

Advancing Integrity and Social Justice through Faith-based Service Learning in Kiambu, Kenya

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Abstract

The Franciscan School of the Institute of Spirituality and Religious Formation, Tangaza University, offers a course on peace, justice, and human rights during which students engage with the Kiambu small Christian communities through five weeks of community engagement service learning from a faith based perspective to implement the theory they learn. The programme includes prayers, Bible study, and reflection on the factors affecting their lives and society. Both formative and summative assessments form the total grade for the course. A study was undertaken with the following objectives: to explore how students of the Franciscan school engage with members of the Kiambu small Christian communities; to examine issues that affect the socio-economic lives of the Kiambu small Christian communities; to evaluate socio-political issues that challenge the integrity of the Kiambu small Christian communities, and to involve the Kiambu small Christian communities in their rights for a just nation. The methodology for this study is the five-stage pastoral cycle, and the experiential educational theory was used as its framework. The programme targeted 17 small Christian communities with a population of 425. There were 28 students in total. The outcome of the community engagement reveals that both communities and students are enriched and transformed by the experience. The findings highlight that, through community engagement, the Kiambu small Christian communities' members work and transform their attitude towards justice, peace, and human rights, improve their economic status, and alleviate their standard of living by starting self-reliance income-generating projects, while the students are transformed intellectually and affectively.

Keywords: *service learning, peace, justice, human rights, community engagement, and experiential educational theory*

Introduction

This paper focuses on community engagement service learning from the perspective of a faith-based education institution and its pastoral cycle methodology. The Franciscan School at the Institute of Spirituality and Religious Formation, Tangaza University, teaches peace, justice, and human rights courses. Tangaza University, established in 1986, is in Lang'ata, Nairobi, Kenya. The university is run by the Catholic Church and is known for its focus on theology, philosophy, education, and social sciences. The course on peace, justice, and human rights takes place each academic year from January to May and falls during the Lenten season within the Church liturgical calendar. Each Lenten season, the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops General Secretariat, Department of Catholic Justice and Peace prepares a Lenten theme for the Catholic followers to use during the Lent season (KCCB-Justice and Peace Department, 2024). The lecturer at the Franciscan School teaches the aforementioned course on peace, justice, and human rights issues as a practical approach to community service learning.

The Franciscan School identified the Kiambiu community under the Buruburu parish as a collaborator for community engagement service learning. Service learning is a reflective pedagogy that combines curriculum content and practice. Rooted in credit-bearing formal courses, service learning comprises community service, curriculum connection, and reflection (Resch & Schrittmesser, 2023). It focuses on the holistic development of society, based on educating students and equipping them with skills to address local community needs. Service learning aims to enable students to explore the connection between the theoretical realm of the classroom and practical community issues (Resch & Schrittmesser, 2023).

The Kiambiu community is situated between Eastleigh and Nairobi River in the eastern part of Nairobi, Kenya. It borders Buruburu, Moi Airbase and Uhuru estate. It has an estimated population of 40,000 to 50,000 inhabitants (Otieno, 2018). The Buruburu parish has established 17 small Christian communities (SCC) whose members vary from 14 to 30, within the Kiambiu community. Each Sunday, the members of SCCs meet in different houses and these Kiambiu SCCs are the service learning units of the students at the Franciscan School.

Life in the Kiambiu slum presents numerous challenges and complexities for residents. The Kiambiu community reflects the broader issues of urban poverty, lack of peace, justice, inequality, and marginalisation. The Kiambiu slum is often characterised by overcrowding, with multiple families sharing small living spaces in makeshift constructed housing with illegal electricity connections (Otieno, 2018). They lack access to basic amenities such as clean water and sanitation facilities (Wangari, 2018; Otieno, 2018). Slum residents typically face high levels of poverty and limited economic opportunities. Many members engage in informal sector activities such as street vending, waste picking, or domestic work, which often offer unstable incomes. Education opportunities in slum areas are often limited, with inadequate infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and poorly trained teachers.

Many children are unable to attend school due to financial constraints, leading to low literacy rates and perpetuating cycles of poverty. Slum residents are disproportionately affected by health challenges, limited access to healthcare services, and environmental hazards (Ayejughbagbe, 2023). Limited police presence and ineffective law enforcement contribute to a sense of insecurity among residents, who contend with issues such as gang activity, drug trafficking, and gender-based violence (Bird, Montebruno & Regan, 2017). The community is denied access to essential services and marginalised in decision-making processes (Ayejughbagbe, 2023). At the same time, there might be many strengths within this community that are perhaps less immediately visible than these socioeconomic and political issues.

