TANGAZA COLLEGE

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

POVERTY AS A STRUCTURE OF SIN IN THE SLUMS

A case study of Mukuru Kwa Reuben Slum

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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INTRODUCTION

At the very mention of the word slum, what first comes into people's mind is poverty and crime. In our human and religious categories, poverty is looked at as an object of mercy and a misfortune that has befallen a person or group of people. Crime on the other hand is treated with resentment and one who participates in it is seen as an enemy of society. In my pastoral experience in the slums, one question however has been going on in my mind; why all these evils associated with the slums? Is it that Satan is more present there? In this paper, I am going to focus my investigation on how poverty in the lives of slum dwellers can be a structure of sin in the extent it influences the occurrence of the various evils that are rampant in the slums. Pope John Paul II talks of structures of sin as rooted in personal sin, that is, concrete acts of individuals who introduce and consolidate them, making them difficult to remove.

Poverty is normally understood in the context of material things, and one who lacks enough to cater for his/her needs is seen as poor. I am going to treat poverty not only as a lack of material things but a whole interconnected network of deprivations that is characteristic of slum dwellers. Engbert Mveng could not expose this in a better way than he did in his article "Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach for Africa and the Third World":

> When persons are deprived not only of goods and possessions of a material, spiritual, moral, intellectual, cultural or sociological order, but of everything that makes up the foundation of their being-in-the-world and the specificity of their "ipsiety" as individual, society and history.... When persons are bereft of their identity, dignity, their freedom, their thought, their history, their languages, their faith universe, and their basic creativity, deprived of all their rights and hopes, their ambitions... They sink into

> a kind of poverty which no longer concerns only exterior or interior goods or possessions, but strikes at the very being, essence and dignity of the human person[1].

He goes ahead to call this anthropological poverty.

I will carry out this study in four chapters. The first will be a social analysis which is an outcome from interviews with the residents of Mukuru kwa Rueben slum. This will be preceded by some background information about this slum, which consists of a section of the vast Mukuru slums in Embakasi district of Nairobi province. The second chapter is going to be a theological background based on scripture and some specific documents of the church.

The third chapter will be a set of reflections that makes a theological or Christian response to the problem of poverty based on the teaching of the Church. These are values and attitudes that can be very instrumental in an attempt towards salvation from the structures of sin that are the subject of our study. The last chapter presents a practical response towards a solution to poverty and its effects on the people. I am going to look at what is being done already in the fight against poverty, and what more could be done. In all this the church is called upon to collaborate, support, encourage and challenge the various bodies involved, be it the government or NGOs.

My main goal in all this is to create an awareness that poverty is not only a problem by itself but a root cause of many other evils that pose a great threat to society and faith. It calls for a deeper understanding and more profound response that surpasses mere charity.

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[1] Engelbert Mveng, 'Impoverishment And Liberation: A Theological Approach For Africa And The Third World' *Paths Of African Theology*, Ed.,Rosino Gibellini, (New York: Orbis Books,1994), 156

1. SOCIAL ANALYSIS

1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.11 Location

Mukuru slums are situated in the south east of Nairobi, on the left of Mombasa road and trimmed by the road leading to Jomo Kenyatta International airport at the junction of City Cabanas Hotel. This is under Nairobi province, Embakasi district, Embakasi division, Embakasi location and Mukuru sub-location of the Kenyan republic.

1.12 Population

The most recent population census indicates that Mukuru slums hold up to 665,000 people, the population ratio being one man to two women. Children and youth between a day old to 25 years form 66% of the whole population in the slums. The people come from different tribal backgrounds, some refugees from Somali and other neighbouring countries.

1.13 Physical Environment

Mukuru is a Kikuyu word meaning Valley. Mbagathi river that drains into Athi River cuts across these slums. Due to its low level during dry seasons, the river is very dirty with effluence from the factories and villages alongside the river. Due to its wide catchment area, when it floods, children and unsuspecting adults can easily drown.

The area is generally flat with a few small-interspersed hills. Thus, stagnant water is common and becomes breeding places for mosquitoes. Hence, various waterborne diseases are rampant while malaria is chronic. Mukuru is at the heart of the industrial

area of Nairobi. Most of the villages are surrounded by factories and warehouses on all sides. The pollution coming from these industries makes the residence a health hazard.

1.14 Origin and Development of Mukuru Slums

Mukuru slums and kwa Reuben in particular was born at the dawn of independence in Kenya. During the colonial era, people were not allowed to settle around this area set apart for industries. After attaining independence, many people especially young men came to Nairobi to look for jobs, mostly in the industries. The exodus to the city was greater than its housing capacity. Worse still, some came with no specific place to stay. That is why people started constructing temporary shelters near the industries. What used to be a home of one man (Reuben) with his family started expanding and being congested with many houses.

Mukuru slums developed basically from the surrounding industries. People working in these industries prefer to stay around to avoid the extra cost of transport to their place of work. Many people live in Mukuru because there is affordable house rent, bearing in mind their low income, which we are going to see later. A room can be rented at less than 1,000 shillings per month. Some of the residents look for jobs and stay there as their base. Bearing in mind the high population density, many people have come to Mukuru to start micro - enterprises ranging from vegetable vendors, street food vendors (a lot of cooked food is being sold on the streets), retail kiosks, charcoal vendors, carpenters and many others. There are a few people who own wholesale shops and commercial plots. This shows that not everybody in the slums is poor.

There are people who have come to Mukuru due to rural land problems and family conflicts. A good number of residents are refugees from neighbouring countries especially Somali. Others are victims of tribal clashes in the up country. Some have come to join their marriage partners from the rural areas. In most cases they come for a while and go back to their rural homes. There are other residents who are living with their relatives and friends as dependants. They could be looking for jobs, working or schooling.

It is worth noting that most people have come from rural areas and elsewhere because of scarcity of resources, and settled in Mukuru because they find life cheaper and basic needs like food affordable.

1.2 POVERTY AND ITS EFFECTS IN MUKURU

One of my major concerns in this paper is to find out how poverty influences the quality of life in the slums. Through my interviews and presence among the people of Mukuru kwa Rueben, I proved that this phenomenon of Marginalization easily creates an atmosphere where evil flourishes while human dignity and values lose meaning. The following is an analysis of my research, which over and above traced the root cause of major evils of Mukuru kwa Rueben in poverty. I will start with a tabulation of the income that the residents earn which will give more light in the extent of poverty in Mukuru kwa Reuben.

1.21 Economic Status of the Slum Dwellers

Below are the results of a research done through interview schedule questionnaire.

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY INCOME PER MONTH AND N0. OF PERSONS November 2002.

INCOME PER MONTH (Kshs.)	NO. OF PERSONS	%
ABOVE 6,500	4	1.09
6000 – 6500	3	0.82
5500 – 6000	-	-
5000 – 5500	8	2.2
4500 – 5000	2	0.54
4000 – 4500	20	5.47
3500 – 4000	13	3.6
3000 – 3500	59	16.2
2500 – 3000	20	5.47
2000 - 2500	53	14.5
1500 – 2000	42	11.5
1000 – 1500	28	7.7
BELOW 1000	18	4.9
DEPENDANTS	95	26
TOTAL	365	100

From this chart, the persons who earn between 3,000 and 3,500 shillings form the highest percentage. Lowest are those who earn between 6,000 – 6,500 shillings. The average income per capita is 2,412.96 shillings per month equivalent to 93 shillings per day. For most residents this is supposed to cater for a family and other dependants who include relatives. A good number of the slum dwellers being vegetable vendors or rather in micro- enterprise businesses could not be able to tell how much they earn per month. Most of the income from such businesses is normally from hand to mouth.

Other people work in factories and other manufacturing industries as casual workers while very few are employed permanently. Casual workers are poorly paid and cannot afford better housing elsewhere or acquire more rooms in the slum. Those who earn more than Kshs. 6,500, though few can afford better houses in the slums, better living standards and education for their children.

Dependants are many including school-going children and those who have attained school age but their parents cannot afford to pay for their school fees. Others include those who stay with their relatives, most of them being job seekers and elderly people.

1.22 Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

For a good number of people, both men and women, young and old alike, drinking is a daily "ritual". To meet a drunkard or group of drunkards in almost every corner is not infrequent, even early in the morning. Some are true addicts who say that they cannot do without it. Due to very low income, they tend to purchase illicit brews because they are cheap. Despite the fact that some of them know the dangers of some local brews they cannot abstain. Some admit this, saying *tunakunywa kifo* (we are drinking death), and sometimes they have witnessed such effects. Two years ago in this village, a local brew killed more than 80 people within a week, leaving others with disabilities like blindness.

Most people say that they drink in order to reduce stress (which is only temporary). It helps them to avoid thinking about their problems. Take the case of a man going home after a day of work with only 20 shillings while the children and their mother are waiting to be provided for. Besides that, the landlord is on the look out for

house rent. This man sees it better to pass through a liquor tavern and intoxicate himself with a few glasses of the brew. This makes him unapproachable by his family or landlord whom he sees as a threat because of his economic status. On reaching their homes, most drunkards turn violent in order to suppress any demands that may come up. They can beat their wives in front of the children or all together with the children. This might force the children to flee from the house only to return later to sleep. What they find out there is not nurturing either. Some men have been involved in cases of fatal domestic violence under the influence of alcohol. When children grow in the face of such violence, they develop a lot of hostility within. Some resort to drinking in order to forget problems of their upbringing and even their rural origin. Maybe one does not even own a house at home, which could be frustrating.

