's Promotion is sensitising the women in order to stop female circumcision. The result until now seems to be successful in only about 10% of the cases, but this is considered a good start.

Kacheliba. Other examples of helping women in the Kacheliba area are also to teach them how to cultivate the soil and to form small co-operatives which are the only ways seen for women to become independent. The sister believes that more preparation in human rights and local language would help her to enter more into the life of the people.

1.4.3 COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS' INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

The development of a country depends on educated people. Some of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in Kenya offer their service in the ministry of education in nursery, primary and secondary schools. Although in these past years there has been a lot of withdrawal from this apostolate, there is still remarkable work done among the students and teachers.

The activity of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in the field of education started in 1964 with opening of Karatina community in Nyeri area. The places where the Comboni Missionary Sisters are involved in teaching ministry are: Moyale, Kacheliba, Amakuriat and Ting'ang'a. Furthermore at a Diocesan level, in Marsabit, there is a sister working with the

²³ Sr. Adela Prieto, Appendix I, Questionnaire, Question No. 7.

teachers, organising meetings for their formation, helping them to strengthen their commitment in teaching the Catholic Pastoral Programme in the schools.

The basic teaching methodology used by the sisters in teaching ministry is the following:

The educational method and syllabus used in Kenya must be adhered to by all those who teach in government schools even when these are Church-sponsored. The sisters who teach in these schools are paid by the Government of Kenya and are considered Civil Servants. The subjects taught by the sisters are assigned by the Headmistress/master and supervised by her/him and Government inspectors.

Special attention is paid to expertise with which one teaches, the preparation and planning of lessons and to the rapport with the administration, the fellow teachers and especially with the students both within and outside of the classroom. "The aim is that of giving witness as Missionary Sisters, fully dedicated to preparing them as leaders for the future, empowering them, both teachers and students, by putting into practice the "Save Africa by Africans" motto so much fundamental in the missionary methodology of the Comboni family."²⁴

All of the schools where the Comboni Missionary Sisters are involved are boarding schools. The sisters are in charge of the girls sections; supervise and also give counsel and encouragement to many young women who are often the first girls to attend Primary or Secondary education. They will be the mothers of tomorrow, and therefore they will contribute to the development of the whole society. In places where there are Muslim students, as well as those of other Christian denominations, parents appreciate the work of the Comboni Missionary Sisters. As a matter of fact, ecumenism and dialogue with non-Christians are carried out in this way on a daily basis.

The Comboni Missionary Sisters teaching in schools are also involved in the Parent Teachers Association which meets periodically to evaluate and discuss issues important for the school and the students. The Catholic Teachers Association is another way to also further the religious education of the teachers based on *in-service* training. Seminars and workshops are held to promote in the teachers, as well as students, a sense of security in oneself and a capacity to become protagonist in one's future and history as catholic teachers, they are called to be witnesses and teachers of their faith.

²⁴ Sr. Mary Bernadette Hilmer, Interviewed on Comboni educational methods in mission on 21st January 1998.

The following is a brief description of teaching involvement the sisters have in three places: Moyale, Ngandu and Marsabit.

Moyale. Moyale is a district situated in Eastern Province and bordering Ethiopia to the north, Marsabit district to the south, Isiolo to the south east and Wajir district to the east.

From its peculiar location on the flat areas atop several hills, Moyale derives its name “moey” from the Borana language “flat.” Its altitude is about 1000 feet above the sea level. The temperature lies between 20° to 30° during the day and it drops between 10° to 15° at night. Still Moyale has a fairly good climate.

“The people of Moyale town and its surrounding areas are predominantly Boran originating from the neighbouring country, Ethiopia. Other minority ethnic groups are also including the Burji, Somali (Gari), Sakuye and Dogodies. These groups are nomadic pastoralists by very nature, except the Burji people, were they are agriculturists.”²⁵

The population of Moyale town, which is about 30,000, is growing very fast every year, and the most spoken and widely known languages are Borana and Kiswahili. The prominent religion is Islam in Moyale though some Borana people are still following their own traditional religion. The Islamic fundamentalists are growing fast enough to cause concern about the future lives of the minority Christians. The Catholics and Protestants who come mainly from down country as civil servants and military are the minority. In spite of the tremendous impact of the Muslims, the few Christians are more than 700 baptised ones.

The mission of Moyale was opened officially in 1969 by Fr. John Dutto, Consolata Missionary and two sisters of the Reparation of Milan. The Comboni Missionary Sisters and Comboni Fathers arrived in Moyale in 1972 and 1973 respectively.

In 1989, “Moyale Girls Secondary School” was built. Being a young harambee school, it still lacks many facilities such as science classes and a library. The majority of the students are Muslims who have a very low appreciation of education for women. “This attitude is connected with their religion (where women are considered like objects i.e. to marry and to have children) as well as supported by their parents.”²⁶ Besides this, most of these students have very closed minds towards the Christian faith or if they have notions about the Chris-

²⁵ Comboni Missionary Sisters <<Pie Madri della Nigrizia>>, *Draft History of Kenya Province* (Nairobi, 1998).

²⁶ Sr. Tseghereda Yohanues, Appendix I, Questionnaire, Question No. 1.

tians in general it is like that of their parents. The need for education is generally to open the mind of these young girls.

The main objective of the project is:

- to make known God's love and salvation in Jesus Christ to all people through education.
- to stress the importance of girls' education in the area. We have to remember that to educate a woman means to educate a nation.
- to build good relationships and dialogue, especially with non-Christian students, as well as with the local population who are 98% Muslims.
- to assist the students who are financially poor.

The project seems to be achieving its objectives, although there is still a long way to go. The negative attitudes towards Christians is lessening all the time. Nevertheless, the students are still slaves of their religion, parents and culture. The sister who teaches Biology and Chemistry is well accepted for her work, guidance and counselling. The Province is planning to send a second sister to teach Kiswahili, English and Christian Religious Education.

The local people built the school, provided all the necessary materials and they are involved in planning and management of the school. The local head teacher runs it. The Board of Governors controls all the money of the school even though the teachers are assigned and paid by the Government. "The financial resources come from local people through harambee, Muslim associations, from abroad (Saudi Arabia), and the Government."²⁷ Recently even President Moi went to Moyale and gave Ksh 500.000 for the school.

If this harambee school becomes a government one, it could help its progress. "On the other hand, there are many rich businessmen in Moyale who could meet all the requirements of the school without any problem if they were really interested in the education of their daughters and sons."²⁸ They need to be more sensitive to the importance of education. The local people perceive the school as their own, especially as the plot and building are concerned.

The school has qualified teachers for all the subjects and they give an adequate education to the girls. Since 1992, about 40 students graduate from the school every year. Some of

²⁷ Ibid., No. 5.

²⁸ Ibid., No. 9.

these students have gone for further studies to colleges. Others are working in and outside of Moyale. They are happy about their education and are becoming more aware of their rights. This is indeed a good sign for society at large and that of the area in particular.

A suggestion for the future is to invest all the energies in the education of these girls because when they marry they can give equal access to education to their children regardless of gender. "The sister involved in the project feels well prepared for teaching but she still sees it very necessary to have greater knowledge of Islam."²⁹

Ngandu. Ngandu is ten km. north from Karatina, Nyeri, district towards Mount Kenya. The official opening of this community was on the 2nd January, 1965. Here the Comboni Missionary Sisters were invited to take over a Girls' Secondary Boarding School from the Consolata Sisters. From 1965 to 1982 the school grew from one single stream to three and 'A' Level was added. The school maintained a high standard of discipline and academic performance as it remained for many years among the first 8 top secondary schools in the national examinations. The Government authorities appreciated the school very much, sending their daughters, no matter their denomination, and giving substantial support. President Moi participated at the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of the Girls High School called "Bishop Gatimu Girls High School," since 26th May 1989. He was so impressed that he granted our three sisters the permission to continue their teaching profession in the school regardless of their age.

The human, Christian and academic formation the girls received enabled them, after university studies, to cover places of responsibility in different fields. A related school activity was the involvement of a sister-teacher with the youth of the parish through workshops, library and counselling. The school continues to be among the top as the Kenyan headmistress and teachers, non-teaching staff are highly committed. The Comboni Missionary Sisters really foresaw the importance of preparing one of "their girls" to take over the direction of the School. This is another example of how the sisters have implemented their missionary methodology.

Marsabit. In the north of Kenya, after leaving the desert of Laisamis there is the Marsabit Reserve consisting of rolling hills with a variety of wild life animals, especially

²⁹ Ibid., No. 10.

elephants. The population, amounting approximately to 12.000, is a mosaic of ethnic groups, in prevalence Borana, Gabra, Turkana and Rendille. These people are mainly nomadic, semi-nomadic and pastoralists.

From 1964 to 1970 the emphasis was on the building of structures (e.g. mission centres and schools). The schools, in particular, were at the request of the local elders. Because of the farsightedness of the first missionaries, who believed the value of the Catholic sponsored school as a place for evangelisation, today the Marsabit District has 53 Primary Schools; of these 40 are Catholic Church sponsored.

The Comboni Missionary Sisters arrived in Marsabit on the 7th October 1966 and they founded a Girls' Primary School, consisting of four classes and a small boarding hostel started by a Kikuyu lady teacher. One sister co-operated with her in the planning of the project. Gradually the school grew in number of classes and children with one sister in charge of the administration up to 1979. At present there are about 400 girls, 80 of them boarders, half Christians and half Muslims.

The main objective is that every person of whatever race, condition, and age have the right to an education corresponding to their proper dignity and suited to their native talents, sex, cultural, background and ancestral heritage. Education must pay regard to the formation of the whole person, so that all may attain their eternal destiny and at the same time promote the common good of the society. "Children and young persons are therefore to be cared for in a such a way that their physical, moral, and intellectual talents develop in a harmonious manner, so that they may attain a greater sense of responsibility and a right use of freedom, and be formed to take an active part in social life."³⁰

Furthermore, Church and Government are partners with parents in the education of children. Partnership with the Kenyan Government in education ensures an adequate number of efficient and committed teachers. The project has achieved its objectives, yet it is an on-going process of renewal, conversion and evaluation. The local people are involved as all the leadership positions of the Primary schools are managed by them.