The Kiambiu community has notable strengths that support its social cohesiveness and resilience despite these difficulties. The existence of 17 SCCs demonstrates robust social networks that promote cooperation, religious unity, and group problem-solving. By operating small enterprises, many locals exhibit an entrepreneurial spirit and show ingenuity and flexibility in overcoming financial difficulties. Community-driven projects such as self-help groups and grassroots organisations are essential in tackling security issues, promoting better services, and expanding access to education. Community links are further reinforced by cultural and religious identities, which offer emotional support and a sense of belonging. These assets are crucial in determining the community's resilience and capacity for constructive change, even though they are occasionally less apparent than the socioeconomic and political problems.

The paper begins with an explanation of the pastoral cycle methodology and the experiential educational theory underpinning the service learning course. This is followed by service learning and community engagement, practical steps of the pastoral cycle, theological reflection, action plan, summary, and recommendations. However, the positionality of the researchers is expressed at the outset.

Positionality

The researchers admit that their positionality as Franciscan School members may introduce a bias toward faith-based initiatives in community participation. Their Franciscan identity, which emphasises justice, compassion, and the dignity of all individuals, influences their viewpoints, beliefs, and methods. This positionality affects how they interact with communities, prioritise solutions, and understand social challenges. This faith-based framework offers a comprehensive and moral perspective for dealing with societal issues, but it also calls for a critical understanding of its drawbacks and possible prejudices. To guarantee a fair and inclusive approach, the researchers are still dedicated to introspection and being receptive to different points of view.

Spiritual and religious perspectives are profoundly ingrained in the structure of this study and are not merely incidental. As a guiding approach, the pastoral cycle places a strong emphasis on action, theological investigation, and contemplation within a framework of

faith. This strategy guarantees that research findings contribute to significant and long-lasting community transformation by promoting a transformative approach where faith and social justice interact. The researchers aim to participate in a dialogical process that respects both religious and secular viewpoints, because they acknowledge that their religious tradition may influence how they understand societal concerns and ethical answers. Moreover, the researchers take a critical and reflective approach to their work because they acknowledge the possibility of faith-based prejudice.

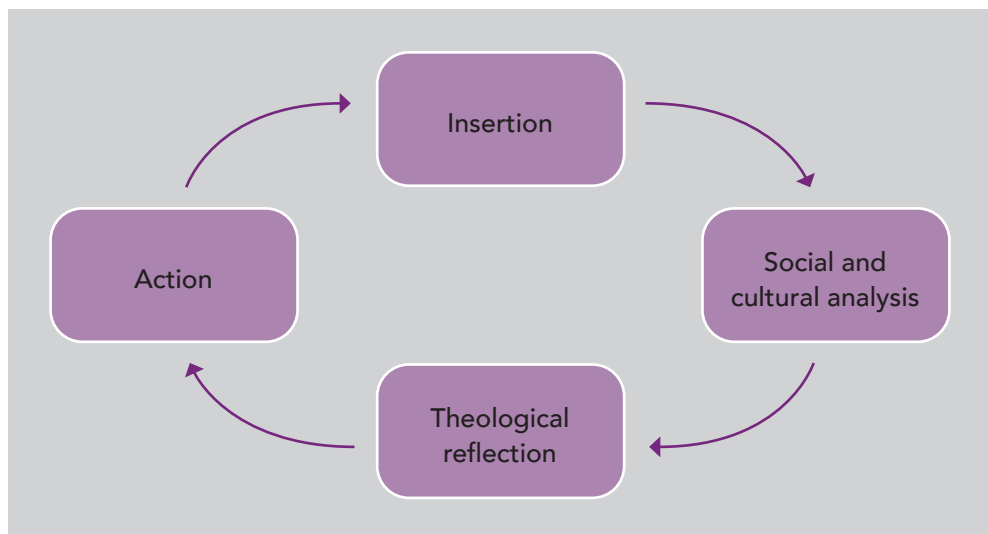
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The pastoral cycle was used as a theoretical framework and methodological tool that combines faith-based viewpoints with experiential learning theory and service learning concepts. By connecting theological reflection with social action, the pastoral cycle expands the analysis to community transformation, whereas experiential learning and service learning are primarily concerned with student outcomes.

Pastoral Cycle Methodology

The pastoral cycle is the methodology that the Franciscan School used for community service learning, which connects students' theory and concerns, leading to action (Holland & Henriot, 1983). The pastoral cycle has four elements: insertion, social and cultural analysis, faith reflection, and action process.

Figure 1: Pastoral Cycle



The pastoral cycle grew out of a methodology for social transformation of 'see, judge and act' introduced by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn. In the early 1900s, Cardinal Joseph Cardijn (1882-1967) was involved in pastoral process and founded the Young Christian Workers movement, out of which grew the Young Christian Students (YCS), whose methodology was based on 'see, judge and act' (Gremillion, 1992). The pastoral cycle typically referred to a methodological approach used in participatory development and community empowerment initiatives, especially in rural or pastoralist contexts. This approach involves a cyclical process of community engagement, analysis, planning, action, and reflection, aimed at addressing local challenges and improving livelihoods sustainably.

