

**AN INVESTIGATION OF SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AND  
EVANGELIZATION IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN VIHIGA COUNTY, KENYA**

**BY**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN RELIGION**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**MASENO UNIVERSITY**

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## DECLARATION

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I declare that this is my original work and has not been presented to any University for the award of any degree.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I thank Almighty God for His guidance and favour throughout my studies. Am also grateful to all the people who contributed towards the success of this study. I sincerely thank all my colleagues in the Department of Religion, Theology and Philosophy for their continuous encouragement and moral support. I give special thanks to my supervisors Prof Sussy Gumo and Dr Susan Kilonzo for their scholarly guidance, mentorship and above all their patience that made this thesis a reality. I wish also to extend my gratitude's to Dr Esha Faki the Chair, Department of Religion, Theology and Philosophy in Maseno University and Prof Chrispinous Iteyo of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology who as chairs of the department offered great mentorship.

I sincerely appreciate my friends for their great encouragement, support and motivation. Special thanks to Mercy Maloba and Jethron Ayumba, you always gave me hope when I felt like giving up at some point. I equally extend my gratitude to all the parish priests in the five parishes studied for their hospitality and support. Similarly I thank my entire research assistants and all my respondents for their cooperation and participation in the study. To Njoroge's family, your support and prayers has been a source of my inspiration even when things seemed tough. To my dear parents, I really appreciate your big role in making this work successful. Thank you for your prayers and financial assistance. Since I may not mention everyone who assisted and supported me in one way or another, I convey my sincere appreciation to everybody whose contribution made this study successful.

## **DEDICATION**

To my family members who were helpful, encouraging and supportive during my studies, I extend my deepest love and appreciation. Thank you for your patience during the research period when you really missed my support and company. Mum, your novena prayers were a source of my energy in my study. Thank you for your endless support and for believing in me. I treasure you all and may God bless you.

## ABSTRACT

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) embody fundamental features of the ecclesiology of Vatican II which encourages sharing and participation of all church members. SCCs serve as the family cell of the church where pastoral work begins and moves towards the sub-parishes, parishes and dioceses. As literature indicates, majority of the Christians in Catholic Church are not strongly inclined towards evangelization. This is based on the fact that the Catholic Church is highly dogmatic, sacramental and hierarchical in character. Church activities are primarily directed towards the instructional pastoral care of its own members. Absorbed in the inner problems of the church, and occasionally in issues of peace and justice, contemporary Catholics feel relatively little responsibility for spreading the faith. Without spreading the faith, the Church is not likely to grow in numbers especially in the context of a religiously diverse platform. This is not an exception in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County. Therefore, this calls for a need to address the issues above in line with Vatican II teachings on SCCs. The current study therefore, investigated how SCCs are involved in evangelization that encompasses social justice and peace within Catholic Church in Vihiga County, Kenya. Specifically the study set to: describe involvement of SCCs in evangelization; evaluate SCCs involvement in promotion of social justice; and, examine the involvement of SCCs in promotion of peace in the Catholic Church. Functionalism theory by Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) was used to determine eufunctions (positive), dysfunction (negative) of SCCs in evangelization, social justice and promotion of peace in the Catholic Church. The study adopted descriptive research design and was conducted in Vihiga County. Vihiga County is one of the counties with the highest number of diverse Christian denominations Catholic Church being one of them. The study population comprised of 5 parish priests, 5 assistant priests, 5 fully trained catechists, 30 nuns and 279 SCCs drawn from; Luanda, Erusui, Hambale, Buyangu, and Chamakanga parishes. All the 5 parish priests and 5 assistant priests and 5 fully trained catechists were purposively interviewed. Simple random sampling was used to sample 74 SCCs using Leeuw's formula. For every sampled SCC, the chairperson was purposively sampled for the study. Two respondents were randomly picked from each SCC giving a total of 148 respondents. Nine nuns (30%) were also randomly sampled. Data was gathered through questionnaires which were administered to SCCs. In-depth oral interviews targeted priests and their assistant, nuns, two members from each SCC and catechists. Participant observation was carried out in selected SCCs. To establish reliability of research instruments, a pilot study was carried out involving; 1 parish priest, 1 assistant priest, 1 catechist, 1 nun and 7 chairpersons (10% of the study sample). Experts were consulted for validity of the instruments. Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis and descriptive statistics respectively and presented in texts, verbatim excerpts, narratives, frequency distribution tables and chats. The findings revealed that SCCs evangelize through catechism, seven steps of bible sharing, charitable activities and inculturation. Secondly, SCCs are involved in provision of social justice through activities that enhance principles of social justice which include; human dignity, common good, solidarity and subsidiarity. Finally, SCCs promotes peace through conflict resolutions approaches such as community based, mediators and reconciliation. The study findings may be instrumental in guiding the Catholic Church especially in Vihiga County on the importance of SCCs and evangelization which encompasses social justice and promotion of peace in the church.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>AMECEA</b>	Association of Members Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa
<b>BCC</b>	Basic Christian Communities
<b>CBA</b>	Community Based Approach
<b>CEVB</b>	Communaute Ecclesiales Vivantes de Base
<b>CCC</b>	Catechism of the Catholic Church
<b>CJPC</b>	Catholic Justice and Peace Commission
<b>CRS</b>	Catholic Relief Services
<b>GCD</b>	General Catechetical Directory
<b>GOK</b>	Government of Kenya
<b>JPC</b>	Justice and Peace Commission
<b>KEC</b>	Kenya Episcopal Conference
<b>LG</b>	Lumen Gentium
<b>LCCs</b>	Living Christian Communities
<b>NLC</b>	National Lay Council
<b>NWBLC</b>	New Way of Being Local Church
<b>PHIL</b>	Philippians
<b>PTRP</b>	Pastoral Theological Reflection Process
<b>RCIA</b>	Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults
<b>ROM</b>	Romans
<b>SCCs</b>	Small Christian Communities
<b>SFCs</b>	Small Faith Communities
<b>SMC</b>	Special Ministries of Communion

## DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

**Catholic Church:** The Catholic Church referred to in this study is what is known as Roman Catholic Church which is the main stream Christian Church headed by the Pope, who is also the Bishop of Rome.

**Evangelization:** This is the use of biblical teachings, and catechetical instructions, inculturation and use of various charity activities as a means of bringing the Good News. In this context evangelization goes beyond Good News to human beings. It encompasses promotion of social justice and peace within the community.

**Lent:** Season of prayer and fasting for forty days before Easter observed by Catholic Faithful.

**Mandate:** A role to be fulfilled by the church in line with the Biblical teachings.

**Mass:** A church service within the Catholic Church conducted by the priest.

**Mission:** A religious task. The Catholic Church has a task of evangelizing, promoting justice and peace to all Christians.

**Peace:** A state of harmony in the society. The study inquired how this state of harmony is achieved in the SCCs where conflicts arise any time.

**Small Christian Community:** It is a group of Catholic Faithfull's that meet on weekly basis for prayer, serving the community and bible sharing .It may consist of an existing community, a neighborhood grouping of five to fifteen families, people with common interests or activities, and so on. It is the basic family cell of the church.

**Social Justice:** These are actions that provide a basis for safeguarding human rights and human dignity at the community's level. These actions call for the respect for human person. In this study social justice is concerned with how SCCs members apply the principles of human dignity, common good, subsidiary and solidarity in their interaction for the common good of all in line with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

The structure of the Catholic Church is hierarchical. Thoppil (2005) noted that through apostolic succession, that same hierarchy willed by the early church, exists today in the Catholic Church with the Pope (the successor of St Peter) at her head, leading the Bishops (the successors of the Apostles) who themselves lead the faithful in their local Churches. The Pope is the head of the Church and below him are Patriarchs, Metropolitans, Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, and other members of the clergy. The laity, who are at the bottom, are considered the foundation of the Church. The lay faithful are the baptized persons not called by God to ordained ministry within the Church, but being immersed in the world, are called in a special way to bring Christ to the world. To intensify the apostolic activity of the people of God, the laity, has indispensable role in the mission of the Church. The apostolate or the laity derives from their Christian vocation and the Church can never be without it. They are in charge of the SCCs.

Sacred Scripture clearly shows how spontaneous and fruitful such activity was at the very beginning of the Church for example Acts 11:19-21 talks of how early missionaries began evangelization after persecution of the early church and were able to convert even Gentiles at Antioch while in Acts 18:26 Apollos appears as a preacher in Ephesus and met Aquila and Priscilla who instructed him fully on the word of God. Small communities of the early church were rooted in the temple or synagogue. Presentation Ministries (2012) noted that they went to the temple area together every day, while in their homes they broke bread (Acts 2:46). Day

after day, both in the temple and at home, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news of Jesus the Messiah (Acts 5:42). Even when official Judaism became hostile to Christians, they stayed in synagogue until they were expelled in 85 A.D. Early Christian communities were united with one another in a network of support, teaching and accountability.

Small Christian Communities developed as a result of putting the communion ecclesiology and teachings of Vatican II into practice (Healey, 2016; Kurgat, 2004). Small Christian Communities make real the vision of Vatican II that calls on the Church to be (shine forth as) a people made one with the unity (brought into unity) from the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Healey (2016) explains that, although the term SCCs is not mentioned specifically in the documents of Vatican II, some of the great theologians of the council emphasized them in their writings in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The French Dominican theologian Congar (1955, p.341), in *Lay People in the Church* wrote that SCCs are “little church cells wherein the mystery is lived directly and with great simplicity...“the church’s machinery, sometimes the very institution, is a barrier obscuring her deep and living mystery, which they can find, or find again, only from below. SCCs are therefore churches from below, from the grassroots. They are the nuclei in an inductive process of church ministry. Healey (2016) argues that these communities are in themselves “church” – church at the most local level. They are the first and fundamental nucleus of the church and the initial cell of the ecclesial structures. They are constituted of members as one cell of the greater community. Nkwawir (2015) states that terminologies commonly employed to refer to SCCs include the following: Small Church Communities (SCCs), Living Christian Communities (LCCs), Small Faith Communities



(SFCs), Basic Christian Communities (BCC), Living Base Ecclesial Communities – in French *Communauté Ecclésiales Vivantes de Base (CEVB)*. Although the definitions are clear from the literature provided from diverse global contexts, the role of SCCs in evangelization which encompasses social justice and peace remain overlooked.

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) or Basic Ecclesial Communities (BCCs) are a post-Vatican II phenomenon. They have been called a new way of being Church (Ponnumuthan, 1996). The term ‘basic’ refers to the bottom or base of a hierarchical society from which such a communities arise. Looking around the world we can see three kinds of SCCs. In certain areas like Africa or India they represent a geographical and pastoral division of a parish for the purpose of better catechetical, liturgical and missionary animation. The people may be economically poor or better off depending on the area where they live. In Latin America and Philippines they may represent groups of the poor (from the base) that have, in addition, a liberational thrust. Barreiro(1984) contends that, we also have groups of people who come together for a more intense spiritual life like new ecclesial movements like *Focolarini*, *Comunione e liberazione*, and the *Neo Catechumenate*. They tend to be middle or upper middle class people. Some of the ‘basic communities’ in Latin America have been criticized for being anti-hierarchical in the 1970s. Some bishops have been critical of the independent behavior of the new ecclesial movements with reference to parish structures. Ponnumuthan and Barreiro views shows that before Vatican II the role of SCCs in the Catholic Church was not known as SCCs were viewed differently. They are seen as structures within the church hierarchy and their role in evangelization, promotion of social justice and peace are not well outlined.

SCCs originated as a result of the implementation of the pastoral and missionary vision, that is, the new communion ecclesiology of Vatican II (Healey, 2013). On the same vein, John Baur says that SCCs originated from Vatican II's ecclesiology of the church as People of God. This "... implies that all the faithful fulfill their vocation and mission in the Church, implying a change from the priest-based apostolate to a people-based apostolate that demands that the priest assumes the role of a community minded inspirational minister" (Baur, 1994:319-20). One of the aims of SCCs is to give the laity the room to play their role and take on responsibility in the Church. They are first and foremost, places of evangelization. (*Ecclesia in Africa* No. 89): that is, "platforms on which the Christian Faith is lived". All the members are therefore involved in the various aspects of evangelization, not leaving everything in the hands of the priest as was the case before: the lay people evangelize themselves in collaboration with the clergy. These aspects include: proclaiming the gospel in word and action (bible sharing); preparing people for sacraments (baptism, first Holy Communion, confirmation and marriage); visitation of the sick and the prisoner; work as agents of promoting reconciliation, justice and peace, healing and forgiveness; they bury the dead, and comfort one another ( Healey, 2013). Healey and Baur views shows SCCs members have major roles to play in the Church toward evangelization, promotion of reconciliation, justice and peace. However, they fail to state how Christians in these SCCs should work in order to fulfill these tasks.

The global picture of SCCs has been painted by a number of scholarly works. Healey, 2016; and Nkwarir, 2015 argue that, in some Latin American countries and the Philippines SCCs are like ecclesial chapels or ecclesial centers where the sacraments are celebrated. They go by names such as Mass Center, Chapel, Missionary Center and Zone Further, Healey (2009)

traces the origin of SCCs in Africa to the emergence of “Living Ecclesial Communities” in Zaire (now DR Congo) in 1961. In Eastern Africa, as Healey shows, SCCs emerged in the 1970s as neighborhood associations or groups of Christians, under the auspices of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA).

Healey (2012) argues that the idea of the SCCs was adopted by the Catholic Church as a pastoral priority by the bishops of East Africa in 1976. It was justified by the fact that while the church of Christ is universal, it is a communion of SCCs rooted in their own society. For African SCCs, according to Healey (2016), this means reading the African signs of the times in the light of the Gospel and at the same time interpreting the Gospel in the light of the African signs of the times.

Ecclesial groups, and specifically SCCs in the Catholic Church, play the same role as the early church Christian communities. *Gaudium et Spes* in Flannery (1988) noted that, the Catholic Church is made up of various ecclesial groups such as lay organizations such as Legion of Mary, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Divine Mercy, Catholic Men Association, Catholic Women Association, Youth groups and SCC among others. The mission of the SCCs is to bring the Church closer to the faithful in small groups as members find a connecting cord between their faith and daily life situations. Thus, the communities are identified through the celebration of the liturgy as a small group; an attempt to be sensitive to life events and to celebrate them in a prayerful way and involvement in and service to society. A renewed expression of SCCs follows the injunction of Vatican II in 11 October 1962 to 8<sup>th</sup> December 1965 which views the Church as the ‘People of God’.

Healey (2016, p.4) further argues that, the founding fathers of Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA)<sup>1</sup> had a vision of implementing Vatican II's ecclesiology of communion in Eastern Africa that focused on the communion (*koinonia*) and service (*diakonia*) aspects. Healey cites a Tanzanian Scripture scholar Titus Amigu who indicated that, after the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) doors were opened and the Spirit of God brought a new Pentecost with the introduction of SCCs in Africa. AMECEA started laying emphasis on developing SCCs as a concrete expression of, and realization of, the Church as Family Model of Church which reflects the ecclesiology of communion of Vatican II. In reflecting on the reception of Vatican II in Africa, Nigerian theologian Orobator (2013, p.299) comments:

AMECEA has developed an admirable profile in the African Church in the area of regional ecclesiastical collaboration. Arguably, the most concrete and best achievement of AMECEA is its pioneering role in developing Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as a new way of being church.

Studies done by scholars show that SCCs play a vital role in the growth of the Catholic Church. For example, Kilonzo's work (2008) shows that in SCCs members experience real interpersonal relationships and feels a sense of belonging. Kurgat (2004) explains that SCCs are a link of the gospel to real life situations and intensify the process of evangelization through social change and transformation. SCCs are the heart of the church where all Christians get their spiritual and social needs from their interpersonal relationships with one another. Church life must be based on communities in which everybody life and work takes place. The literature reviewed herein on the role of SCCs seems to provide general focus to SCCs. Though Kurgat's

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<sup>1</sup> AMECEA is a service organization for the National Episcopal Conferences of the nine English-speaking countries of Eastern Africa, namely Eritrea (1993), Ethiopia (1979), Kenya (1961), Malawi (1961), South Sudan (2011), Sudan (1973), Tanzania (1961), Uganda (1961) and Zambia (1961).

work speaks to the link between SCCs and evangelization, the ways in which this happens is not explained. The present study found this a theoretically relevant gap for exploration.

With regards to evangelization in the Catholic Church, Dulles (2008) noted that majority of Catholics are not strongly inclined towards evangelization. The very term has for them a protestant ring. The Catholic Church is highly dogmatic, sacramental, and hierarchical in character. Its activities are primarily directed towards the instructional pastoral care of its own members, who needs and demands tax the institution to its limits. Absorbed in the inner problems of the church, and occasionally in issues of peace and justice, contemporary Catholics feel relatively little responsible for spreading the faith. In spite of this observation, there is a call by the Vatican II leadership from the Church membership to focus on provision of social justice, which then encourages evangelization. SCCs are called “a place of evangelization for the benefit of the bigger communities especially the individual churches... a hope for the universal church ...and proclaimers of the Gospel themselves (Healey, 2013).” This calls for a need to investigate how the church is addressing the issue of evangelization and provision of social justice and peace as per the Vatican II call within the SCCs.

In response to the above, one of the important contributions of the Second Vatican Council is the renewed understanding of the Church as “Mystical Communion.” Diego (2007) noted that, the Second Vatican Council urges Christians to live as a community. Therefore, God’s word urges them to become a community. The effect of such renewed understanding in the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council is reflected by the fact that people coming from the same neighborhood or the Christians who are living next door to each other are beginning to

meet and become active members in the parish community. The community in the neighborhood is more involved in giving, sharing, receiving, loving and being together with one another. These SCCs are now celebrated as a new way of being Church. However, in practice, they still retain much of the old institutional, hierarchical, clerical, juridical and often paternalistic way of being Church. In spite of the scholarly emphasis that SCCs are important units for the growth of the Catholic Church, in Diego's work for instance, it not clear the role SCCs have played in evangelization and subsequently the growth of the Catholic Church. This is in line with Second Vatican's call for renewed and energized approaches by the SCCs to engage in activities that relate to social change, which in turn attract membership to the Church. The study will subsequently investigate involvement of Christians in evangelization, promotion of social justice and peace in the SCCs in the Catholic Church.

Vatican II is hailed as an epoch making event that has brought more changes in life and million of the Catholic Church in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Vatican II had brought out wider and deeper changes in the church, all over the world (Peter, 1997). As the council addressed the human issues, it called for a commitment of the church (Arokiasamy, 2012). The church began to open its window towards new lends which occur in the secular world. The Vatican document, the church in the world, deals with among many other issues, the dignity of all people, ability, social justice, common good, responses and participation in human solidarity etc. The document also proclaimed that the duty of the church in the world was to work for the enhancement of human dignity and common good (Austin, 1983). However, with the changes advocated by Vatican II it is now clear how the Catholic Church is fulfilling this changes. This calls for a need to investigate how the church at the grassroot is dealing with issues such as social justice.

John Paul II has said, “It is impossible to accept that in evangelization one could or should ignore the importance of the problems so much discussed today, concerning justice, liberation, development and peace in the world” (John Paul II, 1995, *Ecclesia in Africa*, paragraph 68). Because of human dignity, people should not live in sub-human social, economic, cultural and political conditions. In her evangelizing mission, therefore, the Church should defend human dignity; strive for justice and peace, for the promotion, liberation, and integral human development of all individual human beings (John Paul II, 1995, *Ecclesia in Africa*, paragraph 69). On the strength of this assertion, it can therefore be stated that the church in her mission should be fully involved in promotion of justice and peace. This is the gap the current study addressed how the church through SCCs promotes social justice and peace.

SCCs are a global phenomenon. They are developing on every continent. Klaus (2013) contends that as concerned Christians, members of SCCs engage in analyzing social problems that they themselves face, and those faced by their neighbours. They ask: who is benefiting what, who is loosing out and why? How has the situation developed over the past five, ten, fifteen years? In multi-faith societies, socially-engaged SCCs are almost invariably open to inter-faith collaboration in efforts to lessen poverty and stem corruption, to struggle for greater social justice and work for more ecologically-enhancing economic development. The SCCs) have stood up on key justice and peace issues in Eastern Africa in different ways. O’Halloran (2010:203) reports that according to animators in the field the [small] groups in Zambia played ‘a considerable role’ in that country’s peaceful transition from one-party state to multi-party democracy. In Kenya too, during the 1993 elections, some ordinary [small] community members surprised politicians by speaking out on what they felt was for the good of the country. With

such notable commendable role played by SCCs nationally and globally, there is need to investigate how SCCs promotes justice and peace at the grass root (local communities).

The Catholic Church also emphasize on social justice from within the SCCs. Ihuoma (2014) pointed out that each person born into this world has a right to everything she/he needs but she/he is bound up with the right of that of every other creature. This right gives her/him no license to grab everything she/he can without allowing a share for others. The permanent principles of the Church's social doctrine according to Compendium (2005) constitute the very heart of Catholic social teaching. These are the principles of: the dignity of the human person, and which is the foundation of all the other principles and content of the Church's social doctrine; the common good; subsidiarity; and solidarity. These principles assist in the expression of the whole truth about human known by reason and faith. They emanate from the encounter of the Gospel message and its demands summarized in the supreme commandment of love of God and neighbour in justice with the problems emanating from the life of society. In its social doctrine the Catholic Church states the reasons for equal dignity and equal rights of the human persons traceable to the creation in the image and likeness of God. However, despite the existence of these principles of social justice, literature (Ihuoma, 2014 and Compendium, 2005) is not clear on how SCCs have contributed to social justice among their members and within the community in general.

Over the ages peace has been a fundamental quest in the history of humanity (Smith, 1965). The mandate of the church as an actor in peace building is to preach peace, love, reconciliation and repentance to humanity. Matthew 5:9 states that blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be



called children of God. The Catholic Church is increasingly engaged in peace building roles in post conflict and peace negotiations. In this regard, the Catholic Relief Services (CSR) and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) have become the vanguards of Catholic peace building activities in the World (Mac Ginty, 2011). Emphasis has also been given to the value of encouraging peace and reconciliation at community level mainly because conflicts necessitate peace building more than ever before in the history of humanity. Blackman (2003) stated that peace-building within our communities looks at key issues that should be considered when encouraging peace and reconciliation. This is because conflict is normal within the community and it happens when two or more people or groups have, or think they have, incompatible goals. However, irrespective of the necessity shown on the need for peace building within the communities, it is not clear which modalities the SCCs are applied in promoting peace and solving conflicts within the community.

Much of scholarly attention on SCCs and peace building has been given to wider conflicts that affect the community or the nation. Healey (2009) for instance argues that there has been a gradual shift of SCCs in Eastern Africa from being small prayer groups that are inwardly focused to active small faith communities that are outwardly focused on justice and peace issues. Though it is important from SCCs to focus in wider peace building and conflict resolution for the benefit of all, peace within their immediate environment is important. Scholarly work, for instance Healey's, do not give much attention to this form of peace. This study interrogates how the SCCs members resolve conflicts and build peace within their cells and their immediate communities.