In the beginning, much of the financial assistance was given through the Catholic Church. Now, with the establishment of the Parish Financial Commission, together with the

³⁰ Sr. Andr  Teresa Rothschild, Appendix I, Questionnaire, Question No. 2.

local people, who are encouraged to see the value of education and encouraged to help themselves through Harambee. The schools are mainly self supporting.

The local people see the future of education in the District as their own. All school age children are strongly encouraged to attend school. This is not yet the case for the girls. Due to tribal traditions, girls are fewer when it comes to school participation. "Education opens these nomadic people to the possibility of literacy, economic growth and social communication."³¹

³¹ Ibid., No. 8.

CHAPTER TWO

34 YEARS OF PRESENCE IN KENYA: AN EVALUATION

After having taken into consideration in the first chapter Kenya, its process towards independence and its present situation, the Comboni Missionary Sisters' presence and their involvement in the country in health ministry, women's promotion and education, I passed to the judging part. In fact, in this second chapter after defining the terms *Ministry* and *Social Ministry*, I tried to evaluate the methodology used by the Comboni Missionary Sisters in reference to their commitment in health ministry, women's promotion and education. In the second part, I underlined the need for a better preparation in order to be more efficacious ministers. Then I considered the importance of high quality listening and finally, in the light of the "Redemptoris Missio" No. 37 I evaluated the Comboni Missionary Sisters' strong presence with pastoralists. Lastly, I briefly evaluated the sources coming directly from the Archives of the Comboni Missionary Sisters.

The history of the presence of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in Kenya is enclosed in a time space of 34 years. It is with great respect and consideration for all the efforts spent by so many sisters who have been working with dedication in situations of poverty and abandonment that I am going to evaluate their presence in Kenya where there were periods of blooming achievements, and others of painful failure and enormous suffering.

2.1 DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Ministry:** It is concrete way of performing Christian apostolate in response to different needs and pursuing different objectives. Ministry includes a spiritual dimension, that is the motivation of Jesus, a high degree of interpersonal relationships with people plus a scientific profession.

- **Social Ministry:** This touches the integral development of people pointing to the meaning of the Word of God and Social Teaching of the Church in reference to justice and peace, human rights and human dignity. Therefore, a Social Minister has a duty to render a specific service to the Church which is to foster transformation, to convert the oppressive social structures, institutions and systems in order to create suitable conditions for human beings to live their lives to the full.

2.2 FROM TRADITIONAL METHODS TO NEW STRATEGIES

The Comboni Missionary Sisters have made a great contribution to independent Kenya in need of reaching complete political, economic and cultural independence.

Charity-based apostolate in schools, hospitals and women's promotion all along were considered to foster human development. Therefore, many sisters were trained as teachers, nurses, tailors and pastoral workers to serve these needs. What seemed to be clear in the mind of the sisters was that they were carrying out a profession. They did it the best they could. As a matter of fact, in many places such as, for instance, Ngandu, we were known for quality performance and in Sololo, Amakuriat and Kariobangi for good health care.

In such traditional roles, the sisters took on leadership roles. The central figure of the entire enterprise remained the figure of the sister. The typical "image" of the "key maze" would quite well describe the traditional leader role that she played out through them. In this way, little or no independence and freedom were given to the staff, be it of teachers, nurses, or lay women in a women's group.

A further element which very much characterised the past traditional methodology of mission was the "charity based" type of apostolate with the distribution by the sisters of basic items such as free medicine, clothes, food or other material help. But this form of help was not geared toward human development for change. It is in itself short-lived because it is done out of "charity" but without digging into the root causes of people's sufferings and problems. "It does not seek ways and means to elevate, prevent and foster social transformation."³² The risk is that the people become dependent without any stimulus to move ahead and change their situation. Though certainly great under critical conditions and emergencies, this approach should not be adopted on a regular basis. In fact, it is known to engender passivity, dependency, and limits the creativity of the people to search for "their" way to deal with life's crises and life's challenges. A "charitable" approach escaped a formal methodology also because it was carried out by individual people who decided on the spur of the moment to do what they thought best. Community involvement was not always there.

Finally, this style of reaching out to people's need allowed for everything to fall back at the stage when the sister first met the people, and even, they would experience much more frustration since, when she was with them, they were provided with something, but once she

³² Margaret Aringo "Role of Sisters as Social Ministers: Challenges and Prospectives", In: Various Authors, *Social Ministry: Tangaza Occasional Paper/No 5* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1997), 69.

was gone, they found it hard to bear. "As we share in the life and situation of the people, with projects for human promotion and Christian formation, we contribute to the integral development of those oppressed by ignorance, famine, sickness and injustice."³³

In the process, a good number of people were also becoming relatively self-reliant or self-sufficient in terms of financial means, personnel and institutions of health, education and social services. Nevertheless, the Comboni Missionary Sisters' methodology remained more or less the same. I believe that more attention should have been given to the formation of leaders and to more direct involvement of people as far as the financial keeping of our institutions implied. We needed to question ourselves more if we could have trained more leaders to promote the development of people and thus leave our position of leadership and take on more that of the social ministers' role of collaborating, empowering, sensitising and denouncing.

"Listening to the cry of those who suffer violence and are oppressed by unjust systems and structures, and hearing the appeal of a world that by its perversity contradicts the plan of its Creator, we have shared our awareness of the Church's vocation to be present in the heart of the world by proclaiming the Good News to the poor, freedom to the oppressed, and joy to the afflicted. The hopes and forces which are moving the world in its very foundations are not foreign to the dynamism of the Gospel, which through the power of the Holy Spirit frees men from personal sin and from its consequences in social life.

*The uncertainty of history and the painful convergence in the ascending of the human community directs us to the sacred history; there God has revealed himself to us, and makes known to us, as it is brought progressively to realization, his plan of liberation and salvation which is once and for all fulfilled in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation."*³⁴

We, as Comboni Missionary Sisters, are challenged to move out of traditional based apostolates because charity alone without a strong work of awareness (consciousness raising) is not enough. Instead the sisters have to redefine their apostolate anew without abandoning the charitable approach, to move to a more critical way of facing the problems which undermine the people's welfare and lives. The change of orientation and methodology implies a

³³ Comboni Missionary Sisters <<Pie Madri della Nigrizia>>, *Rule of Life*, Rome, 1987, 55.1.

³⁴ Austin Flannery "Justice in the World", In: *Vatican Council II: More Post Conciliar Documents* (Bombay: St. Paul Publications, 1992), 695.

change of attitude and a new conception of the mission. To have to redefine the ministry does not imply that the traditional apostolates are inferior now. No, this is because it is in the traditional apostolates that the sisters have had their foundation.

After speaking about methods, I am going to underline some aspects that according to me could be developed, giving a particular reference to the three areas of involvement of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in Kenya.

Health ministry. In this field, much has been done as charitable work and in leadership approach rather the one of promotion. The work could be more oriented in mobile clinics than in dispensaries.

Women's promotion. I think that little has been reflected upon and done in order to change from the traditional ways of promoting women through teaching them how to sew, to keep house and notions of hygiene.

Education. A great contribution has been given through schools and education, but I think we need to believe more in it as an important tool for development, so that we can invest more energies and not withdraw from it.

The sisters were facing enormous tasks but theirs was more an effort at being "efficient" than "efficacious". They were more worried about the fact that everything had to move on smoothly, than to the reality that they were probably doing most of the work themselves and that people were not benefiting as they should have from their actions. By doing so, they were not ensuring a future to their own praxis as well as to the participation of the people in what had been started by the sisters.

A further element missing in the traditional methodological approach was that mission was not contemplated as an "encounter" with people, whereby missionaries and people needed one another in order to experience conversion and growth. Actually, "mission was understood as a one way road whereby the missionaries were bringing everything, from the Word of God, to new culture, to new customs, etc; but actually, the missionaries were not living mission as the grace opportunity for them to grow."³⁵ In this way, there was no deep liberation taking place in either missionaries or people; therefore, there could be no empowerment whatsoever in either of them.

³⁵ Sr. Maria Teresa Ratti, Interviewed on Comboni Missionary Sisters' Methodology, on 30th March 1998.

An additional factor underlying past traditional methodology was the chronic unwillingness to trust the wisdom, understanding and customs of the people whom the missionaries were serving, and therefore they were not willing to risk the people's dreams because they did not know them in depth. "An attitude of openness towards African customs and way of living is needed and a greater trust and respect towards the African person." (our translation).³⁶ Perhaps one of the reasons that there was little involvement with the life of people from the side of the sisters was also the fact that, generally they were overburdened with heavy schedules of work to the point of not having time for a human sharing with people outside the fixed work-routine. This way of carrying out a profession can engender much anger and frustration deep within the person (sisters) who comes to realise that their basic needs and dreams have not been met. When this occurs for a long time, the person may begin to show pathological signs, as happened in the past.

Often, as missionaries, we became highly emotional about reality with its problems, and we rush to find answers to solve the given problems. "We acknowledge that the local Church is the first to be responsible for its evangelisation. We offer our specific collaboration respecting its system, rhythm and accepting its priorities."³⁷ The lack of a sound reflection on our activity leads to the consecration of *status quo* and mechanical repetition of formulas that might have been successful in the past or in other situations but that are no longer responding to the needs of the contemporary situation of the mission on the African continent.

Most probably the majority of the sisters were not questioning the validity of their methodology; this has surely influenced negatively the pace with which the Congregation, the sisters, have kept a pace with signs of the times. As a consequence, it became more difficult to visualise themselves outside the traditional apostolates. A reality which is now quite evident in our midst. "We make it our duty to evaluate our activities in order to respond to the requests and expectations of the mission and to be ready to attempt new forms of integration."³⁸

Reality oriented reflections must be done in a scientific way and not just on the basis of ecclesiastical authority or the claims of having a "long experience." Among these principles and criteria, one that is particularly important is that of the evangelical discernment of

³⁶ *Sintesi delle Risposte date dalle Comunità alla Verifica della Vita e delle Attività negli Anni 80-86 e Prospettive per il Futuro*, 3.

³⁷ Comboni Missionary Sisters <<Pie Madri della Nigrizia>>, *Rule of Life*, Rome, 1987, 54.1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.10.

the socio-cultural and ecclesial situations in which the particular pastoral and social action has to be carried out.