The pastoral cycle methodology begins with insertion, where students enter into the community, and engage with the community's issues. Holland and Henriot (1983) uphold that insertion deals with students' entering into the community, impacted by the community issues and experience, and observe how those issues affect the life of that community (Freire, 1970; Holland & Henriot, 1983; Resch & Schritteser, 2023). The second step concerns social and cultural analysis in which the facilitators must understand the issue well enough to believe that, by their engagement, they will make a difference. The students and the community jointly participate in social, economic, cultural, political, environmental, and historical analysis of the situation (Sen, 2003). In the third step, which is theological reflection, the community and the students do a pastoral analysis in which they ask theological questions (Goody, 2020). Theological reflection engages the perspectives of faith and prayer by prayerfully exploring what faith says about the issue, and what the community's response is to that issue; what the scriptures say on the issue; and the Christian church's understanding of God's justice and how these elements of faith respond to the life of the community. The theological reflection gives new insights and offers new responses towards addressing the root causes of issues that must lead to action (Holland & Henriot, 1983).

The final stage is action, which is direct community engagement. The action involves planning what to do and accomplish on the issue, what to change and how to change it. The community and students work together to eradicate the cause of the problem. They look for resources: action requires assigning tasks and responsibilities, strategies, implementation, observation of the calendar, monitoring and evaluating the progress and celebrating the steps achieved (Cavanagh & Byron, 1992; Holland & Henriot, 1983). Pope Paul VI in his *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971, No. 4) insisted that the action of the community must solve the problem affecting them by analysing with objectivity the situation, based on the gospel values. Each of the four steps of the pastoral cycle builds on the other, extending the previous insight and experience.

The pastoral cycle, which underpins service learning courses at the Franciscan School, is a useful framework for service learning, especially when it comes to encouraging critical engagement and reflective practice. This interactive method improves students' comprehension of social justice whilst simultaneously strengthening their ability to jointly

effect significant change in their communities. The pastoral cycle greatly enhances students' capacity to link theoretical knowledge with real-world application when it is incorporated into service learning programmes. This results in more meaningful community service outcomes (Groome, 2020).

The pastoral cycle provides an organised method for comprehending and tackling complicated social challenges from a faith based perspective. Students are guided to interact more intimately with the communities they serve by adhering to the four stages of the cycle: experience, sociological analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral planning. This creates a reflective and action-oriented learning environment. The method promotes student engagement, which is both knowledgeable and caring, by encouraging students to combine theory with practice in addition to assisting them in critically evaluating the underlying causes of social problems (Holland & Henriot, 1983). The emphasis is on caring and the cultivation of humanity in students (Nussbaum, 1997).

Experiential Educational Theory

The pastoral cycle resonates with and can be underpinned by experiential educational theory. Experiential educational theory, also known as experiential learning theory, is a framework that focuses on how individuals learn through their experiences. This theory emphasises the importance of direct experience and reflection in the learning process. Kolb (1984) introduced experience as the main source of learning. He contended that experiential learning is a combination of experience, perception, cognition and behaviour. It is a holistic and integrative perspective in the cycle of learning. There is a strong connection between experiential education and service learning since both emphasise learning by firsthand experience. Through the integration of education, reflection, and meaningful community involvement, service learning fosters civic and personal responsibility, while improving learning outcomes. John Dewey's (1916) experiential education philosophy contends that knowledge is created by actively engaging in real-world situations (Hassen, 2023). According to experiential theory, which supports service learning, students learn best when they apply academic concepts in real-world situations. This reinforces the idea that education should focus on developing a sense of responsibility and community engagement in addition to knowledge acquisition (Kolb, 2015; Jacoby et al., 2021).

According to Kolb's model, learning is a cyclical process that involves four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989), which is in alignment with the pastoral cycle methodology. Experiential education theory has similar principles to the pastoral cycle and service learning for community engagement. At the learning experience stage, learners (students) encounter a new experience which involves actively engaging with the experience through observation and participation. After the experience, learners reflect on what happened and try to understand it from different perspectives. This process includes feedback on the effectiveness of the learners' learning efforts (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). The

authors observe that in learning there is a process of moving forward and backward by reflection, action, feeling, and thinking (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). They mention learning styles and learning spaces that enhance experiential learning in higher education (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Here the learners try to make sense of their experiences by forming theories or concepts. As they occupy the space, they analyse the experience and try to understand the underlying principles or patterns. Finally, learners apply their new understanding to real-life situations.

These situations are embedded in a community of practice through legitimate peripheral participation. This learning experience space goes beyond the teacher and the classroom and involves the community of practice (Kolb & Kolb 2005). Experiential educational learning theory suggests that effective learning occurs when all four stages are engaged in a continuous cycle, with each stage reinforcing and informing the others.