Selling of illegal brew is a booming business in Mukuru Kwa Reuben. Some people, even members of the Church, have educated their children with the proceeds they get from such businesses. I was struck by the case of Mary Mwikali, a divorcee, embarked on this after being abandoned by her husband. She educated her son who is an engineer with UNEP and a daughter who is a graduate teacher. The children live outside the slums in an estate known as Ruai where she bought a plot and built a house. She has bought plots and built houses in the slums where she stays to take care of them and of the liquor business. She has managed all this through the selling of this illicit brew. She confesses of not having engaged herself in drinking, although such cases are rare.[2] Most of the people who sell this brew involve their children in the business, who

[2] Mary Mwikali, 49 years old, single.

in turn start tasting and eventually become drunkards. They also watch and learn a lot of immorality from the customers.

The brew is normally prepared elsewhere, including dumping sites. It is transported and sold mostly in the houses of the vendors. Despite the fact that people take it to seek some temporal happiness or for entertainment, it has caused a lot of harm. It has rendered many people unproductive because they are ever drunk. It has also caused many families to be desperate and children to drop out of school because the little available money is used for alcohol. Parents who are drunk behave in a very unpresentable way in front of their children, even in sexual affairs. There are cases of parents sleeping on young babies while drunk, and sometimes it has resulted to death[3].

1.23 Prostitution

More than 50% of the families in Mukuru Kwa Reuben are of single mothers and majority of them have no permanent employment. They depend on occasional casual jobs and micro-enterprises. Many of these ladies have no employment at all, and this is one of the reasons of prostitution in the slum. In most cases it is not "official" or open prostitution in as far as commercial sex is concerned. They normally bring a man in the house as companion for some time, he helps them to pay for their house rent and feed them together with their children. In the process some end up getting more children as one confessed, *nilipata huyu nikitafutia huyo mwingine* (I got this baby as I was earning for the other one)[4]. The preponderance of male migrants and the need for female economic independence are major contributing factors to prostitution.

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[3] Agnes Wairimu, 62 years old, single.
[4] Margaret Njeri, single mother, 28 years old.

This kind of prostitution is quite rampant here, and the single mothers and girls who are involved say that they do it out of economic strains, not for enjoyment. Even a meal of 10 shillings is enough to lure a lady to sex and use her as much as you want. This shows how desperate some of them can be and how hard it is to afford a meal sometimes those who bring men in their houses introduce them as fathers to their children. The problem is that different men come at different times and all are introduced as 'dad'. Since they come as providers, the children can only refer to them as *baba wa múgate (*father of bread), because when the man comes they get bread and eat well. The children see all this, even what happens when the "couple" goes to bed because they all share one room. This brings about lack of respect for the parents and loose morals on the part of the children.

When I talked about AIDS to some of them, they said it is like any other common sickness. Others call it off as an *ajali (*accident). Some are conscious of the dangers and use condoms. Many women prefer to remain single. They see thieves and criminals as the potential husbands who will not give them peace in the house.

1.24 School Drop-outs and Street Children

There were many children who did not go to school because their parents could not afford school fees[5]. Enormous flooding of new pupils in public schools when the government provided free primary education proved this. When children find no means at home, even lack of enough food, they go to the streets in search of better life. They scavenge for food, beg or collect waste papers and other things that they can sell. In the

[5] Teresa Wangechi, 39 years old, married.

process, some join begging gangs who later become thieves. That is where they learn glue sniffing and abuse of drugs like bhang.

There are parents who don't understand the value of education. Besides not being well educated, they see graduates who are jobless and judge education as a waste of time and money. Due to this ignorance and lack of exposure (to life outside the slums), they opt for quick rewards – they use their children for cheap labour in their micro-enterprises, or as their baby-sitters as they go to work[6]. This has lured many young girls into prostitution. Being out of school, and having the need to eat and dress well like others, they are easily trapped by men with money. Many of these have recently eloped with men from the mysterious *Mungiki* sect which is rampant in the slums.

Some of the children drop out of school due to peer pressure. They meet their friends who are not in school and enjoy their company and "free" lifestyle. They see their friends earning some money out of petty jobs like fetching water baby sitting, collecting waste items for recycling, as well as stealing. When it is time to go back to school, they find it very hard to cope with the discipline at school. Some even leave the house in school uniform which they change on the way and run to their friends out in the streets and other parts of the slums. Then they come back home in school uniform. Others who fear coming back home or are influenced by friends stay out in the streets and abandon their homes. Some find more peace in the streets especially in case where the father beats them or there is no food at home. It should not be forgotten that some parents, even mothers, are drunkards and do not care much about their children. There

[6] Lucy Nzungu, 9 years old, single.

are many cases of mothers who have little affection for their children because they got them by mistake as they were moving with men.

1.25 Crime and General Immorality

There are a lot of criminal cases ranging from robbery, rape and theft in this village. Most of those involved in these acts of lawlessness are young men and boys as young as 14 years or even less[7]. It is not difficult to find an explanation for this state of affairs bearing in mind the number of unemployed people and school dropouts. Very few of the children proceed to secondary school and fewer still are those who join colleges or vocational training centres. This is basically because few parents can afford it[8]. As a result, you find a lot of idling young men and you wonder how they survive.

These idle young men have to find an outlet for their energy. During the day, most of them are just in groups and they get into drug abuse in search for happiness. Others go to the numerous video parlors that show mainly action/violent movies during the day and pornographic ones in the evening. This is the general rule of life for most of the young people. Since they have to survive, to eat, dress, and get money for drugs, alcohol and entertainment, they easily get into robbery. After a whole day without food, they can't let a person pass freely without robbing from him/her. The movies and drugs incline them more to violence. It is very insecure to walk around the slums at night because of this problem. They can rob you, even of the very clothes you are wearing.

In most cases, they just want to steal and, unless you resist, they don't harm you. This shows that they are just in search of money or valuable things. Some of these

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[7] Peter Mwanzia, 17 years old, single.
[8] Titus Mwangi, 46 years old, married.

criminals live outside in neighbouring slums and come to loot at night[9]. Most of them target unsuspecting visitors who cannot recognize them. Some attack during the day as well and they are normally in gangs[10]. Apart from attacking individuals, they steal from business enterprises like shops, bars, etc. This is why most people who own businesses close them before sunset.

There are also frequent cases of rape mainly by gangs of young men and boys as well. They are normally intoxicated with drugs, not forgetting the blue movies they regularly watch. They drag women, both young and old to isolated places and rape them in turns. They threaten to kill in case the victim raises alarm[11]. Some women are raped and killed, probably if she recognizes the offenders or just maliciously. There is an alarming increase in the cases of old women being raped by young boys.

The police normally follow the brew sellers and not criminals. They normally go to get bribes and leave them free. The criminals who are caught by police are easily released after giving bribes. The police normally pass along the main streets. They do not get into the interior of the slums, which is the heart of crime. They only patrol for a few hours, after which the criminals take over. Most people do not trust the police because they have been known of corrupt deals. There are cases of police searching people and putting illegal drugs in their bags or pockets in the process, then prosecuting them for that. They also get hold of innocent people walking or hanging around as suspected criminals. They put them in police custody and cannot be released before the

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[9] Hussein Khalif, 21 years old, single.
[10] Boniface Nzioka, 38 years old, married.
[11] Caroline Aluoch, 24 years old, single.

officers obtain bribes from them[12]. Because of this, even people who could help the police with information about criminals are not free with them. Most people hide on seeing a policeman![13]

Majority of the residents do not answer in case of an alarm of someone who is being attacked. They fear for their safety because they do not know how big or armed the gang is. They also fear to be marked and targeted later. One factor that facilitates crime is that the village is in darkness at night. There are no street lights and the roads are also poor making it difficult for security men to reach some places in cases of emergency. There are no telephone lines inside the slums and to own a cell phone is also risky because they are highly targeted by thieves and robbers. This makes it difficult to call the police incase of danger.

This analysis is clear evidence of how much poverty can influence the moral lives of a people. The deprivations that surround the residents of Mukuru kwa Reuben has played a major role in the rise of many sinful and inhuman behaviors within the village. This is a real challenge for a Church which has been called to be an advocate of justice and human dignity in the world. Let us now focus our attention on the problem at hand as it is perceived in the light of the word of God (Bible) and church documents.

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[12] Jane Koech, 32 years old, single.
[13] Mohammed Juma, 37 years old, married.

2. THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF EVALUATION

The challenge of a marginalized people invites Christians to an option for the poor based on love. This theme runs through the church traditions right from the basis of the scriptures. It leads us to an encounter with a God who has special preference for the poor and who is ever fighting for their course.

2.1 OPTION FOR THE POOR IN THE SCRIPTURE (OLD TESTAMENT.)

The Bible is a story of a God who is universal but one who takes special interests in the welfare of the weak and oppressed, right from the very first books, Yahweh's option for the oppressed is expressed as an integral element in the exodus narrative, which gives a foundational character for Israel and exercises a basic influence in most books of the Bible[14].