In the past, we often moved ahead from one crisis to another, rather than planning in advance. "We plan future activities."³⁹ For instance, some sisters were asked to carry out a profession for which they had received no preparation or minimal preparation for it. This caused tremendous psychological problems in them because they would feel totally inadequate for the responsibility they were asked and yet, they had to attend to it. I have known of sisters who had to go and do nursery teaching when they had been trained as nurses. Such a decision had been taken as a quick remedy to unforeseen development, but most of all, to mis-planned missionary methodology.

The same could be said of sisters who were made responsible for hospitals or maternities, without having really undergone proper training. As a result of such moves, some of them experienced tremendous physical and psychological burn-out, due to the fact that they had been put in positions for which they had not been prepared. Not to forget the tremendous strain that they had to undergo when they had to work with lay personnel who had a formal diploma and the sisters did not.

Another example of past crises handled in a negative way, was the case of moving a sister from a particular place where she was involved in a specific responsibility, and with little or no notice, she would be moved to another place. Inevitably such a move would cause anxiety in the person, the community and the institution involved. And often, the sister called in to substitute the first one, would not always be ready, or have had the necessary time to adjust to the change or to be fully prepared professionally to continue the work started by the previous sister.

Definitively, though with the best of intentions, our past methodology of mission was of a "reaction" type and not certainly that of a "pro-active" type. Our style has been more oriented to problem solving, which did not respond adequately to the signs of the times nor did it solve all the problems either. In the past, the missionaries did not have any idea of the concept which today we call: "think globally and act locally"; they just did what they could within the limited areas of their school, dispensary and so on, but without the notion that their praxis was influenced by a larger reality, and vice-versa, that they were creating a greater mentality than just the limited geographical boundaries they operated in.

³⁹ Ibid.

We have often imported European methods, ideas and mentality, not able to inculturate in concrete ways the announcement of Christ and Gospel Message in an African context. “We recognise that the inculturation of the Gospel in a people requires a special <<kenosis>> for us missionaries. By contemplation of the mystery of the Incarnation, we are prepared to enter into a sincere dialogue with the people, in an attitude of attention, availability and respect for every person and for every people.”⁴⁰ It is necessary to be present in the lives of our brothers and sisters. They need to be aware of their condition in order to change and transform it. We do not have all the answers, but we can work together in finding solutions.

2.3 FORMATION AND MISSION: EVER-CHANGING REALITIES

In the past, a good number of the Comboni Missionary Sisters had a great hold on the local languages of the people they were sent to and very little about the official or national languages. This cannot be said of the past few years where we have witnessed a change of attitude in a great number of sisters. In fact, too many have become satisfied with knowing the national language or the official language and not bothered much to learn the language of the ethnic group where they work. In fact, in some of our meetings as Comboni Missionary Sisters we have agreed on the fact that more efforts must be put into the preparation of new missionaries into the study of local languages. “We should study diligently the language, history, religion and tradition of the people to whom we are sent, as we are convinced that we can evangelise efficaciously only if we understand the culture and the religious soul of the people.”⁴¹

A fundamental attitude which the sisters held in the past was related to the “spiritual” dimension of their ministry; the “salvation of souls” was the principle driving force which was giving them the courage and strength to undergo very difficult and trying living conditions. What they lacked was more in the realm of an immediate preparation of the culture of the people, culture taken as a whole definition of life. The sisters did not have the chance to discover the religious dimension already present among the group of people and very often what the people believed or took as a manifestation of the divine in their lives was either disregarded or misinterpreted by the sisters.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 56.1.

⁴¹ Ibid., 56.3.

The majority of them, as stated above, were loaded with material work, so they really could not become acquainted with the political, economic or social dimensions of the life of the people. Many, after years of being in a place, had never taken the time to go and attend a marriage ceremony or a funeral at the house of the deceased person, not to mention the lack of information about the traditional steps in the vital roles and stages of a given tribe.

The little exchange that was taking place among sisters from one mission place to the other or the minimum sharing about the methodology other missionaries were following did not positively contribute to an ongoing expansion in their knowledge and understanding of their role.

Furthermore, the lack of adequate preparation of some of the sisters did not allow them the possibility to be involved in ministries at other levels, such as diocesan, therefore, it became impossible to influence society from a larger prospective.

As for the immediate follow-up of the social projects we are involved in, there is little clarity as to their scope and objectives. The sisters need to be formed more about the strategies needed to formulate projects and to follow them. In regard to the Comboni Missionary Sisters methodology of mission, I realise from their reports that, besides being unclear and lacking focus, the tools are not there to objectively analyse the praxis.

The Church document "Ad Gentes" clearly described the steps which missionaries should follow whenever they start off their ministries:

"All missionaries-priests, brothers, sisters and lay people-should be trained and formed, each according to their state, lest they be found unequal to the demands of their future task. From the very beginning their doctrinal training should be such that they understand both the universal of the Church and the diversity of people. This holds for all the studies which prepare them for their future ministry, and indeed for other sciences in which they might usefully be instructed so that they might have a general knowledge of peoples, cultures, and religions, not only with regard to the past but also with respect to the present time. Whoever is to go among another people must hold their inheritance, language and way of life in great esteem. It is necessary for the future missionary that he undertake missiological studies, that he know, that is, the teaching the laws of the Church regarding missionary activity, that has be aware of the path which have been followed by the messenger of the Gospel down through the cen-

turies, and that he be familiar with the present state of the mission and with the methods considered most effective in the present time."⁴²

Due to the fact that in the past the sisters did not have any introduction whatsoever to the country, people, social customs and so on, many of them always felt somehow strangers in the country, and also, would always feel impaired for lack of such knowledge. This was also seen whenever they would go on holidays back home and they would lack basic information about the country and all the other dimensions mentioned due again to lack of initial exposure to such information.

Furthermore, such state of things produced certain types of "sermons or homilies" which the missionaries would give in their own parishes about the life of the people they had been with. These sharing were always underlying the negative which was taking place in Africa and very seldom would bring out positive aspects in regard to the people, their values and what the experience had meant to the missionaries themselves.

Things have got to change and present day missionaries are encouraged, if possible, to take time during the first months of their arrival in the country and be introduced to the basic elements constituting the culture and religion of the people they will share life with. Proper missionary methodology of the twenty-first century demands that this be done.

"It is necessary that those who engage in missionary activity, even for a time, should receive a training suited to their condition.

These different forms of training should be undertaken in the countries to which they are to be sent, so that the missionary might more fully understand the history, social structures and customs of the people, that they might have an insight into their moral outlook, their religious precepts, and the intimate ideas which they form of God, the world and men according to their own sacred traditions."⁴³

In the present history, mission is indeed a pluralistic situation which directly challenges all of us, who at times may feel unprepared, or worse still, even powerless, for instances of a Kenya we cannot define any more with the usual and familiar ways we did in the past. We certainly must avoid the temptation to run away from reality and retrieve to a world of our own making. If in the past, the sisters did not have the understanding-knowledge of

⁴² Austin Flannery, "Ad Gentes Divinitus" In: *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 843.

⁴³ Ibid.

“ministry” as we know it today. We must now integrate our call to mission in an integral manner which considers all the aspects of formation for a progression as well as for a social ministry.

Today, there are new situations which need our attention and at this juncture we really have to re-evaluate and discern our presence in these traditional apostolates. The different dimensions of poverty as we see them today in the form of street people: children, men and women, slum dwellers, the drug and prostitution problems, house girl/boys (maids), those orphaned by the AIDS epidemic, victims of land clashes (in Kenya from 1991 and 1997, the Likoni and Laikipia issue), war victims, refugees, high rate of unemployment, etc. are tragic as well as urgent challenges for the modern Comboni Missionary Sisters. There are new realities the Government in Kenya has not yet taken into account, for which no personnel are ready and prepared and no financial resources available. Hopefully, the Government of Kenya and the Church will find us professionally ready to involve ourselves in these issues.

2.4 LISTENING AS A TOOL FOR EMPOWERMENT

In ministry, we are called to empower and liberate wounded people. Listening is one of the best ways to do it. In many of our meetings as Comboni Missionary Sisters, we have realised that in the past little attention has been given to this skill, and not only to it as a skill, but also as a basic attitude with which to put ourselves in a position of learning about the life and culture of the people and at the same time to learn from them for our own personal life.

“To possess a listening attitude so as to be able to welcome people where they are at, since in the personal history of everyone there is a certain degree of mystery.” (our translation).⁴⁴

The sisters in several assemblies have underlined the great importance of listening more attentively, in order to understand better the needs of the individual as well as of the group.

“To know how to give time to people and to listen to them carefully.” (our translation).⁴⁵

As missionaries, listening is one of the primary and basic attitudes we must cultivate in ourselves in order to be able to insert ourselves into the culture, situations, problems, pains and joys of the people so that may help them to live full lives. There is work to be done in our

⁴⁴ *Incontro sorelle della catechesi - Tumaini Centre 3-5 Set. 1991.*

⁴⁵ *Relazione Asseblea Zonale - Centro, Nairobi, 1-5- Gennaio 1992.*

own communities so as to create a “listening mentality”. Only in this way can we as a group show we have accepted the challenge of listening more.

As human beings we are very fragile and need to be listened to, in order to be understood, accepted and loved. In this way, we can heal, affirm and empower others. When we are in front of a person who is speaking to us, a piece of truth, a treasure is being revealed to us. We are called to respect and to be concerned. As a religious missionary and Social Minister, listening is of vital importance when we deal with the suffering and needy. This listening attitude will bring us closer to them and more able to walk with them.

Listening is a must if we have to understand the reality of others and therefore walk together towards development and liberation. Today, more than ever, listening has become a key tool for our ministry. There are many movements for change that use listening in this way. We can think, for instance, of programmes such as Alcoholics Anonymous. “In recent decades listening has become a tool of consciousness-raising and breaking of taboos. The telling of their stories and the listening to them is the basis for a deeper understanding, building community, personal transformation, political action, and legal measure against perpetrators.”⁴⁶

As social ministers we have to develop our skills for an empathetic listening which require us to use our ears, eyes and heart, consequently, it is not only on the intellectual level, but also on the emotional one. This requires time, patience and openness to what the other is telling us, especially when we do not agree.