Community Engagement Service Learning

Following the ethical guidelines of service learning, this course on peace, justice and human rights protects and upholds the dignity of all participants. On the one hand, the ethics review board at Tangaza University granted ethical approval to the teachers in charge of this course. The course's goals, methods, and possible effects on the community were carefully evaluated as part of this approval procedure. Participants' informed consent, maintaining the privacy of sensitive data, and minimising any possible harm, were all ethical factors to consider. On the other hand, educators prepare students for service learning praxis in community engagement. Students are first taught the fundamental ideas of civic engagement and service learning, such as the value of reciprocity and the background of the communities with which they will interact. Then, via addressing power dynamics, developing empathy and ethical awareness, and highlighting the value of civic engagement, the educators instruct students to develop a civic mindset. Through explicitly defined learning objectives, skill-building courses connect theoretical knowledge to practical application by focusing on communication, teamwork, leadership, and project management. Pre-service contemplation exercises assist students in setting personal objectives prior to engagement, while community introductions acquaint them with needs in the area. The educators coach and support the students, promoting adaptation based on input from the community. Students engage in reflection exercises following their service to examine their experiences and relate them to theoretical frameworks in the classroom.

Design and Methodology of the Study

The pastoral cycle methodology's application in community engagement service learning is examined in this study, using a case study method. Both qualitative reflective techniques and a quantitative survey were used to gather data. Members of 14 of the 17 Kiambu SCCs were specifically given a structured questionnaire with a four-point Likert scale to gauge

their opinions on issues like sovereignty, access to clean water, and the high cost of living. Utilising descriptive statistical analysis, the survey data was interpreted. The Franciscan service learning students and community members participated in group discussions and kept reflective journals, which yielded qualitative data. The study complied with ethical standards, guaranteeing voluntary participation, confidentiality in data handling, and informed consent from all participants.

Practical Steps of the Pastoral Cycle

Step 1: Insertion

At the insertion step, the Franciscan School service learning class moved to the Kiambiu Community for five weeks for engagement with Kiambiu SCC members. This was a class of 28 students: 12 male and 16 female students. Their ages ranged between 20 and 30 years old, while the members of the Kiambiu community have male and female members: youth, parents, and middle-aged members ranging up to about 55 to 60 years of age.

The students and the Kiambiu community began with a joint study of the book *Integrity for a Just Nation Lenten Campaign 2024* (KCCB_CPIHD_Catholic Justice and Peace Department, 2024). The book has seven themes: sovereignty of the people, right to clean, safe, and adequate water, challenges of the high cost of living, religious extremism, emerging threats to family, prayer for the canonisation of Cardinal Otunga, and prayer for the anti-corruption campaign. After the joint study of the book, the community concluded that the themes of sovereignty of the people, the right to clean, safe, and adequate water, and challenges of high cost of living affect them directly. Based on their conclusion, the students surveyed these three themes (KCCB-CPIHD-Catholic Justice and Peace Department, 2024).

Step 2: Social Analysis

In step two, the Franciscan School service learning students engaged Kiambiu SCCs on social analysis. Each community reflected on their social experiences based on questions posed in the book *Integrity for a Just Nation Lenten Campaign 2024*. The questions were divided into three parts: (1) sovereignty of the people, (2) the right to clean, safe, and adequate water, and (3) challenges of high cost of living. Fourteen (14) small Christian communities out of 17 participated in the social analysis process. The data was analysed according to a rating scale with the following key: 1-agree; 2-strongly agree; 3-disagree; 4-strongly disagree.

• *Sovereignty of the people*

Experience, social analysis, theological thought, and pastoral action are all essential elements of the pastoral cycle, and the results show how the people engage with their national identity, civic duties, and relationships with the state and the Church. In the Kiambiu community, the idea of sovereignty can be interpreted via the prisms of faithfulness, activism, and support for the underprivileged. The research emphasises the community of Kiambiu's lived reality, where people exhibit a strong feeling of patriotism. As Kenyans,

none of the respondents disagreed that loyalty is a fundamental aspect of who they are. On the other hand, the community's experience with government initiatives to safeguard vulnerable and impoverished groups is characterised by a mixed perspective. Significantly more members disagree, indicating a deeper sense of disenchantment and mistrust with political systems, than the minority who think the government protects their rights. The disparity between the community's collective experience and perspective on sovereignty is shaped by the reality of disappointment with government accountability, and the ideal of national allegiance. *They cannot entirely trust the government to defend the sovereignty of the people since, in their experience, it does not always look out for the wellbeing of all citizens.*

The differences in opinion on government responsibility point to structural problems with Kenya's democratic system. Although the Kiambiu community acknowledges its sovereignty inside the borders of the country, this sovereignty is jeopardised by public officials' dishonesty and lack of openness. Deep-seated political dissatisfaction was indicated by 57% of Kiambiu SCC members, who strongly disagreed that voters could expect accountability from elected officials. People who dislike a system are less likely to interact with it because they believe it to be corrupt or inefficient. This has an impact on civic engagement. Furthermore, compared to the government, the Church, which is a significant institution in the community, is thought to be a better defender of the underprivileged. The majority of SCC members recognise the Church's role in advancing the welfare of the vulnerable, including through the Buruburu Catholic Church's initiatives, and see the Church's support for social justice and human dignity as good. This implies a move away from depending on official institutions and toward religious organisations as reliable guardians of human rights and dignity.