2.11 Yahweh's Preference for the Poor Slaves in Exodus

The children of Israel had been enslaved after settling there to escape the famine in their own land[15]. They fell in the hands of perverse kings who took advantage of them in a social system that is well described in Genesis 47:13-26. Yahweh through the hand of his prophet Moses proved a true God to Israel in liberating them from their enforced serfdom despite the powerful Egyptian army. Moses, who had previously

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[14] John J. Pilch - Bruce J. Malina, *Handbook of Biblical Social Values*, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 154

[15] Bernhard W. Anderson, *The Living World of the Old Testament*, (London: Longman Group, 1978), 30

been adopted by the daughter of Pharaoh, killed an Egyptian overseer in a fit of anger for maltreating a Hebrew (Exodus 2:11-15). As a consequence, he had to flee and take refuge in the land of Midian, looking after sheep for a group of Midianites. His exile and loss of luxuries of the palace life was due to an act in defense of the poor[16].

Moses was approached by Yahweh (the God of the Hebrews) while at Midian and called to return to Egypt and lead his people out of their slavery (Ex 3). By accepting this mission, even though with misgivings, Moses progressed a step further in his passion for justice; a proof of his desire to act in solidarity with the oppressed, running the same risks as they did in their quest for liberation.

Solidarity with the Israelites was not easy for Moses. More than once he was forced to renew his solidarity with them in difficult circumstances brought about by their ingratitude[17]. The most significant is the incident of the golden calf (Ex:32, Deut:9). Moses had been summoned by Yahweh to the summit of Mt. Sinai where he was to receive the laws that were to create the structures for the new life of this people who had received their freedom. When the people saw that Moses had taken a long time in the mountain, they made an image (idol) of Yahweh so that God himself, without human intermediary, would lead them to their destiny[18]. Yahweh was angry and fed up with them, suggesting to Moses to abandon the project and get his reward. This was a favourable opportunity for Moses to free himself from a people who shortly before that had threatened to kill him. But as a model of solidarity he replied by

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[16] Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary*, (London: SCM Press, 1962), 27

[17] Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary*, 137

[18] Brevards childs, 372

interceding for the people, preferring to give up his life rather than allow Yahweh to abandon them (Exodus 32:31-32)

The exodus event can be summarized as a project of a liberating God who showed his preference for the oppressed. He heard the cries of the slaves in the hands of Pharaoh, and he came to set them free and lead them to a land flowing with milk and honey.

2.12 The Kings

At first Israel did not have kings because they believed in Yahweh as their only king. Israel was a peasant nation composed of poor people who were prone to the predications of the militarized peoples surrounding them, the Moabites, Ammonites, Edonites and above all, Philistines (1 Sam 11:14,47-52). The legitimate existence of a human king could be justified in the context of one who has been inspired by Yahweh. We know this from the official theology of Jerusalem as we learn from the psalms used in the temple at the time of the Davidic monarchy. One of these is Psalm 72, a prayer for Yahweh 's blessing on the king.

Victory over enemies and abundant harvests are asked for the king, but the main emphasis is the prediction that he will defend the poor and the needy against those who oppress them[19]. Israel thus organized its social patterns in conformity with the privileged positions held by the poor in Yahweh's eyes.

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[19] J. David Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction*, (Kentucky Westminster John Knox Press, 1985), 112

2.13 The Prophets

The kings, despite their divine call to stand-up against oppression, injustice still prevailed in Israel. It was the prophets who kept alive the tradition of Yahweh as the God who took the part of the poor in a society dominated by the ruling class dependent on the court. In the name of Yahweh, the prophets denounced the injustices of the new ruling classes, and predicted disaster such as destruction of the temple, famine and loss of land for failure to respond to their critiques of Israelite and Judean social structures and policies[20].

Amos, one of the great prophets of the eighth century (a time of prosperity for both Israel and Judah) showed how love of luxury was making a mockery of their devotion to Yahweh.

For Amos, the great sinners were the swindling traders, who, by "lowering the bushel, raising the shekel, by swindling and tampering with the scales... can buy up the poor for money, and the needy for a pair of sandals." (Amos 8:5-6). He also spoke against the great people of Israel who lay on Ivory beds, over ate, danced to music, drank wine by the bowls and used the finest oil for anointing themselves, while the poor languished in poverty; and it is the same poor who were working for them[21].

Micah saw the origin of oppression of the poor of Yahweh being in the corrupt practices of princes and judges who enjoyed wealth and prosperity forgetting the horror of what they did to the people:

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[20] William Dryness, *Themes in old Testament Theology*, (Devon: The Paternoster Press, 1973), 219
[21] Megan McKenna, *Prophets: Words of Fire*, (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 68

"Those who eat my people's flesh and break their bones to pieces, who chop them up like meat for the pan and shake them like flesh for the pot when they cry..." (Mic 3:1 ff)[22]

Isaiah denounces rulers as murderers and chasers after bribes, who fail to take notice of widows and orphans (10:1-4). He also identifies that landowners are buying up all the land, for which Yahweh will make their lands fail to produce (Is 5:8-10). Isaiah hopes for a king who will defend the poor with integrity (Is 11:1-9); a society in which one class will not exploit the other.

Jeremiah came a century after Isaiah and he attacked king Jehoiakim for building palaces "by making his fellow man work for nothing" (Jer. 22:13-19)[23]. He also spoke against the devices of the ruling classes by making the temple too party to the exploitation of the people. They made it a "den of thieves," and used it as a religious cloak under which they could go on committing crimes against strangers, widows and orphans.[24] When the Babylonians took the city and freed him from prison, Jeremiah preferred to remain in the country with the humble people whom the Babylonians allowed to stay behind in order to dress the vines and harvest the fruit.

2.14 God and the Poor in the Wisdom Literature of Israel

Wisdom theology stems from acute observation of life, in which God's work is seen in the order of nature and social life[25]. In the eyes of the wise, poverty and foolishness are the worst fates that can befall a human being.

The poor man is detestable even to his neighbour, but the rich man has friends and to spare (Pro 14:20)

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[22] Hamish Swanston, *Prophets II Scripture Discussion Commentary*, Ed. Laurence Bright, (London: Sheed And Ward, 1972), 104
[23] Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction*, 284
[24] Pleins, Ibid, 288
[25] Dryness, *Themes in old Testament Theology*, 189

Wild donkeys are the prey of desert lions; so too the poor are the quarry of the rich (Eccl. 13:19)
However, wisdom warns on miseries that can befall one who acquires wealth unjustly.
Better have little and with it virtue than great revenues and no right to them (Prov. 16:8).

One of the functions of the God of the wise here is to defend the interests of the poor who lack the means to defend themselves:

To oppress the poor is to insult his creator,
To be kind to the needy is to honor him (Pro. 14:31)
Because a man is poor, do not therefore cheat him... for Yahweh takes up their cause, and extorts the life of their extortioners (Prov. 22:22-3)
A man murders his neighbour if he robs him of his livelihood,
Sheds blood if he withholds an employee's wages (Eccl. 34:19-22)

God's favor of the poor in wisdom literature poses no threat to the ruling class in the society but to the unjust rich. This literature is limited in that it does not hint of the idea that God supports the poor in a struggle to do away with the injustices of this world.

2.2 The New Testament

The incarnation of God taking the human condition out of pure gratuitousness, and without there being any inherent attraction in the condition taken on, is the first sign of his solidarity with an intrinsically poor humanity. "He became the kind of man that we do not want to be: an outcast."[26] Paul uses this concept in an argument in favor of the collection for the poor in Jerusalem: "Remember how generous the Lord Jesus Christ was: he was rich, but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty." (2 Cor. 8:9)

Paul is drawing out the implications of divine solidarity and applying them to behavior among human beings. The gospel of Luke places a lot of emphasis on Jesus' option for

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[26] Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, (London: SCM Press, 1974), 205

the poor[27]. Most significant for me is the way he proclaimed his mission in the synagogue of Nazareth using a text from Isaiah:

"The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favor!" (Lk 4:18)

Luke's account of the birth of Jesus recounts this concretely in the way it brought the fulfillment of the hopes of Jews represented by Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna, poor people in Israel. The birth of Jesus in a stable and the celebration of this event by humble shepherds looking after their flocks in the fields, stress the meaning of Jesus' life as a sign of hope for the poor.

Jesus tells a young Aristocrat who asks him what to do in order to inherit eternal life, to sell all his goods and distribute the money to the poor, and then follow him. (Luke 18:18-23). Luke's Jesus collects together a small group of followers who are to do the same and follow him, bearing in mind that their master does not even have a place to lay his head (9:58). In this new society formed around Jesus, a lot of merit is disposed to those who are most disposed to serve (9:46-48). Jesus moves with this group healing sick people, raising the dead, and feeding the hungry and doing many other things for the needy[28]. Jesus spent most of his day surrounded by people who listened to him as he answered to their needs. (21:37-38).

In Matthew's account of the last judgment, we find Christ rewarding people in the measure they responded to the poor and needy people they met on earth. "Then he will say to those on his left, depart from me...For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ..." (Mt 25: 41-46). Basing himself on

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[27] ---, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church,* (Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa, 1994), No. 525

this text, Pope John Paul II says that the church will measure her fidelity to Christ in seeing him in the faces of those with whom he wished to be identified. He calls the church to see with greater clarity the extent to which it can dedicate itself in charity towards the poorest[29]. Christ's option for the poor could be seen as the option the poor made for him.