One recent development is SCCs members in Eastern Africa being more involved in civic education and political processes like awareness of political issues before and during elections (Healey, 2016). For example, in Kenya a significant turning point was the post-election crisis in Kenya in January-February, 2008. Using the "See," "Judge" and "Act" process during the Kenya Lenten Campaign 2008 SCCs members dramatically discovered how much tribalism and negative ethnicity existed in their SCCs on the local level. This led to concrete actions such as: one-on-one sessions in which one person would share a traumatic/painful/ difficult experience (most frequently a personal experience) that took place after the 27 December, 2007 Kenyan elections. It was usually connected to the violence and ethnic tensions and raised questions such as "What did you feel?" "Try to get in touch with your feelings." The other person would listen very carefully ("be a good listener") without making comments or judgments. Then the roles were reversed. Therapeutic group counseling sessions during SCC meetings. SCC mediation teams comprised of members from different ethnic groups visiting the small communities in their neighborhood. Various reconciliation and healing services and rites on the SCCs, outstation and parish levels. Long-range action steps included subsequent Lenten Campaigns devoted to SCCs' involvement in peaceful, free and fair elections. Kilonzo (2008) noted that there is diverse nature of Christianity in Vihiga County which has resulted into individualism within religion dividing people along ethnic/clan and family lines. This consequently affects both mainstream churches such as the Catholic Church, New Religious Movements (NeReMos) and Africa Independent Churches (AICs). Therefore, this calls for a need to investigate how SCCs in the Catholic Church are addressing such issues based on their recent development as outlined by Healey (2016). The current study hence, examined conflict resolution methods used by members of SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County in promotion of peace within the grassroots.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Small Christian Communities were adapted by the Catholic Church as a pastoral priority by Bishops in East Africa. The mission of SCCs is to bring the church closer to the faithful. Members see themselves as a real community where the survival of the whole depends on the strength of its individuals. This expression of SCCs follows the injunction of Vatican II which views the church as the people of God and therefore urges them to become a community in the neighbourhood. SCCs in doing so have become an avenue where members share, give, receive and love one another. From the changes called for by Vatican II, the SCCs are becoming more involved in church life. The active participation in the church mission has however not indicated a substantial transformation on the Catholic Church. Majority of the Christians are not strongly inclined towards evangelization which is the main mission of the church as commanded in Mathew 28:19-20. This call is not an exception to the Catholic Church in Vihiga County. Given the fact that Vihiga County is one of the religiously diverse Counties as studies have shown, it is important to investigate how Christians evangelize through the SCCs in the Catholic Church and how this evangelization encourages promotion of social justice and peace. Moreover, as literature has shown, the Catholic Church activities are primarily directed towards the instructional pastoral care of its own members. Therefore, there is little response towards issues of social justice which is imperative for human development. Subsequently, there is need for a study on how SCCs as the Catholic Church at the grassroots promotes social justice. Finally, literature postulates the church as a peacemaker, an institution that is increasingly engaged in peace building roles in post conflict regions, nationally and globally. The realization however should be that peacebuilding begins from the community's grassroots yet these lower level conflicts within the church and family have been given little attention. Without a proper

mechanism to address these conflicts, the work and growth of the Church, right from the SCCs, is affected. This calls for a need to examine how Christians are involved in promotion of peace through the SCCs within the Catholic Church. It is against this background that the researcher prompted to conduct a research on SCCs and evangelization in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following questions;

- i. How do Christians involve in evangelization through the SCCs in Catholic Church in Vihiga County?
- ii. How are Christians involved in promotion of social justice through the SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County?
- iii. How are Christians involved in promotion of peace through the SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County?

### **1.4 Research Objective**

The overall objective of the study is to investigate SCCs and evangelization that embraces social justice and peace in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County. Specifically it will aim at the following objectives.

- i. Describe involvement of Christians in evangelization through the SCCs in Catholic Church in Vihiga County.
- ii. Evaluate the involvement of Christians in promotion of social justice through the SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County.
- iii. Examine the involvement of Christians in promotion of peace through the SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The study findings will be significant in providing more and current information on the SCCs involvement in evangelization that encourages promotion of social justice and peace in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County, Kenya. Specifically it is hoped it will provide a deeper understanding of evangelization within SCCs, as a church at the grassroots. Secondly, it will help the catholic faithful to get a better understanding of how they should be involved in social justice and finally how they should be fully involved in promotion of peace as peace maker in the SCCs.

The study will provide literature, which will benefit various scholars of religion in general, and Catholic Church in particular. The wider Catholic Church community will have a good scope of knowledge that will enhance their understanding of SCCs and their significance in regards to evangelization; promotion of social justice; and, peace. It is also hoped that generally, the study will add new knowledge to both social and spiritual affairs of the community at large.

### **1.6 Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

The specific focus of the study was to investigate SCCs' involvement in evangelization which encourages promotion of social justice and peace in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County. Study was carried in all the Catholic Churches in Vihiga County. There are five parishes that have a total of thirty sub-parishes in Vihiga County. These parishes included: Erusui, Chamakanga, Buyangu, Hambale and Luanda. The study was limited to the use of observation guide, in-depth oral interview schedule and questionnaires guide as means of generating data. This was based on the objectives of the study. Any other areas of development within the Catholic Church were not a concern of the present research.

## **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

The researcher encountered language barrier in some areas within the County especially in the rural areas where some elderly respondents were interviewed. A translator was sought to translate. In addition the researcher used the research assistants trained for the purpose of this study to explain and elaborate some key issues in the study using the local dialects and translate in English.

## **1.8 Theoretical framework**

The study was based on functionalism theory propounded by Emile Durkheim (1858-1917). Other later scholars who have furthered the use of this theory include Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942), Talcott Parson (1967), and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955). According to Abraham (1982) one of the premises of this theory stipulation is that every element of a system has a function that contributes positively to the continued operation of that system or negatively to its disintegration and change. The central focus of functionalism is analysis of such contributions, which are called eufunctions (positive), dysfunction (negative) or 'survival' that is an element that makes no contribution at all or has outlived its purpose.

Functionalism, to Abraham therefore, seeks the contribution of religion in human society based on its central characteristics, namely, its transcendence of everyday experience in the natural environment; uncertain nature of human conditions; and, their limited aptitude and conditions. Durkheim's functionalism therefore shows that to get to macro levels there is need for smaller internal mechanisms that contribute to the greater whole. By inferring functionalism, this thesis is based on the premise that SCCs, organs that are at the Church's micro level, are necessary

components for encouraging evangelization, social justice and peaceful co-existence within communities.

In addition, Abraham (1982) pointed out that functionalism seeks the contribution of religion to human societies based upon its central characteristics, namely, its transcendence of everyday experience in the natural environment. Humans live in conditions of uncertainty, and their aptitude to control and affect the conditions of their lives is limited. Due to limited resources, religion assists individuals to adjust to these three core human problems: contingency, powerlessness and scarcity. Therefore, it can be argued that functionalism theory seeks to explain social elements in terms of their functions and consequences in a society.

In relation to religion and society, Samirah (2011) noted that Emile Durkheim had pointed out that religious societies held together because their dissimilar parts made unique contributions toward collective life. In emphasizing the function of religion as community of believers, and benefits to collective life, Durkheim conceived societal or macro level realities that were not reducible to the wants or impulses of individuals or even groups. He was concerned with the question of how certain religions maintain internal stability and survive over time. He proposed that such religions tend to be segmented, with equivalent parts held together by shared values, common symbols or systems of exchanges. In modern societies, members of various religions perform very different tasks resulting in a strong interdependence churches. He used a metaphor of an organism in which many parts function together to sustain the whole based on specialization and interdependence that are strong among members This idea was borrowed to show how SCCs participates in evangelization in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County. It was

used to explore the various methods used in evangelizations within the SCCs to enable stability of the Catholic Church in Vihiga County.

Central to his work, Durkheim emphasized that societies are held together by means of a collective conscience, that is, powerful beliefs and sentiments that are shared in common by members of the society, and that exert a strong influence on individuals behavior (Goring ,1992). In his view, the function of religion is the creation and maintenance of social solidarity. The study therefore adopted functionalism approach to evaluate SCCs involvement in promotion of social justice in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County.

Religion plays a major role in influencing and reinforcing societal integration in legitimating society's values and norms by providing divine sanctions for behavior that society defines as normative and by periodically bringing people together for ritual activities that strengthen their feeling of unity (Johnstone, 1992). Functionalism theory was used to show SCCs are involved in promotion of peace as a way of bringing people together through reconciliation after conflict in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County.

Through functionalism theory, the study assessed how SCCs functions within the Catholic Church and their contributions towards the church growth and individual spiritual growth. The theory helps explain how individuals depend on SCCs to meets their social, economic and spiritual needs and also how the local church, the sub parish, parish and the deanery going upward the hierarchy depends on SCCs activities.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

The review of literature for the study is organized according to the objectives of the study. Various scholarly literatures were reviewed in line with their relevance to this study.

#### 2.2 Small Christian Communities and their involvement in Evangelization in the Catholic Church

As a social institution (Thoai ,2013) noted that in certain place and time the evangelizing mission of the Church is inevitably conditioned and challenged by many peripheral factors, which every so often play a decisive role in changing the mission's direction, its concepts and approaches. If until the beginning of the twentieth century the missionary activity of the Church was understood mainly "for the salvation of the souls," after the Second Vatican Council the personal encounter with the good news of Christ and the participation in his paschal mystery for the salvation of the unified body-soul have been emphasized. Thoia work reveals the challenges the church had before the Vatican II in fulfilling its mission. The current study investigated how evangelization is carried out in the Catholic Church through SCCs in line with the emphases laid down by the Second Vatican Council.

For effective pastoral work, the Catholic Church introduced a system of *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo*- Small Christian Communities (SCCs) — and the involvement of lay people in Church activities became significant. The movement to form SCCs or basic ecclesial communities is a worldwide phenomenon among the Catholic faithful. The SCCs have been formed in various places for many reasons including: a shortage of priests, a desire for

communal liturgy, a desire for cooperation and fellowship, a desire for re-interpretation of the gospel in an existing situation, a desire to come together around a common issue, among many other reasons (Healey, 2007, 2009). Today Catholics are being divided into SCCs made up of small units or families that live within certain neighbourhoods. From these SCCs, leaders are selected to represent the faithful in sub-parishes, parishes, the diocese, and in the National Lay Council (NLC), Kamwendo (2012). Kamwendo's work, though important in explaining the role of SCCs in general, and does not show how, SCCs carry out evangelization in the Catholic Church, and how they are understood by the people at the grassroots level. The current study has examined these two gaps in the context of the Catholic Church in Vihiga County.

A major step in the development of SCC was the First African Synod of bishops which took place in Rome in 1994 on the theme "The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission towards the Year 2000." It approved the creation of SCCs in the parishes so that by the year 2000 they will have a new model of being a community of communities. From the very outset of the synod, participants recognized that "the Church as Family cannot reach her full potential as Church unless she is divided into communities small enough to foster close human relationships." (*Ecclesia in Africa*, No. 89). The characteristics of such Christian communities are described as follows: Primarily they should be places engaged in evangelizing themselves, so that subsequently they can bring the Good News to others; they should moreover be communities which pray and listen to God's Word, encourage the members themselves to take on responsibility, learn to live an ecclesial life, and reflect on different human problems in the light of the Gospel. Above all, these communities are to be committed to living Christ's love for everybody, a love which transcends the limits of the natural solidarity of clans, tribes or other

interest groups (*Ecclesia in Africa, No. 89*). The findings above states that the First Africa Synod SCCs have a role in evangelization however it is not stated how this ought to be achieved. This was the concern for this study.

Similarly, Nkwarir (2015), whose work focused on the role of SCCs in economic development in Cameroon, is keen to list the mandate of SCCs which include, giving the laity the room to play their role and take on responsibility in the Church. Nkwarir says that evangelization is important within SCCs. The SCCs members are therefore involved in the various aspects of evangelization, not leaving everything in the hands of the priest as was the case before. Nkwarir however does not deeply delve into the approaches of evangelization, and does not carry out community specific study within the Catholic Church to show how these approaches have been appropriated through SCCs. This study will focus on Catechism, use of the Bible, and others, to show how evangelism is being carried out by the SCCs within the Catholic Church in Vihiga County.

In describing SCC Healey (2016) states that, it is the church in the neighborhood where Christians share the same local situation with other neighbors not only during weekly meetings but on a day-to-day basis. Within SCCs there is caring, sharing, faith-reflecting, praying and serving community in which ongoing Christian formation and pastoral outreach takes place. The community gathers in the available homes of its members to discuss their lives in the light of the gospel and share their Christian faith through prayer and service to others. They engage in evangelizing so that subsequently they can bring the Good News to others. Healey gives a description of the composition of SCCs. He also stated that they engage in evangelization but doesn't state how they evangelize. This was the gap the study addressed.

The primary mission of the laity is the mission of the trinity as stated by Healey (2016). Moved by love, God the Father sends the Son – and the Holy Spirit – into the world. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (*John* 3:16). Recall Jesus Christ's words to the Apostles after his resurrection: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me (*John* 20:21). Jesus continues to send SCC members today in the continuation of the Trinitarian mission. He sends all of them to "go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation" (*Mark* 16:15) and says: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (*Acts* 1:8). SCC members follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ the first missionary who said, "I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other towns also, because for this purpose I was/have been sent" (*Luke* 4:43). Healey pointed out the mission of the laity who are the members of SCCs in evangelization but does not show how they fulfill this mission of trinity. The current study examined how SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County evangelize as a way of reflecting on the Good News.

A means of evangelization that must not be neglected is that of catechetical instruction. Pope Paul V (1975) noted that the intelligence, especially that of children and young people, needs to learn through systematic religious instruction the fundamental teachings, the living content of the truth which God has wished to convey to us and which the Church has sought to express in an ever richer fashion during the course of her long history. No one will deny that this instruction must be given to form patterns of Christian living and not to remain only notional. Truly the effort for evangelization will profit greatly- at the level of catechetical instruction given at church, in the schools, where this is possible, and in every case in Christian homes- if those giving catechetical instruction have suitable texts, updated with wisdom and competence, under

the authority of the bishops. The methods must be adapted to the age, culture and aptitude of the persons concerned, they must seek always to fix in the memory, intelligence and heart the essential truths that must impregnate all of life. It is necessary above all to prepare good instructors- parochial catechists, teachers, parents- who are desirous of perfecting themselves in this superior art, which is indispensable and requires religious instruction. Moreover, without neglecting in any way the training of children, one sees that present conditions render ever more urgent catechetical instruction, under the form of the Catechumenate, for innumerable young people and adults who, touched by grace, discover little by little the face of Christ and feel the need of giving themselves to Him. Pope Paul's teachings and directions are however not directly linked to the work of SCCs, yet these communities are vital in evangelization. The current study examined how the SCCs use catechetical instructions in evangelization.

According to Barreiro (1982), SCCs can be said to be places of focal points and vehicles for evangelization. The members of the SCCs are both hearers of the gospel and privileged beneficiaries of evangelization, as well as proclaimers of the gospel themselves and they do this both in words and in actions. In and through them, the poor hear the good news. Many Catholics today, through the SCCs have developed a new love for scripture and as such, they give witness to the truth of these words. DeSiano (1993) noted that SCCs now explicitly discover the Word of God in the *Bible* as a source of nourishment for their religious life. The Word of God in scripture always serves as a source of inspiration and stimulation for their lives and actions. Barreiro and DeSiano's studies, though key in discussing the general importance of the Bible within SCCs are not particular to how these small Church units use the Bible to guide them in evangelization. The current study examined how the Bible is used in evangelization as a reference source for religious life in the SCCs.

The SCCs are organized in such a way that the prayer meetings take place in the homes of the members of SCCs in a rotational manner. They meet weekly for common prayers, reflection and mutual action following the Lumko Steps of Reflection on the Word of God and other methods. This is putting prayer at the center of every activity in the SCCs and initiating children, youth and adults into an appreciation of the different models of praying. It is through prayer that God speaks to us in an intimate way. Members are encouraged to use events of their lives as occasions for prayer so that prayer is linked to what is happening in their lives (Pikiti, 2015). Pikiti's work only states how SCCs members meet and follow Lumko Steps of reflecting the word of God. It doesn't outline these steps and how they apply in evangelization. This is what the current study addressed under seven steps of biblical sharing in the SCCs.

Kurgat (2004) avers that SCCs have been used as an agent of inculturation. The whole purpose of inculturation is to make evangelization the influence of the Good News more effective in human development. For effective implementation of inculturation, the task should be taken as a community project where the Christian community shall be fully involved both formally and informally. Christians should be involved in the search for the most effective ways of achieving the goal. Kurgat's work was on general application of inculturation. The centre of focus was not on evangelization. This study investigated how inculturation is used as a means of evangelization in the SCCs.

African values have been constantly rehearsed in the abundance of rituals in various stages of human life, from childhood to adulthood (Assenga, 2009). These rituals accompany an individual in all stages of life a commitments such as in the age-set systems, marriage and the

rites of passage to the ancestral world (funeral and associated rituals). Christian rituals, as practiced particularly in the sacraments of the Church, are highly appreciated in the areas where these traditional rituals are in abundance. This is seen particularly among the Chagga of Kilimanjaro (Tanzania) where Christian rituals, namely: frequent celebration of the Eucharist, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Christian funeral rites and prayers for the dead (during Mass among other rituals) have led to a vibrant Christian faith. Culture can therefore give an opportunity for evangelization if approached carefully. In any case, it has to be first evangelized so that the values found in it can be purified and Christianized. Assenga's work was particular to the Chagga of Tanzania. The current study shows how culture among the inhabitants of Vihiga has been incorporated in evangelization in the SCCs.

Laity are one of the agents of evangelization (Diego, 2007). Healey (2016), added that SCCs are one of the most successful pastoral approaches in terms of the laity's involvement in evangelization: The laity evangelizing the laity and sharing their lives in the spirit of charity with the Word of God at the centre of their activity. In the SCCs, lay people serve lay people in different matters, not depending on the priest's presence. They prepare people for baptism, first communion, confirmation and matrimony. They visit the sick, bury the dead, and comfort each other. However, appropriate material and training is needed. But the actual preparation is done more slowly and carefully within the community itself. Thus, the poor have assumed the Gospel and are preaching it with simple eloquence, and sometimes at a very high price (Azevedo, 1987). Diego, Healey and Azevedo state laity are involved in evangelization through charity activities through appropriate material and training. However, the present study examined charity activities carried out by SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County and their contributions to evangelization.

According to Kamwendo (2012), the merger between faith and life brings about a practical approach to theologizing. Evangelization that arises out of SCCs is practical in its origin, its intention, its methods and its goals. These groups reflect on the Gospels, the sources at hand, to learn how to live and act and what they might hope for. From the outset they take a practical approach. It ordinarily does not occur to them to discuss who Jesus is, or what his nature is ; they look at what Jesus does, and listen to what he says, empathize with those he heals or encourages or scolds. They try to understand what his message is, what wisdom he teaches, what salvation he envisages. Therefore it leads to promotion of fellowship. Kamwendo's findings were on fellowship formation as a practical approach in evangelization. However, the current study shows how through the SCCs practical approach in theologizing is achieved through charity activities geared towards evangelization in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County.

### **2.3. Small Christian Communities Involvement in Promotion of Social Justice in the Catholic Church**

Institute for Catholic Education (2013) notes that the foundation of social justice is the principle of the dignity of the human person. Social justice has to do with changing the way the world is organized so as to make a level playing field for everyone. In simple terms this means that social justice is about trying to organize the economic, political and social structure of the world in such a way so that it values equally each individual and more properly values the environment. Accomplishing this will take more than private charity. Present injustices exist not so much because simple individuals are acting in bad faith or lacking in charity but because huge, impersonal systems (that seem beyond the control of the individuals acting within them) disprivilege some even as they unduly privilege others" (Rolheiser, 1999). This may have been



attributed to the lack of knowledge of what social justice is. The above scholars give a scholarly understanding of social justice while the current study examined the Christians understanding of social justice at SCCs level.

In the course of history and with the light of the Spirit as pointed out by Compendium (2005), the Catholic Church has wisely reflected within her own tradition of faith and has been able to provide an ever more accurate foundation and shape to the principles of human dignity, the common good, solidarity and subsidiarity, progressively explaining them in the attempt to respond coherently to the demands of the times and to the continuous developments of social life. It is however not clear from the compendium how these attributes are applicable within the SCCs in a bid to enhance social justice. The current study analyzed the Catholic Church teachings on the above principles as applied in the SCCs in promotion of justice.

The members of SCCs as noted by Diego(2007) address the problems of alcoholism, drug abuse, family conflicts and other social problems, such as child abuse and neglect, health and HIV/AIDS, corruption and injustice, environmental degradation, unemployment, ignorance and poverty. They take various initiatives to tackle some of these challenges by acting as community health workers, HIV/AIDS counselors (behavioral process leaders), community based counselors, and street children rehabilitators. Within the SCCs there are organizations such as a widows group, care group (praying and being in solidarity with the dying), holy family group, youth group, scouts, flower/dancing girls' group, altar servers, fish youth group, justice and peace group, catechists and liturgical leaders' group. Diego's findings reveal challenges faced by Lugbara people in Uganda in their quest for social justice. However, the current study examined

how Christians in the SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga addresses various social challenges within the county.

According to Lloyd (2013) our God-given dignity as human persons with human rights comes from having been created by God and being capable of knowing, loving and glorifying God, unlike all other earthly creatures. Christians are all children of the one God. They are brothers and sisters to each other. Their respect for each person's human dignity is the basic principle of Catholic Social Teaching. Their human rights flow from their dignity as human persons. The right to life from conception to natural death is the basic human right, the condition for the exercise of all other human rights, such as the rights of the child to live in a united family and a moral environment, the right to food, clean water, clothing and shelter, as well as health care, education and truth, the right to work, the right to marry and have a family, free speech, the right to participate in society and government, and religious freedom. Literature, including Lloyd's work, is not specific to how SCCs exercise these facets. The current study examined how human dignity is exercised in the SCCs.

Because of people's primacy and their human dignity as children of God and as brothers and sisters in one family, they must be respected in the building and developing of a more humane society (Tien, 2006). Their primacy also requires integral human development incorporating the material, mental and spiritual needs of people. The lack of this total development renders human development handicapped or incomplete. The devaluation of human dignity is damaging society and people. Society will be impoverished or people will be humiliated because the disrespect of human dignity often makes rulers or people in power exercise authority arbitrarily. People will become merely cogs in the wheel of production instead of being the goal of development. These

distortions will not contribute to human development, but will lead to the alienation of people and society. Tien's findings are on the importance of human dignity towards development of human and how lack of it affects the society. The ongoing study findings examined how human dignity is upheld in fight for injustice against the marginalized in the society.

Marandu (2013) indicates that, the desire and initiative of the African for community living and communal discernment has endured the challenges of the times and has remained a gift to the African society. Marandu's study was not specific to application of this desire and initiative to SCCs and their immediate families and communities. Today, the Church in Africa as family of God is constituted of SCCs in which there are youth groups, and different women and men associations. This study explored the work SCCs in ensuring communal sharing in prayer, retreats, seminars, and both spiritual and material sharing, while searching for solutions to the problems and challenges of everyday life. Such gatherings and sharing promotes the spirit of common good whereby each individual is responsible for the wellbeing of the community. The study explored how SCCs apply the principle of common good through working together and sharing in promotion of justice in the church and the society.

In ensuring common good is achieved in the SCCs. Diego(2007) contends that members of SCCs in Lugbara tackle many issues of injustice within the immediate vicinity. For example, some of the members can approach the local government officials and seek explanations on issues such as lack of water in the neighborhood. Others may provide legal advice and guidance to parishioners who face various acts of injustice and are unable to afford legal representation. One can find in these SCCs legal experts, lawyers, magistrates, and ordinary citizens who lack

basic education, that is, they cannot read or write, due to no opportunity in their younger years. Diego's findings show how SCCs in Lugbara addresses the issue of injustices in the community through local government and legal advice. However, the current study examined how Christians within the SCCs solve injustices through material, spiritual support and through various special institutions within the five parishes that caters for special groups of individuals in the community such as orphans, physically challenged among others.

God created human being as social beings that exist best in relationships with others. Lloyd (2013) states that, the first community a person encounters is family. This is the fundamental building block that sets the stage for future relationships. Society is interdependent in that each individual is responsible for the other's wellbeing—physical, psychological, and spiritual. Human beings establish many relationships in a lifetime in areas such as school, extracurricular activities, clubs, organizations, work places and church. Each individual has the responsibility to contribute positively to their relationships and society always striving for the good of humanity. The common good is achieved when those who are marginalized (such as the poor, immigrants, those facing physical and mental challenges, and the homeless) have a place at society's table, sharing in its wealth and goodness. Lloyd's work did not centre on the role of SCCs in establishing and practicing the common good. The current study reveals how common good as a principal of social justice is achieved through interdependence in the SCCs.

The principle of subsidiarity protects people from abuses by higher-level social authority and calls on these same authorities to help individuals and intermediate groups to fulfill their duties. This principle is imperative because every person, family and intermediate group has something

original to offer to the community” (Compendium, 2005:187). The practical application of this principle is participation. Each person is encouraged to fully participate in the cultural, economic, political and social life of their society, both as an individual and in association with others. “Participation is a duty to be fulfilled consciously by all, with responsibility, and with a view to the common good” (Compendium, 2005:189). Compendium explains what subsidiarity is all about but does not explain how it is applied in promotion of social justice. The current study analyzed how SCCs participates in, social life of the society in promotion of justice.

Feely (1994) states that, certain societies, such as the family and the state, correspond more directly to the nature of man; they are necessary to him. To promote the participation of the greatest number in the life of a society, the creation of voluntary associations and institutions must be encouraged “on both national and international levels, which relate to economic and social goals, to cultural and recreational activities, to sport, to various professions, and to political affairs. This socialization also expresses the natural tendency for human beings to associate with one another for the sake of attaining objectives that exceed individual capacities. It develops the qualities of the person, especially the sense of initiative and responsibility, and helps guarantee his rights. Feely’s findings on participation are too general and also he talked of the importance of such participation to an individual. However, the current study analyzed how SCCs enhances participation in promotion of justice.