The Church's defence of the rights of underrepresented groups is consistent with the teachings of Pope John Paul II (1995), who highlighted the moral duty to assist those who are in need. The Kiambiu community's conception of sovereignty is shaped by this theological framework, which views it as an obligation to fight for justice and protect the dignity of all citizens, especially the weaker ones. The Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2017) is one example of how the Church is involved in civic affairs, demonstrating the Church's theological commitment to empowering citizens to be active citizens. By consistently advocating for social justice, this civic participation ensures that the sovereignty of the people is honoured and maintained, which is crucial for the community's well-being.

The pastoral cycle urges action that closes the gap between the community's experience and its goals for a just society in light of these discoveries. The allegiance of the Kiambiu people to their country, their civic engagement, and their reliance on the Church for advocacy, are all closely linked to their sovereignty. But the lack of faith in government transparency emphasises the necessity of more extensive pastoral involvement to deal with these structural problems.

- ***Right to clean, safe, and adequate water in Kiambiu community***

The results show that the Kiambiu community's access to sufficient, safe, and clean water is seriously disadvantaged. With 29% strongly disagreeing and 50% disagreeing, there was not a single SCC that believed that the water supply was safe for people's health. This reflects the general worries about the area's water quality and safety. Nonetheless, 21% of SCCs were adamant that the water was advantageous and safe. This disparity in opinions highlights the need for more thorough water testing and public health programmes by raising serious concerns about the dependability and quality of the local water supply. Undoubtedly, having access to clean and safe water is a fundamental human right. Another infrastructure-related worry is Kiambiu's water tower availability. Of the SCCs surveyed, only 14% strongly agreed that there were enough water towers; a sizable majority (43%) disagreed, and none felt that the infrastructure of the water towers was adequate. The fact that just 18 of Kenya's 88 recognised water towers are fully gazetted exacerbates the lack of infrastructure and worsens the problems with water access. Furthermore, 21% strongly disagreed and 64% of SCCs disagreed that it was easy to acquire water in the neighbourhood, illustrating the daily problems that the locals experience.

There does not seem to be much community support for solving the problems with water access. In response to a question on whether their communities assist one another in obtaining clean water, a majority of 57% disagreed, with only 7% agreeing and 14% strongly agreeing. This suggests that broader structural factors, including poor governance or inadequate infrastructure, may be impeding local attempts to enhance water access. The water issue in Kiambiu is made more difficult by the surroundings. Significantly, 85% of SCCs voiced worries about the detrimental effects of tree dispersal on subterranean water sources, citing environmental deterioration as a major contributing factor to water resource contamination and depletion. Community participation in water-related advocacy also remains low. Although eight SCCs took part in World Water Day, only 7% of SCCs strongly supported local participation in the event, with 57% opposing it. This low engagement rate may be attributed to factors such as limited outreach, socioeconomic challenges, or competing local priorities. Increased community involvement in events like World Water Day could help raise awareness and drive collective action to address the pressing water issues in the area.

The pastoral cycle framework can be used to assess the findings on the water access difficulties of the Kiambiu community in an efficient and effective manner. The responses from the SCCs provide a basis for the first stage, which is based on the community's lived experiences. Their personal testimonies of the difficulties they experience with infrastructure, access, and water safety highlight the pressing need to resolve these issues. This phase documents the day-to-day Kiambiu community experiences. Based on the SCCs' response, the community is investigating the underlying reasons for the water problem at this point. Important obstacles to clean water access are noted, including inadequate

water towers, inadequate infrastructure, environmental deterioration, and governance difficulties.

The pastoral cycle provides an opportunity for the community to engage in theological discourse that addresses social justice principles and faith in connection to water rights. Faith-based organisations like the SCCs are called to fight for justice and the dignity of people because clean and safe water is a fundamental human right. In addition, the pastoral cycle helps the community develop a sense of unity and shared responsibility. Through the practice of theological reflection, the SCCs may utilise their common values to fight structural injustices that sustain unequal resource allocation while also promoting water rights. This contemplation of faith, justice, and dignity serves as a spur for transformative action, encouraging the neighbourhood to address the environmental and infrastructure problems preventing people from accessing clean water.