High quality listening is empowering for both the speaker and the listener. When we hear and listen, we help the speakers to listen to themselves. Listening to people in a way that allows them to express their doubts and confusions, and half-formed ideas, helps them to arrive at inner clarity and strength. Social activists can connect with that strength and use it for appropriate action. On the other hand, the listener has a new perspective, a new vision of the happenings. Listening is also to expose ourselves to what could be wrong and to change.

Good listening is relatively rare. From being passive, listening calls for alertness and exertion, with one’s energy focused solely on hearing. It does not diagnose the speaker for rightness or wrongness, consistency or inconsistency, logic or confusion. It asks open-ended

⁴⁶ Patrick Ryan, “Empowering Ourselves for Social Ministry”, In: Various Authors, *Social Ministry: Tangaza Occasional Paper/No 5* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1997), 33.

questions that encourage the speaker to go deeper. It affirms feedback to what is heard in a way that affirms what has been received and respected.

To listen empathetically means also to show interest in the person who is speaking to us, irregardless of his own preparation, condition, status, etc. It requires a genuine interest in what the other has to say, even if it is the opposite of what we wish they would say. It has a non-judgmental character which creates the atmosphere for the speaker to risk exposing deeper memories, conflicts and aspirations. It is these latter that may be blocking social action or producing counterproductive action.

It is important to consider that without the African value of listening, the Comboni Missionary Sisters' Social Ministers will not be significantly involvement and people will remain passive and will not grow. In urban areas, in which some of the Comboni Missionary Sisters operate, the pace of life is usually very fast and the tendency is to run after many things. We need to convert ourselves when facing new realities in Africa where attitudes of welcoming and listening are essential for any lasting social action or change.

2.5 RURAL/SEMI-ARID AND URBAN AREAS: FIELDS OF OUR CONCERN

As Comboni Missionary Sisters, we have invested our best energies in the rural/semi-arid areas, mostly with pastoralists for more than 30 years in Kenya, as I tried to show from the above presentation of the projects. The numbers of our communities clearly point out to the fact that we have and still very much involved in the rural areas. Out of 12 communities, seven are in rural, remote areas; 2 are on the outskirts of Nairobi, but they are geared formation. The Provincial House serves the needs of the entire Province with some involvement in pastoral and catechetical work in the parish. One only community, Kariobangi-Korogocho presents our commitment in urban areas. In the past, and also at present, many sisters feel that to serve the poorest and most abandoned, which is a basic element of our charisma, could only be fulfilled if we continue to minister in the pastoralist areas where there are still scarce presence of missionaries.

I think that our attention has to become broader in the sense that we have to be convinced about the presence of the poorest and most abandoned also in other areas. Certainly, we should not move completely away from the pastoralist areas, but we need to challenge our presence there and certainly improve our missionary methodology, aware of the fact that history has already decree that if these populations do not try to integrate a bit with modernity,

they will surely disappear. As missionaries, we must have a clear plan as to the handing over of our places to either the diocesan pastoral agents or other congregations which are not missionary in nature and therefore can accompany the growth and stability process of a diocesan pastoral agents for a longer period of time than we have been able to do.

As a Missionary family, we have rendered a precious service, specially in the beginning of our presence in Kenya, where there was the need for immediate answers to the needs of the country in certain areas, such as education, health and women's promotion for a quicker development. But I think that what has been done is not enough because long term answers are also needed. Temporary solutions are adopted in crisis situations, but always with long-term solutions in view. Joint planned socio-economic development is necessary in order to improve the standard of living and family income. Simple projects done in collaboration with the concerned parties will prove to be more effective. "Today, more than in the past, missionaries are being recognised as *promoters of development* by governments and international experts."⁴⁷

The shortage of commodities in the rural areas encourages people to migrate to the towns that are sources of those commodities. The urban areas are increasingly becoming the breeding ground of enormous numbers of people who are obliged to live in sub-human conditions with a whole series of destructive consequences. In Nairobi alone there are about 500 new dwellers daily, coming mainly from the rural areas. These are added to the already enormous numbers present in the slums.

In the light of the "Redemptoris Missio", we are encouraged to make a reading of our own reality here in Kenya.

"In the modern age, missionary activity has been carried out especially in isolated regions which are far from centres of civilisation and which are hard to penetrate because of difficulties of communication, language or climate. Today the image of mission ad gentes is perhaps changing: efforts should be concentrated on the big cities, where new customs and style of living arise together with new forms of culture and communication, which then influence the wider population. It is true that the "option for the neediest" means that we should not overlook the most abandoned and isolated human groups, but it is also true that individuals or small groups cannot be evangelised if we neglect the centres where a new humanity, so

⁴⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 1990, 58.

to speak, is emerging, and where new models of development are taking shape. The future of the younger nations is being shaped in the cities."⁴⁸

Already Mons. Caesar Gatimu of Nyeri archdiocese, in his speech of 12 December 1974 to the General Assembly in Kenya was underling the importance of our apostolate in the outskirts of the city.

The Pope in "Redemptoris Missio" No. 37 invites all the missionary agents to assume the demands of diversified mission fields. Therefore, we must question ourselves on the meaning of "First Evangelization" with these paradigms. Today's *situations of Nigrizia* are certainly many more than those we were handed down by our Founder and the first sisters.

I definitively believe that more effort should be invested in the urban areas where we can also find the most abandoned and those who do not know Christ. Are we convinced of this? Are we prepared to face these new challenges? A serious discernment is wanted and rather urgent.

2.6 EVALUATION OF SOURCES

The sources used for this paper have mainly come from the Archives of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in Kenya. I have used:

- A manuscript of the History of the Province;
- Provincial Assemblies from 1976 to 1998;
- Various Provincial questionnaires and replies in preparation to Provincial Assemblies as well as to the General Chapters;
- The Questionnaire prepared by me and sent to twenty-six Comboni Missionary Sisters involved in the ministries addressed in the paper;
- Personal interviews;
- Communities' programmes, projects, mission statements.

In general, the sources, were rather few and poor. The methodology followed by the sisters in writing sources, spelling out our commitment to history, events and happenings never came out very clearly, neither as a group nor as individuals. The objectives stated in the

⁴⁸ Ibid., 37.

various papers were rather general in nature and without clear focus. In general, the minutes summarising these sources were rather insufficient and lacking a proper style. Probably, this was due to the fact that in their meetings the sisters would address many topics and this would contribute to a rather superficial accounting of what had been discussed and decided upon. A further problem with the minutes was that when decisions were taken, who, how, when, where... were seldom specified. Therefore, the picture presented was rather confused and somehow insignificant.

CHAPTER THREE

MISSION IN THE 21st CENTURY: THE CHALLENGES OF A MINISTERIAL METHODOLOGY

In the first chapter I focused my attention on Kenya, its independence process and present situation. Within this historical frame, I took into consideration the Comboni Missionary Sisters' establishment in Kenya and their commitment in the field of health, women's promotion and education. In the second chapter I defined the terms "minister" and "social ministry" and evaluated the Comboni Missionary Sisters' methodology with a brief reference to their service in health ministry, women's promotion and education, along with their professional preparation. The importance of listening was brought out as an essential element in our methodology and the Comboni Missionary Sisters' strong presence with pastoralists. Lastly, I made an evaluation of the paper's sources.

In this third chapter, that is the act part, I investigated a new and clear methodology in ministry and the necessity for missionaries of an integral formation as social ministers. After that I examined people's contribution and the Comboni Missionary Sisters' help for an empowerment process. I took into consideration the importance of collaboration, networking and partnership. Then I tried to see how we, as Comboni Missionary Sisters, can find new initiatives in the sectors where we are working, such as health, women's promotion and education. To make the approach to these fields more dynamic, I did not list them in the above order as I did in the first and second chapter, but I used a different methodology. In fact, I considered today's priorities, taking into consideration "Redemptoris Missio" No. 37.

The first great priority is constituted by youth who require special attention and innovative and new ways to promote their integral formation and care; in this context, I proposed also new styles and methods of education which are exemplified in the school environment.

As a second concern, I considered the urgent need to build a more just and peaceful society and the necessity to give answers to injustices and poverty which women are undergoing. The third priority is the importance of spreading truthful information, adequate development and Gospel values through mass-media. Lastly, I proposed new strategies in the health ministry.

Taking into consideration the areas of education, women's promotion and health I divided my proposals in the two areas where we are present: rural/semi arid areas (with farmers and pastoralists) and urban areas.

The Church, as well as society all over the world, but particularly here in Africa, are undergoing a time of transition and quick changes.

Today's reality demands that Africa takes a big jump to reach a global development, otherwise this continent will continue to suffer and be cut off from this process, unable to keep pace with the other continents. Consequently, mission, in this context, becomes ever more a complex and fast changing reality. As missionaries, we have to hear the cry and will of the people for a better society which demands the recognition of their rights and identity. Moreover, as missionaries and agents of transformation, we have to be challenged by the present pluralistic situation and accompany Africa in its process of liberation, change and growth.

3.1 METHODOLOGY IN MINISTRY

As missionaries, we are called to have a particular sensitivity in discerning the "signs of the times" within the local Churches that have received us, so as to grow in the quality of our evangelising service and in being agents of transformation. To do so, we need an efficient and clear methodology. This requires, first of all, four basic attitudes of mind: attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility.

- TO BE ATTENTIVE is to observe the situation, to collect data, to be aware and to realise what is going on with a listening attitude as I remarked in the second chapter. Without this attitude the following steps are not possible. We need to be educated to active listening. It involves a serious commitment on our part, otherwise we cannot build mission together with people.

- TO BE INTELLIGENT is to analyse, to read deeply the reality, making links, understanding the causes and effects and what is important and secondary.

- TO BE REASONABLE is to judge, to evaluate the present condition if it is liberating and empowering.

- TO BE RESPONSIBLE is to act and to plan in order to liberate and to empower people intellectually, morally and scientifically.

Among the various methodologies one can use today there is "The Pastoral Circle," that includes several steps and reflections. One of its characteristics is a circular or better, a spiral process, where the steps are closely linked. When one has reached the last step one returns to the first. The "Pastoral Circle" or spiral could be described as follows:

1 - Insertion. The agent is invited to live the situation from within as much as possible. The purpose of this insertion is not only to gather the data of the situation, but to try to live it from the side of the people.