The church follows the triune model of solidarity with humankind, in creation (Gen 1:26-27) and in history (Tien, 2006). Here it follows Jesus who describes his mission as life-giving and as a salvific solidarity with all people in order to build the reign of God (John 10:10, Mt 5:3-10). God

created all creatures to live in interdependence and harmony. However, this harmony was broken by Adam and Eve. Jesus came to reconcile people with God and with one another. Jesus in his teaching and life showed his solidarity with people by protesting against injustice in religious and social institutions. He left his mission to the church. This mission includes active engagement to promote human dignity and to achieve just societies. Tiens's findings addresses the origin of solidarity right from creation and how the harmony was destabilized due to human weakness and restored back through Jesus Christ and His teachings. The present study examined how the Catholic Church through SCCs has been able to achieve solidarity as part of its mission.

The Jewish and Roman religious and civil structures during Jesus time were highly hierarchical and stratified. However, in that context, Jesus proclaimed a new social order where people could commune across class, gender and descent barriers, with equal dignity (Crossan, 1995). All people were valuable and no one was expendable. Jesus had preferences for those of lower classes or the marginalized because they were often more open to, or more receptive of God's will. In this sense, his mission was social, even if he combined the social and spiritual mission into action. Crossan's work shows how people relate for harmonious existence and to promote justice. The present study analyzed how SCCs members work together for the common good in promotion of justice irrespective of their different social backgrounds.

#### **2.4 Small Christian Communities involvement in Promotion of Peace in the Catholic Church**

Peace is promoted when there is conflict among people. Magondu (2012) states that, conflict arises from differences which if not properly handled will produce sharp disagreement and

sometimes violent clashes. It occurs whenever people disagree over their values, motivations, perceptions, ideas, or desires. Sometimes these differences look trivial, but when a conflict triggers strong feelings, a deep personal and relational need is at the core of the problem—a need to feel safe and secure, a need to feel respected and valued, or a need for greater closeness and intimacy. Conflict also occurs when you have disagreement, dispute or controversy in ideas or viewpoints mostly held by two or more individuals/groups. Magondu works explains how conflicts arise among people in the society in general. The current study examined causes of conflict in the SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County.

In attempting to resolve conflicts, Mwagiru (2000) notes that the conflict manager needs to understand origins, patterns and possible outcomes of the conflict. The conflict manager therefore must identify the issues in the conflict by asking the actors involved why they are engaged in the conflict. This will enable the conflict manager find the best solutions. Since no conflict is ever about a single issue, the conflict manager should employ practical means of conflict management for example the process called fractionating the issues. In this process, the conflict manager classifies the different issues into two groups, simple or complex, and therefore gives form and structure to the process. Fisher (1964) notes that separating or ‘fractionating’ the large issues involved into smaller workable ones can often increase the likelihood of reaching a satisfactory solution to a conflict. Mwagiru concurs that fractionating the issues is an important tool for practical conflict management. When engaged in a process such as negotiation for example, it helps to encourage the parties to deal with the more straightforward (simple) issues before moving to the more complex ones. Mwagiru and Fisher describe what need or ought to be

done before resolving any conflict. This is contrary to the current study which aimed at examining conflict resolutions strategies in various SCCs in the Catholic Church.

Traditionally as observed by Marandu (2013), the African society managed to maintain peace and harmony in the society by using their own community-based methods of conflict resolution. In the event of two conflicting communities, elders from both sides gathered and proposed ways for peaceful conflict resolution. One speaker put proposals forward after another and the rest kept silent and listened carefully. One elder would lead a prayer invoking the name of God for guidance and light, and finally they would conclude by voting to know which norm of action should be observed. The procedure followed what today can be termed as interplay between the dynamics of grace and ‘locally inherited wisdom’. Indeed, the Second Vatican Council was right in affirming the ‘secret presence of God’ in all customs and cultures leading them to perfection in Christ. Marandu’s findings explain how elders in the African communities resolved conflicts in the community. The findings are general as they are based on African communities. This differs with the present study which specifically examined how community –based approach is applied in conflict resolution among Christians in the SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County.

The ability to skillfully mediate conflicts comes easier to some people than others as noted by (Korir, 2009). However, to fully master it requires training, experience and mentoring from other peace builders. When in a high stakes situation, a small mistake, such as a poorly chosen word, can have many negative repercussions. Moreover, if the mediator does not know how best to channel people’s anger and frustration, dialogues can often become stuck in a rut, unable to



move forward. Mediators should be focused people, to prevent the process from being hijacked and run off track. They must also be diplomatic, thoughtful and tactful to avoid causing unnecessary offense. Korir explains how a mediator's should carry out his/her role in conflict resolution. This differs with the current study examined how SCCs manages conflicts through use of mediators among the members and the church community at large.

The Church's charisma and likewise her unique nature vis-à-vis reconciliation, at whatever level. It needs to be achieved, lies in the fact that she always goes back to that reconciliation at the source. For by reason of her essential mission, the Church feels an obligation to go to the roots of the conflict, in order to bring healing and to re-establish, so to speak, an equally original reconciliation which will be the effective principle of all true reconciliation. Therefore, the Church has the mission of proclaiming this reconciliation (Kelman, 2008). In the context of the change now taking place on the continent, the church has a role to play in reducing or eliminating all together the root causes of simmering or open conflicts and effecting true peace. One way of effecting true peace is by becoming agents of peace building and reconciliation (Scheper, 2002). Kelman's and Scheper's work shows the role of the church in reconciliation as part of its mission. They don't explain how the church fulfils this mission. This was the concern for the current study which examined how reconciliation is done in the SCCs.

SCCs are places to live Christ's gift of reconciliation and peace (Klaus, 2013). SCC members exchange a sign of Christ's peace with each other and with others in the spirit of solidarity, unity and commitment/responsibility to each other. Together with the parish, the SCCs and the movements and associations can be helpful places for accepting and living the gift of

reconciliation offered by Christ our peace. Each member of the community must become a 'guardian and host' to the other: this is the meaning of the sign of peace in the celebration of the Eucharist. SCC members are agents of reconciliation in their own faith communities on the local, grassroots level, in their natural, human communities and in the wider society. Klaus's findings explain the roles of SCCs in reconciliation as an agent of peace. However, the current study describes how reconciliation is achieved in the SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County.

Reconciliation after conflicts informs structural actions to identify and support structures which would tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse in conflict (Boutros –Ghali 1992). He further notes that reconciliation implies building structures for peace in all phases of a conflict, not merely after the violent phase has been replaced by a fragile peace. Structures that contribute to strengthening and solidifying peace can be institutions that offer forms for peaceful conflict resolution or that prevent violence, such as church institutions. In support of Boutros – Ghali, Blackman (2003) noted that following conflict, there are often very clear structural needs that can be addressed, such as rebuilding infrastructure and helping to restore livelihoods. However, for peace to be sustainable, it is also necessary to look at what started the conflict in the first place. It is important to stand back and analyse the conflict so that appropriate, sustainable strategies can be identified. Boutros –Ghali and Blackman states in general about reconciliation structures that need to be put in place to resolve conflict. This study examined the structures of reconciliation within the SCCs in the Catholic Church such as Catholic Justice and Peace Commission.

According to Magesa (1996), there are four core values that promote healing in a conflict situation from a religious worldview. The first value he notes is the fact that all human beings have “human dignity” or rather all human beings are created in the image of God. Second, human beings live in God’s world. Therefore as creatures, they need to accommodate one another. Third, religion or rather churches should help humanity to cross the boundary of negative ethnicity that characterizes our society. Churches should thus emphasize commonality of Kenyans particularly the essential characteristic of humanity, shunning the accidental characteristics such as political party affiliation, negative ethnicity and the geographical divides. Fourth, churches should preach the Gospel. Kobia (2005) contended that there is need to emphasize that justice is required for human prosperity and peace. Therefore, church leaders, as shepherds who tend congregations comprising diverse political, socio-economic, cultural and ethno-linguistic backgrounds need to be impartial on various standpoints as heads of churches. This will limit divisions within congregations, hence harmony and unity. Magesa and Kobia explains how healing after conflict should be done through the church leaders and the church itself. The current study examined how various reconciliation strategies have been employed in SCCs in cases of conflicts among members for a lasting relationship and peaceful community.

Much of scholarly attention on SCCs and peace building has been given to wider conflicts that affect the community or the nation. Healey (2009) for instance argues that there has been a gradual shift of SCCs in Eastern Africa from being small prayer groups that are inwardly focused to active small faith communities that are outwardly focused on justice and peace issues. Though it is important from SCCs to focus in wider peace building and conflict resolution for the benefit of all, peace within their immediate environment is important. Scholarly work, for instance

Healey's, do not give much attention to this form of peace. This study interrogates how the SCCs members resolve conflicts and build peace within their cells and their immediate communities.

Klopp, Githinji and Karuoya (2010) argue that the growing literature on peacebuilding and internal displacement emphasizes a number of specific interconnections. First, without successful local peacebuilding, resettlement and reintegration of the displaced to former homes becomes a potentially dangerous and hence less attractive option. In some cases, return can produce more violence. In Kenya, as elsewhere, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have been killed or maimed when they have attempted to return to former homes in areas without adequate peace and order. Persistent insecurity linked to mobilized youth, local impunity, and the failure of the police and legal system makes resettlement and reintegration of the displaced dangerous. This is an indication of lack of cohesiveness and peaceful co-existence among people living within same communities even when they share similar institutions like schools and churches. There have been progresses for churches in addressing this. For instance, Healey (2009) noted that the major change in Kenya since the post-election violence in January 2008 is the increasing use of a Pastoral Theological Reflection Process (PTRP) such as the Pastoral Circle in the SCCs to reflect on a deeper level. This process uses the well-known "See, Judge and Act" methodology starting from concrete experience. Now more and more SCCs in Africa are using various reflection processes and methodologies to reflect pastorally and theologically on their experiences, often using the tools of social analysis. This includes both identifying the new signs of the times and creatively responding to them. This shows SCCs can be used as agents of peace and reconciliation in any country. More information is needed on how PTRP are used in the Catholic Church today in promotion of peace and reconciliation among SCCs family and community

members. Though the present study is not intended to resolve conflicts at national level, what emerges from the existing literature is the fact that if there is no peaceful co-existence at the local level, then an all-encompassing peace that transforms communities to contribute the national and international peace will be elusive. This study will only examine how communities' grassroots peace building through SCCs has been realized.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This section describes how data was gathered from the library and the field. It also explains the study design and the study area. It further describes the study population, the sampling procedures as well as the data collection instruments. The procedure of analysis for the data that was collected is also explained.

#### **3.2 Study Design**

The research adopted descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey design involves asking a large group of respondents' questions about issue(s) (Mugenda, 1999). According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), the major purpose of descriptive research is description of the state of affairs as it exists. Kothari (2004) argues that, descriptive research studies are those studies which are concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual or group. The research design was used to assess how evangelization is carried out within the SCCs. From the various activities, key facts in evangelization were noted.

In addition, Kerlinger (1969) points out that descriptive studies are not only restricted to fact findings, but may often result in the formulation of important principles of knowledge and solution to significant problems. In this study, the researcher analyzed how Christians in the SCCs are involved in promoting social justice in the Catholic Church. This was done by describing various activities within the SCCs aimed at promotion of human rights guided by four principles of social justice namely: Human dignity, common good, solidarity and subsidiarity.

Finally, Nkpa (1997) points out that descriptive survey involves depicting a situation as it exists in details. It entails an investigation of issues of issues as they affect an activity. The researcher examined various ways which SCCs promote peace. This was done after investigating the causes of conflicts among SCCs and the methods applied in conflict resolution and reconciliation. The research design was adopted to examine how SCCs are involved in promotion of peace through application of conflict resolutions strategies.

### **3.3 Study Area**

The Catholic Church is among the major denominations within the county. Kilonzo (2008) noted that Vihiga County is one of the counties with the highest number of diverse Christian denominations and movements in Kenya. Catholic Church came later after other churches. It is because of this that the county was purposively chosen for this research to show how the Catholic Church is using SCCs to fulfill its mission in evangelization, promotion of social justice and peace. There are five Catholic parishes in Vihiga County namely: Luanda, Erusui, Hambale, Buyangu, and Chamakanga. This was done by examining how Christians in the SCCs evangelize, promote social justice and peace.

### **3.4 Study Population**

The study population comprised of parish priests, assistant priests, fully trained catechists, nuns and chairpersons of the total 279 SCCs from; Luanda, Erusui, Hambale, Buyangu, and Chamakanga parishes. The table below shows the number of SCCs across the five parishes in Vihiga County.

**Table 3.1: Small Christian Communities in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County**

<b>PARISH</b>	<b>SCC</b>
Hambale	40
Luanda	37
Buyangu	56
Chamakanga	46
Erusui	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>279</b>

**Source.** Catholic Church records (14<sup>th</sup> September 2013)

### **3.5 Sampling Procedures**

Kombo (2006) describes sampling as a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains representative of the characteristics found in the entire group.

The study adopted Leeuw's (2008) sampling formula to sample out SCCs from the five parishes; worked out as:-

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(\alpha^2)}$$

**Where:** n is the sample size,

N is the total number of SCCs in the parish and

$\alpha$  is the margin of error set at 10 percent.

**Worked out as:**

$$= \frac{279}{1 + 279 (0.01)}$$

$$= \frac{279}{3.79}$$

$$= 73.71$$

$$= 74 \text{ SCCs}$$



Therefore by use of the above formula, simple random sampling was adopted to sample SCCs from the 5 parishes.

Hambale	=	$40/279 \times 74$	=	10.609	# 11	SCCs
Luanda	=	$37/279 \times 74$	=	9.814	# 10	SCCs
Buyangu	=	$56/279 \times 74$	=	14.853	# 15	SCCs
Chamakanga	=	$46/279 \times 74$	=	12.200	# 12	SCCs
Erusui	=	$100/279 \times 74$	=	26.523	#26	SCCs

In simple random sampling the sample is picked at random and each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected (Mugenda, 1999). The researcher drew ballots of the total number of SCCs in each parish and with the help of the above stated formula, was able to randomly pick the SCCs where data would be collected. The total number of SCCs randomly selected for the study through random sampling, with the help of the formula above, was 74.

Since the number of respondents who are believed to have crucial/classified information about the role of SCCs in the parishes was manageable, 15 respondents who included; 5 parish priests and 5 assistant priests and 5 fully trained catechists, one from each parish were purposively picked for the interview. These groups of respondents are well conversant with the church teachings on SCCs. They are also in charge of foreseeing activities of SCCs in the Catholic Church. These officials were interviewed to give detailed information on SCCs involvement in evangelization, involvement of SCCs in provision of social justice and in promotion of peace. For every sampled SCC, the chairperson was purposively sampled for the study giving a total of 74 chairpersons. The chairpersons were given semi-structured questionnaires that were drawn in line with the study objectives. Two respondents were purposively sampled from each SCC through snow balling to represent the others in providing relevant information required

from members of SCCs on all the three objectives. This gave a total of 148 respondents. There are thirty nuns spread evenly in the five parishes who are also members of SCCs. Nine (30%) nuns were randomly sampled from the population of thirty, two in each of four parishes (Luanda, Erusui, Hambale and Chamakanga), and one in (Buyangu). Babbie (1998) points out 30% of any homogenous group gives a scientific representation of the population under study.

### **3.6 Data Collection Methods and instruments**

#### **3.6.1 Sources of Data**

The study depended on different sources of data. These included library literature and field data. Relevant literature from published book, online journals and unpublished theses were used to show the gap of knowledge to be filled by the study. Some of the reviewed data corroborated to beef up the primary data obtained from the field. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected from the field. This yielded to both statistics and textual data. Whereas the study was primarily qualitative given the nature of the study objectives, quantitative data emanated from the demographic information obtained as well as quantization of qualitative data through generation of frequency distribution tables with an aim of understanding patterns of distribution of various phenomenon. The researcher in essence, embedded aspects of quantitative data within the larger qualitative study. The qualitative data was generated through use of notes prepared by the researcher in the field through interviews, observation of SCCs activities and responses given by the respondents in the questionnaires given to them.

#### **3.6.2 Data Collection Methods**

The study obtained data for analysis through observation, in-depth oral interview, and questionnaires.

### **3.6.2.1 Participant Observation**

Kothari (2004) states that, through participant observation the researcher is enabled to record the natural behavior of the group. Researcher can even gather information which could not easily be obtained if he/she observes in a disinterested fashion. Also the researcher can verify the truth of statements made by informants in the context of a questionnaire or interview guide. The researcher attended various SCCs meetings in order to establish how SCCs carry out evangelization, observe how SCCs are involved in promotion of social justice and activities partaken. Researcher observed the various activities carried within the SCC such as preparation for liturgy, prayer meetings, bible sharing, and how social justice was exercised through application of principles of social justice. Observation checklist in appendix 3 was used. This was guided by the objectives of the study. The researcher in this case observed phenomena without manipulating the study participants. Through these observations, the researcher attained qualitative data and in the analysis described all the information obtained thematically.

### **3.6.2.2 In-depth Oral Interview**

Ochola (2001) notes that, it is only through interview that the researcher can fully explore an audience's perspective and the reason for it. Thus, discussions through in-depth oral interviews were employed. The interview guide was in form of guiding questions that helped the researcher follow the mandate of the study and achieve the three objectives. According to Kothari (2004), the items are put in sequence to allow orderliness in providing and recording information. The researcher engaged the parish priests and their assistance, nuns, catechists and two members from every SCC selected into an in-depth interview. This was aimed at getting information on SCCs and their participation in evangelization; SCCs as agent of social justice;

and, SCCs involvement in promotion of peace. This enabled the researcher to probe in order for the respondents to explain further and provide rationale for answers given. The method enabled the researcher to establish rapport with potential subjects in order to gain their co-operation which aims at yielding the highest response. In- depth oral interviews yielded qualitative data for the study, and most of the information resulting from these interviews meant that the researcher could use narrative and cite the words of the respondents verbatim in order to give a true picture of what is happening at the study area in relation to the study objectives.

### **3.6.2.3 Questionnaires**

In this method a questionnaire is administered to the persons concerned with a request to answer the questions and return the questionnaire (Kothari, 2004). It consists of a number of questions typed in a definite order on a form or set of forms. The respondents have to answer the questions on their own. Questionnaire was used for the study because it is free from the bias of the interviewers. That is, answers are in respondents own words and the respondent has adequate time to give well thought out answers.

Questionnaires were prepared and administered according to the information required based on the objectives of the study. The questions in the questionnaires were open-ended to give respondent room to express themselves in line with their understanding of the questions. Questions were organized chronologically in line with the objectives of the study as outlined in appendix 2. A total of 74 questionnaires were distributed to the chairpersons of SCCs who were believed to be the rightful respondents with full knowledge of the activities of SCCs. This is because they coordinate the day-to-day activities of SCCs. All questionnaires were presented in

English as all chairpersons had secondary and tertiary education as evidence in figure 4.2. This tool gave qualitative data based on explanation written by respondents on the questionnaires, yet for purposes of analysis we were able to quantify the data by developing frequency distribution tables that helped show the number of times certain responses had been repeated. Therefore both qualitative and quantitative data were yielded.

### **3.7 Validity of Research Instruments**

Validity is the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure (Kombo & Trump, 2006). A research instrument may be considered valid when its contents are relevant and appropriate to the research objectives. Validation of the data collection instruments is done before commencement of the actual research. According to Burton and Mazerolle (2011), the common types of validity are: face, content and construct validity. Face and content validity are secured through a panel of experts who judge the survey's appearance, relevance and representativeness of its elements. The panel of experts is comprised of individuals with expertise in the area the data collection instrument will measure (Netemeyer, Bearden & Sharma, 2003).

To address face validity evaluation of the appearance of the data collection instruments were done by supervisors at Maseno University's Department of Religion, Theology and Philosophy and the School of Arts and Social Sciences. Aspects to be scrutinized with regard to face validity included the ease of use, clarity and readability of the data collection instruments. A pilot study was undertaken by the researcher to establish content validity in parish 2. The researcher evaluated data collection instruments. This was in order to establish credibility,

accuracy, relevance and breadth of knowledge within the scope of the current study. The feedback from the pilot study and experts' suggestions and recommendations improved the efficacy of data collection instruments.

### **3.8 Reliability of the instruments**

Kombo and Tromp (2006) define reliability as the measure of how consistent the results from a test are. For the purpose of conducting a pilot study, Nieswiadomy (2003) recommended obtaining and involving approximately 10 participants or 9 to 10% of the final study size. To establish reliability of research instruments, a pilot study was carried out to test the interview guide and the questionnaire in parish 2. 1 nun and 7 chairpersons (10% of the study sample) drawn from the Vihiga County, but outside the final sample population were used to test the instruments. The priests, catechists and nuns were interviewed using the same interview guide, and since the number of Parish priests and catechists were few, the testing was done with the nuns, whose numbers were a bit high and had representation outside the sample population. The results of the test were used to revise the instruments appropriately and make possible corrections by removing possible errors before formally administering them.

### **3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation**

Data was collected through in-depth oral interview, participant observation and open-ended questionnaires. The study yielded qualitative and quantitative data. Inductive coding was used because the questions used were open-ended. Trochim (2003) noted that inductive coding involves the conversion of raw, qualitative data into more useful qualitative data. Unlike deductive analysis, inductive research does not involve the testing of pre-conceived hypotheses,

instead allowing the theory to emerge from the content of the raw data. It ensures that no misconceptions are made in advance of the analysis, clouding the truth within the actual content. Data was classified and coded into meaningful themes. Then thematic analysis was used in analyzing data where major concepts or themes were identified and discussed.

According to Grbich (2007) thematic analysis is the process of segmentation, categorization and linking of aspects of the data prior to the final interpretation. In the interpretation of data using thematic analysis, words or explanations of research respondents are put alongside the words of other respondents to enable the researcher to: describe the data, explore the data for meanings, look for relationships between different parts of the data and explain similarities and differences apparent in the relationships (Mathews & Ross, 2010). Data from observation checklist, open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interview was coded and the codes used to organize data into themes. The themes provided a basis for presenting and discussing data in line with study objectives. Part of the data has been presented in form of narratives excerpts to emphasize the points made by the study participants in line with the study objectives. All excerpts from in-depth oral interview are coded numerically.

According to Mathews and Ross (2010), the guiding questions in thematic analysis are: What the respondent says, why they say that and what might they mean by what they say? These questions were important for the researcher in presenting a thematic analysis, as they helped ensure clarity in writing an account that was based on the emerging themes from which we have used selected verbatim quotations from the data in line with study objectives. This form of analysis also acted as a guide in developing categories for discussion.

This research also used descriptive statistics for the analysis of data on the role of SCCs in evangelization, promotion of social justice and peace. The results of this method are as valid as those of pure statistical or descriptive methods (Creswell, 1994; Russel, 1995). The method is most recommended for both qualitative and quantitative data. Descriptive statistics included frequencies distribution tables and percentages aimed at depicting the pattern of response in the study. In analyzing the study findings, the researcher has also corroborated data with existing body of knowledge. That is, other scholarly works. This provides a basis for discussing the findings in depth and showing the emerging new knowledge.

### **3.10 Data Storage**

Data was collected for a period of 10 months. After collecting data it was stored in a personal computer that is protected with a password. After analysis and writing of the final report the raw data will be stored safely to be discarded later, once the process of acquiring a doctoral degree is complete.

### **3.11 Ethical Consideration**

This study involved human subjects. Caution was therefore observed to ensure that the participants were protected. To do so, the researcher observed the following: First, she explained the nature and purpose of research to all the concerned participants and thereafter sought for their consent. The participants were requested to sign a consent form that was attached to every questionnaire. For the instruments that did not have a questionnaire to be filled the researcher provided a separate consent form to participants. Privacy and confidentiality was maintained at all costs and therefore where need be, pseudonyms were



used. Ethical approval to conduct research was sought from Maseno University Ethics and Review Committee. The ethical review approval letter is appended at the end of this thesis (Appendix 6).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES INVOLVEMENT IN EVANGELIZATION IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN VIHIGA COUNTY

#### 4.1 Introduction

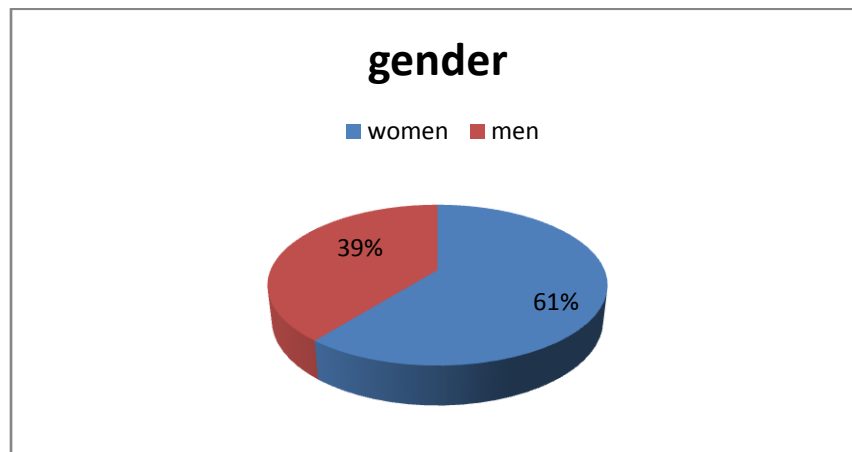
The first objective of the study was to analyse how SCCs are involved in evangelization. To achieve this objective, the researcher collected data on how evangelization is done in the Catholic Church using the following ways: use of catechetical instructions in evangelization, bible sharing in the SCCs, inculturation, and through charity activities. To obtain information for all these, responses were sought from, 5 parish priests and 5 assistant priests , 5 fully trained catechists, one from each parish, and two respondents picked from each of the 74 SCCs who added up to 148. This gave a total of 163 interviewees.