[28] Pheme Perkins, *Reading the New Testament: An Introduction*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 134
[29] John, Paul II, *Novo Millennio Inuente* (Nairobi, Paulines Publications, 2001)

2.3 CHURCH DOCUMENTS

The study of Catholic social teachings shows how it is an effective instrument in the cause of the poor and an encouragement to them in their struggle for justice. In its option for the poor, the church takes a commitment to struggle against structural injustice, and together with the victims, they set out to work for a fair sharing of power and resources in the society[30].

2.31 *Rerum Novarum (1891):* A Call for Justice

This encyclical was issued by Pope Leo XIII as a strong protest against the harsh conditions which industrial workers had to endure. The basic principle behind Leo's stance is that human labor cannot be treated simply as a commodity, because to do so is a denial of human dignity and a reduction of the worker to the status of a thing. This was in defense of underpaid workers who could not support a basic living from their wages. The Pope drew the conclusion that if through necessity of fear of a worse evil the worker accepts a wage less than that required for frugal living then that person is made a victim of force and injustice (RN 34).

Leo proposed two key changes to this problem: Immediate action by the state to protect the rights of the working classes and a long-term effort to distribute ownership of property much more widely. He recognized that, in practice, so long as wealth is concentrated in the hands of the few, these few are likely to have undue political power and will use this power for their own benefit (RN 35).

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[30] John C. Haughey, *The Faith that Does Justice: Examining The Christian Sources for Social Change,* (Toronto: Paulist Press, 1977), 207

At a more practical level, Leo defended the right of workers to form trade unions and to play a political role in changing the society. He warned against a strike that causes damage to the property of the employer, and he advocated for the use of law incase a strike posed an imminent threat to the already existing good (RN 29). Leo says the Church is the spokesperson for religion in reminding each class of its duty to the other, and especially the obligations of justice (RN 16). He wanted these changes to be initiated "from the top down", that is, by the very people or classes who were benefiting from the existing liberal-capitalist order. In case they failed to introduce a more equitable society, Leo was not prepared to encourage the poor or workers to engage in confrontation, giving very little encouragement for activism on the part of workers in the struggle for their rights (RN 16,31).

2.32 *Quadragesimo Anno(1931):* On Social Reconstruction

Pope Pius XI took a prophetic stand on economic questions. He showed very clearly that the official church does not always have to play a conservative role in society. Concern for stability is important, but stability is not the only social value or even the highest. Justice ranks higher, and there are many times when the value of Justice calls the Christian Community and its leaders to take a risky stand on political, social and economic issues. The church may feel touched and therefore called to challenge the economic and political structures, which are widely assumed to be necessary for the survival of a society.

The Church condemns every unjust rebellion or act of rebellion against the properly instituted civil power. On the other hand, if the case arose where the civil power should so trample on justice and truth as to destroy even the very foundations of

authority, there would appear no reason to condemn the nation and themselves by lawful and appropriate means against those who make use of the power of the state to drag the nation to ruin.

2.33 Gaudium et Spes (1965): Church in the modern world

This document presents justice as essential in tackling issues of poverty and peace. Calling for a change in the international economic structures, it stresses the right of the poor to their share of the earth's goods, and insists that this imposes on the rich an obligation, which is more than that of giving alms for their superfluous goods (GS 69). It also calls on the Church to renounce the patronage of the state in order to be free in taking a prophetic stand against those who hold power, a major step in the progress of the church towards making an option for the poor.

2.34 Populorum Progressio(1967): On the Development of Peoples

In its approach on development this encyclical seeks to integrate all the dimensions of personal development and also to reconcile personal development with the welfare of other peoples. The encyclical recognizes the massive problems of poverty at the global level, and offers some analysis of its root causes. Among them are: the evil effects left as a legacy by colonialism in the past, the present neo-colonial situation which has replaced the older form of colonialism, and an imbalance of power between nations, an imbalance which gives rise to injustices in trade relations between them (pp. 7-9, 52, 56-58).

This calls for bold transformations of the structures of the international economic order. While retaining some elements of free enterprise, the present

structures of international capitalism would be replaced or at least restrained by a good deal of planning under a global level at the supervision of some world authority.

2.35 Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (1987): On Social Concern

This encyclical has at its heart the valuable teaching on the virtue of solidarity. John Paul II maintains that genuine development must be understood in terms of solidarity (SRS, 33). Solidarity spells out interdependence - the producers depend on the consumers (market) for their products. It causes the more powerful people to feel responsible for those who are weak and makes them ready to share what they have with them. This leads the weak and poor to reject destructive or passive attitudes (SRS 39). Solidarity also links nations in a system that makes them dependent on each other. With this international system, the powerful and wealthy nations are morally bound to resist the temptation to dominate, oppress or exploit others (SRS 39).

3. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

3.1 THE VALUE OF THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHING

The social teaching of the Church has encountered different responses from various sectors of the society[31]. For some civic institutions, the Church is seen as purely spiritual, not entitled to interfere with the affairs of the secular society.[32] The Kenyan government has been known for telling the Catholic Church to keep to Church affairs whenever the bishops strike out or issue a statement of civic concern. It is beyond doubt that the Church's proper mission is one of evangelization and that it is not for the Church to propose temporal programs in technical matters for which she not suitably equipped. At the same time, however, the Church does claim to pronounce with supreme authority social and economic matters since its mission extends to "all things that are connected with the moral law".[33] Below are arguments that prove the Church's intervention on such matters legitimate.

Social problems cannot be defined solely in terms of the technical aspects of social, economic, and political realities. Most of them in fact have their origin in human selfishness and sin, bringing us to their moral or ethical aspects. Faith helps to enlighten consciences and enables human beings to fulfill

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[31] Nicholas Segeja, --- Mathew Ojara, The Prophetic Role of the Church in AMECEA Countries: Pastoral Challenges and Response in the *New Trends for the Empowerment of the People*, Ed. David Kyeyune, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1997), 53

[32] Congregation For The Doctrine of the Faith, *Christian Freedom and Liberation*, (Kampala: Paulines Publications Africa, 1986), 12

[33] Dennis P. McCann, *Christian Realism and Liberation Theology*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 81

their responsibilities on the secular arena while also remaining open to the transcendent[34]. Various Popes speak of the Christianisation of a society, where, spiritual values have been forgotten and the organization of economic life ignored or contradicted ethical requirements. The Church as the society's conscience has a duty to point out the sinful situations that degrade the dignity of people in the society, be it economic, social or political. Faith is thus able to lend support proper to the social order[35].

The Church is concerned about the effects of living conditions unworthy of the human person that are an obstacle to salvation. The analysis on the effects of poverty on the lives of Mukuru residents is a clear indication of this. Such situations imply contempt for society; these are unacceptable to a society that draws its inspiration from the gospel. Christian conception of life calls for a right of intervention, which implies a correlative duty of Christians to hear and respond to the Church's social teaching[36]. This teaching and practical implementation is an evident pastoral priority in Mukuru kwa Reuben, a society that is presently structured towards major misfortunes.

With these reasons we may assert that the Church, with the Pope and the bishops as her teachers, has something to say with regard to social conflicts. Social life is not a series of behaviors to be evaluated in terms of their contribution to temporal well being but a totality of specifically human forms of

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[34] McCann, *Christian Realism and Liberation Theology,* 80
[35] Congregation For The Doctrine of the Faith, *Christian Freedom and Liberation*, 38
[36] Segeja, --- Ojara, The Prophetic Role of the Church in AMECEA Countries: Pastoral Challenges and Response in the *New Trends for the Empowerment of the People*, 62

conduct that are under the guidance of conscience and are geared towards the good of man. The Church is not concerned with technical solutions for the civil society but the value that ought to prevail in human life[37].

In the *"Laborem Exercens"*, John Paul II reaffirms the right of the Church to speak out on social problems acknowledging that this teaching is limited to a specific field. It is not for the Church to analyze specifically the consequences, which these changes may have on human society. But the Church considers it its task always to call attention to the dignity and rights of those who work, to condemn situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated, and to help to guide the above mentioned changes as to ensure authentic progress by man and society.

The "Catechism of the Catholic Church" expresses this as a duty that is part of the mission of the Church. It is part of the Church's mission "to pass moral judgments even in matters related to politics, whenever the fundamental rights of people or the salvation of souls requires it. The means, the only means she may use are those which are in accord with the Gospel and the welfare of all people according to the diversity of times and circumstances"[38]. The social teaching of the Church rests upon two pillars: human reason, which interprets a concrete historical situation, and revelation, which in this same situation calls for a response in faith.[39]

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[37] Ricardo Antoncich, *Christians In The Face of Injustice: A Latin American Reading of Catholic Social Teaching*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1987), 31

[38] ---, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No.1897ff.

[39] Antoncich, *Christians In The Face of Injustice*, 32

3.2 THE NEED FOR CONVERSION

Jesus began his preaching with the words; "The reign of God is close at hand, repent and believe in the Good News" (Mk 1: 14). He called for a change of heart, urging people to change the direction of their lives, away from the security and insufficiency of what they already knew and possessed to the bright promise of the reign of God embodied in his life and teaching. The process of conversion is often painful. It means leaving the world of the known with all its advantages and disadvantages and moving into the direction of light (Christ)[40].