Since this insertion is a real human experience of the situation, the time factor has to be respected. In fact, human relations require time and real information about the situation cannot be forced from people. "A certain amount of trust and familiarity is necessary to enter into dialogue with the people concerned."⁴⁹ Not all can be achieved through questionnaires or formal interviews; because informal communication is usually a rich source of human data.

The kind of data to be gathered during this insertion will depend very much on the purpose and the extent of the intended planning, but generally the information has to cover geographical, economic, demographic, cultural, political, educational, medical and religious areas. Consequently, the stress on one or more areas will be also determined by the kind of information required for the pastoral evaluation of the project.

2 - Social Analysis. The various lists of situations/problems discovered must then be read and interpreted through an accurate social analysis. The data are not useful if they are not interpreted and critically analysed. The goal of this step is to go to the root causes of problems affecting the human situation. This method is known as "social analysis", a whole analysis of the social context not limited to sociology, but using all other human sciences that can help understand and interpret the situation as objectively as possible.

3 - Theological Reflection. This is the third step of the process, where there is the theological meditation, that is, the analysis of the situation in the light of the Word of God, Tradition, Documents of the Church and the Rule of Life in our case. At this point, reality is approached with the eyes of faith in God's presence in history. It is only through a theological reflection that we can see the signs of the times. Insertion, social analysis and theological reflection work together. It is important to underline that this methodology does not start with the Bible and the Teaching of the Church, as if everything else could be deduced from these sources. This method is rather inductive, submitting real life situations to the light of divine revelation. "Life is always first in the existential order, theology comes always after as a reflection."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Rodrigo Mejia, "The New Understanding of Pastoral Theology", In: Cecil McGarry, Rodrigo Mejia and Valerian Shirima, eds, *A Light on our Path: A Pastoral Contribution to the Synod for Africa*, (Nairobi: St. Paul Publications, 1993), 32.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 34.

4 - Planning. The previous steps were more oriented towards an evaluation of the contemporary situation; the planning is, by nature, oriented towards a new pastoral praxis for the near future. Planning is not done once and forever or planning for a distant future; planning is just for the near future. The so-called “pastoral circle” is hence more of a spiral than of a circle because it is never closed. The new praxis proposed will be the place for new experience, a new insertion and the whole process will start again. Nothing is of absolute and immutable value here.

5 - Evaluation of the actual caring out of the planning is extremely important without it we can run the risk to become irrelevant and stagnant with all the negative consequences such realities imply. The evaluation is carried out according the schedule agreed upon by the members of the group.

3.2 INTEGRAL FORMATION: PROFESSIONAL AND MINISTERIAL PREPARATION

In today’s world, there is a need to be formed in an integral manner. The specific profession that we may have (teaching, nursing, catechetical, women’s promotion, etc.) is not enough any more. We need to complement our profession with a more detailed preparation to minister in an ever changing society and to be able to relate to people in such a positive way so as to empower them to become the protagonists of their own lives.

To be a Minister involves dealing with people in a deeper way than a mere professional would. It requires a better preparation since it deals with inserting oneself into reality to transform it from within.

People can improve their situation through socio-economic liberation and change. “We spare no effort to help them to become aware of their dignity and improve their situation.”⁵¹ People must be helped to improve material and social life and to make this improvement an on-going feature. “The role of the Sister as a social minister is to take an active part and to promote human and Christian values as the basis of social structure so as to transform and to restore people’s dignity in any socio-economic, political and technological strategies.”⁵² This is best done through self-help projects for self-reliance which are aimed at bringing socio-economic transformation, growth and positive change.

⁵¹ Comboni Missionary Sisters <<Pie Madri della Nigrizia>>, *Rule of Life*, Rome, 1987, 55.1.

⁵² Margaret Aringo, “Role of Sisters as Social Ministers: Challenges and Prospectives”, In: Various Authors, *Social Ministry: Tangaza Occasional Paper/No 5* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1997), 75.

In the self-help projects, all members must participate and work together as a whole or as a unit. As the project sets off the process of reflection, thus evaluation starts and then continues. Whether the project is based on education, health care, art, crafts and technical knowledge, the objective is for human development and to foster change. In the process the people learn to be responsible, accountable and transparent. The cyclic process is meant to help people see whether there is development or regression and then do something about what needs to be remedied.

One of the fundamental principles which should guide our entire missionary formation journey is to “think globally and act locally.” We should also be able to make an adequate social analysis of the situation in which we live and work. This requires of us to always keep our eyes on the global situation around us, the new challenges, and realities. We cannot close ourselves in our work and be satisfied with that. We are always called to move onward. The moment we stop, we have lost the pace of history.

Proper planning motivates, involves on-going missionary formation, reflection and discovery of the root-causes of problems. It is important to remember that when we make a choice, we create a mentality.

The sisters, as social ministers, are bound to grow as they are challenged to open to new ministries and move towards justice and transformation for change. The aim of social ministry is to set up a guarantee for transformation inspired by the concrete involvement of Jesus in social issues. Jesus himself talked about redistribution of wealth, cancelling debts, the liberty of the oppressed and compassion for the suffering. He called people to share and to serve. He challenged the authoritative and oppressive structures.

The sister’s role as social minister is also to face and answer to the social needs of the people by making them aware of the socio-economic and political situations surrounding them so as to promote solidarity, tolerance, justice and peace. In helping to improve their living conditions, care must be taken so that fundamentally unjust systems are not made permanent. Through its social apostolate and specialist care, the minister fights against disease, unsanitary conditions, illiteracy, violent crime, drunkenness, drug-addiction and prostitution. He/she risks unpopularity with the authorities by campaigning against injustice in the administrative system through corruption, intimidation and exhortation.

Moreover, it is important that people become aware of the ways in which their particular vulnerability is exploited by the wealthy and powerful, as well as by officials who

abuse their authority. "Faithful to the prophetic aspect of our vocation, we commit ourselves to promote fraternity and justice in a concrete manner. We favour those initiatives which bring public opinion to realise the situations of poverty and oppression of some groups of people, so that Christians take on their proper responsibilities and look for suitable solutions according to the spirit of the Gospel."⁵³

To be ministers committed to social issues is a powerful means to turn the messianic mission of the people of God into concrete planning and initiatives which touch the daily lives of all, but especially of the poor, downtrodden and oppressed, and to provide all with vision and sound human conditions to experience the liberty and fulfilling dimensions of salvation which begin here on earth.

To function effectively as Social Ministers, we must attain a sound formation in the see, judge and act methodology. If this is done properly, sisters will be capable of sharing in the transformation of the world to become a better place to live in and change together. The objective of the Social Minister is indeed to enable the person to see, to judge and act in order to improve their standard of living, socially, spiritually and mentally. They should not only know their rights but also struggle to obtain them.

These rights are basically:

1. food, shelter, health, etc.;
2. work: the right to serve humanity with dignity; the right to form trade unions, etc.
3. the common good with particular option for the poor;
4. justice, solidarity and liberation;
5. subsidiarity: social structure within families, communities, groups, small businesses local governments set up, co-ordinated and regulated for the common good;
6. rights of women, children, the marginalised of society.

Lastly I can affirm that the five key words for our social work have to be:

Promotion Liberation Empowerment Challenge Collaboration

To be promoters: to mobilise people, even other Religious women and make them aware of social problems through seminars and how to go about their solution.

⁵³ Ibid., 55.2.

To be liberators: to lead people to recognise those social structures of sin, which rooted in personal sinfulness, give rise to immoral institutions. Oftentimes, people are unable to realise the presence and negative effects of social sins in their life because these have taken such a solid root in society that they are almost taken for granted.

To be empowerers: to enhance from within and without. From within it is to lead the person to integration and wholeness through self-knowledge, awareness, appreciation and acceptance. From without using education, politic, culture, health promotion and economy.

To be challengers: to question the culture in its negative aspects and taboos and the public structure in order to move always forward for a better, just and peaceful society.

To be collaborators: to act more efficiently and have a communal expression for all. Collaboration can take place on the intellectual, organisational, and personal level, but demands trust, maturity and commitment from those involved. It requires mutual respect and calls all to seek the truth and serve the common good, confident that all have gifts to contribute to the mission. It also very important to promote a network with other missionary institutes.

3.3 PEOPLES' CONTRIBUTION AND OUR HELP

In every context where we are sent we find people who need to improve their condition in a way or another. Most of time they are not even aware of their priorities, what exactly is lacking and how to go about solving their problems, because they are too involved in their own situation.

Our contribution in these realities is very important. First of all, in order to understand the whole set up we have to de-code every aspect of the problem. Our belief has to be that there is always something behind every behaviour or custom. It is necessary to note what people believe with the attitude of learning and see different aspects of a reality that is different from our own. We are called to improve our skills of observation, questioning the why of every aspect that seems strange to us, where we do not agree or what is causing poverty and ignorance. We have to analyse why people are doing what they do. This process of decoding involves culture, religion, social state, etc. and can be done only with people. Through this work we slowly make them aware their present situation and the solutions, adjustments, improvements that will come from their experience, creativity, needs, human, cultural, and material resources.

Another important aspect concerns feelings. People's feelings are essential because reality in all of us. If we want people to collaborate and grow, targets and feelings have to go together. To acknowledge their value, those of feelings, and to make the people aware of them is very important because they are a great strength in their own lives. Very often persons affirm and encourage us and are open to change. They teach how to do it in a very simple way. So we also need to trust people more and more, to believe in their potentialities and eagerness to learn. Most of all, we must change our role, from that of protagonist to companion.

Our task sometimes consists simply in gathering people together and helping them to come out with their own ideas and to have a clear idea prospective of their needs, resources and goals. We need to help organise, co-ordinate and encourage them in hope and towards the fullness of life.

We have to help people to understand their role about the betterment of the whole society, that there is a unique role which "each one" and nobody else is called to play in society through his/her potentialities, work and availability to share with others. In a word, the importance of being called "co-creators." If we enable people to feel proud of their small improvements also through what they do and how they do it, we know that we have contributed to the up-building of a better humanity. In this way, they can realise their unique being and develop their physical, mental and their living. Our role is also to stimulate people to work with dedication, making them aware that wealth and development come from hard work.