#### 4.2 Socio-demographic Data.

##### 4.2.1 Gender

Figure 4.1 shows demographic information of gender representation consulted during the study.

**Figure 4.1: Gender Distribution of Study Respondents**



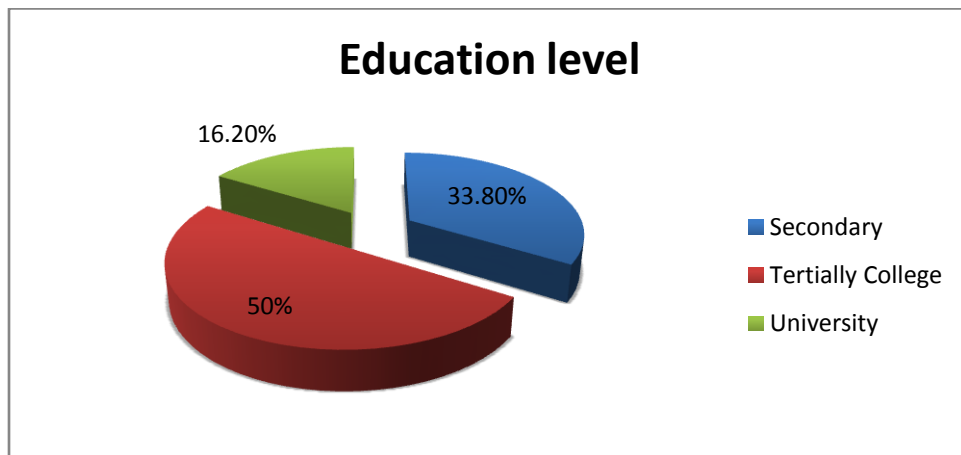
Source: field data

Majority (61%) of the respondents who were consulted for the study both in the interview and questionnaires were women, with males comprising 39%, as shown in Figure 4.1. This could be an indication that women are active in the activities of SCCs. The activities studied evidence this assumption as show in sections: 4.3.2, 4.3.3.1, 5.4.2 and 6.3.

#### 4. 2.2 Small Christian Communities general information demographics

The information below shows SCCs demographics captured from the questionnaires.

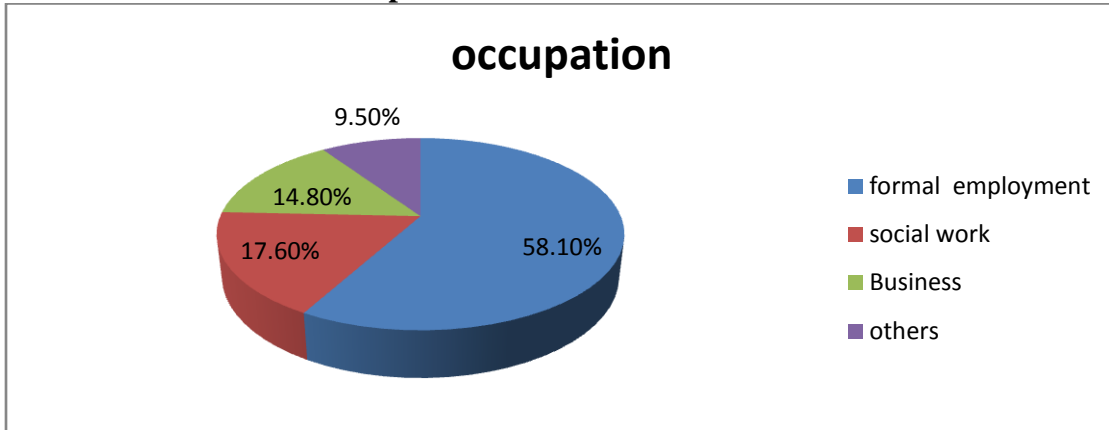
**Figure 4.2 Education Level**



**Source: field data**

Majority of the respondents (50%) were educated to tertiary level while 33.8% had secondary education. 16.2% had attained university education. Therefore they were able to interpret the questionnaires provided and gave relevant information as per objectives of the study as shown in sections: 4.3.2, 4.3.3.1, 4.3.3.2 and 6.3.

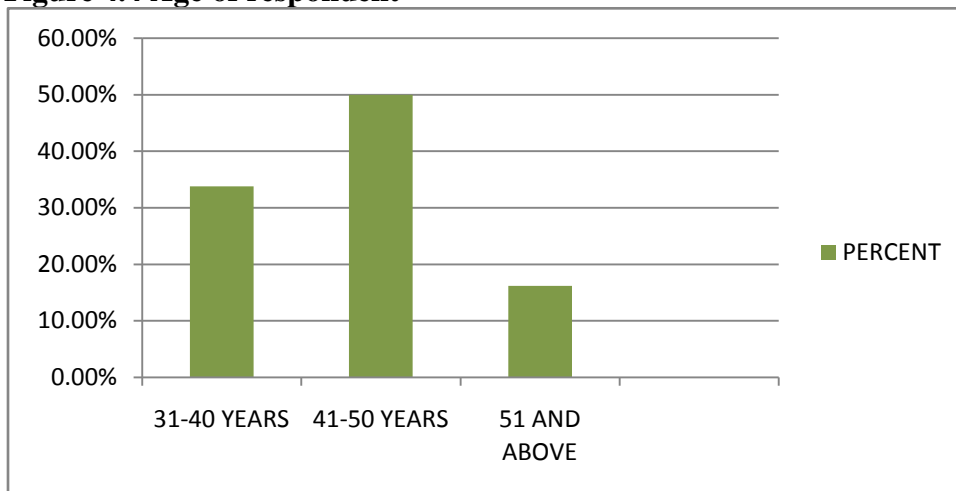
**Figure 4.3 SCCs Members' Occupation**



**Source: field data**

58.1% had formal employment, 17.6% were working as community or social workers in various offices and institutions within the county. 14.8% had their own business which they were running in various towns within the county, while 9.5 % were not employed or were either doing some casual jobs. Occupation had an influence on activities of Christians within the SCCs as evidenced in sections 4.3.2.4, 5.4.3 and 6.3.

**Figure 4.4 Age of respondent**



**Source: Field data**

Half of the respondents (50.0%) were aged between 41 and 50 years old. The second most populous group in terms of age was that of people aged 31 to 40 years (33.8%), with those who were aged 51 years and above comprising just 16.2% of respondents. This had influence on SCCs involvement in various activities as evidenced (4.3.3.1, 4.3.3.2 and 6.4.1.)

### **4.3 SCCs and Evangelization**

This section is organized in the following themes: understanding of evangelization; Catholic Church teaching on evangelization; evangelization in the SCCs through the following ways: Catechetical instructions, use of the bible in the seven steps model, inculturation as a means of evangelization, and charity activities in evangelization. Functionalism theory was adopted to show the contributions of SCCs in evangelizations in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County. The theory was used to explore various methods used in evangelization within the SCCs.

#### **4.3.1 Understanding of Evangelization**

From the various questionnaires administered, respondents understood evangelization as follows:

*SCC 7: It is preaching of the word of God and witnessing Christ in our life.*

*SCC 12: It is the art of spreading the Good News to the people in different areas close to you so as to reach the maximum possible number of people.*

*SCC 30: It is spreading of the message of Christ in word and action to different parts of the world.*

*SCC 60: It is proclaiming the Good News and sharing them with each other and making converts within our neighborhood.*

Many respondents understood evangelization as preaching the word of God among themselves and their neighbors through reading the bible and sharing the readings as per their understanding.

To others, evangelization was more than Good News spread verbally but also through their own words in their actions as they interact in their daily activities.

In the activities of SCCs, evangelization is understood not just as the conversion of neighbors to Christianity so that they become members of the Catholic Church. Rather, it is more broadly the vocation of the lay faithful in the world to be accomplished in many ways. Through a life of harmony the lay faithful better realize the work of the Holy Spirit in their neighbors and experience God's providence in their neighborhood. Members of SCCs engage in a fellowship of life with their many neighbors and work together for the common good (Kim, 2011). In this way, they fulfill their vocation in the world and accomplish evangelization.

Rich (2014) defines Evangelization as the action of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. As the apex of God's plan of Salvation History, Jesus is, in his person, message, and redemptive sacrifice on the cross, the ultimate saving good news for us. Jesus embodies the Gospel, indeed the very Good News of God. This is made eminently clear in Luke's Gospel when Jesus chooses this passage from Isaiah to explain his mission: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord" (Luke. 4: 18-19).

According to Barreiro (1982), Pope Paul VI *on Evangelization in the Modern World* No. 15, the church is an evangelizer, but it begins by evangelizing itself....The Church has a constant need to be evangelized, if she wants to retain her freshness, vigour and strength in order to proclaim the Gospel. The SCCs can be said to be places of focal points and vehicles for evangelization.

Members of the SCCs are both hearers of the gospel and privileged beneficiaries of evangelization, as well as proclaimers of the gospel themselves and they do this both in words and in actions. In and through them, the Christians hear the good news. Many Catholics today, through the SCCs have developed a new love for scripture and as such, they give witness to the truth of these words.

Evangelization seeks to invite modern man and culture into a relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church. Evangelization strives to engage our culture and to help us draw our inspiration from the Gospel. The New Evangelization calls all Catholics first to be evangelized and then in turn to evangelize. While it is directed to all people, the New Evangelization focuses specifically on those Christian communities that have Catholic roots but have “lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church.”(John Paul II, 1991). It is a call to each person to deepen his or her own faith, have confidence in the Gospel, and possess a willingness to share the Gospel. It is a personal encounter with the person of Jesus, which brings peace and joy. Evangelization provides the lens through which people experience the Church and world around them.

Evangelization can therefore be defined as preaching of the word of God through fellowships and conversion of neighbors to join the Christian faith. It is aimed at proclaiming the Good News of salvation to all and extending it to the neighborhood. SCC first evangelizes among them, and shares the Good News with their neighbors. In connection with functionalism theory, Durkheim believed that human beings do not function as an individual but as part of the society and his/her

functions as a being has strong foundations in the society. Therefore, this theory will be adopted to show how SCCs members evangelize among themselves to their neighbours.

#### **4.3.2 Catholic Church Teachings on Evangelization**

The Catholic Church is mandated to evangelize to all. It was reported in the questionnaires that:

*SCC 5: The church teaches that it is our duty to evangelize through sharing the word of God.*

*SCC 45: Evangelization should start from our homes and extend to our SCCs and to our neighbors.*

*SCC 60: We are supposed to preach to each other through our actions and by use our bibles so that we can win many souls to Christ.*

*SCC 70: We are taught to go out and make disciples and bring them for baptism in the church through our weekly fellowships.*

From all the seventy-four questionnaires it was reported that the Catholic Church teaches that evangelization is a duty of all Christians. It must begin from within the nuclear family and extends to the SCCs then to the entire church. SCCs are the church at the grass root and the church encourages evangelization to begin there for the church to be able to achieve its mission of evangelization. From the demographic data in figure 4.1 women were the majority which is a strong indicator of a big role they play at family level in evangelization and extends to the SCCs and the whole church in general. In addition, demographic data in figure 4.2 shows that all the SCCs members are educated meaning that they are capable of learning and understanding the church doctrines and put them in practice.

The Church's mission to evangelize derives from the Lord's mandate: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations... (Mt. 28:19)". Kim (2011) states that throughout the ages the



Catholic Church has responded to this command of the Lord to evangelize using various methods according to different situations and times. Kim adds that, mission in Catholic tradition has consistently been defined as preaching the Gospel and implanting the Church among people who do not yet believe in Christ. Therefore, the task of evangelizing to all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize. Born of the evangelizing mission of Jesus and the twelve disciples, the Church is in turn sent forth. Having been sent and evangelized, the Church herself sends out evangelizers. Evangelization itself is nothing new because the Catholic Church has been involved in evangelization throughout its long history.

SCCs are very instrumental in bringing the Gospel down to the lives of the people. They are effective way of making people feel that they are fully part of the church's evangelizing work (Healey, 2016). The lay faithful through the SCCs have a very effective role in the whole process of evangelization. They can very well build up the believers into a community of faith and love. Thus, the SCCs are means and occasion to proclaim the Gospel in a concrete manner and share God's love in an effective way.

From a pastoral point of view, SCCs are means of integral evangelization and a field of inculturation, where people can learn to pray, and use symbols and practices that arise out of their own traditions, so that their faith and life can become one. They are also an excellent situation from which to discover and promote lay ministries, which serve the needs of the local community. They have become tools of transformation, change and liberation by integrating

faith and life in a concrete context. In them, the church learns how it can be Christ's ministering presence in the land of Africa (Pelton, 1997).

Evangelization invites people to experience God's love and mercy through the sacraments, especially through the Eucharist and Penance and Reconciliation. Evangelization is the essence of the Church's identity: "The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the holy Spirit "( Ad Gentes, no 2) . Pope Paul VI reawakened the Church's evangelizing mission, Blessed John Paul II championed the call for the Evangelization, and Pope Benedict XVI has reaffirmed the need for the New Evangelization. In *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*, the Catholic bishops of the United States have expressed a sincere desire to invite all of God's children to their place in the Church: "We want to let our inactive brothers and sisters know that they always have a place in the Church and that we are hurt by their absence—as they are. . . . we want to help them see that, however they feel about the Church, we want to talk with them, share with them, and accept them as brothers and sisters" no 40.

Evangelization is a mandate from Jesus in Mathew 28:19 therefore, the Church is an evangelizer. The church also needs to be evangelized in order to proclaim the gospel. The Catholic Church uses various methods in fulfilling its mission. The church uses SCCs as one of its agents in evangelization. SCCs members are receivers and proclaimers of the gospel in words and actions. They integrate faith and life in fulfilling the mission of the church. Their mission begins from the family in an upward approach to the community and the church at large.

SCCs seemed to live as African extended families, and this is what Magesa (2004:43) describes, that: “SCCs were meant to be cells where the Christian faith would be intensely lived and shared. They were in fact seen as the ecclesiastical extension of the African extended family or clan”. More scholarly writings show that a SCC is a small neighborhood, parish-based group in an urban or rural area that is a pastoral model of church that transforms the parish into a communion of communities and an instrument of evangelization Klessier et al (2002). In the context of Vihiga County, SCC is a small group of around 10-15 families who meet weekly usually in their homes (but sometimes in a parish, a school or another institution), to reflect on the *Bible* especially the Gospel of the following Sunday, and connect it to their day-to-day activities.

Therefore, the Catholic Church throughout its history has encouraged evangelization as part of its mission. The church has been able to achieve this mandate through SCCs as the key agents of evangelization as will be discussed in the next section.

#### **4.3.3. Evangelization in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County**

The study findings show that the Catholic Church in Vihiga County has put a lot of emphasize in evangelization through the SCCs. The central focus of functionalism is to analysis the contributions of various elements of a system towards its survival. For this study, the theory will be adopted to show various approaches are used by members of SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County in evangelization. These include; use of catechism instructions, bible sharing, inculturation and charity activities. They will be discussed in the following sub themes.

#### 4.3.3.1. Catechism as an Instrument of Evangelization

For this study baptism catechism was the centre of interest because it is only through baptism that one becomes a member of a Christian community. Data on catechism in SCCs was collected through in-depth oral interview and observation. Study participants during the oral interview explained the meaning of catechism and its relevance in evangelization as discussed below.

*Respondent 11: Catechism involves teaching new members in the Catholic Church both young and old about the church teachings for a period of not less than six months. They are taught on the need of baptism as a requirement by the Catholic Church as one of its sacraments, the origin of baptism with reference to the biblical teachings and expectations of the church after one is baptized. After they have fully learned about these teachings they undergo through water baptism and they acquire new names. Therefore they become members of the Catholic Church.*

*Respondent 28: We encourage catechism to be done at SCCs level. All those who want to be baptized or have young babies who need to be baptized must get authority from the SCC. SCCs are church at the local level. During our weekly meetings we also share some catechism classes. With the help of the catechetumen instructor we learn together as a family. We are reminded of the church teachings on baptism. We ask questions and make clarifications on our Catholic faith and in return we share the knowledge with our neighbors. Through this catechism sessions we are re-evangelized and empowered and we are able to convince and convert our neighbors. We have also been able to preach to our neighbour of different faith during social gatherings.*

*Respondent 38: During catechism classes in our SCCs we gain a lot of biblical knowledge and exposure which we cannot acquire during our normal weekly meetings. We are exposed to a lot of bible reading and interpretation. This makes us develop a habit of reading the bible often and in the process we get enlightened. We are able to face challenges when confronted by our friends from different faiths and we have managed to attract them to our church and even some being baptized as Catholics.*

*Respondent 50: Through catechism, we as members of Christian community are made aware of our obligation to support Christian parents in their difficult task of bringing up their children as Christians. We are reminded of our responsibility to inspire the newly baptized to their Christian faith.*

*Respondent 108: Catechism has helped in evangelization in our SCCs. It is the only channel through which we learn a lot and at length about our church doctrines. The priest alone on Sunday during sermon cannot evangelize to us fully. We are able to explore the bible well during Catechism. For example one cannot be a 'god mother or father' (those to be in charge of the new converts) unless you are fully equipped with the church doctrine. The only avenue to learn about this doctrine is through catechism at SCCs level. Therefore those who attends catechism classes as initiates (those to be baptized) or as 'god parents' are equipped with a lot of knowledge to evangelize to each other and to make converts.*

*Respondent 163: Those adults who are interested in becoming Catholics first pass through SCCs in their geographical area or neighborhood. The respective SCC submits the request forms for the baptism of adults to the parish priest. After that they are referred to the catechist for catechumen classes within their SCCs. They are issued with a card which serves as a register to be signed every Sunday after attending mass and after attending Catechumen class. Only the Catechist should sign the card to monitor and follow up their catechumen class attendance. We encourage the Adult Catechumens to pray and serve within the community. The first step in the Adult Catechumenate is usually for the individual to pray in his or her SCC.*

The above data from in depth interview was also confirmed during observation. Researcher visited some SCCs that were preparing for both infant and adult baptism as they celebrate their SCC saints day. Catechism was done during their normal weekly meeting. They had set aside some thirty minutes for learning. During this session the catechist lead through various bible verses pertaining to baptism. He began with the reasons for baptism with reference to the bible, what the Catholic Church teaches about baptism and on the roles Christians offer after baptism which involved preaching and converting new members in the Catholic faith through baptism. We observed how the bible was used to teach and prepare converts for baptism. SCC members were exposed to the bible as the main source of reference in preaching the word of God and of making converts. There were sessions of oral testing to those who were to be baptized to ensure they were well conversant with the catechetical teachings before they were baptized. For the

infants, their parents and their 'god parents to be responded to the oral tests on behalf of the infants.

The study findings revealed there was a connection between gender distribution and catechism. Figure 4.1 shows that women were the majority in SCCs. Their presence in catechism instruction was also high bearing in mind their maternal role of upbringing children and nurturing their spiritual life. Therefore they have an active role of bringing their children for baptism in the church. Education level as outlined in figure 4.2 had a positive impact on catechism as all members are able to follow the catechism instructions as taught by instructors and participates in bible reading and sharing as per catechetical instructions. The age of respondents as outlined in figure 4.4 also had an impact on evangelization whereby all the members of SCCs were adults except the infants who were to be baptized. Therefore, they understood the church doctrine very well and was easy for them to evangelize and make converts.

Paul VI (1975:67-68) in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* contended that a means of evangelization that must not be neglected is that of catechetical instruction. The intelligence, especially that of children and young people, need to learn through systematic religious instruction the fundamental teachings, the living content of the truth which God has wished to convey to us and which the Church has sought to express in an ever richer fashion during the course of her long history. No one will deny that this instruction must be given to form patterns of Christian living and not to remain only notional. Truly the effort for evangelization will profit greatly- at the level of catechetical instruction given at church, in the schools, where this is possible, and in every case in Christian homes- if those giving catechetical instruction have suitable texts, updated with

wisdom and competence, under the authority of the bishops. The methods must be adapted to the age, culture and aptitude of the persons concerned, they must seek always to fix in the memory, intelligence and heart the essential truths that must impregnate all of life. It is necessary above all to prepare good instructors- parochial catechists, teachers, parents- who are desirous of perfecting themselves in this superior art, which is indispensable and requires religious instruction. Moreover, without neglecting in any way the training of children, one sees that present conditions render ever more urgent catechetical instruction, under the form of the Catechumenate, for innumerable young people and adults who, touched by grace, discover little by little the face of Christ and feel the need of giving themselves to Him.

In relation to Catechism as an instrument of evangelization, Phan (1999) pointed out that Catechesis generally presupposes evangelization. It leads both communities and individual members of the faithful to maturity of faith. Through catechetical instruction, people learn the fundamental teachings, the living content of the truth which God has wished to convey to us and which the Church has sought to express in an even richer fashion during the course of her long history. No one will deny that this instruction must be given to form patterns of Christian living and not to remain only notional.

On the importance of catechism in evangelization John Paul in *Ecclesia in America (EA)* (1999:256) stated that, evangelization in which the whole continent is engaged means that faith cannot be taken for granted, but must be explicitly proposed in all its breadth and richness. This is the principal objective of catechesis, which, by its very nature, is an essential aspect of evangelization. Catechesis is a process of formation in faith, hope and charity; it shapes the mind

and touches the heart, leading the person to embrace Christ fully and completely. It introduces the believer more fully into the experience of the Christian life, which involves the liturgical celebration of the mystery of the redemption and the Christian service of others.

Catechism has always been considered one of the primary tasks of the Church as noted by Diego (2007). Consequently, the 1977 Synod focused on catechesis. Evangelization and catechesis are closely linked, that is, there is always the need to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world on one hand, but on the other hand, there is the need for Christians to continually deepen their awareness of the faith and the life of the Church. It was in the 1977 Synod that bishops addressed the different ways and means by which catechesis can be effectively imparted to the people in Church today. It was in the context of this discussion that reference was made to the phenomenon of SCCs as being effective means for catechesis, something that the existing scholarly works do not explain. The Synod recognized that there are ongoing problems with some of the SCCs, especially their hostility toward the institutional Church, and even engaging in illicit pastoral and liturgical activities within the parish community. However, SCCs are still seen as being effective instruments for parish catechesis. They possess a great potential for parish renewal as well. Diego further added that the Synod of bishops also recognized that it is becoming increasingly imperative, to renew the parish by making it a community of communities through SCCs.

On the issue of adult participants in Catechism, John Paul II in *Catechesi Tradendae* (CT) (1979: 60) emphasized that adult catechism is the principal form of catechesis, because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian



message in its fully developed form. SCCs cannot carry out a permanent catechesis without the direct and skilled participation of adults, whether as receivers or as promoters of catechetical activity. The world, in which the young are called to live and to give witness to the faith which catechesis seeks to deepen and strengthen, is governed by adults. The faith of these adults too should continually be enlightened, stimulated and renewed, so that it may pervade the temporal realities in their charge. Thus, for catechesis to be effective, it must be permanent, and it would be quite useless if it stopped short at the threshold of maturity, since catechesis, admittedly under another form, proves no less necessary for adults.

It can be noted that catechism acts as a bridge for membership into Catholic faith. This is because after catechism one is baptized to become a member of the Christian Community. It lays foundations for Christian's faith from the teachings offered during that period. Evangelization cannot take place without catechism. It equips one with evangelization skills. The study finding shows that other than infant baptism there is the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) which is carried out in a SCC setting. RCIA is catechism that involves adults who are converted in Catholic faith. Such a program is offered to the adult Catechumens in the parishes, sub-parishes and outstations. It involves Bible reflection, study of the Catholic faith and journeying together as a community. The knowledge gained during catechism instruction introduces a convert into the experience of Christian life. The catechism instructions play a very key role in conversion and faith formation which are essential elements in evangelization.

SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County have achieved the mission of the church in evangelization through Catechism instructions. It can be pointed out that catechism offers the

basics for evangelization. It equips SCCs members with evangelization knowledge. It is only through catechism that one becomes a member of the Christian community through baptism which is conversion. Through catechism one acquires a sense of identity as is able to identify with a certain SCC. Catechism involves both young and old and is emphasized during baptism as a way of converting members into the Catholic faith. During catechism, those to be converted or baptized and other members of SCCs are taught on the Catholic Church teachings by trained personnel (catechetumen instructor). Catechism serves as an evangelization tool in that it exposes the converts and the members of SCCs to the teachings of the Catholic Church which are necessary for their faith formation. They employ the teachings to preach and make converts.

#### **4.3.3.2 Lumko Seven Steps of Biblical Sharing in the SCC**

The study findings revealed how bible is used in evangelization in the SCCs. Data was gathered through the use of questionnaires, interview and observation. There were seven steps that were followed in all the SCCs. These steps have been discussed elsewhere in theory by Nkwarir (2015). Oswald (2007) states that 1978 saw the birth of *Bible Sharing/Gospel Sharing* at the Lumko Missiological Institute in South Africa. Excellent SCC training manuals were published that popularized the Lumko "Seven Steps" Method of *Bible Sharing/Gospel Sharing*. The Seven Steps have spread all over the world. They constitute a kind of “agenda” for SCCs as they bring Christ into the center and encourage active participation in the mission of the church in the neighborhood which involves evangelization.

In order to understand how these seven steps are followed in the area of study, we sought for explanations on the same. The following are the responses from respondents on how the seven

steps were followed and their roles in evangelization. It was reported by an interviewee that the first step involved inviting God.

*Respondent 36: We begin our meeting by inviting God in our meeting in form of a worship chorus and prayer. After that, we recite the rosary which we share in leading.*

We observed that during the SCCs meetings worship songs varied from one SCCs to another. Some sang Marian songs in praise of Mary the mother of Jesus before reciting the rosary. Others sang Holy Spirit songs as a way of inviting the Holy Spirit in their meeting and then followed rosary recitation. This step prepares members for the meeting. They are to cleanse themselves and be attentive during the meeting. The worship song whether in praise of Mary or the Holy Spirit is meant to empower them in their evangelization as they begin their meeting.

The second step involves reading the word of God. During the study we observed that bible reading is done in all SCCs during their weekly meetings. The Bible passage is read loudly, prayerfully and reflectively. Sometimes the SCC members pass the Bible around the circle and each person reads. We noted different Bible versions being read mostly the English and Kiswahili version.

*Respondent 73: We are encouraged to carry our bibles during our meetings. Before sharing, we read the verse of the Bible many times depending on the different bible versions available. The Bible is the life of SCCs as it is an important asset and an essential element for Catholics in SCCs and families. We believe the word of God in the scripture is the center of all our meetings.*

This step helps SCCs member to develop a culture of reading the bible and compare different versions for easy interpretation during evangelization in the group.

The third step entails listening to the word (dwelling on the text).

*Respondent 15: From the bible verse that was read, SCC members are requested to choose words (that is, single words, or short sentences, or short phrases) which inspired them most in a special way. One by one, SCC members read the word or words that have impressed them aloud in a prayerful way. They are encouraged to repeat those words silently to themselves three, thus allowing the message to “soak in”. No explanations and no comments are given in this session .Afterward someone read the same text again from a different bible version.*

*Respondent 45: we are asked to repeat in form of prayers the verses that touch us spiritually. We usually pick out any words or short phrases, read them aloud prayerfully and keep silence in between.*

Similarly, researcher observed that in most SCCs members pick a verse and recite it three times. All members are expected at least to have a verse or a word that impress them most. The third step acts as a guide in evangelization. As members recite what impressed them in the verse that they read, it gives them an insight of what is expected of them as they evangelize to one another as per their understanding of that verse.

The fourth step calls for silence or meditation of the scripture. It was observed that after spending time on the individual word or phrases, the entire verses are read again aloud and slowly. Then the chairperson announces a time of silence, mostly three to five minutes, during which participants listen to God in silence and meditate the text. Similarly it was reported during the interview that:

*Respondent 33: we normally have a moment of silence during this stage to allow God to speak to us.*

*Respondent 70: we keep quiet for five minutes to meditate on the verse that we have read. We are supposed to think on what God expects from us so that we can share our with others.*

This is a very important step in evangelization as members mediate on the text in silence and allow God to speak to them in a spiritual way. In doing so, they are empowered on what God

expects of them from the Scripture how to apply it in evangelization basing it on their daily situations.

Bible sharing follows in the fifth step.

*Respondent 70: we share what we have felt in our hearts during meditation. We share what we think God is directing us to do after the moment of meditation. It entails our relationships with Him, our neighbors and our families.*

*Respondent 112: our sharing is in form of application based on the life of the community and the church. All members are free to share their views accordingly depending on their understanding. Afterwards we choose a 'Word of Life' from the reading of the day. It is supposed to be the spiritual theme of the week to guide us in our relations with one another and with God.*

Researcher observed how members participated in bible sharing as per their different understanding. At some point some members asked questions about the verses they felt they could not be able to interpret their meaning. Sharing was open to all and members. We noted the interpretation of the bible verse was in form of application on how members were expected to carry on the teachings from the verse to their day to day activities in the community. This is the most crucial step in evangelization as it exposes one to the use of the bible in a rational way. One is expected to explore the bible, analyse the verses and apply them to the day-to-day activities of the community. In doing so, one is able to evangelize to the other through doing good deeds. It is an enlightenment stage where one is exposed to various ways of interpreting bible verses in evangelization.

Step six entails plan for action.

*Respondent 55: The secretary reads through the minutes of the previous meeting. Matters arising are discussed and agendas of the day presented and discussed. At this step*

*members discuss any task which the group should carry within the SCC, neighborhood or Parish.*

*Respondent 90: Normally, a practical action or task is chosen to be carried out during the following week, as a response to the Word of God .It may be connected to or flow from the Gospel text that was read, and may be related to the pastoral priorities and activities of the parish. In some cases they refer it to as ministries. The tasks include: visiting the sick, helping the needy, praying for the sick among others. Member also gives reports on the previous task.*

It was further observed that after bible sharing in the previous step, there was a session of discussion on other issues pertaining the SCC. All the SCCs visited have a secretary or assistant secretary who read the minutes of the previous meeting. Matters arising were addressed, agenda of the day discussed, reports from the Church Parish Council (CPC) were read and any form of report or announcement was presented in this stage.

This stage is meant to connect the group, relates and applies the Gospel to their daily lives and experiences. The See-Judge-Act process is used. That is; perceiving and understanding the prevailing situation regarding to their lives in the community, making judgment lead by scripture and the tradition of the Catholic Church and a way forward as proposed in pastoral accompaniment of the faithful.

Step six is important in evangelization in that it helps members of SCCs to connect to the gospel with regard to the lives of the community through listening or seeing. They share their commitment to the truth of the teaching of the church, and also struggles that accompany the commitment.

The last step include conclusion. It was reported that:

*Respondent 70: At this stage, the chairperson invites everyone to offer prayers of the faithful. Through prayer the Bible sharing session is summarized and concluded.*

*The words of Scripture, the various experiences of God's word, the daily problems, all become fuel or the building blocks for prayer. Anyone who wishes may pray spontaneously. Afterwards the meeting ends with a prayer and a hymn which everyone knows especially those on praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary as an intercessor of Christians in the Catholic Church.*

In all SCCs researcher visited, it was observed that after prayers of the faithful that after prayers of the faithful there were closing prayers that were lead by one of the members. Some of the prayers included prayers to the patron saint of the respective SCC for example prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi and St Teresa of Calcutta among others. This was followed by a chorus as the meeting adjourns.

This last step is important in evangelization because other than equipping SCCs members with bible reading skills, it also offers them knowledge on how to pray basing on the biblical teachings acquired during the meeting.

It was observed that the education level and age of respondents played a very major role in evangelization through application of Lumko seven steps of Bible Sharing. Members were able to base their bible interpretation on examples of their work places and their real life experiences. This enhanced evangelization at SCCs level.

In confirmation of the field findings, Healey (2010) states that, in SCCs in Africa there are two starting points for the weekly Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection: a "Deductive" starting point such as the Bible (for example, the Gospel of the following Sunday) or a particular teaching of the Catholic Church) or an "Inductive" starting point using our daily life (especially our critical concrete experiences, incidents, examples and stories). John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *The*

*Church in Africa in the section on “Living (or Vital) Christian Communities”* states that SCCs should “reflect on different human problems in the light of the Gospel” (John Paul II: 1995,p. 89). However, Healey’s centre of focus was not on the use of the Bible by SCCs to evangelize. The current study observed how the SCCs members use the seven steps to evangelize to themselves and to the families that are invited to attend, or where they visit, especially when providing charitable works to the needy.

Similar to the Seven steps of bible sharing, Mesters (1989) proposes reading the Scriptures following the tripartite method of Jesus which he finds in the Emmaus story (Luke 24:13-35). The first step is to start with reality. Just as Jesus met the downcast disciples on the road to Emmaus, drew close to them, and inquired about what was going on with them, so too with us. We begin by walking together with others and drawing near to the reality in which we live, especially its problems. We help them to take a new look at that reality by asking questions which help them look at it more critically. The second step imitates how Jesus used the Scriptures to illuminate the problems that made the disciples suffer. Jesus used the Scriptures to show the disciples that their history was not out of God’s hands. This second step uses the Scriptures to illuminate reality and situate it within the design of God’s plan. Jesus showed them how an instrument of torture and death, the Cross, had been transformed by God into a sign of life and hope. Therefore, what had become for the disciples an obstacle in their walk with and toward God became the principal force of their journey, a new light on the way. The third and final step involves opening the eyes of the disciples and setting their hearts on fire. This means that the disciples are reborn: they themselves experience being raised from the death caused by their fears and doubts, and they return to Jerusalem from where they were fleeing. The Bible



itself did not produce such an experience of hope and resurrection, but rather its reading and interpretation in a welcoming community of prayer where bread is blessed, broken, and shared.

This third step involves creating an environment of faith, solidarity, and sharing where the Holy Spirit can work and help us understand Jesus' message and produce in us an experience of resurrection and new life (John 14:26, 16:13).

Reading the Bible as a narrative provides us with a way to understand our lives in light of the narrative that Scripture tells (Matera, 2003). This renewed appreciation of the narrative dimension of the biblical text has important implications for the evangelization. First, it reminds Christians that Scripture *is* a narrative—a story that begins with creation and ends with its restoration; a story in which people can discover the meaning and purpose of their lives; a story that roots us in the past and gives them hope for the future. Second, this narrative approach provides Christians with an example of how they can evangelize today. By becoming familiar with the scriptural narrative, Christians find new ways to tell an old story, to explain the problems they face and how to respond to them and gain new insight into how they ought to live.

Similarly, on the issue of Bible sharing in the SCCs, Ihenacho (2013) stated that SCCs now explicitly discover the Word of God in the Bible as a source of nourishment for their religious life. The Word of God in scripture always serves as a source of inspiration and stimulation for their lives and actions. Contact with the Bible is evangelizing by the very fact that the members of the SCCs become familiar with the Word of God, which is addressed to them and is to be lived by them. This contact is valuable in letting them see that faith and Christian life take in the totality of their lives. Contact with scripture and its resulting prayer life enable them to link faith

and life; thus, eliminating a dichotomy that underlies the very existence of many Christians. Thus, they integrate faith and life. For example, the weekly Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection Service is the heart of the SCCs in Eastern Africa and connects the Gospel of the following Sunday to our daily lives. Besides using the word to evangelize to themselves they internalize it to use for other's benefit.

In addition, Osunwokeh (2014) states that Bible sharing, evangelization and faith are to be seen as Christian concepts that should be tied together and regarded as vital in the appraisal of Christianity as a religion. This interrelatedness of these concepts springs basically from the fact of Christianity, like most major World religions, having the Bible as a sacred text, "where terms and themes, doctrines and theologies, dogmas and tenets are contained, alluded to, denoted and reflected" (Osunwokeh, 2009). Since this sacred text is generally regarded by the Christians as "a book of revelation", its level of comprehension determines a Christian's level of faith and his level of attainment of evangelization. The high level and degree of faith and evangelization in Paul of Tarsus, evidenced in the 22 books of the New Testament attributed to him or containing his history testifies to these. Paul's deep knowledge of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ministry that he claims was revealed to him by Christ himself in several of his writings is the reason for these. Christian faith is not something one receives once and for all. It is a life that is lived. This is done by a continuous critical search of the Bible containing the Word of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For SCCs, their agenda is not just self-reflection and growth, but to evangelize to others.

It was reported and noted that Bible reading for the SCC was from the gospels depending on the liturgical year. There was uniformity on the scripture to be read in all SCCs. They read and shared from the gospel of that Sunday for better and deeper understanding from their Sunday service. Alternatively in line with the Catholic Church Liturgical calendar they read the gospel to be read the following Sunday. This was to equip them with evangelization skills prior to the Sunday preaching. Whichever approach was applied they all equipped SCCs members with evangelization knowledge as they all developed passion for reading the Bible on their own and be able to use it to evangelize.

Each of the seven steps has a role in evangelization. Prayers at the beginning and at the end of the meeting enable SCCs members to link their faith and life. Reading the Bible and dwelling on the text helps members to become familiar with the word of God. In meditation, they are able to reflect on different human problems in light of the Gospel. They are able to understand their lives in light of the Scripture and get examples of how to evangelize today. In Bible sharing they get deep knowledge of Christ. In the sharing they get to explain problems they face and how they respond to them. In the plan of action step, they offer nourishment in religious life which is vital in evangelization. The final prayers also give hope to the future as they are able to get meaning and the purpose of life from the sharing of the bible which is linked to the final prayers.

In conclusion, it can be pointed out that Bible use through sharing plays a very vital role in evangelization and in the life of a Christian. SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga had adopted a seven step model in bible sharing to equip them with necessary skills and understanding of the bible. Every step is important in impacting the necessary skills in preaching as SCCs members

are in a position to share the verses in light of the Gospel linking it with their life. Other than skills, the seven steps offers empowerment through prayers, knowledge through application of life skills in relating the scripture verse to people's daily living and finally a change of attitude from the sharing leading to conversion of members in to the Christian faith.

#### **4.3.3.3. Inculturation as a Means of Evangelization**

The study also revealed that evangelization is done through inculturation. Data was gathered through in-depth oral interviews, observation and scholarly literature. According to Waliggo (1986), inculturation means the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and His message of salvation evermore understood by people of every culture, locality and time. It means the reformulation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought-patterns of each people. It is the conviction that Christ and His Good News are even dynamic and challenging to all times and cultures as they become better understood and lived by each people. It is the continuous endeavor to make Christianity truly "feel at home" in the cultures of each people.

In addition, Assenga (2014) in his article on *Cultural orientation and evangelization in Africa* in Tangaza Journal states that, while inculturation is an essential step in evangelization, inculturation must be seen as both the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity on one hand, and the insertion of Christianity in various human cultures on the other. The two approaches must be taken together. Evangelization should always precede the using of the cultural categories and values for the gospel. Assenga added that, Culture is an embodiment of a given people's way of life in its entirety. It includes their entire worldview or their general orientation of life. It encompasses a particular people's

language, their relationship with the divine/supernatural, their mode of dressing, feeding, bringing up of their young ones, recreation, marriage and burial. The particular aspects of culture cannot be comprehended in isolation from the other aspects, since each of them portrays an aspect of the whole. For example, one cannot master the language of a given people without knowing their worldview, the understanding of which often explains why they use particular constructions of words, symbols and proverbial patterns. These must be understood in relationship with the place they live, their history and their entire livelihood.

The results from in-depth oral interview and observation revealed how cultural values are used in evangelization in the SCCs. These are discussed below.

Five priests, 5 assistant priests, 5 catechists and two SCCs members from each of the 74 SCCs indicated how evangelization is carried out through inculturation (table 4.1):

**Table 4.1 Ways of Evangelizing through inculturation**

	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Prayers in various local dialects	43	26.4
2	Offerings in form of local foodstuffs	39	23.9
3	Luhya art in Liturgical preparation	37	22.7
4	Traditional forms of art accompanying music	25	15.3
5	Carrying out traditional rites of passage in a Christian way	19	11.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field data**

The use of various local dialects in prayers was the highest response at 26.4% in evangelization through inculturation. This was followed by offerings in form of locally available foodstuffs at 23.9% and was closely followed by use of Luhya art in liturgical preparation during Sunday mass lead by various SCCs. Evangelization through inculturation was also done through

traditional forms of art accompanying music and through various rites of passage conducted in a Christian or as per the church teachings on inculturation. This was evidenced in the responses below from various respondents.

*Respondent 5: As a clergy, we always encourage Christian's right from their SCCs to embrace their cultural welfare by incorporating their cultural values in their way of worship. During prayers for the faithful we encourage Christians to pray in their various languages for easy communication with their creator. We encourage even all rites of passage for example marriage and death rites done within the community to be done both in a cultural and a Christian way. That is why incase of any marriage or death, the church always refers someone to the community since we cannot ignore our culture neither our religion. In doing so, as a church we have been able to accommodate through conversion some of our immediate neighbors who have been uncomfortable or rejected from their faith because of their cultural traditions.*

*Respondent 125: Every time when we are animating mass in our SCCs, we carry food stuff such as grains, eggs, greens among others as our offerings. We carry our offerings depending on what we have harvested during that season and what we have in our homesteads. Our way of giving offerings has attracted our neighbors from other denominations who are used to offer money for offerings. From within our homesteads no one lacks something to offer to God. This has made us always to have new converts in our SCCs.*

It was observed that during mass led by various SCCs especially those in rural set up, there was the usage of vernacular during prayers for the faithful, use of Luhya art in liturgical vestments, in decorating the church and on sacred vessels. Also there was the use of Luhya traditional forms of art that accompanied music as the use of drums, clapping of hands, dancing and body language.

These findings are comparable to those of Pelton (1997) who observed that from a pastoral point of view, SCCs are means of integral evangelization and a field of inculturation, where people can learn to pray, and use symbols and practices that arise out of their own traditions, so that their faith and life can become one. They are also an excellent situation from which to discover and promote lay ministries, which serve the needs of the local community. They have

become tools of transformation, change and liberation by integrating faith and life in a concrete context. In them, the church learns how it can be Christ's ministering presence in the land of Africa.

The first African Synod affirmed that, a serious concern for a true and balanced inculturation is necessary in order to avoid cultural confusion and alienation in our fast-evolving society. John Paul II (1995) in *Ecclesia in Africa* (pg 48) contends that Africans are challenged to look inside themselves, nurture and emulate values that correspond to the best of their traditions and their Christian faith. Genuine freedom was to come from with inculturation. Africans are encouraged to overcome the fears of embracing their traditional values while embracing Christianity. It is through inculturation of the Gospel that dichotomous modes of living can be overcome, paving way for authentic living as truly Africans and truly Christians. SCCs are venues for transforming humanity from within and making it new. SCCs provide an opportunity in and through the only Son the relations of people with God, one another and all creation will be renewed. For this reason the proclamation of the Gospel can contribute to the interior transformation of all people of good will whose hearts are open to the Holy Spirit's action.

In addition, Nkwarir (2015) states that the theological basis of inculturation is God's incarnation and saving presence in human cultures. Any talk or action about inculturating the Christian faith must be seen in the light of the mystery of Jesus Christ, and not just as efforts to make a system or an institution more meaningful to people of different cultures. Theological consideration of inculturation cannot fail to begin with a study of divine revelation as model and source of all inculturation. Various cultures have served the revelation of the mystery of salvation. The

elevation and sanctification of culture through the process of inculturation is not only valuable for the said culture, but for the enrichment of the entire church.

On the importance of inculturation in evangelization, Mawusi (2009) noted that inculturation is one of the fundamental aspects of the church's evangelizing mission and points to the mutuality between the Gospel and the cultures it engages. The Christian Gospel is to be open to all cultures, bound to no single culture and made accessible to every human person through a process of inculturation, by which the Gospel introduces something new into the culture and the culture brings something new to the richness of the Gospel. The aim of inculturation is to ensure authenticity and depth of faith in African Christianity; to heal cultural alienation, to bridge the gap between faith and life, and thus resolve the many instances of spiritual schizophrenia and double life affecting many of our people.

From in-depth oral interviews and observation it is evident that SCCs are used as tools for inculturation in that it is within the communities that Christ message of salvation can be understood and contextualized within people's culture. This is because, geographically SCCs members are from the same locality therefore majority share the same culture. Due to cultural dominion, they are able to evangelize to each other and even to make converts in a more appealing way.

Secondly, there is cultural accommodation within the SCCs. Members are able to accommodate each other and embrace their culture. This was evident in town centers where some SCCs had members from different ethnic communities. It was reported there was socialization that was



beyond ethnic lines. In doing so, they created a sense of belonging which in turn brought room for conversion.

Thirdly, there is contextualization of culture whereby the church encourages members to incorporate their cultures within the gospel like in rites of passage. Findings revealed that within the SCCs, members enjoy their way of worship especially where they incorporate their traditions and cultural way of doing things without being condemned. They enjoy their way of giving offerings during Sunday service. They appreciated how they conduct various rites of passage within their SCCs with acknowledgement from the church. For instance, after initiation, the initiates were brought back to the church through SCCs after seclusion period for prayers and blessings. Their way of carrying out their culture in religious way has attracted their neighbors and their SCCs are expanding. In doing so, inculturation has been used as a tool in evangelization in the SCCs.

In conclusion, inculturation has been used as a tool of evangelization in the SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County through incorporating people's culture with the gospel. This has been done through their ways of worship whereby SCCs member carry out the church service in their cultural way through decorating the church in their cultural arts, praying in their different dialects, being allowed to carry out their rites of passage traditionally and allowed back to the Church afterwards for prayers. Inculturation has in this way created a sense of belonging whereby members of SCCs are able to identify themselves with each other. The accommodation of their different cultural backgrounds has created a fertile ground for evangelization. In doing

so, they have been able to spread the gospel of Christ within their culture in a more easy and understandable way.

#### **4.3.3.4 Evangelization through Charitable Activities in the SCCs**

Evangelization also entails charitable activities that are carried out by members of SCCs that have a strong influence on their neighbour and the church at large. The study findings showed that the various pastoral activities that SCCs perform have boosted their evangelization. Data was collected by use of questionnaires and in depth oral interviews. These activities are part of activities assigned during the weekly meetings and whenever a need arise. From oral in-depth interviews the following were captured.

*Respondent 3: As clergy, we encourage SCCs members to participate in various activities within the SCCs. For example during bereavement we encourage them to participate in funeral and burial arrangement as members of that SCC. In doing so, their active participation makes the bereaved family feel a sense of belonging and these acts have an impact on their neighbors who would wish also be part of the community.*

*Respondent 28: We as members of SCCs are also concerned with the welfare of the sick. We visit them in their homes and pray with them. Sometimes members of SCCs contribute money to buy drugs for the sick that may not be financially stable or in a position to buy drugs from the pharmacy. We also visit our sick members in hospital and pray for them and in some occasions we volunteer to take and accompany them in hospital to ensure they are well attended and assist where necessary. We inform the priest if the sick person requires the sacrament of the anointing of the sick.*

*Respondent 35: It our duty as members of SCC to identify the needy and the less privileged in the community. After we have identified them, we offer them the assistance they require. For example, we have a rehabilitation centre in Parish one that take care of street boys in the nearby market centre. Another example is a girl's orphanage in Parish three that provides home for orphaned girl child in the local community. We continue to support these centers and many others with food stuffs and other humanitarian assistance.*

Similarly, from the questionnaires administered to the 74 chairpersons of the SCCs, the following data was captured.

**Table 4.2. Charity Activities in Evangelization**

	<b>Charity Activity</b>	<b>Frequency out of 74</b>	<b>percentage</b>
1	Participating in funeral and burial of member/relative	20	27.0
2	Visiting the sick at home	16	21.6
3	Care of the sick and the suffering	13	17.6
4	Visiting families with social problems	10	13.5
5	Bringing sacrament of anointment to the sick	8	10.8
6	Visiting the sick in hospitals	17	9.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: field data**

Participation in funeral and burial of members or relatives has the highest count of 27.0% of charity activities carried out by SCCs. This was followed by visiting the sick at home at 21.6% and caring for the sick and suffering in the society at 17.6%. 13.5 % indicated that they also visit families with social problems and assist them to address them. Charity activities that also enhance evangelization and bringing sacrament of anointing of the sick at 10.8% and visiting the sick in hospitals at 9.5%. This implies that members of SCCs participate in various charity activities in their day to day activities which in turn enhance evangelization.