In order to address the water problem in Kiambiu, tangible measures or action must be taken in the final stage. The provision of equal access to water could entail taking action for improved water infrastructure, taking part in environmental conservation initiatives, and encouraging community cooperation. The low levels of involvement on World Water Day indicate that more needs to be done to get the community involved and promote awareness. The SCCs can be given the authority to take significant action to enhance water availability and safeguard the environment in Kiambiu by tying advocacy to their religious beliefs.

- ***Challenges of high cost of living***

Significant issues with the high cost of living in the Kiambiu community are brought to light by the study, which also reveals the intricate interactions between poor leadership, community involvement, and sound financial management. There appears to be a gap between elected officials and community needs, as evidenced by the large majority (71%) of SCCs reporting scarce interactions with their County Assembly members. Insufficient involvement and representation from the leadership compound the difficulties encountered by inhabitants in mitigating the high expense of living, seen in overpricing. This disparity was highlighted by one SCC member, who pointed out that *'the members' infrequent presence suggested a possible disregard for their duties'*.

The majority of SCCs (93%) showed a willingness to cut back on their unnecessary spending despite the rising cost of living, and 50% strongly agreed that better financial discipline was necessary. Although more study is needed to examine the reasons for these modifications, and their viability in the face of financial strains, this suggests that the community is conscious of the significance of managing resources more wisely. A resounding majority (93%) of SCCs concurred or strongly concurred that Kiambiu residents had accepted personal accountability for addressing the high cost of living. This shows a strong commitment to social change and a sense of community. The research, however, demands a deeper examination of the dynamics at play in these communities, particularly the part played by leadership and the impact of outside assistance in converting this commitment into concrete deeds.

Remarkably, 96% of SCCs strongly disagreed with the idea that residents do not face financial hardships, underscoring the widespread effect that high living expenses have on families. This is in line with broader national views, as people have voiced discontent with policies implemented by the government, and the growing price of necessities. Furthermore, a sizable percentage (72%) of SCCs reported that different community sectors were not included in talks about budget changes, indicating a deficiency in participatory governance. This deficiency highlights a potential systemic problem, whereby community people are prevented from actively advocating for their demands and influencing the procedures that lead to making decisions.

Step 3: Theological Reflection

The third step of the pastoral cycle is theological reflection, where the Franciscan School service learning class engaged Kiambu SCCs on theological reflection concerning integrity for a just nation based on the sovereignty of the people, the right to clean, safe and adequate water, and the challenges of the high cost of living.

• *Sovereignty of the people*

In this study, sovereignty is defined as the people's collective ability and right to self-governance, based on the moral and ethical foundations found in scripture (Romans 13:1; Proverbs 21:1). Viewed through the prism of divine responsibility, which holds that the authority bestowed upon human institutions is ultimately answerable to God's higher rules and principles, sovereignty is understood to be more than just the capacity to exercise control. According to this interpretation, genuine sovereignty entails a dedication to justice, love, and truth in order to represent the divine image that is present in every human being (Micah 6:8). Therefore, as long as it is in line with God's intention for the welfare of all, the idea of sovereignty includes the right of the people to self-determination and involvement in government. The study highlights that a nation's strength and legitimacy come from its people's commitment to moral living and righteousness, acknowledging that sovereignty is practiced within the framework of divine power (Proverbs 14:34). According to this perspective, national stability and well-being are directly impacted by the moral fibre and dedication of the populace, who bear a shared duty for sovereignty as indicated above.

The idea of integrity as it relates to a people's sovereignty is ingrained in religious debate, especially in the context of Christianity. Integrity, which is the application of moral and ethical standards, is frequently seen as a manifestation of humanity's divine nature. Integrity is strongly associated in the biblical context with the qualities of righteousness and justice, which are fundamental to a nation's sovereignty. For example, according to Proverbs 14:34, "Sin condemns any people, but righteousness exalts a nation" (New International Version, 2011). This verse suggests that a people's moral character plays a vital role in determining their status and national sovereignty. A people's sovereignty is reinforced when they uphold their integrity because they are designed by God's will and are thus protected and shown favour.

- ***Clean, safe, and adequate water***

The Bible presents water as both potent and life-giving. According to Marais (2018), God's presence is seen hovering over the rivers in Genesis, producing water to sustain life and provide animals a place to live. Water's dual nature as both life-giving and potentially destructive is shown in the book of Exodus when God uses it to drown the Egyptian army and save the Israelites. According to Matthew 8:27 and Mark 4:41, Jesus exhibits His almighty power in the New Testament by calming the stormy Sea of Galilee. In addition, Jesus is referred to in John 4 as the 'water of life', providing spiritual refreshment that satisfies an unending thirst, in contrast to the actual water from Jacob's well (Marais, 2018).