The call to conversion recognizes the presence of sinful and destructive ways in the world and the desire to move away from them. The reign of poverty in Mukuru has brought about destructive trends such as alcoholism, prostitution, crime and others. Formation is needed to bring forth belief in a new heaven and a new earth, the reign of God, which is the result of a converted life. The new heaven and new earth represent the end of oppression and a life in accordance with the freedom given to the daughters and sons of God from the beginning, and restored through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (Gal 4: 31-5:1).

3.3 LISTENING TO THE CRY OF THE POOR

Throughout salvation history, the heart of God has been moved by the cry of the poor. In Exodus 3, we find a God who knows the sufferings of His people, has heard their cry and is coming down to save them. Before acting in the name of justice and

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[40] A. Walter Rauschenbusch. 'The Salvation of the Super-Personal Forces' *Poverty and Economic Justice: A Philosophical Approach*, Ed., Robert H. Hartman, (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1984), 70

love, it is important to be like God, to listen first to the cry of the people, to know their suffering, and to have a firm desire for the liberation of the poor.

The cry of the victims of injustice, that is, the cry of the poor, is what tests the promise of the Reign of God, the truth of the Gospel which we preach and the depth of love in the disciples[41]. Where the cry goes unheard, it is harder for people to believe. When we listen and respond to the cry of the poor in an authentic manner, we go through a process of conversion. While it is true that all people are poor in some way, it is important to understand the reality of the materially poor. These people who do not have enough to live on and whose voice and contribution to the society do not count, are in many instances the victims of positive discrimination and violence.[42]

3.4 SALVATION

The plan that God has with his creation has been conceived mainly in two different ways. The first one sees salvation as a rescue operation from this sinful and evil world whereby the good ones are selected and taken into the new heaven and the new earth. Here, the kingdom is a totally transcendent reality, something not related to the present world and its social dimensions. The sin-permeated and corrupt world is considered a testing ground to prove one worthy of eternal salvation. In such a view, salvation is easily conceived of as being totally individual and deprived of any connection to other human beings, the world and its destiny. It is a salvation of the soul.

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[41] John Mary Waliggo, The External Debt in the Continued Marginalization of Africa, *Marginalized Africa an International Perspective*, Ed. Peter Kanyandago, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1999), 53

It is totally unimportant whether one is rich or poor, educated or illiterate, of high class or low caste. What matters is that I pass the test to the new heaven regardless of my achievements on earth.

When we talk of individual salvation and the commandment of love that extends to every woman and man, we have to discover the ways in which that love is to be expressed. The love of God will build up some (poor, sick) and bring down others from their thrones (rich and tax collectors who sold everything and followed Christ). God made choices, and his option is that of the poor as it is presented in the scriptures. God chose a small and humble nation (Israel) and sent His prophets to defend the powerless (strangers, widows, and orphans). The prophets in God's name proclaimed a future when all things will be put right and the poor set free. Jesus was born in a very humble context, and he made the poor and the outcasts His companions throughout His life and mission.

The option for the poor represents a choice between different ways of understanding and behaving. Each of these choices can be an experience of conversion representing a choice of companions, ways to evangelize, interests, and in a nutshell a choice of places in which to put our resources. The option for the poor appears the privileged and Gospel way to bring God's love to all, building a world in which all are cherished and welcome. I feel that most of us students are far removed from the real life of poor people. The structures of religious life keep us away from the real life of the poor. When our frame of mind enters and responds to the cry of the materially poor, the

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[42] Peter Lwaminda, "Models of the Church's Participation in Intergral National-Building in AMECEA Countries" in *New Trends for the Empowerment Of The People*, ed. Kyeyune Savid, (Nairobi: Paulines publications, 1997)110

abandoned, those who are basically outside the economic power structures, we attain conversion in this perspective. Since we are tied in many ways to each other and to society as a whole, if we accept the latter view of God's plan for creation, our whole understanding of salvation will change. Being saved does not mean being taken out of this world and being transferred to another place. Being saved could mean remaining a part of a world that has been transferred into the "New Heaven and the New earth".

This view of salvation can easily be connected with Christ's theology of life when He stated His mission in Jn. 10:10: "I have come that you may have life and life in abundance". This was evident in Christ's pastoral activity as he went preaching God's values and bringing new life to the sick, the blind, the lame, the hungry, and others who were oppressed by other deficiencies. This theology of life affirms God's option for the poor by challenging the values of the world with the values of God's reign. It calls for a radical re-ordering of our life styles, attitudes and structures of human relationships at the social, ecclesial, civil and personal levels[43]. Today and in the recent past, the Church has affirmed a spirituality that confronts and overcomes all life-negating forces and strives to build a community rooted in the universal love of God, justice, peace, integrity and dignity of all creation. This theological understanding of salvation is one that is liberating.

3.5 LIBERATION

In Hebrew Scriptures, the words "salvation" or "save" are used in reference to the salvation of the whole person: there was no dichotomy between body and soul.

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[43] McCann, *Christian Realism and Liberation Theology*, 164

Jesus uses the word save with reference to the whole person in an integrated sense. More than ten times in the gospels he uses the word save with reference to the healing of the sick and the forgiveness of sins.

It is being widely and increasingly acknowledged that in Church history, "salvation of the soul" has been prioritized to the detriment of neglecting the salvation of the whole person. It is only recently, at the dawn of the growing and glaring injustices in the world with its resulting lack of human dignity for a great percentage of the world's population that we have become more conscious of the liberation element in Evangelization.

Salvation and liberation are two words, which are used to describe the same thing: God's coming to the aid of women and men to raise them from every form of oppression and make them one with Him. Salvation and liberation have been going on from the very beginning of salvation history and will continue until the *Parousia* when Jesus Christ will be all in all. According to the method of liberation, a salvific event is one in which praxis can be identified, praxis in this case being an activity whose purpose is to transform history for the better[44].

People are saved in the measure that they are liberated from all that oppresses them. Liberation theologies take into consideration the sinful structures that oppress people at all levels both individually and socially. They call for the need of an integral liberation from spiritual, social- economic and political repressive forces[45]. It is not sufficient to say that the Church (called to be herald of salvation and liberation) stands

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[44] McCann, *Christian Realism and Liberation Theology, 210*
[45] Congregation For The Doctrine of the Faith, *Christian Freedom and Liberation*, 30

for liberation and salvation. It must be seen to have a liberating praxis being experienced in the community of believers as an agent of integral liberation and a sign of whom their liberating God is.

4. PASTORAL CHALLENGES

4.1 LIBERATION AND MUKURU'S STRUCTURAL SIN

Sin does not directly depend on the personal behavior of the people who operate within an unjust structure; it can result from a quality of the structure itself. In the first chapter we saw that poverty and other structures in Mukuru's life-style lead many people to immorality, crime, and other actions that are not consonant with human dignity. Patrick Ryan reduces liberation to three levels, which he sees as reciprocally interpenetrating[46]. I want to analyze or reflect on my case study in the light of these three levels.

The first level of liberation is in effect structural liberation. It refers to freedom from oppressive social-economic and political institutions. Most of Mukuru residents who work in factories are paid an average of about a hundred and twenty shillings per day. This is not just wage. It cannot support a basic family living. The ministry of labour in the government should ensure that all workers are well paid and their rights respected. The government should effectively provide security in Mukuru, ensuring harmony and peace in the area. The roads should be well maintained to facilitate communication, and streetlights to enhance security at night. Many people cannot work in night shifts because of insecurity. Most businesses are closed at sunset for these same reasons. The illegal brewers should be eliminated, and drug trafficking curbed. The area

[46] Patrick Ryan, 'The Shifting Contexts of Sin', *Tangaza Occasional Paper*. No. 7, Structures of Sin, Seeds of Liberation, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998), 17f.

needs more schools to cater for the high population of children in the area. Lack of these facilities has influenced the growth of alternative negative traits in the people of Mukuru. The social teaching of the Church obliges political authorities to respect the fundamental rights of the human person in ensuring such necessary provisions. The government is urged to dispense justice humanely, by respecting the rights of everyone, especially the disadvantaged families.

The second level of liberation is that of persons assuming responsibility for themselves[47]. At this level, conditions are created for the oppressed to subvert situations of oppression and to assume conscious responsibility for their own advancement. For Mukuru residents, this will be possible if the workers are paid well, the small-scale business people improve their enterprises, and opportunities of work created for the many unemployed people. Individuals should be in a position to raise and take proper responsibility for their lives, ensuring that children go to school and that families are provided for and get access to better housing. This calls for personal initiative and formation from various bodies in society to enlighten the people on ways to ensure authentic dignified living.

The third level at which liberation occurs is that of faith. This is about the liberation from sin, which is in fact the ultimate cause of injustice and oppression in which human beings live. At this level, the Church has a great duty in forming people's consciences towards truth. This will control corruption and immorality and give way to justice and upright life. People will be able to hold themselves in high esteem, respecting their dignity and that of others. Government officials should be more

[47] Patrick Ryan, 'The Shifting Contexts of Sin', *Tangaza Occasional Paper*.18

responsible in their duties, ensuring harmony and provision of essential services to the people. All this calls for a conversion, which is effectively possible when the influencing impoverishing structures are replaced with supportive ones.