It was observed that most of these charity activities required financial support. Therefore occupation /job description of the respondents as outlined in figure 4.3 was very paramount. This was to ensure that they meet all the basic needs of the needy through their humanitarian assistance. This assisted in evangelization through actions and deeds.

Similar to these study findings, Msangaambe (2011) states that SCCs members in matters of assisting the poor, eradicating hunger and poverty, and promoting human development, social reforms and peace are in a special position to assume roles of service and leadership. What Msangaambe did not elaborate on is the fact that these charity activities are important if evangelization is to be realized. The involvement of SCCs in such an apostolate is a public witnessing to the dynamism of the Gospel message. The SCCs should be guided in such a way that the true evangelical vision and prayerful discernment should be the principles in holding at all costs the dignity and rights of the human person as the greatest values in spiritual and social life of the community.

Jenkins (2012) states that, Christ teaches us how to evangelize, how to invite people into communion with him, and how to create a culture of witness: namely, through love. A Christian life lived with charity and faith is the most effective form of evangelization. Evangelization testifies to the transformative power of the Gospel and the mission of the Church to sanctify society, hand on the faith to future generations, strengthen the faith of her members, and renew the faith of those who have slipped away from the Church. The faithful become agents of evangelization through living witness and commitment to the Gospel. The everyday moments of one's life lived with Christian charity, faith, and hope provide witness to family members, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and others who have stopped actively participating in the life of the Church. This witness is essential for reaching others in today's modern world.

SCCs are in a better position to meet the immediate spiritual needs of their members through their rotational visitations during their fellowships. In doing so, they are able to evangelize

through their actions. Kilonzo (2008) noted that it is at the SCCs level that the problems of the people are known. From these problems, the SCC leaders are able to write a report and present it to the priest in-charge. The Church can then take action to help resolve the challenges. Through the SCCs the priest conducts church services (mass) at home level, and specifically in homes where there are needs. SCCs are used to enhance house-to-house visitations for spiritual nourishment.

SCCs members participate in various charity activities as part of evangelization. From the questionnaires it was observed that they participate in funerals of members and relatives; visiting the sick at home; pastoral care to the sick and those suffering; visiting families with social problems; bringing sacrament of anointing to the sick; and, visiting the sick in hospital. Additionally, issues such as child neglect, alcoholism and drug abuse, poverty, insecurity, crimes, hunger and many more are addressed at the meetings. The charitable individuals are at the service of the needy and the poor. The end product of these activities has been conversion of some members into the Catholic faith. The attention accorded to the needy has helped them realize their sense of belonging. There were some reported cases of those who have joined SCCs and converted into Catholicism. As Jenkins (2012) argues, all members are called to individually, and in groups, participate in the work of the Church by living a truly Christian life. They are each called to spread the Gospel through both word and deed to friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, and even the strangers. This form of participation contributes greatly to a more extensive spreading of the Gospel, indeed it can reach as many places as there are daily lives of individual members of the lay faithful.

The findings reveal that SCCs have been successful in caring for the needy in the community. These communities have encouraged the Christians and the entire neighborhoods to become aware of their mission within their families, extended families and the surrounding neighbors. They have become a source of help against the dangers that threaten the lives of the people in these areas. Issues such as child neglect, alcoholism and drug abuse, poverty, insecurity, crimes, hunger and many more are addressed at the meetings. The charitable individuals are at the service of the needy and the poor. By connecting life and what they draw from the Scriptures, on a day to day basis, their deeds are passed on to those in need of help. They put the Scriptural readings into practice and by so doing they are able to integrate the realities of life and their faith. They now transform family and parish life. The experiences of faith and community life in this religious environment are reflected in the lives of the people, in the parish and outside of it. Their cultural richness is shared in faith and love. There are some rehabilitation centers which are under the care of patrons /patroness from the SCCs that caters for children with disabilities and street children within the county.

Part of the literature reviewed from Msangaambe (2011) and Jenkins (2012) agrees that through the charity activities, SCCs members have been in a position to empower each other spiritually leading to their spiritual transformation. They have been able to learn the need of team work and the benefits of leading hand. In places where majority carried out SCCs charity activities effectively, the SCCs were strong and vibrant. On contrary, in areas where charity activities were given less attention, the SCCs were less active. Therefore, it can be stated that charity activities play a very vital role in evangelization because they make members active in carrying out their roles and also transforms the lives of many spiritually.

It can be deduced that, evangelization also includes charity activities. These are activities that are done to assist the needy in the society and have a positive impact on the faith of the Christians and their neighbour. Activities such as visiting and taking care of the sick and the needy have had a positive influence towards evangelization. Those who have benefited from these activities have bear witness of how their lives were transformed. Church based institutions such as rehabilitation centre and orphanage have been put in place where SCCs continue to evangelize through their works of charity. Evangelization therefore, is not limited to preaching the word of God but also works of compassions as evidenced in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County.

In spite of the gains by SCCs from these activities, the process of evangelization has not been without challenges. The section below highlights some of the challenges that these grass roots groups face with reference to their evangelization work.

#### **4.4 Challenges Faced by SCCs in Evangelization Work**

Approaches used in evangelization in the SCCs in Vihiga County have enabled the church realize its mission as mandated in Mathew 28:19. However, during the study it was reported that SCCs and the Catholic Church at large are experiencing challenges that have hindered their effectiveness in evangelization. The following were revealed from the findings.

Women dominate most of the SCCs. Very few men attend SCCs meetings. Youths and children who are also supposed to be members of SCCs hardly attend SCCs meetings. Women are left to share their understanding of the bible without the input of men and youths which could be of great help to their spiritual growth as well as enhancing their evangelizing skills. This has

weakened SCCs because all members have a role in the SCCs towards realizing the mission of the church in evangelization. Similarly, Kurgat (2004) noted that most men do not attend SCCs meetings because they regard them as women affairs.

It was also reported and noted that Vihiga County have very many denominations which have a lot of influence to the SCCs members and all Christians within the locality. When SCCs are evangelizing, they seem to be in a form of competition and this has weakened some of SCCs. Some of the SCCs members have joined protestant churches where they think there is a better interpretation of the bible. This findings , concurs with Kilonzo's (2008) findings where she reported that Vihiga county has many denominations which complete for members therefore influencing each other either positively or negatively in terms of membership.

Most of the SCCs in the rural setup comprise of members of the same clan. It was reported that at times it difficult to evangelize to some of their clan members because of their bad relationship with them. They cannot apply the teachings of the scripture to their day to day life because of the family feuds and enmity within the clan. At times they even fail to attend SCCs meetings in some of their members homes because of hatred. This affects the way they evangelize and they end up being inefficient.

Research participants also complained that, in SCCs some members pretend to know everything. During their weekly bible sharing meetings, they do not give others room to share and express their understanding of the scripture. This makes them shy off and hinder their potential and



knowledge in some very important issues. Such members are underutilized and their contributions in evangelization are never explored and used.

In addition, in some SCC some members were reported to have put a lot of emphasis on their traditions. In some occasions they don't give equal attention to SCCs meetings and activities because of superstitions based on their culture. Therefore they do not lend a hand in works of charity in the SCCs because of their beliefs. This affects evangelization which entails more than preaching (words). In support of this, Kurgat (2004) noted that some Luhya strongly oppose the Church's prohibition of their culture, which they highly uphold.

Lack of commitment by some members has made some SCCs to remain inactive. Some participants complained that everyone claimed to be busy. Responses during the study indicated that most SCCs are active only when it is their turn to lead in mass. Weekly meeting attendance was poor compared to the registered members in the respective SCCs. In some SCCs, the activities of these cells had been left in the hands of the elderly people. The working class and the youthful groups always claimed to be committed elsewhere. This hindered their active participation in the SCCs. This concurs with Kurgat's (2004) findings where she noted that in SCCs in the Catholic Church in Busia some members are not actively involved in their weekly meetings due to busy work schedule.

Despite these challenges, the church leadership claimed to always encourage the various SCCs, through their leaders, to address the challenges in order for them to fulfill their mission of evangelization as mandated by Jesus Christ. The priests in charge and Catechists noted that they

frequently visited various SCCs during their weekly meetings and home -based mass at SCCs level.

#### **4.5. Summary**

The study revealed that SCCs contributes towards evangelization through the use of catechism instructions, bible sharing, and inculturation and charity activities. Evangelization is done through catechism by subjecting new converts and the members of SCCs into catechetical instructions where they are taught about the teachings of the Catholic Church whereby baptism is given a lot of emphasis. This is because, for one to be converted into the Catholic faith, they must be baptized. Catechism equips SCCs members with evangelization skills. The teachings from catechism offer knowledge to the members of SCCs which they impact on each other's and on to their neighbors. Therefore catechism itself is an evangelization tool.

SCCs also carry out evangelization through bible sharing. This happens through a model of seven steps which exposes SCCs members to a better understanding of the bible and hence effective evangelization. SCCs members gained evangelization skills through application of bible knowledge on to their day-to-day activities. This knowledge was shared with family members and their neighbors.

Through inculturation SCCs members were able to evangelize through incorporating their various cultural values in to worship. This was done through worship whereby they offered foodstuffs and also conducted some of their rites of passage in the Christian way such as initiation where initiates were presented to the church for prayers after the end of the seclusion

period. The act of incorporating and embracing their cultural values created an avenue for evangelization as they have been able to accommodate many who have been rejected in their faith because of some of the cultural practices.

Finally, through various charitable activities SCCs have been able to evangelize to many who have witnessed these charity activities. Their works of charity and compassion have had a positive impact on many who have been transformed and converted into the catholic faith. These achievements have not been without challenges such as low male attendance in SCCs meetings, clanism and competition from other denominations among others.

This study was pegged on functionalism theory which focuses on contributions of various elements of a system. This is done through analyzing their contributions, which are called eufunctions (positive), dysfunction (negative) or, ‘survival’, that is, an element that makes no contribution at all or has outlived its purpose. The argument that we therefore make is that SCCs, are organs that are at the Church’s micro level, are necessary components for evangelization, and are important in passing the message of Christ among members of these organs and communities around them. We also argue that, the SCCs, in an effort to function as ambassadors of the Catholic Church, they also use charity to take care of the destitute. This is a way of taking care of those among them that are not able to meet their daily needs, and, through this, attracting them towards the love of God. Both these – catechism and charity – are acts of evangelization.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

The findings of the study help us conclude that SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County have four ways of evangelizing and they have realized their missions. This has been achieved through catechism whereby Christians are taught about the church teachings. After acquiring the teachings, the new converts are baptized. During catechism lessons, members of SCCs acquire evangelization skills as they are involved in teaching new converts and mentoring them. There is also extensive bible sharing through adoption of seven steps of bible sharing model. SCCs members are involved in bible interpretation based on their day to day interaction with their neighbors. In addition, inculturation is embraced whereby SCCs spread the gospel within their cultural values and this has created a home for many who value their cultures. Finally charity activities through charitable works of compassion have had a positive impact on evangelization whereby a number of Christian has been converted to catholic faith. A few challenges however persist such as few men in SCCs meetings, competitions from other denominations and poor relationships within the clan. The Church leadership is however keen to help the SCCs address these challenges.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES INVOLVEMENT IN PROMOTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN VIHIGA COUNTY**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The second objective of the study was to analyse how SCCs promote social Justice in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County. The study objective was guided by functionalism theory propounded by Emile Durkheim. He stated that societies are held together by a means of a collective conscience. Therefore, sentiments that are shared in common by members of the society have a strong influence on individual and group behavior. First, the study discusses what Social Justice implies. It also provides the teachings of the Catholic Church on social justice. Secondly, the study analyses the principles of social justice as applied in the SCCs which included: human dignity, common good, solidarity and subsidiary.

#### **5.2 Understanding Social Justice**

The study analyzed the meaning of Social Justice from various scholars; and, sought clarity on the contextual meaning from respondents during oral interview. According to Shelagh (2013) Social Justice is the assurance that the basic human rights of all people are upheld. Society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. The foundation of social justice is the principle of the dignity of the human person. Social justice is linked to the common good and the exercise of authority. In addition, Pennock (2007) states that social justice applies to the Gospel of Jesus Christ to society's structures, systems and laws so people's rights

are guaranteed. It ensures that persons have a fair say in social, economic and political institutions, thus fulfilling their duty to give back to the larger community.

From in-depth oral interview respondents had different understanding of social justice. For example:

*Respondent 3: Social justice is being mindful of others welfare and treating each other equally and with respect.*

*Respondent 5: It involves giving others what is right for them and allowing free and fair participation in community activities.*

*Respondent 7: Social justice is treating others fairly and according them what is right for them.*

*Respondent 10: Social justice is showing dignity to others through respecting their rights and working together for the benefit of each other.*

*Respondent 15: It involves care and protection for all in sharing things in the society and working together as a team. It involves freedom to participate in various activities in the society.*

*Respondent 18: Social justice is fairness and equity in dealing with various issues in the society. It entails respect for human rights.*

Other definitions from the respondents states that social justice was seen as a quest for fair treatment of people with dignity and equality in distribution of resources. It includes respect for human rights and dignity. Therefore from these definitions, social justice can be termed as fair treatment of people in the society through upholding their human rights; taking into consideration the common good of their welfare; allowing freedom of participation in various activities in the community; and, working together for the good of the community.

### 5.3 Catholic Church Teachings on Social Justice

According to Kizito (2015), Catholic social teaching is the body of doctrine developed by the Catholic Church on matters of social justice. According to Pope Benedict XVI (2011), its purpose is simply to help purify reason and to contribute, here and now, to the acknowledgment and attainment of what is just. The Church has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice ... cannot prevail and prosper.

Data on the Catholic Church teachings on social justice were gathered through in-depth oral interviews:

*Respondent 25: As Christians we are taught to respond to the injustice we see in our SCCs and actively advocate for justice on those affected.*

*Respondent 30: We are taught to take care of all in the society through our SCCs. We should fight injustice and ensure that the poor, the marginalized and the physically and mentally challenged have a place in the society through our various SCCs.*

*Respondent 80: We are taught to create a friendly environment in our SCCs for all to participate in community work either as individual or groups without discrimination of whichever type or interruption by any party.*

*Respondent 110: For justice to prevail, we are encouraged to work together as a family in our SCCs irrespective of our culture, tribes or financial status.*

*Respondent 150: We are supposed to respect human dignity and promote common good for all in our dealings with others in the SCCs.*

From the questionnaires administered to the chairpersons of SCCs the following was captured;

*SCC 6: The Catholic Church teaches that respect of human person should be done without discrimination in order to give a place for all in the community.*

*SCC 17: We are taught of the spirit of togetherness in that we are all brothers and sisters. We are reminded that we are created in the image and likeness of God and therefore all are equal.*

*SCC 33: All Christians are equal and must be treated equally despite their social statuses. They should be given equal opportunities in decision making and in participating in church activities right from their SCCs.*

*SCC 73: All are equal before God and therefore should treat each other with respect and ensure common good for all through working together as a team or a family in various activities they participates in.*

These definitions of social justice from the participants in this research are in line with some scholarly arguments. For instance, Kizito (2015) explains that, social justice foundation rests on the threefold cornerstone of human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity. These are the sentiments gathered from respondents when they highlighted issues on fair treatment, equality, care and togetherness. These concerns echo elements of Jewish law and the prophetic books of the Old Testament, and recall the teachings of Jesus Christ recorded in the New Testament, such as his declaration that "whatever you have done for one of these least brothers of Mine, you have done for Me (Mat 25:45).

Treating human beings well is at the centre of Catholic Church's teachings. Himchak (2005) states that, since its inception, the Catholic Church has always held the human rights perspective in its teaching of social justice and used it as the essential framework for the implementation of all its social ministries throughout the world. The Church has understood this perspective as representing the teaching of the Old and New Testament, and the Traditions of the Church. The human rights perspective emerges in the social teaching of the Catholic Church in the truth found in the triune nature of God, which is communal, relational, and social. God the Father sends his only Son, Jesus Christ and shares the Holy Spirit as his gift of life and love in which each person is created uniquely in the image and likeness of God. Beyond human and natural bonds, there is a discerning light of faith, a new model of the unity of the human race which is a reflection of the



intimate life of God that is One God in Three persons. Through Baptism each person is empowered by the Spirit of God to build relationships based on God's justice that are life giving and love communicating throughout the world.

In 1975, Pope Paul VI wrote an encyclical on "Proclaiming the Gospel" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*) in which he underscored the intimate connection between evangelization and social justice. He made it clear that evangelization involves a clear message about the rights and duties of every human being, about life in society, about international life, peace, justice and development (Paul VI, in Deneulin, 2009:75). Deneulin informs us that this encyclical echoes what the synod of Catholic bishops said in 1971 in a letter entitled "Justice in the World." They reiterated the links between evangelization and development, and stated that "action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world" is "a constitutive dimension of preaching the gospel" (Catholic Bishops, in Deneulin, 2009:75-76).

Within the Catholic Church in Kenya there is a commission in every church in charge of justice issues. According to Kenya Episcopal Conference (KEC) *Lenten campaign training manual* (2016), the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) was established in 1988 as the executive arm of the KEC on matters of peace and justice. The CJPC works to promote justice and challenge in oppressive structures in society. CJPC's broad mandate is to sensitize individuals, communities, and the whole nation on justice, peace and reconciliation issues and their respective roles and duties in addressing peace development, evangelization, governance, human advancement and human rights. Some programmes that CJPC undertakes include; peace building and conflict resolution, Lenten campaign and transformative civic education. The

objectives of this commission as set out in the CJPC Pastoral Letter of 1988 are: to work for the eradication of injustice wherever it is seen to exist, by analyzing the situation in the light of the Gospel, planning relevant steps and action in order to contribute to their solutions and issuing official communications as to the stand of the Catholic Church in Kenya. Secondly, advice, encourage and support the diocesan CJPC and other groups involved in justice and peace issues. Third, to cooperate with other institutions, churches and peoples in the spirit of Christian Unity. Fourth, to approve the contents of formation on programmes and Lenten campaign. Finally, CJPC has representatives in all SCCs to address issues of justice at the grassroots level.

From the existing literature and field data, it is clear that Catholic faithfuls are aware of existence and teachings on social justice. The church advocates for justice to be granted to all. This is because all are equal before God based on biblical teachings. Secondly, it was pointed out that there is need for respect for all through fair treatment. Therefore human dignity is paramount. Third, justice cannot be promoted in isolation; it requires Christians to work together for the common good of all. Finally, justice is well exercised when Christian are given freedom to participate in various activities in the church and society. These forms the principles of social justice that guides in creation of a just society.

The study therefore concludes that there is evidence that the Catholic Church teaches about social justice for all. SCCs therefore are expected to promote human dignity by taking care of all, working towards promotion of common good through equality. In addition justice is promoted in SCCs through solidarity by working together for the good of the church and community and finally by creating an environment where SCCs members can freely participate in various

activities aimed development of the church and community. In Kenya, the Catholic Church has a commission in charge of social justice (CJPC) and it has representatives in the SCCs.

#### **5.4 Promotion of Social Justice in SCCs through Application of the Principles of Social Justice**

The study sought to examine how the principles of social justice were applied in SCCs in Vihiga County. Functionalism theory was applied to show the cohesiveness of the society through the SCCs in the Catholic Church and its influence on the members as will be discussed latter in this chapter.

With reference to the principles of social justice, Stratford (2001) states that, the central theme of the Catholic teachings on social justice is the human person created in the image and likeness of God. This is the reason behind argument for social, political, economic, cultural and religious activities that are all suitable for human existence. The teachings provide principles of reflection, criteria for judgment and guidelines for action. It includes a collection of key themes which have evolved in response to the challenges of the day rooted in biblical orientations and reflections on Christian tradition. The major themes of the Catholic social justice include: Dignity of the human person, Common good, Solidarity and Subsidiarity. These were the basis for the study's exploration of social justice because they seemed to provide a good summary of the definition of what social justice meant to the respondents.

### 5.4.1 Human Dignity

From the questionnaires and from in-depth oral interview, respondents gave their various views of human dignity and how it was applied in their respective SCCs in promotion of justice. The following were gathered from the questionnaires:

*SCC 1: Human dignity has to do with respect. We respect each other in our SCC by fighting for the rights of the underprivileged.*

*SCC 23: We show our human dignity by treating our neighbors well irrespective of our different cultures.*

*SCC 70: We respect each other opinion in our SCCs meeting and show love to all.*

From the oral interviews conducted the following were captured in support of the above.

Table 5.1 below shows summarized views on how human dignity was exercised in the SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County. The views were obtained from 5, priests, 5 assistant priests, 5 catechists and 148 SCCs members.

**Table 5.1 Application of Human Dignity in SCCs**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Respect of life	46	28.2
Education on human rights	35	21.5
Tolerating each other	28	17.2
Providing needy with basic needs	24	14.7
Treating others fairly	18	11.0
Respecting others opinion	12	7.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: field data**

From the table above, 28.2% of the respondent indicated that human dignity is highly exercised through showing respect to life while closely to that, 21.5 shows that human dignity is expressed through educating others on human rights. Human dignity was achieved through tolerating each other at 17.2% and by providing the needy with basic needs at 14.7%. Finally, 11.0% reported

that human dignity was acquired through treating others fairly and respecting others opinion which was rated at 7.4%. In addition, based on demographical data from the questionnaires ,it can be pointed out that education level of the respondents had a influence on the understanding of human dignity since the group seemed to be well conversed with human rights. Therefore SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County were involved in promotion of social justice as indicated above. The following were captured from respondents during the study.

*Respondent 23: We exercise human dignity through showing respect to life by taking care of the sick in our SCCs. We encourage them through visitation and offering help where necessary. We fight for the rights of the physically and mentally challenged in the society by ensuring that they get access to education in the church based institutions for the physically and mentally challenged. We ensure the challenged persons are not isolated or discriminated in any way. Once we identify them in our SCCs and our neighbouring, we ensure they are fairly treated and granted all their rights.*

*Respondent 90: We have CJPC officials in our SCCs who teach us on various issues pertaining our human rights. For example during election year, a CJPC official educates us on our rights to vote especially on civic education. People have been taught on their rights to votes and on other rights such as on women participation and youth's participation in various activities in the church and society.*

*Respondent 122: We express the human dignity in our SCCs by tolerating each other irrespective of our different ideologies. We are supposed to treat well those who think and act differently from us and forgive those who offend us and forget all offences against us as a way of creating a just society.*

*Respondent 141: we assist the needy in our SCCs by providing them with basic needs. We donate clothes and foodstuffs to them for them to feel they are part of the community. During our weekly meetings we preach equality for all whether rich or poor by discouraging SCCs members from offering meals because it can lead to competition and division among members.*

The data above shows how SCCs understands and apply human dignity among themselves and community at large. It also describes how SCCs apply the principle of human dignity by showing

respect to life through caring for the sick and those with special needs such as the physically and mentally challenged in the society, providing basic needs to the less fortunate and through learning their various rights pertaining their participation in the church and society at large. This application of human dignity also was greatly influenced by the age and occupation of the respondents because of the norms that guides the any society.

In addition, it was reported that SCCs have created a just environment where there is fair treatment of all irrespective of their different, social and cultural backgrounds. Human dignity also entails good neighborhood through the virtue of love and forgiveness. Fair treatment of neighbors without exception is encouraged as a way of promoting justice in the SCCs.

In support of the finding above, Stratford (2001) notes that, the foundation of human dignity is God's plan of creation. God created human beings in His own image and likeness (Gen 1.27) hence the root reason for human dignity. It is also rooted in our call to communion with God. Every person regardless of race, sex, colour, national origin, religion, economic status, health etc is worthy of respect. It is not what a person does or what one has that gives a claim on respect, but it is simply by being human that establishes ones dignity. Given that dignity, the person is never a means but always an end.

Feely (1994) adds that, human dignity originates from God and is of God because we are made in God's own image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27). Human life is sacred because the human person is the most central and clearest reflection of God among us. Human beings have transcendent worth and value that comes from God; this dignity is not based on any human quality, legal

mandate, or individual merit or accomplishment. Human dignity is inalienable, that means it is an essential part of every human being and is an intrinsic quality that can never be separated from other essential aspects of the human person. Human beings are qualitatively different from any other living being in the world because they are capable of knowing and loving God, unlike any other creature. Belief in the dignity of the human person is the foundation of morality. The principle of human dignity is the foundation of all the Catholic social teaching principles.

Similarly, Kizito (2015) states that every person is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ. Consequently, every person is worthy of respect simply by virtue of being a human being. People do not lose the right to being treated with respect because of disability, poverty, age, lack of success or race, let alone gain the right to be treated with greater respect because of what they own or accomplish. People can never forfeit their right to be treated with respect because God, not us, assigns it.