Life depends on water, which connects ecology and humans (Turner, 2013; Renato, 2003). As it permeates and sustains all forms of life, it is essential to the survival of humans, plants, and animals (Marais, 2018). Article 43(1)(d) of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) states that every person has the right to clean and safe water in adequate quantities. The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (2017) stresses that access to water is a fundamental human right, which is required for both ecological and human flourishing. The United Nations (2021) stresses that access to safe, sufficient and affordable drinking water, and sanitation is a fundamental human right essential for enjoyment of life. In many cultures and religious traditions, water represents community and unity in addition to its physical and spiritual value. Water, for example, is used in many rituals as a means of rejuvenation, healing, and purification, strengthening the social ties between participants (Sullivan et al., 2023). Within the framework of the worldwide water issue, this symbolism encompasses the necessity of group efforts to protect water resources.

- ***Challenges of high cost of living***

The complex interaction of economic, social, and environmental factors, many of which were made worse by the COVID 19 pandemic is responsible for the high cost of living that exists today on a global scale. Inflation has weakened the purchasing power of money as a result of factors like growing manufacturing costs, disruptions in the supply chain, and increased demand. Population growth, urbanisation, and a lack of available housing have all contributed to rising housing costs across Kenya. In urban areas, in particular, high demand and a lack of affordable housing options have driven up prices. This problem is made worse by income disparity, since lower-income households find it more difficult to keep up with the growing prices of necessities, putting strain on finances and lowering standard of living. According to Shibia (2023), the cost of living in Kenya is at its highest point since 2017. This is due to rising food prices and commodity costs, as well as falling incomes for the lower and middle classes as a result of high taxes, high unemployment, rising cost of necessities, including school fees, and environmental factors such as floods, and droughts. Kenya saw significant inflation between June 2022 and June 2023, which made matters worse.

During their assembly in November 2022, the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops voiced concerns about the impact of increasing living costs on average Kenyans, pointing

out that essential commodities are out of reach for many (KCCB, 2022). The Bishops also called for the elimination of the 2024 Finance Bill, which imposed significant tax increases which have incited hostility among Kenyans (KCCB, 2024) and contributed to the high cost of living in the Kiambu community. In addition to having an impact on individuals and families, Kenya's high cost of living also has wider ramifications for social cohesiveness and the general well-being of communities. The stress and anxiety levels of residents have increased as a result of the mounting financial hardship, which has negatively impacted their mental health and general quality of life. In places like Kiambu, where rates of poverty are already high, the weight of growing expenses can aggravate already-existing disparities and obstruct access to basic services like healthcare and education (Shibia, 2023; KCCB, 2022; KCCB, 2024).

Step 4: Action

The pastoral cycle culminates in action. It brings together insertion, social analysis and theological reflection.

Summary Presentation of the Results:

- i. People's sovereignty: According to the survey, a sizable fraction of Kiambu SCC members have a mistrust of government accountability, with 57% strongly disagreeing that elected officials behave in the public interest.
- ii. Right to safe, adequate, and clean water: 79% of respondents disagreed or disapproved of the safety and sufficiency of the current water supply, underscoring persistent infrastructure issues.
- iii. Challenges of high cost of living: In response to growing living expenses, 93% of participants felt that financial restraint was required. However, only 29% of respondents said they regularly discuss budgetary decisions with their elected officials. Qualitative reflections from community members and students supplement these findings, offering a thorough picture of the difficulties encountered.
- iv. Results and the coherence of theological reflection: The pastoral cycle's integration of theological and sociological analysis is one of its main features. This study emphasises the close relationship between faith-based viewpoints and community reflections on sovereignty, justice, and economic hardships.
- v. Suggestions enhancement: The study's recommendations were mostly developed using survey data and the students' reflections. Nonetheless, more suggestions from the community would improve the study's legitimacy and inclusivity. To ensure a balanced viewpoint, future research should include structured feedback sessions where SCC members present their own suggested solutions.
- vi. Key recommendation: Tangaza University in collaboration with the Kiambu SCCs should finance an entrepreneurship project for self-sustainability.

First Action in the pastoral cycle: Franciscan School and Kiambu SCCs

By the end of May 2024, the Franciscan service learning students and the SCCs together set up action activities after the 2024 Lenten Campaign programmes. The Kiambu SCCs undertook to take part in public participation forums on budgeting and agreed to commit to fighting corruption. The Franciscan students and Kiambu SCC members began a tree nursery and also brought tree plants to be planted in Kiambu. These trees will, in the long run, help in water conservation. The Franciscan students and the Kiambu SCC officials visited the nearest county water office to get relevant information on water provision and access to the area. The Franciscan students service learning class created awareness among the Kiambu SCC members about the annual World Water Day and encouraged them to participate in the World Water Day of 2024. In following the Lenten campaign themes, the service learning students organised a walk dedicated to discussion of sovereignty and to planting commemorative trees. The purpose for the walk was for civic education.