Appreciation of God's creation and the call to continue in it underline the common responsibility we have in bringing about the fullness of life for the universe, nature and humanity. God 'saw that everything was very good' and gave us the task of even improving it.

3.4 COLLABORATION - PARTNERSHIP - NETWORKING

Team ministry is absolutely an imperative. Collaborative ministry is rooted in the understanding of the Church as communion, in which all the people of God participate in the universal call to holiness, mission and ministry. Collaborative ministry utilises gifts in building up the ecclesial community to mutual respect and to participate in dialogue. Collaborative ministry can empower the church to be more effective in its mission, yet it is seldom initiated within the context of a reflective process that combines an understanding of the ecclesiological, spiritual, and interpersonal dimensions of collaboration. It requires patience in sharing the

vision of the Church and working together in building up what the Lord asks of each person, and courage essential to challenge each other honestly. "Collaboration can take place on the intellectual, organisational, and personal level, but demands trust and commitment from those involved."⁵⁴

Today's world is so complex that we cannot presume to solve situations alone with our limited experience; specialised people are needed to help ministers in the field, as well as the full collaboration of the local people who are the protagonists as well as the receivers of the mission.

Another integral aspect of team ministry is **partnership**. We are in an era of integration that requires us to complement the male and female aspects, such as the practicality of men and the attentiveness of women. Partnership is a must for the sake of the people we are going to minister to and an enrichment for the ministers. This implies maturity and the ability to live out one's role in serenity and with sense of a purpose.

Collaboration is also to **network** with other religious congregations and organisations to be more effective and to tackle better the problems. To network with others contributes to a more global view about situations, needs and answers, while avoiding duplicate work on the same issue, in the space of a few kilometres. Networking also helps us to leave the traditional approach, to face new challenges, so that we may find together creative ways to answer questions that are posed by the new frontiers of suffering.

3.5 EDUCATION AS A KEY TO HUMAN PROMOTION

In this paragraph, I tried to propose new styles and new areas in which we as Comboni Missionary Sisters can be involved in education, furthermore, I considered the need to focus our attention on the youth who represent the future of Kenya in order to follow and form them for the new challenges in society.

3.5.1 AREAS OF COMMITMENT FOR EDUCATION

Rural/Semi-arid areas

In these areas, specially among pastoralists, we are called to stay with people, to understand their basic needs and to teach them simple skills which are useful to them. We will be successful when people will see the benefits of education. Besides formal education, to-

⁵⁴ Norman P. Cooper, *Collaborative Ministry: Communion, Contention, Commitment* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 8.

gether with them we can find solutions to improve their standard of living, for example, through small projects and co-operatives, etc. These will make people more open to the challenges of education.

In the case of pastoralists, why not commit ourselves to visit them systematically and teach their children? This will also stimulate them to send their children to school.

I also think that our role is to train teachers who will teach in the missions and parish centres. Some of them could be sent regularly to distant villages in order to animate the people about the importance of education. This will call us to change from a certain standard way of educating in order to be creative, adapt to different needs and situations.

To be efficient and effective, we need to form local leaders who will integrate or synthesise their preparation, experience, creativity and nearness to people and culture. I strongly believe that the ministry of health, women's promotion and education have to go together. In remote areas, where we stay with people in their villages for a week or so, the work can be organised in a way that while the sick are being cured, women and men can learn how to cultivate the soil, run better their small businesses and continue their basic alphabetisation process. This is holistic education for life.

Urban areas

East Africa has learned by experience the failure of the educational system as managed by governments since the time of nationalisation. An urgent cry for help has been sent to the Church. Once again it is being asked to help provide a viable system of education at all levels and to all members of the society. It is part of the Church's mission of bearing witness to the truth. It is not only formal education that society needs, but also ethical education. The Church is often in a better position to provide this than anyone else. The Church can also help to provide civic education, that is, preparing future citizens of tomorrow. This will allow each member of society to work actively in collaboration with others for the common good.

I think that as Comboni Missionary Sisters, we are called to be empowered with this new commitment of promoting, animating and training teachers also in ethical and civic education. The Bishops of AMECEA were and are convinced that authentic, real and integral development cannot take place without good and sound education given to the people. The future of any nation depends on an enlightened citizenry. "It is in this context that the bishops insisted on the promotion of the training for transformation, which will create an awareness

and help people identify their real needs and priorities.”⁵⁵ This education is going to provide the needed human power for good political leadership and for economic and technological development.

In education we have to impart empowerment. We have to remember that education has to lead to the exercise of a critical function, to form standards that will enable people to create a new society that is truly fraternal and participative. This has to be more and more our direction.

3.5.2 YOUTH

Education is the key to development, which encompasses the total growth of the person and of the society. Very often we speak about the future and this primarily is constituted by youth who, in many countries comprise more than half of population, therefore, youth ministry is vital to the future.

Youth is a time of great change, physically, intellectually and emotionally. In today’s rapidly changing culture, teenagers have lost their once privileged position. Instead, “they have had a pre-mature adulthood thrust upon them.”⁵⁶ Our duty is to give them the right attention. The negative trends exhibited by street-children, prostitution, drug abuse, alcoholism, single mothers and Aids victims are more and more present in all different areas of the city and also beginning to be present in the countryside. Unfortunately, the youth are the majority of Kenyans who are very much affected by these serious situations.

Youth ministry has to be one of our priorities, helping them in religious, moral and sexual education as well as following them in their overall process of growth through formative meetings and particular initiatives like community service projects and teaching them job skills and positive attitudes toward work. What “are needed are associations, institutions, special centres and groups, and cultural and social initiatives for young people.”⁵⁷ This is a field where there is ample room for involvement.

⁵⁵ Peter Lwaminda, “Models of the Church’s Participation in Integral Nation-Building in Ameen Countries”, In: David Kyeyune, ed., *New Trends for the Empowerment of the People: Proceedings of CUEA Third Interdisciplinary Session of the Faculty of Theology and the Department of Religious Studies Nairobi 1-3 April 1996* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1997), 123.

⁵⁶ James A. Davies, “Adolescent Subculture”, In: Ratcliff, Donald and James A. Davies, eds, *Handbook of Youth Ministry*, (Birmingham: Religious Education Press Books, 1991), 34.

⁵⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 1990, 37.

3.6 JUSTICE, PEACE AND WOMEN

In this paragraph, I interlined the importance for us as Comboni Missionary Sisters of promoting justice and peace by our involvement in women's promotion as co-operators in forming a more just and peaceful society.

In the second chapter, I underlined that our commitment to women is intrinsic to our charism. Its expressions have been more related to activities such as cutting and sewing, hygiene and, general care of mother and child. Though these activities have been very relevant to women in the past, nowadays they are not sufficient anymore if we want to truly promote the integral cause of women in society. As social ministers, we must empower women to the point that they themselves realise the sinful conditions they are kept in; moreover, women must be helped to discover that many of the ills they suffer from are the result of their culture, oftentimes keeping them in a subservient rules. Women are often socialised to believe that such state of things is normal and must be accepted.

Our task is to help women confront their own reality in their cultural structures in regard to the justice paradigm. The year 2000 demands of women a fuller participation in all of the spheres of society, such as education, land inheritance, political and economic entrepreneurship, etc.

3.6.1 JUSTICE AND PEACE

Justice and Peace is an intrinsic part of the mission of the Church. The commitment to work in this area has to grow. Justice and Peace work is not optional for missionaries. The call to make and to help make ethical choices regarding the creation of a more just and peaceful society often occur daily. The challenge is here, especially these days in Kenya, where the role and urgency of Active Non-Violence cannot be postponed.

Justice is the other challenge that is beckoning us. Justice is part and parcel of our Christian faith. Christians believe in a just God, a God who calls to perfection, to be as perfect as he/she is, which implies being just as he/she is. The Christian's justice must be the justice of God: justice for all, in all and to all. It is a justice which covers the totality of human existence, it includes, therefore, social, political and economic justice.

This mission of justice will be better fulfilled if our presence in Kenya is seen also as a human organisation which demands of itself justice among other things. There is, therefore, a challenge to justice both externally and internally. For example, internally we need to be

more sensitive to the economic needs of the people, pay just wages, give priority to women when hiring workers and use more local products. Externally, we can promote the formation of our collaborators, take part as others in meetings, encouraging also transparency in activities and contribute to greater awareness and involvement during election time (active non-violent approach).

3.6.2 WOMEN IN NEED OF AND PROMOTERS OF JUSTICE AND PEACE

Justice is being violated by forms of oppression, both old and new springing from restrictions of the rights of individual. The most abused in African culture are women who have still to undergo many cultural traditions which impede them to express fully their giftedness. We as Comboni Missionary Sisters can truly become co-operator in the struggle for true and total development.

Justice has to promote all that Christians say and do; in all the apostolic activities justice must take its rightful place. This will give members of the Church credence when they demand justice from others. "We also urge that women should have their own share of responsibility and participation in the community life of society and likewise of the Church."⁵⁸

A very important priority for the Comboni Missionary Sisters is the integral development of women. "Our specific ministry as women, considered by Comboni as indispensable to the evangelising mission, makes the promotion of women a prerogative for us. Women should become conscious of their values, of their dignity and the essential role to which they are called in the family, in the Church and society."⁵⁹ Initiatives at Congregation and Provincial levels have stressed our commitment to the cause of the woman.

Today, society speaks of the "feminisation of poverty." Women need a more comprehensive form of development and this calls us to sharpen our tools so as to meet the challenges. Women must be understood as a global entity; their dignity, rights, roles and participation in the life of the Church and of society.

Rural/semi arid areas

Women's promotion has much to do with education, formation and empowerment. In these areas, there is a primary need to make people aware of the importance of the education

⁵⁸ Austin Flannery "Justice in the World", In: *Vatican Council II: More Post Conciliar Documents* (Bombay: St. Paul Publications, 1992), 695.

⁵⁹ Comboni Missionary Sisters <<Pie Madri della Nigrizia>>, *Rule of Life*, Rome, 1987, 54.6.

of girls. Due to the great influence of women in society, they need to be helped even in early childhood, to have a positive view of their dignity. They have to be helped to have a good education, only in this way can society be transformed.

Furthermore, when girls marry, they are more open-minded about many aspects of life and so can influence positively their children by giving both sexes equal access to education. It is very important to invest more energies in education.