In addition, Windley-Daoust (2005) pointed out that all people have dignity because they are loved and created in God's image. They are called to love others regardless of race, gender, social status, disability or history. No behaviours or actions can take away God's love or the fundamental and inherent dignity of a person. Windley-Daoust adds that, the respect for human life is the basis of all Catholic social teaching, and, consequently, means more than to allow individuals to live. Such respect expects that Christians will be called to ensure that each person lives life fully, experiencing the abundance of God's love and participating in all aspects of society.

Kizito (2015) states that, The Catholic Church teaches that the human person is both sacred and social. We realize our dignity and rights in relationship with others, in community. As Saint Paul said in 1Corinthians 12:26, Christians are one body: when one suffers, they all suffer. They are called to respect all of God's gifts of creation, to be good stewards of the earth and each other. Human dignity can only be realized and protected in the context of relationships with the wider society. How we organize our society - in economics and politics, in law and policy -- directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The obligation to love our neighbor has an individual dimension, but it also requires a broader social commitment. Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to the good of the whole society, to the common good. In addition, Trisolini (2011) also pointed out that love of neighbor is an absolute demand for justice, because charity manifests itself in actions and structures which respect human dignity, protect human rights, and facilitate human development. To promote justice is to transform structures which block love.

SCCs in matters of assisting the poor, eradicating hunger and poverty, and promoting human development, social reforms and justice are in a special position to assume roles of service and leadership as pointed out by Majawa (2005). The involvement of SCCs in such an apostolate is a public witnessing to the dynamism of the Gospel message. SCCs should be guided in such a way that the true evangelical vision and prayerful discernment can be the principles in holding at all costs the dignity and rights of the human person as the greatest values in political and social life in promotion of justice.



In promoting human dignity the church through SCCs is involved in a number of activities. From the findings, justice has been exercised in the SCCs through promotion of human dignity in the following ways; SCCs members have been able to take care of the sick, the physically and mentally challenged. The SCCs try to identify the needy in the society and help them or channel them to government or non-governmental bodies so that they can receive help. In some of the SCCs they evidenced that they have made efforts to have the needy access to good health care and education.

There are some centers that have been set aside to cater for people with various challenges. An example that was given during interview was in Parish one where there is rehabilitation centre for street children from the nearby market centre. The centre caters for street boys picked by members of various SCCs. In this centre they are rehabilitated and educated to make them fit in the society. The church through SCCs offers for all their needs and upkeep. In addition the same Parish has a primary school and secondary for the hearing impaired which are results of SCC in their effort to enlighten the community on justice for all without discrimination. To maintain these projects, the SCCs make contribution in their kitty and when need be hold fund raising ceremonies to support the projects.

It can be concluded that the SCCs contribute to the welfare of the members of the Catholic Church, and the community at large by drawing teachings on human dignity from the scripture. This therefore becomes the foundation of the teachings on justice. SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County ensure justice is achieved by taking care of the sick, the physically and mentally challenged and the underprivileged such as orphans and street boys. They ensure these

groups get their rights and are fairly treated in the society. They also have encouraged good neighborhood by treating each other well without any exceptions. They forgive each other and respect each other opinion. They teach people about their rights especially on equality for all genders and encourage active participation of all individuals in the church activities. Therefore they have developed a culture that protects and cares for the community members as a way of promoting societal justice.

#### **5.4.2 Common Good**

In defining common good, there seemed to be a connection with this terminology and human dignity in that common good strengthened human dignity. The participants explained that for human dignity to be all encompassing for humanity there has to be common good, that is, efforts have to be directed to the less privileged in the society. From the in depth oral interviews, observation and through questionnaires data was generated on how the principle of common good was achieved in the SCCs in promotion of social justice for all. The aspect of common good was defined as follows:

*SCC 2: It is our duty to take care of the poor, physically and mentally challenged, destitute and orphans. We ensure they have a place in the society where they can feel at home through our SCCs.*

*SCC 45: As members of SCCs we work together as a community. We give equal chances to all during our meetings. We appreciate their contributions towards our social and spiritual growth.*

*SCC 60: We depend on each other for our survival. This is because we are talented and blessed in different ways. Whatever we do in our SCC is for the benefit of us all.*

This was also evidenced in the in-depth oral interview as summarized in the table below and in the oral excerpts from 148 SCCs members.

**Table 5.2 Principle of Common Good in the SCCs**

	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Identifying the needy and taking care of them	37	25.0
2	Working together for the benefit of all	34	23.0
3	Giving equal chances in participation in the SCC	30	20.3
4	Being concerned about others welfare	27	18.2
5	Cultivating the spirit of interdependence	20	13.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: field data**

Table 5.2 above gives a summary of how the principle of common good is achieved in the SCCs in Vihiga County. Twenty five per cent (25%) of the respondents stated that common good is promoted through identifying the needy in the society and taking care of them as part of their society and as their duty. They also emphasize on working together as a team for the common good of all as rated at 23%. 20.3% of the respondents reported that they give equal chances to all in participation of various activities in their SCCs. They are also concerned about others welfare as rated at 18.2%. Finally, 13.5% noted that they have cultivated the spirit of interdependence for the benefit of all. This was evidenced in the following oral excerpts.

*Respondent 91: Human being is social by nature. We need each other to thrive. We depend on each other for our survival and comfort in life. In our SCCs we encourage members to cultivate the spirit of sharing whatever they have with the needy. We should be mindful of others especially vulnerable members of our society and treat them well. This is because although they lack material things they are blessed in other ways which can be of benefit to us as a community.*

*Respondent 120: As SCC members, we are all responsible for each other and work for social conditions which ensure that every person in our community is able to meet his /her needs and realize their potential. We always take in to account the rights and aspirations of all our members, and of their well being and for the benefit of all of us.*

The researcher observed some donation of clothes and foodstuffs in some SCCs. They were to be given to a group in one of the special needs centers. There was evidence of rehabilitation centre in parish one, orphanage in parish three and a center for the mentally challenged in parish

four through the support of SCCs. The findings revealed that SCCs members ensured common good was achieved in their quest for justice by ensuring that the vulnerable members in the community were helped. It was reported that all SCCs members contribute to life in the community, and all members share in the mutual benefits of life in the community. The spirit of sharing and caring was emphasized as it was believed that when one suffers, all suffered. Therefore, interdependence was encouraged to ensure a place for all in the SCCs and society at large. The presence of many women than men in SCCs had an influence on the promotion of common good. This was based on the fact that women are very motherly and compassionate in nature. Therefore most of the activities that were carried out within the SCCs for the common good of all were based on acts of compassionate such as caring for the poor, physically and mentally challenged and interdependence among others.

Justice and Peace Commission (2009) states that, common good is to be understood as the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily. The common good concerns the life of all. It calls for prudence from each, and even more from those who exercise the office of authority. It consists of three essential elements: First, the common good presupposes respect for the person as such. In the name of the common good, public authorities are bound to respect the fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person. Society should permit each of its members to fulfill his vocation. In particular, the common good resides in the conditions for the exercise of the natural freedoms indispensable for the development of the human vocation, such as the right to act according to a sound norm of conscience and to safeguard ... privacy, and rightful freedom also in matters of religion. Second, the common good requires the social well being and development

of the group itself. Development is the epitome of all social duties. Certainly, it is the proper function of authority to arbitrate, in the name of the common good, between various particular interests; but it should make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life: food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on. Finally, the common good requires peace, that is, the stability and security of a just order. It presupposes that authority should ensure by morally acceptable means the security of society and its members. It is the basis of the right to legitimate personal and collective defense.

A basic moral test of society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. According to Kizito (2015), morality which involves trust and credibility should be examined in view of what the Church calls “option for the poor”. The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation. The option for the poor is a perspective that examines personal decisions, policies of private and public institutions, and economic relationships in terms of their effects on the poor - those who lack the minimum necessities of nutrition, housing, education, and health care. Those who are marginalized and whose rights are denied have privileged claims if society is to provide justice for all. The obligation to evaluate social and economic activity from the viewpoint of the poor and the powerless arises from the radical command to love one’s neighbor as one’s self. The option for the poor is an essential part of society’s effort to achieve the common good. A healthy community can be achieved only if its members give special attention to those with special needs, to those who are poor and on the margins of society.

In support of Kizito on the option of the poor (Tien, 2006) states that, the church of the poor is grounded in the social teaching on the option or love of preference for the poor. The Catholic Church acknowledges this option as its vocation for the proclamation of the good news and the

promotion of justice. The church encourages all people of God to carry out this mission. Many projects, mainly on the parish, religious, religious congregation or lay volunteer levels have been carried out for the needy.

Common good involves interdependence. Kizito (2015) states that, interdependence concerns the sharing and caring aspect that is co-operation and participation. The Catholic Church teaches that the human person is both sacred and social. We realize our dignity and rights in relationship with others, in community. As Saint Paul said 1Corinthians 12:26, “We are one body: when one suffers, we all suffer.” We are called to respect all of God’s gifts of creation, to be good stewards of the earth and each other. In a culture driven by excessive individualism, our tradition proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social.

Similarly, Ihuoma (2014) avers that Christians recognize human interdependence not only as a necessary fact but also as a positive value in their lives. The full potential and dignity of the human person is realized through a life that he shares with others. Mutual benefit comes through just cooperation with others in society .The consequence is a transformation from an inner attitude about solidarity, not manifested in action, to the engagement in external activities that demonstrate our commitment to the well-being of others.

The research findings also showed that every SCC has a ministry of justice and peace referred to as Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC). Within the five parishes and their sub-parishes in Vihiga County, CJPC plays a major role in fighting for justice for the underprivileged. Through the SCCs, members are able to identify the physically and mentally

challenged and accord them the necessary treatment. For example a school of the mentally challenged in Parish four was initiated through the efforts of SCCs. SCCs members identify the children from the villages and bring them to the school. In most cases, these children are stigmatized, isolated and hidden by their parents and relatives. With the assistance of SCCs members, they receive care and attention in the church which acts as their home. This promotes common good for all irrespective of their social or physical statuses. These findings are in line with what Kizito (2015) observes, that, human dignity can only be realized and protected in the context of relationships with the wider society. How we organize our society - in economics and politics, in law and policy -- directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The obligation to “love our neighbor” has an individual dimension, but it also requires a broader social commitment. Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to the good of the whole society, to the common good.

The study therefore concludes that the principle of common good has been achieved in the SCCs through the following ways: first, there is sharing and caring for the needy with an aim of making them feel they are part of the community since their suffering affects others; second, there is sharing by working together not for self benefits but for the good of all in the SCCs and the wider community; third, there is togetherness where people work in unity in order for all to thrive; finally, there are contributions in interdependence whereby all have a voice in decision making in their SCCs. Therefore, the social well being and development of the SCCs members is emphasized for the common good of all.

### 5.4.3 Solidarity

In order for the virtue of common good to work, working in togetherness becomes very important. The SCCs must unite since their mandate in ensuring that social justice is enhanced, strengthening human dignity and common good requires solidarity. The study findings show that SCCs members embrace the principle of solidarity through working together in the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood. This was evident from information gathered on the questionnaires and from discussion in the in depth oral interviews.

Data from the 74 questionnaires administered to chairpersons of SCCs had the following information on how solidarity was achieved in the SCCs

**Table 5.3. How solidarity was achieved in SCCs.**

	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Treating each other as brothers as sisters	23	31.0
2	Participating in various activities as a family	15	20.3
3	Assisting each other in times of need.	14	18.9
4	Sharing social and spiritual challenges	13	17.6
5	Emphasizing on cooperation	9	12.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field data**

The table above shows that 31% of respondents indicated that they show solidarity in their SCCs by treating each other as brothers and sisters and participating in various activities as a family at 20.3%. They also stated that they assist each other in times of need through sharing their social and spiritual challenges at 18.9 % and 17.6% respectively. Finally, they emphasize on cooperation in their attainment of solidarity. It can also be pointed out that the occupation of respondents as outlined in figure 4.3 had an influence on the promotion of solidarity in the



SCCs. Respondents may have borrowed some ideals of work relations from their different occupations for the smooth running of their SCCs .This was proved in the following excerpts from the questionnaires.

*SCC 2: We treat each other as brothers and sisters and we work together as a team in solving challenges that affect us as a community.*

*SCC 15: we work together as a family through co-operation and assist each other in times of need.*

*SCC50: we relate as a family and we are united in whatever we do. We participate in various activities together such as in wedding preparations and during bereavement.*

*SCC 74: we share our different social challenges and address them as a group and as a family.*

Similarly, during oral interviews it was confirmed that,

*Respondent 25: We emphasize on co-operation in our SCCs, we treat each other as one family of God and we share our spiritual goodness through our bible sharing and in cash and kind to support those in need.*

*Respondent 133: We encourage unity among ourselves during our interaction within and outside the church for the good of the community and church at large. We believe as SCCs member it is our duty to stand with those who are suffering by being compassionate to them. We visit the sick and pray with them, moan with the bereaved and make merry with the happy ones.*

The findings above reveal that there is a lot of co-operation and team work among the members of SCCs in their day to day activities. The spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood is exercised for the benefit of all. SCCs members work together as one family guided by the principle of solidarity in promotion of justice. They treat each other as equal and believe that they belong to one body of Christ. They accommodate each other in all times in their daily activities. In case of events such as a wedding, they are all involved in preparation and ensuring the success of the event. During bereavement they support the bereaved through financial support and offering any form of assistance. There was a reported case in one of the SCC where members volunteered and

re-constructed a house to a member after the house burned down in accident. There was also another incident when SCCs members contributed to raise house rent for a member who had some financial challenges. The Catholic Church through SCCs participates in addressing issues of injustice on the vulnerable members of the society as each other's keeper. The SCCs members not only participate in establishing social care centres as already discussed above, but also visit the rehabilitation center, orphanage and institutions of physically and mentally challenged and offer them assistance in form of foodstuffs and clothing.

The practice of solidarity within the SCCs is evidenced in these narratives and as Kizito (2015) in giving the meaning of solidarity states, Christians are our brothers and sisters keepers. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that loving our neighbor has global dimensions in an interdependent world. Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.

Ryan (2005) argues that solidarity means that individuals should consistently work together for the common good. Human beings are co-dependent on one another for their survival. All are responsible for one another. This means to be true brothers and sisters to one another. Catholic social teaching rejects competition and conflict; instead it focuses on working collaboratively for the good of society, the nation, the church and community through cooperation, compassion and social initiatives.

The church, including its members must be present among the marginalized because practical solidarity and presence are not given realities. These realities must be struggled for and achieved through immersion and socialization with people. Aguilar (1995: 75) argues, “the individual Christians personal responsibility towards justice, community solidarity and the social outcasts has to be channeled through the common solidarity of a larger community by the pastoral agents”. He further notes that it is through presence among people that the church by its teaching and training can help them actively to be involved in the social mission of the church as their responsibilities towards other members of the church.

Orobator (2000) on his part explains that solidarity with the needy is doing the social mission of the church as family needs to be practiced by confronting and denouncing the very structures of society which produce injustice. The story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 could be differently interpreted for it has some influence on the image of the church. In an uncritical hermeneutic of the Good Samaritan the church fails the challenge of active participation in the social arena. It prefers “the indulge in assistential” and the caritative endeavors rather than uncover and confront the structural and root cause of social malaise. On contrary, in a hermeneutic, the Samaritan stands as an active agent who seeks to redress the unjust violence happened to traveler. Charitable work is admirable, but it is not an adequate remedy. Therefore the church is challenged to carry out a ministry of active participation in order to address social issues for the sake of the needy.

According to Nduku (2011), solidarity helps people to feel that they form one family. It creates a bond between all people and fosters a spirit of responsibility. It does not aim at elimination of

one class by the other but enhances cultural tolerance by bringing people of various cultural backgrounds to participate actively at all levels in building up appropriate structures for their integral development . It also rejects violence as a solution to social, political and economic injustices. It further recognizes the noble and just struggle for justice, but it is categorically opposed to violence as a means of achieving this noble struggle for justice.

JPC (2009) states that the exercise of solidarity within each society is valid when its members recognize one another as persons. Those who are more influential because they have a greater share of goods and common services should feel responsible for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess. Those who are weaker, for their part, in the same spirit of solidarity, should not adopt a purely passive attitude or one that is destructive of the social fabric, but, while claiming their legitimate rights, should do what they can for the good of all. The intermediate groups, in their turn, should not selfishly insist on their particular interests, but respect the interests of others.

According to Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994), the home is the natural environment for initiating a human being into solidarity and communal responsibilities. Parents should teach children to avoid the compromising and degrading influences which threaten human societies. In addition, it also presupposes the effort for a more just social order where tensions are better able to be reduced and conflicts more readily settled by negotiation. Socio-economic problems can be resolved only with the help of all the forms of solidarity: solidarity of the poor among themselves, between rich and poor, of workers among themselves, between employers and employees in a business, solidarity among nations and peoples.

The spirit of solidarity is important because it is the foundation of equal development as noted by Tien (2006). It is fostered when it is grounded in human rights, moral values, and legitimate independence of people and autonomy of civic organizations. It must go beyond the benefits of particular organizations and groups in order to serve the development of society and the promotion of human beings and family.

The Catholic Church teaches that there is an intimate connection between solidarity and the common good, between solidarity and the universal destination of goods, between solidarity and equality among human beings and peoples, and between solidarity and peace in the world (Ihuoma, 2014). This is the reason why the Catholic Church supports ties that unite individuals and social groups in which they participate and share their natural gifts and exercise human freedom for common growth. It is an opportunity for men and women to engage in beneficial sharing with their neighbors beyond individual and particular interests as opposed to separation and fragmentation. The principle of solidarity has the character of inspiring willingness in a person to give himself for the good of his neighbor. It makes a person live a life that goes beyond any selfish interest.

In conclusion, solidarity has been achieved in the SCCs through working together in the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood through sharing with the needy. SCCs members ensure fair treatment of each other by working together as a team and as a family. They share and solve challenges affecting them in their SCCs. They assist each other in times of need through the spirit of cooperation. They create a sense of responsibility for the weaker through the virtue of love.

#### **5.4.4 Subsidiarity**

Pennock (2007) states that Catholic Church defines subsidiarity as a social doctrine where “all social bodies exist for the sake of the individual so that what individuals are able to do, society should not take over, and what small societies can do, larger societies should not take over”. Pennock gave a contemporary example on any construction site in Ontario. There are a variety of trades people, each with their own area of expertise, that come together to build a house. Each trade is given the responsibility to apply its craft, whether it is carpentry, masonry, electrical or plumbing, without interference. Only when blueprint or government code is violated does a project manager interfere and give direction. This means that only when individuals or groups cannot carry out their responsibilities should managers, organizations or governments intervene. In the pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops notes that a government should not replace or destroy smaller communities and individual initiative. Rather it should help them contribute more effectively to social well-being and supplement their activity when the demands of justice exceed their capacities.

The teaching of the Church has elaborated the principle of subsidiary. According to *Justice and Peace Commission* (2009) a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to co-ordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society. God has not willed to reserve to himself all exercise of power. He entrusts to every creature the functions it is capable of performing, according to the capacities of its own nature. This mode of governance ought to be followed in social life. The way God acts in governing the world, which bears witness to such great regard for human freedom, should inspire the wisdom of those who

govern human communities. They should behave as ministers of divine providence. The principle of subsidiary is opposed to all forms of collectivism. It sets limits for state intervention. It aims at harmonizing the relationships between individuals and societies. It tends toward the establishment of true international order.

The findings of the study show that SCCs promotes the principle of subsidiarity through participating in various activities in the community. This was proved through the data gathered from the questionnaires, in depth oral interviews and participant observation as discussed below;

*SCC1: We participate in civic education during election year to be educated on our civic rights so that we can vote wisely.*

*SCC 23: We organize our own SCCs programmes such as saint's day celebration and SCCs mass celebrations in our respective homes.*

*SCC 60: We choose our own leader in the SCCs and in the parish without interference of the priest or political leaders.*

In addition, during the in depth oral interview, respondents pointed out the following as captured from 148 SCCs members interviewed during the study.

The table below gives a summary of how the principle of subsidiarity was applied in the quest for justice in the SCCs in Vihiga County as reported by two members from each of the 74 SCCs.

**Table 5.4 Principle of Subsidiarity in the SCCs**

	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Working with the priest	33	22.3
2	Taking care of institutions that promotes human life	30	20.3
3	Regular meetings and training sessions for leaders	28	18.9
4	Organizing retreats	25	16.9
5	Organizing for baptism of infants and new converts	19	12.8
6	Organizing Eucharistic celebrations within SCCs	13	8.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field data**

The highest opinion count recorded 22.3% of respondent who were interviewed. They stated that they work with the priest by communicating to him all their SCCs activities and plans. 20.3% reported that they normally take care of institutions that promote human life within the county that are run by the Catholic Church. 18.9% reported that they have regular meetings and training sessions for their leaders. 16.9% stated that they organize retreats within the SCCs. In addition, it was also reported they also organize for baptism and Eucharistic celebrations at SCCs level.

*Respondent 35: The Church empowers SCCs for effective participation in various church activities. At parish level we have regular meetings and training sessions (workshops and seminars) of the SCC leaders. Leaders are trained on leadership skills, the liturgy of the Catholic Church and on self awareness. Once leaders are trained, they disseminate this information to the members of their respective SCCs. This is aimed at empowering them and equipping them with leadership skills for effective running of SCCs.*

*Respondent 45: We at the SCCs are the church at the grassroots .we are encouraged to have Eucharistic celebration within our SCCs in our various homes. Therefore, we are at task to plan and organize for these celebrations within the SCC and inform the priest to conduct the service. Above all we educate one another in the SCCs on the need of these celebrations in our faith formation.*

*Respondent 55: We normally organize for retreats annually at Vincentian Prayer House Kisumu and we encourage members to go for retreats frequently .If it could be possible we would wish our members to be going for retreats monthly for spiritual nourishment.*

*Respondent 127: It is our duty as SCC members to ensure smooth running of the SCCs. Our leaders in the SCCs communicate directly with the priest. In case of any issue that require priest intervention, they contacts the priest for advice and action. For example in case of death of a member of SCCs, we report to the priest and co-ordinate with him on when the burial will to be conducted. Also the sacraments of Baptism for infant and adults catechumen are organized within the SCCs and we assist the priest in identifying the eligibility of the Christians in taking those sacraments based on the teachings of the Catholic Church.*

*Respondent 140: We take care of institutions that promotes human life such as the rehabilitation center in parish one and the orphanage in parish three. We offer donations of all types and visit the institutions. We feel it is our personal responsibility to take care of those institutions. We only involve the church and the government in coordinating activities in these institutions such as in provision of education.*



The researcher visited some SCCs during Lent season and participated in the discussions of various topics that touched on subsidiarity. Among the topics discussed were: youths and modern society, good citizenship, security and environment. All members were involved in sharing their views and suggesting on the best way forward for a just society. The researcher also attended an SCC service (mass) in one of the SCCs and noted that SCCs have a right to organize Eucharistic celebrations in their homes. After planning, they contact the priest for his availability.

Tien (2006) states that the practice of subsidiarity facilitates the presence of the church in a given place. The Holy Spirit as the advocate or the defender of the accused helps the church in carrying out its social mission as happened to Jesus. Jesus went to villages, entered houses and ate with people because he considered them his family members. Beabout (1998) explains that, the government must not interfere in the internal activities of the social and religious organizations. Instead, they must acknowledge the competence and autonomy of the latter in order to coordinate their activities for the service of the society. He added that this subsidiarity must also be applied to the relationship between the government and citizens. It must be developed and practiced as mutual relationships among the government, organizations and individuals in order to promote genuine development.

This principle of subsidiarity encourages communities to be more involved. Nduku (2011) contends that, it places responsibility as close as possible to the grassroots. The people or groups affected by the decision or policy should have a key decision making role. The church has worked hard to empower and support community to ensure that they participate in development and decision making processes at the various levels. The establishment of SCCs, support of

different lay movements and devotion groups in the church and lay participation is a clear indication of this involvement. The church too encourages her members to be actors in the social, political and economic arena so that they can be able to infuse ethical values in the decision making processes.

In addition Kizito (2015) reiterated that people have a right, which is also a duty to participate in shaping a more just and human society, seeking together the common well and wellbeing of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. All people need to take an active role in the development of socio-economic, political and cultural life. They should be shapers of history (subjects), not just passive recipients of other people's decisions (objects).