The laws and government bodies should be at the service of all citizens. According to Kiraitu Murungi, Kenya's minister for Justice and Constitutional affairs, "poor Kenyans have insufficient protection under the present constitution because it was designed by the British government in the 1960s to protect the interests of the powerful colonial elite and the property owning class. The document was drafted in a legal jargon which common people do not understand and therefore alienates the very people it is supposed to help"[48]. As a result, many citizens are ignorant of their basic rights. In the ongoing constitutional review process, the delegates hardly reached the slums and specifically Mukuru kwa Reuben to collect people's views. As a result, their constitutional draft mentions superficially the slums a few times (three to be precise) without concretely addressing their problems.

As Christ became incarnate to our human condition to save us from sin, the Church, the government and other NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) are all called to descend to the neglected, poor and oppressed people living in Mukuru and other slums to save them from the structural sin of poverty. It is dehumanizing and destructive as Archbishop Ndingi recounts:

> If we recall the purpose of the government is to ensure the dignity of the people then surely dignity is damaged by the quality of life of those living in sub-human conditions. The quality of shelter in the slums does not allow for moral life. Inadequate

[48] Sylvia Mudasia-Mwichuli, Laws Fail to Protect the Poor in *Action Forum*, 13

bedrooms,... are all ways in which the poor are reduced to living at virtually subhuman levels. Security in the slums is also often vicious and violent.[49]

4.2 SOCIAL RESOURCES IN MUKURU KWA REUBEN

In the face of numerous social and ethical challenges in Mukuru kwa Reuben both the government and the church have notably done something in answer to this. I will start by examining what the government is offering, then the Catholic Church in Mukuru.

4.21 The Government

The presence of the government is felt mainly through the existing police post, which has a couple of administration police under the area chief. These ought to maintain law and order in the neighboring villages. They deal with the daily crimes that arise ranging from violence, theft, drug trafficking and selling of illegal brews. People contact them for administrative problems or any other issue that concerns the government. The main problem felt by the residents is that the personnel is not enough and well equipped to deal with the many social problems around. An example could be the police on patrol who do not move with security arms while criminals are well armed with guns. The residents also complain of too much corruption in this office. Criminals are caught and easily released on bribe, and then they go back and continue terrorizing people. The chief, together with the police, take too long before they can address themselves to people's problems unless on the motivation of a bribe.

There is Katoto primary School which is church- sponsored but run by the

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[49] Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki, *Kenyans! Where do we want to go?* In The voice of the African Bishops, No.46, (Nairobi, Pauline Publications, 2003) 5.

Government. It offers education to many children in the area and it is relatively cheap, but still not all can afford. The city council has provided water, which is accessible to few individuals and the Catholic Church. The rest of the people buy water from these few individuals who normally sell at relatively high prices. The electrical power lines pass by the side of Mukuru kwa Rueben, but only a few people who have built permanent structures at the peripheries of the slum have access to it.

There are no other major government projects in the rest of Mukuru apart from one city council primary school and police post. The community itself has cooperated in the construction of Mukuru community Primary school and Embakasi Girls Secondary School.

4.22 The Catholic Church

Mukuru kwa Reuben is under St. Mary's Catholic Parish which is run by the Holy Ghost Fathers. The Parish Priest is Fr. Patrick O'toole from Ireland. He is helped by the visiting priests especially Fr. John Lange from the Mary Knoll Missionaries. Also present in the Parish are Christian Brothers, Marianists, Medical Missionaries and the Sisters of St. Joseph. None of these live within the slum set-up. The parish priest lives in Imara-Daima, an upper class estate in the neighborhood of Mukuru.

At Mukuru kwa Reuben the Christian brothers run a school comprising of a Primary education unit, tailoring and dressmaking training, and a dispensary. At the Parish level, there is Imani polytechnic owned by the Marianists. It offers training in a number of technical courses including electrical, dressmaking, catering, metal work and hairdressing. The Marianists have another school, Nazareth Primary School in Mukuru

Njenga. The Medical Missionaries of Mary run a dispensary near the Parish while the Sisters of St. Joseph help in Catechesis, and School Sponsorship.

4.221 The Office of Social Work

This office is currently headed by Teresa Wangechi who is a trained social worker. They identify the very needy cases that are desperate in terms of material things and help them. Before this office was created, all needy people used to go directly to the Parish Priest who was prone to extensive cheating from the clients. This is because he doesn't know the people well and he is not fluent in Kiswahili, the common language of the people. Most of the times the social worker goes through the leaders of the Small Christian Communities in order to get clearly the situation of the person. Mostly they sponsor orphans (majority being AIDS orphans) to school, and help those desperate "zero poor" with food, medical facilities and school fees. They also help to construct shelters on plots set aside for desperate cases such as people whose houses have been destroyed by fire or the city council.

This office runs a major health care ministry in collaboration with Fr. John Lange and a group by the name of Vincent De Paul. Through this group, which basically consists of volunteer church members, they identify sick needy cases and give them a letter to present at particular hospitals for (free) medical treatment, which Fr. John Lange clears later. They also have a counselling center with a trained counsellor to help the patients since most of them are HIV positive or infected with AIDS.

This ministry, however helpful it is, has not gone through very smoothly. The treasurer of Mukuru kwa Rueben outstation Mr. Charles Wanyama described the members of St. Vincent De Paul as greedy (Walafi). Some of them have been known to

bring in relatives and friends from elsewhere and present them as poor slum dwellers who benefit from this free medical treatment. Worse still, some coin fake cases. They plan with someone to pretend to be very sick, and they call the Father to see him, give anointment and even in some cases baptism. Then they present the person as a desperate case who does not have even a house to live in or food for her children. When they receive the money they share among themselves and the "false patient" – a deal gone through. This happens to the parish priest as well because many still go directly to him in spite of the social office.

According to church leaders and the Catechist at Mukuru kwa Reuben, this has made the Catholic Church to be seen as a donor agency ("*Watu wanatambua Kanisa katoliki ni ya msaada*" says Mr. Wanyama). Many residents come to fill the church so as to be identified as members and in due course receive help, whereas the baptized and committed Catholics are very few. This has earned a lot of enemies to leaders who fight this form of dishonesty and has caused divisions within the church. A young African Priest Fr. Simon Kinyua who stayed here shortly, and who fought this kind of behavior received threat letters, even of death, being accused of blocking aid from reaching the people. These people claimed to have a right to the money of the white *(Mzungu)*.

The church is surely sensitive to the social needs of the people. The main issue in the slum being survival, many people find themselves lucky to have someone who gives things free of charge! That is why they look for all possible means to get these "manna from above" even when they do not really deserve help. Some who have been stopped from active ministry in St. Vincent De Paul have gone to accuse the church to the Bishop. They could not imagine losing their place in the health ministry which is

considered as free service but which they had turned to be a "career of corruption." This calls for the Church in Mukuru kwa Reuben to revise and evaluate its method of charity. Instead of fighting poverty, it may propagate the evil by making people more dependent and insincere.

4.3 PASTORAL INITIATIVES

The Catholic Church in Mukuru has surely done something substantial in the social dimension of the slum dwellers. However, I feel that there is still room for more development. I would like to examine some of the areas that I feel need to be addressed more in relation to my subject of poverty. The Church alone cannot do enough. It needs to work in collaboration with the government and NGOs. The Church cannot, however, wait for these to act first but it is called to set the pace by being a true concrete witness of social justice.

First I would encourage ministers, both clergy and lay, to be more with the people. Their insertion into the context of the needy will create real consciousness of the pain of the victims, and of the brokenness of the social-political fabric and various agencies of oppression. Their presence will gain more credibility from the people, who will take their ministry more seriously. As a matter of fact, they will not be seen as visiting donors, but as walking with the people in their journey of life and faith. This gives more confidence and hope to a people neglected and ashamed of facing their reality. A special invitation goes to the African religious. Very few of us are ready to work in the slums and yet we stand a better chance of understanding people's problems than the foreigners.

In catechesis, the ministers ought to be more practical.[50] For instance, in educating women on the dangers of giving birth to children whom they cannot cater for. The youth who have few models to follow need a lot of pastoral care and encouragement so as to grow as authentic Christians in such an environment. Seminars and other avenues need to be created in order to educate them on the possible dangers especially of drugs and sexually transmitted diseases (like HIV/AIDS). Their pastoral care should be geared towards helping them to focus on building a good future in selecting what can build them. Time should be created for them to openly share their life experiences with each other for encouragement and support.

In the face of acute alcoholism, the Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) would be of vital importance in Mukuru. Members of this group meet to share personal experiences and encourage one another. This will help alcoholics to come to terms with their problem and set towards solving it. Most alcoholics can hardly admit that they have this problem. When they come together as a group there is more support and sense of belonging which gives courage and enthusiasm to work on the problem. The sharing of experiences from members gives more confidence and incentive to individuals in their struggle with the addiction.

Justice and Peace Commission should be one of the strongholds of a Church in the midst of structural injustice. In Mukuru, pastors should encourage and strengthen this group to be more active and open to the social realities of the place. Through this group, people should be conscientised about their rights, and encouraged to work for

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[50] Segeja, --- Ojara, The Prophetic Role of the Church in AMECEA Countries: Pastoral Challenges and Response in the *New Trends for the Empowerment of the People*, 63

human dignity in the area. This commission could for instance seek audience with government officials on issues of security and illegal drugs and alcohol business in the area. It could also stage campaigns against the various injustices that occur in the area to create more awareness and solidarity among the village dwellers. Their mission should not only be in the Church but ought to extend and address real situations in their daily life.