In the mission of Anakuriat, the promotion of women includes the basic teaching of reading and writing. I think this has to be compulsory in the work of women's promotion, besides some notion of mathematics. These skills help the women take care of their daily business and financial managing of their home.

More projects of development, such as clean water supply, cheese processing and agricultural projects have to be implemented so that the people see the advantages of how these areas can answer to their needs. In Kacheliba, one of the sisters involved in women's promotion is teaching them how to cultivate the soil. So in the Kacheliba area, leaders who are Catholic women, are organised to cultivate the soil, make pottery, bricks and produce medicine for animals. The money they gain has been invested in buying a tractor and a millstone. In future, they have in mind to buy a mini-bus as there is a lack of transport in the area. These are only some examples of how we can bring about development in these areas where we work. I believe that experiences like these have to be developed and expanded.

Urban areas

On a different level, the Comboni Missionary Sisters are challenged to invest some of their energies also in the formation of women in politics. In Kenya, only two women out of fifteen candidates stood for presidential elections in 1998. Women are to be encouraged and also to be allowed to bring their feminine expertise into the political arena. This is not going to be an easy task when the entire ruling regime is predominantly made up of men and the few women present are put there just as symbolical figures. Unfortunately, the "feminine insight and genius" as well as their gift of compassion and understanding are not fully valued and put to the service of a new humanity.

In this way, we can prepare and make people aware of the present, but moreover, the future. In Kenya, where corruption is a reality and power is in the hands of a few people, awareness of rights and duties of citizens is a must if we want to truly empower people.

As already stated, financial management is another tool which is necessary in order to empower women in running their own businesses and making them capable managers of development projects. Development and the empowerment of women also include instruction in human development, self-awareness and self-worth, etc. We need capable women who are aware of and utilise their own giftedness, talents and potentialities which can be put at the service of society. They can help themselves and others to be free from many taboos and conditions that are enslaving them.

3.7 MASS MEDIA

Communication is a crucial element in the maturation of the personal identity and in the evolution of culture. It is an integral part of human empowerment, structural change and evangelization.

Long ago scholars have been stressing the role of the mass-media in forming the “public opinion”, in spreading world wide “consumerism” and in causing the so-called “synchronisation of culture.”⁶⁰ More lately, however, the focus has shifted from the mass media to the process of communication in itself. Since 1967 Paulo Freire stressed the difference between a communication which imposes to the “receivers” the ideas of the “oppressors” and a communication which helps the awareness and empowerment of the “receivers”.

The first is a “one-way” or “top-down communication”, in which only the “experts” are allowed to speak, while the “ignorant” have to receive passively; the second is a “dialogical communication”, which allows also the “illiterates” to express their experiences, so becoming they themselves “experts”. The “receivers” can also play an active role when decoding a “message”: in so doing they can distort the “intentional meaning” of the senders through their own interpretation. Thanks to these recent insights in the complexity of the communication process, the development workers have to replace the traditional concept of communication as “extension” with the today concept of “participatory communication”.

In order to forge “development,” a simple transferring of technology and knowledge is no longer sufficient: the “experts” have to engage in a demanding dialogue with the people they want to help, in order to promote a mutual understanding and expose the crucial role played by their cultures in determining their “perception of reality”.

⁶⁰ Cees Hamelink, *The Politics of World Communications* (London: Sage Publications, 1996).

Nowadays development project should be “participatory”, i.e. should involve the so-called “receivers” in the planning of the project itself. The Comboni Missionary Sisters are committed to the promotion of women. The General Chapter of the Comboni Missionary Sisters of 1992 already underlined the importance and relevance of mass-media for evangelization. As communication is so crucial for the maturation of personal identity and critical awareness, women could be “promoted” first of all changing the “top-down” relationship into a more “dialogical” one, involving them actively since the planning of the “development projects”. But the means of communication could also be used to mould their capacity of observing and denouncing what oppresses them, to promote their self-confidence and to empower them in decision-making. Some experiences with community media and low-cost video cameras have been successful.

The information challenge is definitively an ethical one. The lack of proper/truthful information explains a lot of social problems present in our midst. In fact, the means of social communication have often been monopolised by political parties to brainwash society. The only truth society is allowed to know is *their* truth, tailored to fit their goals.

Definitively there is a need to invest more people in this area. In this way it will be easier to challenge the present society and promote the cause of women on the African Continent. Number 37 of “Redemptoris Missio” says it all: “The means of social communication have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behaviour as individuals, families, and within society at large.”⁶¹

3.8 HEALTH MINISTRY

Some new proposals on how to change the methodology in this field have come out from the last Provincial Assembly of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in Kenya from 24 - 02 - 1998 to 28- 02 - 1998.

Rural/semi-arid areas

In these areas dispensaries, mobile clinics and hospitals are very important structures and reference points for the people in need of health care. Today, as a missionary, we need to reach out to more people, those who are far away and cannot come to the dispensary or are not

⁶¹ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 1990, 37.

aware of the importance of prevention, immunisation and recognition of some sicknesses. A possible way to change our approach could be that of staying out for two or three days with people in their villages. Consequently, this would call us to do less work in the dispensary, to be more in contact with people outside the mission and be more mobile. The work in the dispensary can be run by trained local people, so that empowerment and subsidiarity can be implemented.

Moreover, the work of mobile clinics are meant to pursue a double purpose. Firstly, to reach the people who are very far and give them first aid, nursing care, including prevention with immunisations. Secondly, it is an important occasion for formation, such as family planning, sexual and moral education to reduce the plague of AIDS, prevention of some disease, the importance of hygiene and recognition of the possibilities to use some natural resources to improve the local diet. This awareness has to be accompanied by organising people and trying to find out with them concrete answers to long term problems concerning the improvement of their standard of living.

Urban areas

The problem of AIDS throws this challenge into sharp focus. At times, the abandoned victims of AIDS have nowhere else to turn to, except to the Church. Furthermore, on top of the traditional lepers, there are the new lepers, the AIDS' sufferers. An effect of this evil is that it leaves behind orphans who themselves could fall victim to the same evil and who belong to nobody. As well as taking care of AIDS victims, as missionaries involved in the health field, we "will have to double our efforts in the field of moral education, encourage chaste living"⁶² behaviour change and faithful relationships. People have to be helped to develop their self-esteem and sense of worth so that they no longer turn to occasional relationships. I think that by tackling the roots of the problem we will see some definite results.

Emergencies have to find us readier, especially in the slums where we work. Just a few months ago, we experienced the spreading of cholera. These events have to find us ready to leave our dispensaries to be run by the trained people and to implement emergency structures which give quick help, with ideas, materials, etc.

⁶² Valerian Shirima, "Challenges to the Church in East Africa", in: *A Light on our Path: A Pastoral Contribution to the Synod for Africa*, op. cit., 48.

As ministers, visiting the sick in their houses is very important as a way to help, to encourage, to direct them in correct decision making, specially for those who are very far away from a dispensary or not aware of the seriousness of their condition.

CONCLUSION

This paper has been a real challenge to me in many ways, but particularly, in two ways: firstly, because I have been a member of the Comboni Missionary Sisters in the Province of Kenya for only a little over a year and a half, and secondly, because the sources used were rather scanty in providing information. Furthermore, the realities in which the sisters live and operate are very diverse and therefore, they entail the acquisition of some particular experiential tools before one is in a position to define a situation as objectively as possible. As the various phases of the paper were taking shape, I could detect inside myself a growing appreciation for the presence and courageous ministries carried out by all the Comboni Missionary Sisters who have lived in Kenya and for those who are still continuing in the pathway made by the pioneers.

As I look back at the various phases of my research, I realise that this paper has taken me along an interesting journey. The historical, political and social developments of both the nation, as well as the Comboni Missionary Sisters' initial involvement and development in this Province, have provided me with much information, fact-finding and discoveries as I was previously unaware of. This journey has also been an occasion for me to critically evaluate objectively the Comboni Missionary Sisters' methodology of mission. Furthermore, it has been a challenging situation, whereby I was invited to search for new proposals and styles of presence.

I would also like to say that this paper has been a graced opportunity for me, a young member in the family of the Comboni Missionary Sisters, to deepen more my own religious-missionary roots. My future has already been enriched by my reflection and analysis on our past, as well as by my suggestions towards an ever growing tomorrow. I felt highly motivated while carrying out this research by the fact that the whole of the information I was compiling and the reflection that I was elaborating were very much echoing inside of me as part of my own being.

This research paper has affected me as a woman, as a social minister and as a Comboni Missionary Sister.

As a woman, this paper has helped me to appreciate even further the importance of listening as a missionary attitude. I already treasure it very much but I have come to learn that listening is a "sine qua non" condition to encounter people in their reality so as to be able to

empower them to make decisions for an integral human development. As a woman, also, I have come to appreciate very much the tremendous dedication to people our sisters had and still have in their ministries. I learned from them the real meaning of “caring” which goes beyond immediate results and official recognition. This is a very important attitude in a truly fulfilled woman.

As a social minister in the making, I have had the opportunity to appreciate the various fields which social ministry encompasses and deals with. I enjoyed trying to apply to concrete situations what I have learned in class. Furthermore, I have become more convinced and more enthused about working together and staying with people. In the near future, I hope to be able, with the knowledge I have and I am accumulating in the Social Ministry courses, to enable people to be protagonists of their own lives, and together, to transform the reality we live in.

As a Comboni Missionary Sister, I have had the chance “to stay and dwell” on 34 years of history my province has lived here in Kenya. I realised its pros and cons; I discovered that, probably, the main drawback in our methodology has been the inability to recognise, with the passing of time, the need for us to change roles.

Now we seem to be orienting ourselves a different and new way of being in mission. I myself truly hope to influence this process in a positive way. In the future, I hope to hold some workshops with the sisters in my Province in order to facilitate a change of mentality and eventually of structures, etc. For an even better missionary presence. The Comboni Missionary Sisters women and, more all, the African women deserve all of this. The African Synod affirmed that “the woman is another ‘I’ in a common humanity.”⁶³ It is my real hope that with our new awareness of women’s roles in mission and in the whole of society my research has helped us, the Comboni Missionary Sisters, to discover that we will have contributed to bring about the unity of humanity which was there at the beginning.