Second action in the pastoral cycle: experiential learning of the Franciscan service learning students from community engagement

After the five-week engagement period the students wrote a report drawn from their experience of community engagement with Kiambu SCCs. The reports reflected their sense of increased exposure to critical thinking, and reflection on community issues. The two partners were able to exchange knowledge and shared the ideas for the betterment of the two groups. The students learned to appreciate the things they have. For example, they have clean, safe, and potable water, yet they are wasteful of it, while the Kiambu community lacks this commodity. The students learned from the Kiambu community to have a sense of commitment as they work towards better citizenship. They expressed how they were challenged by the Kiambu community on how the SCCs struggle to make their ends meet financially.

Third action in the pastoral cycle: summative and formative evaluation

At the end of the five-week engagement period, the students gathered all the reflection papers into one project, known as the 'long essay', which was enriched from secondary data as well as their learning drawn from the Kiambu community. The students' formative assessment was based mainly on reflections from the community, where they saw their work in Kiambu as an expression of Franciscan spirituality and interconnectedness, deepening their commitment to compassion and justice. The Kiambu community affirmed that theology grows from lived experience, where the gospel is encountered in daily struggles. Together, the Franciscan students and the Kiambu community committed to community development rooted in social justice, aiming for equality, justice, and empowerment for all. The long essay was submitted to the lecturer at the end of the five weeks of insertion which marked the end of the course on justice, peace and human rights for the academic year 2023/2024.

Summary of Social Analysis

The analysis emphasises how the Kiambiu community's allegiance to Kenya is a reflection of their sovereignty as Kenyan citizens. Nonetheless, it is necessary to protect their rights and provide them with necessary assistance. Kiambiu's SCCs ought to vigorously defend their rights and hold public servants responsible for their deeds. They have a right to expect the state to be transparent, honest, and run efficiently (The Constitution of Kenya, 2010, 2c). Their capacity to influence legislation and improve their living situations can be increased by bolstering civic engagement and community advocacy. The safety and accessibility of water in the region are among the top issues brought up by the Kiambiu SCCs. Residents of Kiambiu are in serious danger of health problems due to the unsafe drinking water that is supplied. Access to sufficient and clean water is a constant problem because of the restricted and unstable water supply caused by the absence of suitable water towers. According to data gathered, a large number of people in Kiambiu find it difficult to make a meaningful contribution to expanding access to clean water.

Limitations and bias of the study

This study's failure to include viewpoints from Kiambiu's non-Christian community is a drawback. Furthermore, although the SCCs and students took an active part, there was little participation from other community stakeholders. To give a more complete picture of the effects of faith-based service learning, future studies should try to incorporate a range of perspectives from both religious and nonreligious backgrounds. This study's dependence on participant self-reported data, which could introduce biases like social desirability or selective remembering, is another drawback. It is possible that participants' answers, especially those taking part in faith-based service learning, matched perceived expectations more so than their actual experiences. By using observational techniques, interviews with independent community members, or longitudinal studies to monitor the long-term effects of faith-based programmes on students and the larger community, future research could overcome this constraint.

The study mostly emphasises the benefits of faith-based service learning, possibly ignoring unforeseen repercussions for participants. More research is necessary on topics including the power relationships between students and community members, varying expectations for service results, and the sustainability of interventions. In order to provide a more thorough and balanced perspective, future research should take a more critical stance, looking at both the advantages and disadvantages of faith-based engagement in disenfranchised populations.

Conclusion

Integrity for a just nation is a right for every citizen and focuses on using the nation to build in its people a culture of justice, peace and human rights. The integrity of the people requires that the way the people live shows their sovereignty as a people and that their conditions of living reflect their dignity as human beings. The Franciscan School's service learning programme was limited to the engagement with the 17 Kiambiu SCCs and focused on peace, justice and human rights. The service learning for the Kiambiu SCCs also incorporated the 2024 KCCB proposed Lenten themes: sovereignty of the people, safe, clean and adequate water, and challenges of high cost of living. The empowerment of the Kiambiu SCCs through the Franciscan School's service learning class exemplifies a transformative approach to community engagement, centred on the pastoral cycle. By actively involving community members in identifying and analysing their challenges, the students facilitated a collaborative environment where theological reflections informed their actions. This process not only enhanced the community's capacity to address its issues but also fostered a sense of ownership and agency among its members.

The nature of community change and transformation emerged as a dynamic interplay between local knowledge and faith-based principles, allowing for tailored solutions that resonate with the community's values and needs. Students, in turn, gained profound insights into the complexities of social justice and community development, enriching their educational experience and nurturing their commitment to service. This holistic engagement underscores the potential of educational initiatives to drive meaningful change while empowering both students and community members in their respective journeys toward growth and transformation. Together with a growing sense of hope in the community about the possibility of achieving a sustainable solution, the Franciscan School and all stakeholders need to work together for greater performance, development, and transformation in Kiambiu engagement, increasing hope of improving performance, promoting development, and accelerating transformation.

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