Another group that needs to be formed and followed is that of single mothers. They constitute a great proportion of the village and Church population. They tend to be neglected in religious circles and stigmatised as not being of good moral standing. This group is prone to a lot of dangers in the society (prostitution for instance) and they need a lot of encouragement and formation to face life with courage and confidence. They need also to feel a sense of belonging and love. They ought to be integrated with other women and Church groups but they also need special pastoral care in this context of Mukuru slums. They need more support in order to bring up their families and acquire some economic and moral stability[51].

4.4 ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

I strongly feel that the Church ought to adopt a method geared towards empowering the people. (A great resource could be found in using the graduates of Social Ministry at Tangaza.) The occasional handouts based on charity tend to make people more dependent instead of looking for resources to improve their economic status. They tend to seek opportunities of being helped to the extent of exaggerating

their problems and creating false ones. I believe that most people in Mukuru are able to rise from their poverty, given the means and proper support. Moreover, they came to live here to seek better life. The Church could organise a self-help committee in charge of organising the people into groups geared towards micro-finance projects. Many jobless residents, are aware of the opportunities of self-development, both in the slums and in the wider city. It is only that they lack incentive and start-up capital.

The self-help groups should start with educating the participants on strategies of starting a business and how to manage it. It should also test the commitment of the members through some regular contribution. This should continue even after one starts his/her business, for a follow-up on challenges and development. Instead of spending millions on charity, the Church can set aside some of this money for small loans to the poor people who are ready to work and earn a living through small-scale businesses. With about 2,000 shillings for instance, one can start a vegetable stall, which will do well in most parts of the highly populated city.

The Church cannot pretend to work out this initiative alone. The government ought for instance to bring banking services nearer to the slum dwellers of Mukuru. Banks that are friendly to their financial needs and where they can save and borrow loans easily. Many people are not able to build capital for personal development because they live from hand to mouth. Banking services will therefore enable people to build up resources for projects and focus on future plans for development. It doesn't matter how much one saves, but it counts.

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[51] Elena Rastello, On the Side of Women and Children: Great Resources in a World of Marginalization, in *the Poor Discover their Own Resources*, Ed. Fritz Stenger & Maria Teresa Ratti, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2002), 60

The government and NGOs should initiate and support micro-finance enterprises for the economic empowerment of slum dwellers. In its budget plan, the government should set aside some funds for such projects, in order to cater for a marginalized section of its citizens who desperately need to rise from their poverty. Special attention should be given to single women who are jobless and yet they have families and other people depending on them.

4.5 SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

For harmony to prevail in Mukuru and people to enjoy more human dignity, the government and NGOs should ensure security in all parts of the slum. People need peace to operate their businesses and carry on their daily tasks. The roads in the slums and the streetlights should be improved for better communication and security. More security and government personnel should be deployed in Mukuru to cater for the great need of the highly populated environment.

There is need to increase education centres in order to cater for the population of uneducated youth. More efforts should be focused on vocational training for the school leavers and dropouts. These could also help to rehabilitate those who are already lost in the streets. Recreational facilities could be very beneficial to reduce the rate of idleness and its dangers among the slum dwellers. These could be community recreation centres with games, television and other constructive facilities.

The growth of industries and especially in the agricultural sector should be emphasized in the rural areas. This will control the rural-urban exodus, majority of whom end up in the slums, making the situation unmanageable.[52]

4.6 JUSTICE

The government should establish proper policies to protect the rights of the poor. Concerned government bodies should supervise the payment rates of those working in factories and industries to ensure that they are well paid and treated with dignity. The constitution and national development plan should address the problems facing the slums. Any state that operates for the interests of its people should have programmes directed at helping the poor.

Many urban poor feel that discussions about them have been conducted through a top-bottom approach, and in their absence. Some respondents of my research in Mukuru slums believe that real and concrete solutions to their needs will come if they take part in poverty alleviation and development programmes. The various bodies working in the slums should make the residents involved through outreach programmes. They should give opportunities for the people to participate, not to work for them. The slum dwellers should be more involved in the constitutional review process and their needs should be addressed in a more pronounced way. They are the most needy, yet they seem and feel most neglected.

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[52] Renigald Nalugala, The Voice of the Urban Poor Towards their Empowerment, *the Poor Discover their Own Resources*, Ed. Fritz Stenger & Maria Teresa Ratti, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2002), 45

CONCLUSION

This study has proved that the structural set up of the slums can act as a breeding place that nurtures the development of many social evils. The persistence of poverty in Mukuru kwa Rueben has replaced what could otherwise be basic human rights with the struggle to stay alive; a struggle that has no time and place for morality. Most slum dwellers experience a lot of misery that lowers their self-esteem and dignity, and this weakens their resistance against evil ways of survival.

The Bible reminds us that there is a special preference for the poor in God's eyes and the mission of Christ. This calls for the Church to make a preferential option for them as a testimony to the nature of God's love, providence and mercy. It should support and encourage economic empowerment conscientisation of a people living below the minimum requirements demanded by human dignity. Developing the awareness of human dignity among the poor of Mukuru is a major way forward towards reconstructing the image of God that is being attacked by their state of poverty.

This paper has shed light into this challenge of the slums, and so it is a step towards addressing the problem. My appeal is to the Church, the government and other concerned bodies to lay more emphasis to this phenomenon that calls for an urgent and profound answer.

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QUOTED INTERVIEWS

Agnes Wairimu, 62 years old, single (divorcee).
Boniface Nzioka, 38 years old, married
Caroline Aluoch, 24 years old, single.
Charles Wanyama, 53 years old, married.
Hussein Khalif, 21 years, single.
Jane Koech, 32 years old, single.
Lucy Nzungu, 9 years old, single.
Mary Mwikali, 49 years old, single.
Margaret Njeri, 28 year s old, single mother.
Mohammed Juma, 37 years old, married.
Peter Mwanzia, 17 years old, single.
Teresa Wangechi, 39 years old, married.
Titus Mwangi, 46 years old, married (polygamist).

Workers on rampage

By **Philip Mwakio,** Mombasa

CASUAL workers at the Blanket Industries Limited went on rampage yesterday burning down two company vehicles.

The incident led to an abrupt close-down of machines at the giant factory that manufactures blankets for the local and export markets.

The over 200 casuals were protesting against alleged bad working conditions at the company situated along Kirinyaga road. Company Director, Mr Sandeep Gudka, put the damage cost of movable property at over Sh2 million.

Gudka also said they lost an unconfirmed amount of money after workers gained forceful entry into one of the administration offices.

A Datsun pick up van was reduced to a shell after workers torched it and a Lancer saloon car parked at the firm's parking bay had its front and rear windscreens shattered.

The workers had reported to work at 7.00 am before the incident that also disrupted learning at the adjacent Makupa Primary School.

The workers retreated and left the premises when police from the Makupa Police Station arrived at the scene after they were called in by the management.

Among the grievances, the workers were complaining about included lack of protection gears, poor pay and being on casual employment for far too long.

Gudka added that following the incident, his firm was bound to lose heavily on export market orders to Malawi.

"I am not sure we will be able to reach our target market after this unfortunate incident. We might even be closed for an uncertain period," Gudka said.

He said an importer in Malawi would likely penalise them for "breach of contract".

Monday, February 17,

The economic challenges facing Kenya can be overcome

Kenya has gone through a historic election and the greatest challenge for the new Government is the local and international community's expectations in regard to the country's economic well-being, growth and development.

In his inaugural speech President Kibaki said. "The task ahead is enormous, the expectations are high and the challenges are intimidating". The good news is that the Government has the support of Kenyans.

During the last decade, Kenya experienced incredible obstacles in the pursuit of development. The collapse of major industries; the refugee crises; the Aids pandemic; poor investor confidence; competition and short-sighted leadership both in private and public sectors; collapsing credit markets and adverse weather patterns have led to a general deterioration in economic performance.

Implications of organisational responses to globalisation are alarming. The global economy has experienced structural transformation. An issue currently being raised relates to whether or not nation states will be in control of the globalisation process. Where does that leave Kenya? What about the issues of free trade, the dynamics of technological change and economic development? Hopefully, solutions to these problems can be found.

The mere fact that Kenyans are yearning for change in governance for the benefit of the economy is good news. This alone shows there is knowledge of the challenges of a weak economy, the opportunities, and likely solutions. What remains are action and the commitment to change.

Despite these bleak episodes, a number of businesses in the region - foreign and domestic - have actually business opportunities, but sources of competitive advantage and prospects for efficiency gains.

The most successful have been those that have exploited these opportunities most effectively and most consistently. The managers of these organisations have been able to translate their unique visions beyond the hurdles facing them into realities that lead to success.

In the last several years, the private sector has started to play an active role in raising issues and initiating successful discussions with the Government. This has resulted in a more enlightened private sector that wants to share its management ability and the search for solutions with the Government, as well as assist in the formulation of policies.

Many executives today realise that an important source of competitive advantage is knowledge. The focus of the global economy is knowledge: how to develop, share, leverage and measure it to create more value for customers, employees and shareholders.

Managers need to understand how to exploit the unusual characteristics of the knowledge economy and how to manage knowledge effectively.