I am deeply grateful to all those who believed in the necessity of this paper and in the vitality that would be generated through it.

⁶³ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 1995, 82.

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GUIDELINE QUESTIONNAIRE

ABOUT THE COMBONI MISSIONARY SISTERS' INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (Social Ministry) IN KENYA.

NAME:

AGE:

POSITION:

PARISH:

ADDRESS:

- 1. Would you describe in detail the needs of the people behind the project (institution/school/hospital/kindergarten/women's promotion) in which you are involved?**
- 2. What are the main objectives of your project?**
- 3. Would you say that the project has achieved these objectives? If yes, how? If not, which were the main obstacles?**
- 4. Are the local people involved in planning and management of the project? If yes, outline the positions they hold.**
- 5. Where did the financial resources come/are from: local people/government/benefactors/associations?**
- 6. Can the project sustain itself? If not, for how long will it depend on others, rather than local people?**

- 7. Do the local people perceive this project as their own or something imposed on them?**

- 8. In which ways does the project contribute to the development of the local people?**

- 9. Which advice would you give for the future of the project?**

- 10. Do you think that you had a good preparation in order to carry on these activities?**

Of course, feel free to add any other information you deem important for me to know. You can write in English, Italian or Spanish. I gently ask you to return this questionnaire by the 15th of November, since I have to submit the first part of my Essay by the end of December. I do understand that I am asking you to add to your busy schedule of work by answering this questionnaire, and I really appreciate your co-operation and sisterly help. Thank you and God bless you and your mission.

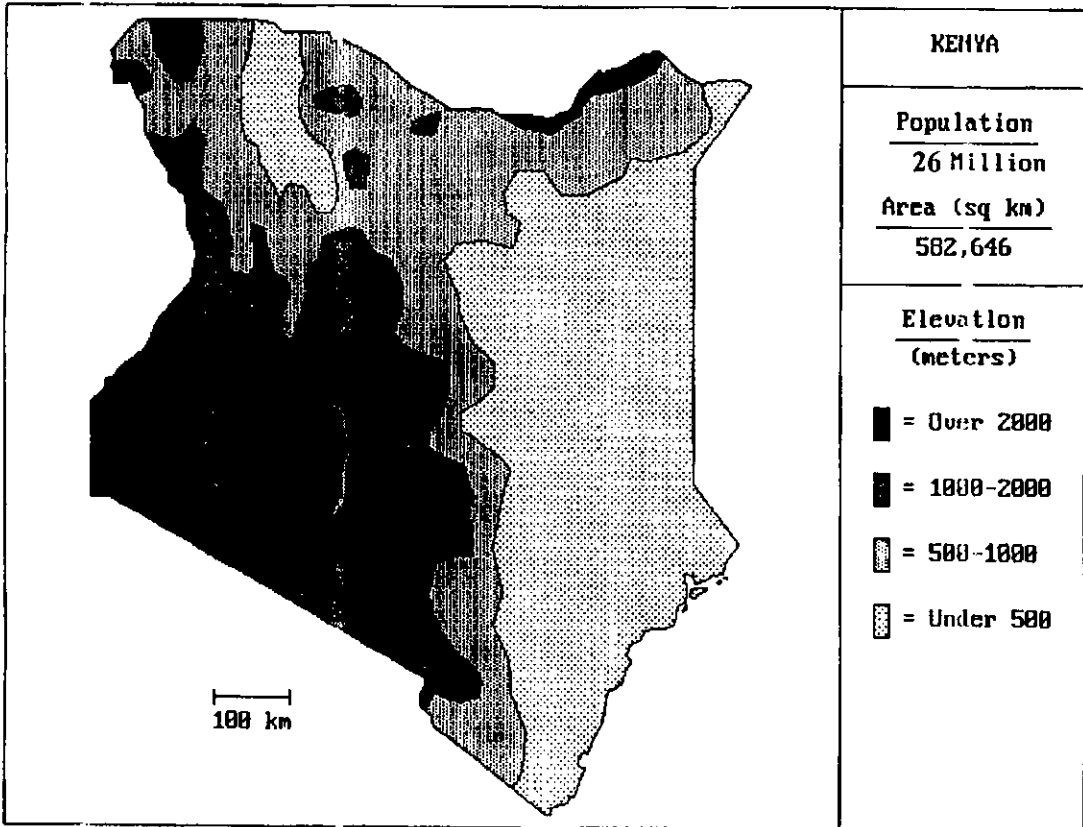
Sincerely,

N/B

Questionnaire sent to 26 Comboni Missionary Sisters, 13 only returned it.

Map -1

Population and Geographical Data



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Table 1.
Education Statistics in Kenya at 1992

KENYA

Education				
	Schools	Teachers	Students	Students per Teacher
Primary	13,849	149,151	5,031,340	34
Secondary	2,614	25,583	540,078	21
Third Level	4	N/A	9,888	N/A
GNP for Education: 7.0% Literacy Rate: 69%				

Table 2.
Health Statistics in Kenya at 1992

KENYA - HEALTH STATISTICS

Life Expectancy (M)	60 years
Life Expectancy (F)	64 years
Crude Birth Rate	45 /1000
Crude Death Rate	8 /1000
Infant Mortality	69 /1000
Hospitals	536
Population/Hospital	47,093
Hospital Beds	31,356
Population/Hosp. Bed	805
Physicians	3,071
Population/Physician	8,219
Dentists	492
Population/Dentist	51,305
Pharmacists	231
Population/Pharmacist	109,273
Nurses	23,064
Population/Nurse	1,094

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Map 2.
Comboni Missionary Sisters' Missions in Kenya

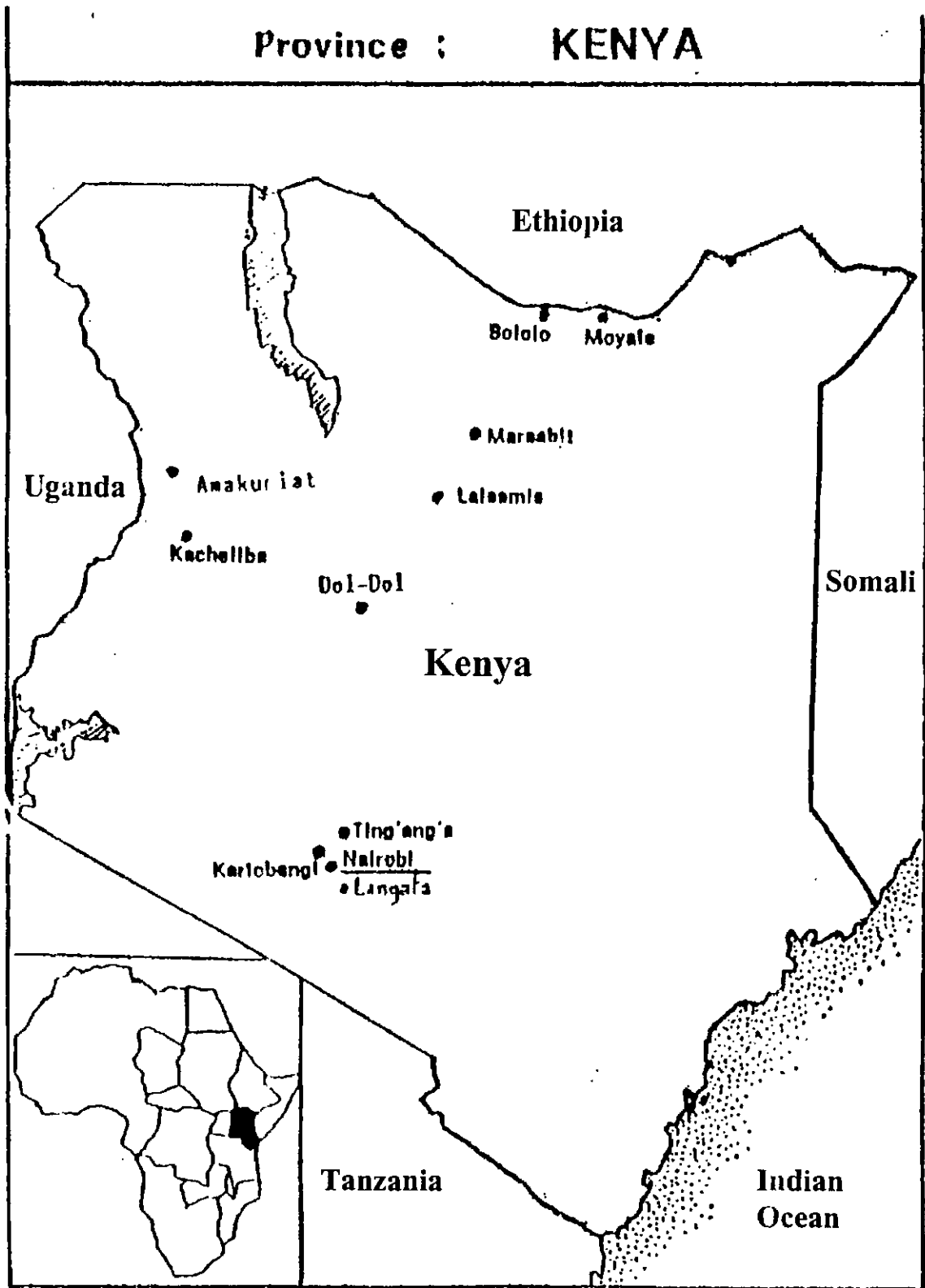


Table 3.**Comboni Missionary Sisters' Communities in Kenya**

Community	Opened	Handed over
Karatina	1964	1987
Ngundu	1965	1996
Laisamis	1966	
Marsabit	1966	
Sololo	1971	
Gaichanjiru	1971	1987/1989
Sagana	1971	1977/1983
Moyale	1972	
Ting'ang'a	1973	
Kacheliba	1974	
Tartar	1974	1980
Thigio	1974	1981
Makindu	1975	1996
Kariobangi	1976	
Himo (Tanzania)	1976	1991 withdrawal of Sisters
Naivasha	1978	1986
Kolongolo	1981	1986
Ongata Rongai	1982	1995 withdrawal of Sisters
Amakuriat	1985	
Postulancy	1989	
Ting'ang'a	1973	
Dol Dol	1991	
House of Studies - Langata	1996	