The economic landscape is not the same as it was 20 years ago, nor is the pace of global economic change expected to slacken in the next 20 years. On the contrary, change is likely to accelerate. Thus, organisations and managers must understand what globalisation is, what drives it and what the implications are for them.

The Management Convention to be opened tomorrow seeks to create awareness and bring about a common understanding of the "Kenya we want".

This convention is a call to all to come on board and together find lasting solutions to our enormous challenges. This is a time to challenge ourselves and think of those great things we could contribute

NARC AGENDA ❐ **KIRUGI M'MUKINDIA**

Govt can create 500,000 jobs a year

The issue of job-creation featured prnminently during the Econnmic Recnvery Wnrkshnp at Diani, South Cnast, early last week. There is nn dnubt the immediate challenge facing the Government is Narc's campaign promise tn create at east 500,000 jobs a year. If it achieves this, it will have roved its credibility and its popularity can only soar. f it fails, many Kenyans will be greatly disappointed, nd this may even engender a sense nf betrayal.

Clearly, therefore, the Gnvernment cannot affnrd to ail. Yet, the question that lingers in penple's mind emains: Is this gnal achievable immediately during Narc's first year in office?

It can be done if the Government takes several ctinns, some of which I shall try to outline.

■ The Gnvernment owns the idea, and it cannnt xpect the private sector tn take the lead in this effort.

Furthermnre, the private sector is starved of capital nd even if the capital were available, investment pro-rammes take a lnng time to conceive, evaluate and nplement. It is also likely that business will adnpt a wait and see" posture tn see what Government will ctually do to create an enabling envirnnment, curb orruption and stimulate growth. It may nnt, there-ore, be realistic to expect private sector investment nd job-creation during the first year nf the Narc dministratinn.

■ The onus, then, will be on the Government tn inject apital intn the economy and stimulate growth. But, vith a budget deficit already soaring tn unprecedented evels, where will the Gnvernment get the additinnal apital frnm?

Clearly, increased domestic borrowing is nut of the uestion since the Sh32 billion a year interest rate pay-nents should be drastically contained, nnt enhanced. Therefnre, the Government will entirely depend on onnr generosity, not only to balance the expenditure udget, but also tn set up a development budget.

The development budget, if used wisely, will stimu-ate growth-oriented sectors of the economy. business vill accumulate capital, invest, and create mnre capital nd jobs.

It is also conceivable that with a mnre liberal tax egime, Government revenues could be enhanced hrough increased collection. These wnuld assist in elping to plug holes in the deficit, and also to bring noney previously nnt in circulation back into the nainstream economy.

■ Irrespecuve nf the level of Government develop-nent expenditure, affordable credit must be made vailable to individuals, agricultural small-holders, jua kali artisans and fnrmal business fnr increased invest-ment, production and jnb-creatinn.

■ The immediate challenge facing the Government is Narc's campaign promise to create at least 500,000 jobs a year. If it achieves this, it will have proved its credibility and its popularity can only soar

Again, it is nnt realistic to expect that private sectnr financial institutions will shnulder the risk of lending tn agriculture and the informal sector. In any case, they do not have the capacity or their shareholders' mandate to dn sn. The Government, therefnre, will have to design innovative schemes to make affordable lnng-term credit available tn the average Kenyan through special risk mitigating insurance schemes, and a review of the Banking Act. This has been done in nther countries and we need not re-invent the wheel.

Agriculture the best bet

If we accept that the Government has to inject capital into the economy and that it has to create structures tn make affnrdable credit available to "risky" bornnwers, what are the sectors likely to yield the greatest bene-fits in the shnrtest time possible?

■ The largest employer in Kenya is agriculture and it has the greatest potential nf creating many jobs within a very shnrt time provided: (a) A price stabilisation scheme is put in place, thus guaranteeing a minimum price fixed at the beginning of every seasnn, and (b) Inputs such as quality seed, chemicals and fertiliser are made available

For the cereals sub-sector, there's need tn promote wheat at the expense of maize (as long as we have sufficient strategic stocks of maize tn meet shortfalls in times of drnught). Rice productinn should also be encouraged. This will curtail the need to import these grains. High-value fruits, flnwers, nuts and herbs should be promoted, especially through smallholders.

Cntton, due to the Agoa initiative, represents nne of the greatest opportunities to rapidly create jnbs and imprnve incomes, especially in semi-arid areas. A minimum ex-farm price fnr cotton shnuld be fixed s snnally and new high-quality seed will be disrnbu to farmers befnre the next planting season.

The sugar sub-sectnr shnuld be supported, nnt n to satisfy the dnmestic market, but also tn fill Keny Eurnpean Union export qunta.

Dairy farmers need stable ex-farm prices fnr th milk. Dairy processors need support to increase th product range to include yoghurt, cheese, cream, b ter and milk powder to absorb the expected incre in milk productinn.

An urgent campaign fnr livestock disease eradi tion shnuld be undertaken. Stocking levels should a be cnntrnlled. These actinns will result in increa prnduction and export of high-quality beef, g sheep and camel products.

■ Let's carry out a *blitzkrieg* of publicity for tour immediately, never mind the low per capita exper ture of the average tourist. If tourist numbers are they will support transport and agriculture as well utilising idle capacity and creating jobs. We can wo abnut the per capita expenditure nf tnurists later.

■ Immediate administrative actinns (nnt legal) n to be taken here to npen up the Infnrmatinn Comr nication and Technnlogy field and enhance comp tion. This can be done today, not tnmnrrow. This create space for more entrepreneurs and invest leading tn jnb creation.

■ Government should spend money on prnje which are unlikely to attract private sectnr inter This money should be injected intn rural roads c structinn and maintenance using the man/machine which will create many rural jnbs.

Government should urgently identify reputable vate investnrs who are ready tn build, nwn and op ate key highways at nn cost to the Government. Mombasa-Nairnbi, Nairobi-Nakuru, Nakuru-Eldor roads may be able to attract private investors. T again, will create construction jnbs and also m service-oriented jnbs and businesses.

■ Apart from lack of credit, the greatest challer facing the Jua Kali sector is product quality impro ment, product diversification and marketing. There need to set up at strategic locations "productivity c tres" which will prnvide engineering services, qua cnntrnl and market intelligence. With the support Government, these centres may be set up by the vate sector.

Mr M'Mukindia, a former Cabinet minister, is the for Central Imenti

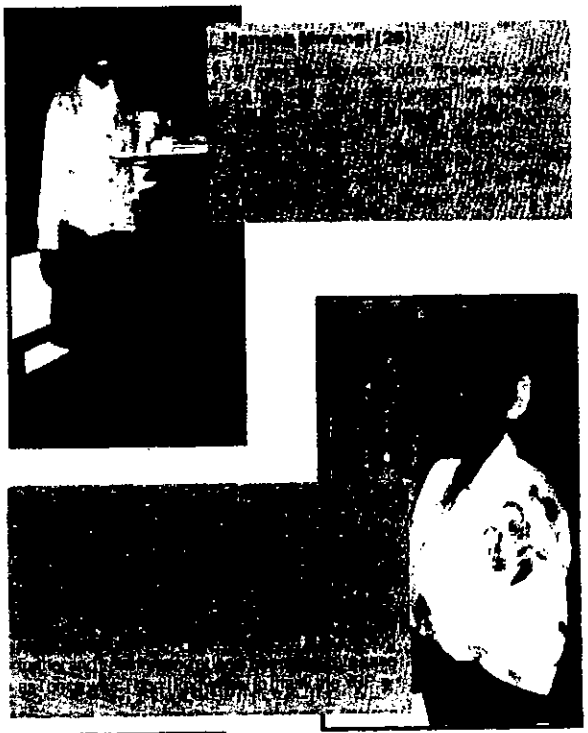
LIFE

An unidentified child at Mathare Valley ponders over life. YSP has been helping poor children from the slum by taking them to school.

y Mioere a YSP sponsored student doing her homework as her mother looks on.

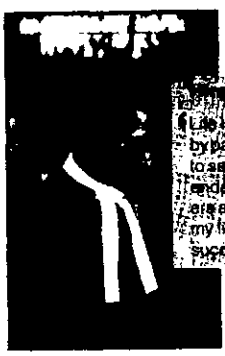
Feedback: The beneficiaries speak

A number of YSP benaficiaries have written back. Here are some excarpts of thase letters:



Hurram Muindi Mathenge (32):

"Life is a mystery. Having aided me in my problems by paying for my schooling, the YSP opened my eyes to see other people's problems. That is why I have ended up becoming a reverend. I want to serve others as YSP did to me. YSP has taught me to spend my life for others. (Hurram became a reverend after successfully working as an electrician.)"



Josephine Nyokabi (26):

"I had just started Form I and after one term, I saw no future for me because I already had some fee balance and the school would not allow me back in the second term. When I approached YSP, they were ready to take me. YSP has made such a difference in my life. I even got to university. I thank YSP for changing the whole course of my life."

Carol Muthoni:

"I am a former YSP student. After high school I joined Daystar University where I pursued a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication. I graduated in 1998. I worked for a PR firm where I met my current employer Vivid Features Ltd., where I work as a production manager. I was posted in Nigeria in June 2001 to set up a new office for Vivid Features that would primarily cater for the needs of the CNN West Africa Bureau based in Lagos. I will be eternally grateful for the opportunity that YSP gave me. I pray that God continues to bless your good work in Kenya as you continue to help those in need."