The clergy in the Catholic Church should guide the laity into full participation in a holistic ministry as pointed out by Msangaambe (2011). Through the SCC, the Church must reflect God's presence and make a difference in society. To enable a holistic ministry in the Catholic Church, SCCs must be empowered to do theology, to discern God's will, and develop their gifts to make a difference. Such empowerment will further enable the congregations to play a part in addressing the many facets of poverty. In the process of a church's growth or decline, Hendriks (2004) records that positive lay leadership is needed for the transformation process to succeed. He reiterated that transformation can only succeed if SCCs are empowered and committed to deal with new realities.

It was also reported that CJPC in SCCs also provides civic education during election year in the country. It was pointed during interview that the Catholic Church trains leaders of CJPC in every

SCC on civic education. The leaders then disseminate the information to the grassroots to ensure that church members know their rights as citizens, reasons for participating in elections, how to vote wisely and on how to handle the outcomes of election results.

From the information obtained from in depth interviews with the priest, we gathered that the church supports SCCs in promotion of justice through organizing seminars and workshops for SCCs leaders. This is done to equip them with necessary skills to enhance their active participation in the SCCs. For instance, skills on how to take care of areas of which they assumes personal responsibilities as leaders. The church also intervenes to support in case of need for example during bereavement of a member in the SCC and weddings. The church also coordinates activities of SCCs through visitation by the priest or the catechist where they advise and give direction on the smooth running of SCCs as a way of empowering them.

From the findings above, it can be deduced that the principle of subsidiarity is applied in the SCCs in promotion of justice through participation. SCCs members are granted freedom to participate in various activities in the church without interference of the parish priest or any other influential person. They have assumed personal responsibilities in taking care of institutions within the church such as the orphanage and the rehabilitation centre. They also take part in social life in promotion of civic education during Lenten campaign in the election year. They organize various activities in the SCCs such as Eucharistic celebration and saint's day which they invite the priest to preside. The church coordinates SCCs activities such as seminars, workshops and SCCs visitations as a way of empowering them for active participation. SCCs

member also organize retreats for their spiritual empowerment for effective participation in church activities.

These achievements by SCCs in enhancing social justice within the Catholic community and the immediate community members have not been without challenges. The section below expounds on these challenges.

### **5.5 Challenges Faced by SCCs in Promotion of Social Justice**

SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County have succeeded in promoting social justice through enhancing four key principles of social justice namely; Human dignity, common good, solidarity and subsidiarity. However, in their effort to achieve this mission they have encountered some challenges as reported during the study as explained below.

Lack of knowledge on the importance of Social Justice has hindered its promotion and enhancement at SCCs and the larger community in Vihiga County. It was reported that quite a big number of people understand social justice to be the fight for human rights mostly political rights. Therefore, the church is indebted to teach social justice to its faithful through Lenten campaigns which are taught only once per year during Easter (Lent) season. Blackman (2003) concurs with the finding above where he noted that today's justice systems do not recognize that crimes hurt people in addition to breaking the law of the land. An increasing number of Christians are arguing that justice should aim to help restore the relationship between the offender and the victim. It is an attempt to personalize the legal process.

Some Christians were reported to be very mean to their SCC members and their immediate needy communities. They were not ready to neither share whatever they had nor assist the needy in the society. They were reported to be very uncooperative and only available in the SCCs when they have a problem with a hope of being assisted. The low income earners were reported to have been very generous in assisting the needy than the middle class and high class. This has resulted to some sort of social classes in the SCCs based on their financial capabilities.

It was also reported that due to the hard economic times, SCCs members have not been able to assist the needy fully due to limited resources and finance. Institutions such as the orphanage, rehabilitation center and schools for the physically and mentally challenged have not benefited fully from the SCCs. They are forced to depend on donations from well-wishers, the government and other nongovernmental organizations. Similarly, Nduku (2011) notes that the human person is the reason and purpose of all activities. Unfortunately human person is seen as a means not an end and is being used to accumulate/produce wealth without respect of their dignity.

Assisting the needy has been a challenge from what the research participants referred to as poor attitude of laziness. It was reported that some people did not deserve to be assisted in the SCCs because they were simply lazy and did not want to work and help themselves. Others posed to be needy yet they were capable of getting their basic needs without much struggle. Therefore it appeared problematic in identifying genuinely needy people in the SCCs. This made SCCs members to shy off from assisting the needy in their communities and in doing so, some genuine needy people were neglected and did not get their right justice.

Finally, social justice could not be achieved fully because of pride of some people and their individual differences. However much the church has tried to preach unity and the need for togetherness, this has not been achieved as per expectations. There are those who believe in doing things on their own and are not dependable. They at times seem to isolate themselves from the SCCs leading to weakening of these SCCs and inefficiency in their quest for social justice in the society. Lusambili (2016) in his findings noted that this challenge occurs because people and communities are ego centric, and the animosity does not even give their Christian faith a chance to be the meeting ground for positive communication.

## **5.6 Summary**

The findings revealed that SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County ensure justice is achieved through promotion of the principles of social justice. Human dignity has been achieved by taking care of the sick, the physically and mentally challenged and the underprivileged such as orphans and street boys. They ensure these groups get their rights and basic needs. They also have encouraged good neighborhood by treating each other well without any exceptions. People are sensitized on their rights especially on equality for all genders. They have developed a culture that protects and cares for all in promotion of justice.

Common good has been achieved through sharing and caring for the needy with an aim of making them feel they are part of the community. There is also sharing by working together not for self benefits but for the good of all in the SCC. There are contributions in interdependence whereby all have a voice in decision making in their SCCs.

Solidarity has been achieved through working together in the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood to strengthen the aspect of common good and human dignity, especially for the needy in the society. SCCs members ensure fair treatment of each other by working together as a team. They share and solve challenges affecting them in their SCCs. They assist each other in times of need through the spirit of co-operation.

The principle of subsidiarity has been achieved in the SCCs through participation in various activities in the church without interference of the parish priest or any other influential person, or organ. SCCs members have assumed personal responsibilities in taking care of institutions within the church such as the orphanage and the rehabilitation centre. They also take part in social life in promotion of civic education during Lenten campaign in the election year. They organize various activities in the SCCs. The church coordinates SCCs activities such as seminars, workshops and SCCs visitations as a way of empowering them for active participation.

The findings of the study also revealed a number of challenges faced in the aspect of social justice. Key among them include, lack of knowledge on the importance of social justice, egocentrism among some members and hard economic times among others.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

It can be concluded that SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County has achieved its mandate in promotion of social justice. This has been through SCCs involvement in various activities in promotion of human rights guided by four principles of social justice namely: Human dignity, common good, solidarity and subsidiarity.

Human dignity was achieved through respecting each other and fighting for the rights of the underprivileged, treating others fairly irrespective of their cultural differences, taking care of the needy and providing them with basic needs. Common good was achieved through ensuring that the needy had a place in the society through SCCs, working together as a community through giving equal chances to all in participation of various activities in the SCCs, being responsible of each other welfare and enhancing a culture of interdependence for the benefit of all. Solidarity has been achieved through treating each other as a brother or a sister and working together as a family, participating in various activities together and sharing their different social challenges as a family. Finally, subsidiarity has been effected through participating in various activities within the SCCs such as training on leadership skills, retreats organizing baptism and Eucharistic celebrations within SCCs and taking care of institutions that promotes life within the county through SCCs such as orphanage, rehabilitation centre and learning institutions for the physically and mentally challenged.

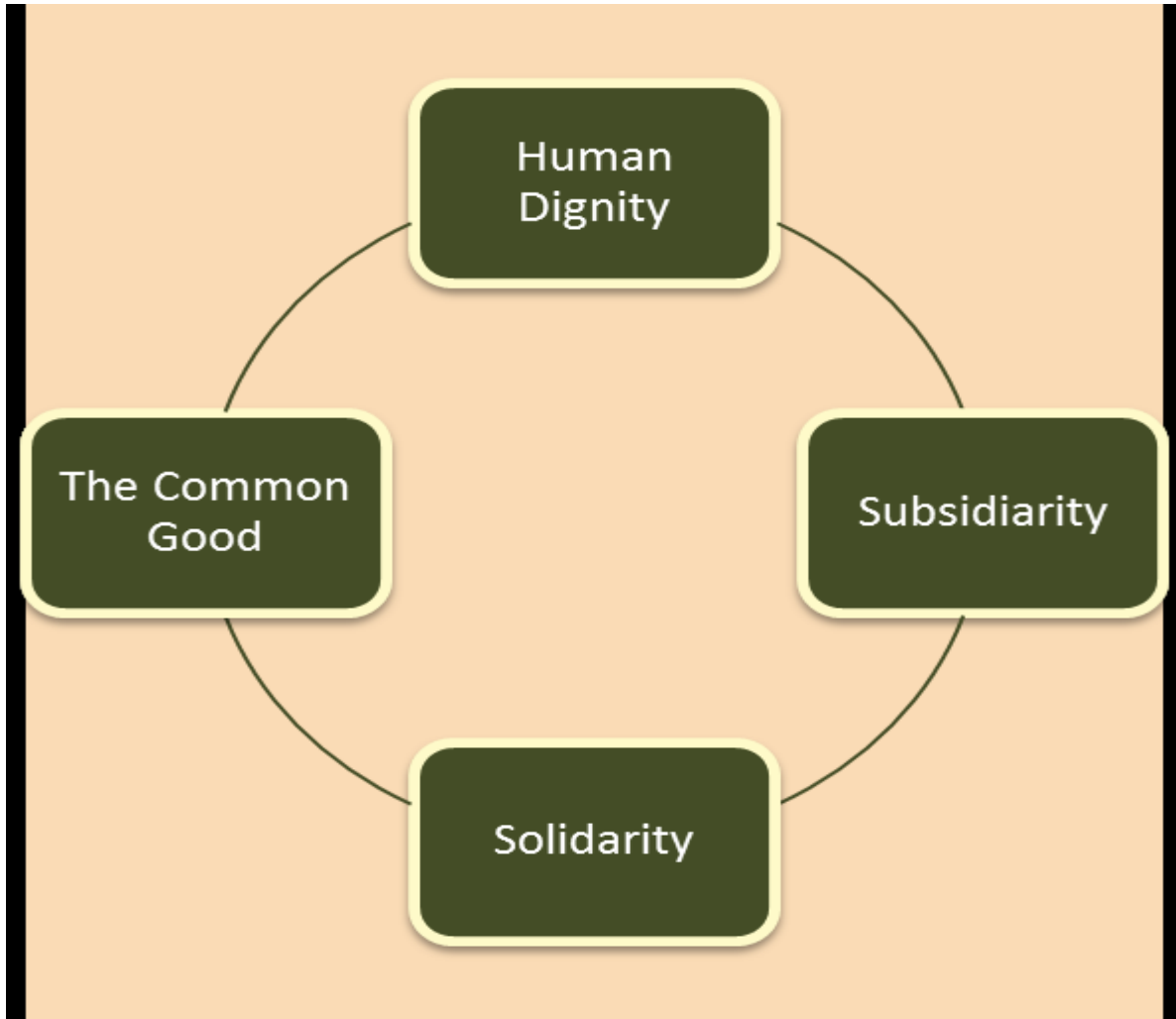
The study was guided by functionalism theory propounded by Emile Durkheim. The theory was used to analyse the involvement of SCCs in promotion of social Justice in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County. Durkheim held that societies are held together by means of a collective conscience. That is, sentiments that are shared in common by members of the society exert a strong influence on individual and group behavior. The argument we can make is that SCCs have been influential in promoting social justice in the church and among Vihiga communities at large through application of the above named principles of social justice. The four principles were interdependence in that promotion of one lead to achievement of the other. When human dignity was upheld in promotion of human rights, common good was achieved. When the respect for all



was emphasized and interdependence encouraged in promotion of common good, subsidiarity was achieved which advocates for active participation for all.

A number of challenges were highlighted to have affected realization of social justice. Among them is the inability of community members to identify the truly needy people; individualism; hard economic times; as well as wrangles that lead to divisions among the community members. In spite of these, it was noted that participation of all in decision-making lead to solidarity for the common good of the community and the church. Through interdependence of social justice principles, all SCC members should focus in the common good. The four interrelated facets that contribute to social justice can therefore be summarized in the following model.

**FIGURE 5.1: Fundamental Principles of Social Justice**



**Source: Lloyd (2013) Principles of Social Justice Model**

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES INVOLVEMENT IN PROMOTION OF PEACE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN VIHIGA COUNTY**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

Peace and peaceful co-existence among people, groups and communities is important if meaningful progress is to be realized. Evangelization and social justice, for instance cannot be realized where there is no peace. This sixth chapter therefore analyzed how SCCs are involved in promotion of peace .This objective was guided by functionalism theory which states that Religion plays a major role in influencing and reinforcing societal integration in legitimating society's values and norms. This is done by providing divine sanctions for behavior that society defines normative and bringing them together through activities that strengthens their feeling of unity. The chapter is divided into the following themes: Catholic Church's understanding of peace; causes of conflicts in the SCCs; conflict resolution mechanisms: community based approaches, mediation and reconciliation.

#### **6.2 Catholic Church Understanding of Peace**

In the context of the social mission of the church (Benedict XIV, 2011) contended that the Second African Synod (2009) underlined the critical status and role of SCCs as agents, signs, loci, custodians and promoters of reconciliation, justice and peace. Together with the parish, the SCCs and the movements and associations can be helpful places for accepting and living the gift of reconciliation offered by Christ our peace. Each member of the community must become a 'guardian and host' to the other: this is the meaning of the sign of peace in the celebration of the

Eucharist. Several Episcopal conferences and diocese have underlined these aspects of the ecclesiological roles of SCCs in their particular contexts and circumstances.

Peace building is paramount after conflicts. The peace building process helps identify and support structures that would strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse in conflict (Doyle, 2003). Doyle explains that peace building implies building structures for peace in all phases of a conflict, not merely after the violent phase has been replaced by a fragile peace. Structures that contribute to strengthening and solidifying peace can be institutions that offer forms for peaceful conflict resolution or that prevent violence, such as church institutions.

The Church is founded on Christ who is perceived by Christians as the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah; 9:1-6, Luke 2:14; 19:38, Ephesians; 2:14, 2 Thessalonians; 3:16). He said that He came so that the world may have life in abundance (John 10:10). Njoroge (2011) notes that peace and the Church are inseparable. In the beatitudes, Christ gave a summary of his teachings: “blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). Peace and reconciliation are inseparable. Njoroge also adds that the Church is called the body of Christ. To maintain the integrity, churches must advocate for peace and love among their adherents.

The role of the church in peacemaking and reconciliation is strengthened by the fact that the social and political crisis in the society questions radically the message of the gospel. The church’s initiatives for reconciliation were anchored on the concept that peace is the tranquility that flows from right order. When we put right order into the structures of our society, the tranquility that results is peace. Many people, however, perceive peace as the absence of war or violence (Burton, 1997). In this model, peace is seen as the transformation of contextual and destructive interactions into more co-operative and constructive existence. However, it is

noteworthy that peace and peaceful co-existence should not be defined from the perspective of absence of war, but a continual process of resolving conflicts that escalate into chaos and war.

The church is necessitated to mitigate conflicts in order to live to her mission. Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), The Church and Church- Based Organizations (CBOs) such as Caritas, Diakonia, Inter-life, Church of Sweden, Swedish Mission, Covenant Church, Swedish Ecumenical Women Council and Swedish Mission Council have been involved in peace building processes in areas affected by ethnic conflicts in Africa (Njoroge, 2011). Likewise, the Church has been involved in peace building and reconciliation in Kenya. The Catholic Church involvement has also been strengthened by her commissions such as, CJPC which has representatives in all SCCs.

From the questionnaires, respondents understood peace as follows:

*SCC 23: It is a state of being in harmony with each other in the community.*

*SCC 39: It is a state where conflict does not exist among people in a given community.*

*SCC 43: It is harmonious living among people whereby their human dignity is respected.*

Peace can therefore be understood as a state of harmony in the community where there are no conflicts, and if they happen, the involved parties are able to resolve the conflicts. In a peaceful environment, people relate freely with each other without any hindrance. But at times in their interaction, when conflicts arise among them, then they invoke and use conflict resolution processes that lead to reconciliation through dialogue, confessions and apologies. At times, the conflict resolution process in the community calls for use of mediators, who act as go-between, and are experts in uniting two or more conflicting parties. The Catholic Church has been

involved in peace making as part of its mission. Through CJPC, the SCCs are used as vehicles through which peace is transmitted where and when conflicts happen among its members.

### **6.3 Causes of Conflict in the SCCs**

The study findings show that there are several causes of conflicts within the SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga. Data from the questionnaires showed that the following are the causes of conflicts:

*SCC 3: When leadership is poor it leads into conflicts. This happens especially when leaders fail to listen to the members of the SCC and dictates them on what to do. At times it leads to divisions in the SCC.*

*SCC 17: Family differences bring in conflicts. Some members who are from one clan don't even visit each other. They have unresolved issues which have broken communication among them.*

*SCC45: Some people have a tendency of speaking ill about others. This brings tension and divisions within the SCCs.*

From the above data, it can also be stated that from the dominance of one gender in the SCCs as shown in figure 4.1 there is possibility of some conflicts being more predominant among a certain gender than others. Also education and occupation of respondents could also have played a big role also in some ideological differences. On the same aspect of causes of conflicts, the in-depth oral interviews showed the following as summarized in the following table and except.

The following information was revealed from 148 SCCs members from the 74 SCCs and the five catechists. They were consulted because they are all members of SCCs and they are aware of the causes of conflicts among themselves. Table 6.1 below gives a summary of the most common causes of conflicts in the SCCs.

**Table 6.1 Causes of conflicts in SCCs**

	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Poor leadership skills	28	18.3
2	Misunderstanding among members	27	17.6
3	Conflict between leaders	23	15.0
4	Communication breakdown	22	14.4
5	Differences in opinion	21	13.7
6	Personality traits	18	11.8
7	Pride of some members	14	9.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: field data**

From the table above, poor leadership skills are the major cause of conflicts in the SCCs with a record of 18.3% followed closely by misunderstanding among members of the SCCs at 17.6%. Other closely related causes were conflicts among leaders of SCCs at 15.0% and breakdown of communication among members at 14.4%. Personality traits such as gossiping and emotions recorded 11.8% and finally pride among some members was also a cause of conflict. These were evidenced in the oral excerpts below.

*Respondent 28: Conflicts are normal occurrences in any society. Whenever we have health interactions among people in the community, conflict must occur. Fahali wawili hawakai zizi moja(Two bulls cannot stay together in one stable) . Within our SCCs we differ with our neighbors who are our clan members. We differ because of progress in one family than the rest. We are in conflict with our neighbors who are members of our SCCs because of the way we up bring children. A fight between children while playing can bring conflict among many to a level of destabilizing an SCC.*

*Respondent 35: Some conflicts are caused by misunderstanding among members. During our discussions on various issues there are those who feel they have been belittled maybe because of their statues in the community. In areas where SCCs members are from different backgrounds, some members feel inferior or superior to the rest. They always misinterpreted discussions based on their ego.*

*Respondent 55: In some cases there has been conflict among leaders. This happens in SCCs where the chairperson of the parish council as a member of an SCC in one way or another undermines the role of the chairperson of that SCC. They may argue over certain issues pertaining to the SCC to a level of dividing the SCC. This happens mostly when issues to do with contributions of money towards the development of the parish are not well addressed.*

*Respondent 60: Pride among members also leads to conflict. There are those who do not attend SCC meetings in some member's house because they just hate them for no reason. This brings in conflict because they also do not expect those they hate to visit their homes during SCC meetings. This is an interpersonal conflict which affects SCCs meetings. In Kiswahili we say 'Chui na mbuzi hawalali nyumba moja (The leopard and the goat do not sleep in the same house). There is no harmony possible between totally dissimilar people. They do not frequent the same places.*

From the above findings, it can be noted that conflict starts because people do not agree about an issue. There are many different types of conflict experienced by communities within their SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County as shown in table 6.1 .These conflicts occurs in the process of interaction among members of SCCs as they play various roles in the church and society at large.

Mwagiru (2000) noted that conflict is considered as an endemic feature of society which implies that the phenomenon of conflict in one form or another is an inevitable and ever present feature of society and social interaction. Conflict is a normal and necessary part of human relationships. It is part and parcel of our everyday life, a part of human society. As long as there is human interaction, there will be conflict, therefore, conflict can never be completely eradicated hence the need to manage it properly.

Another type of conflict according to Magondu (2012) is interpersonal conflict that occurs between two or more individuals. It may result from differences in opinion, motives and actions. This kind of conflict is what is seen when two people are having disagreement among themselves.



Palmer (1990) identifies underlying causes of conflict as faulty and leadership and administration where relationships within the organizational structure are unclear. Leadership that is viewed as too autocratic, too weak or too political creates an organization that has no guidance and is both passive and demoralized. Poorly defined responsibilities due to the church's lack of proper review of roles as changes take place has been a source of disharmony within the people serving in the church.

Kenyan Catholic Church faces conflict that result from poor communication as noted by Magondu (2012). Conflict arises when church members do not learn to communicate with each other and understand what each is saying and meaning. The breakdown in communication mainly results from emotional factors such as stereotypes and personal insecurities which hinder accurate hearing. There are church members who do not enjoy or even use the advice others give them.

From the findings above conflicts are normal occurrences in the SCCs. These conflicts are a result of interaction among members in the society. From the interview it was also reported that some misunderstanding occurs in the SCCs because some members view themselves as of higher ranks in the social classes. Those from high social class, as reported, did not respect the rest, and this made them feel inferior and therefore fail to take active roles in the SCCs. The low class members always feel the later should perform all the tasks in the SCCs to avoid conflict of interest.

Another aspect highlighted as a source of conflict was people's emotions. It was also reported that some people cannot be corrected when they go astray because of their emotions. They easily

lose temper and as such pick up fights easily. Some were also said to keep grudge for long. These emotions meant that they were always in conflict with some members of SCCs. The same lot was reported as not being good listeners to anyone and this affected their interaction with others in the community. If such personalities were elected in any leadership position in their SCCs, their decision affected many negatively, leading to disharmony in the group.

From these findings, we deduced that the SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga experience conflicts such as poor leadership, gossips, misunderstanding among members, and conflict between leaders, communication breakdown and differences in opinions among others. These are sources of disharmony that is not a healthy environment if the SCCs are not able to resolve them. These led us to inquire what mechanisms the SCCs have put in place to resolve the conflicts. The section below discusses these.

#### **6.4 Conflict Resolutions**

In line with the theory of functionalism, to get to community, national and global peace, peace building must begin from the 'cells' – the small units that feed into the larger picture. The small issues within families, clans, communities, tribes, nations, are what escalate conflict into wars. Consequently, there is need to resolve conflicts and make peace, and in relation to this study, among members of SCCs. This will contribute to the wider peace in the Church, and subsequently to wider community. The sources of conflict therefore call for conflict resolution.

Conflict resolution involves assisting in the termination of conflicts by finding solutions to them. Conflict resolution deals with the conflict in a way that brings the conflict to a closure, an end, a resolution that will please either parties or one of the parties in conflict. Conflict resolution is

more comprehensive as it implies that the deep rooted sources of conflict are addressed and most of all resolved. This implies that there is no more violence or hostility and the structure of the conflict has been changed (Miall, 2005). This method “aims at reaching a mutually self sustaining solution” by identifying and addressing the causes of the conflicts on ground. The method identifies the needs of parties in the conflict and finding new ways of reconciling the groups involved to build a new social relationship (Mwagiru, 2000).

The study findings revealed there are three main approaches used in SCCs in conflict resolution. They are: community based approach; use of mediation; and, reconciliation.

#### **6.4.1 Community based Approach**

Community-based approaches (CBA) seek to empower local community groups and institutions by giving the community direct control over investment decisions, project planning, execution and monitoring, through a process that emphasizes inclusive participation and management. The basic premise for demand-led approaches is that local communities are better placed to identify their shared needs and the actions necessary to meet them. Taking charge of these processes contributes to a sense of community ownership, which can contribute to the sustainability of interventions (Haider, 2009). The community-based approach has been adopted in fragile and conflict-affected societies. It can be an effective approach to peacebuilding, defined as the range of measures necessary to transform conflict towards sustainable, peaceful relations and outcomes. (Lederach, 1995) Since public institutions are often weak in conflict and fragile settings, community-based approaches can be used to re-connect the state with its citizens and to strengthen local governance. They can be used as a means of prevention, for example, or to prepare communities for peace processes.

Data from the questionnaires shows that SCCs have a ways of involving community in conflict resolution. The following were captured from the questionnaires.

*SCC 3: We encourage those in conflict to try and resolve their differences without first involving a third party. This is because they are the only one who knows the root cause of their conflict.*

*SCC 20: Where there is breakdown in communication, we encourage members to initiate dialogue to resolve their conflicts and solve their difference amicably.*

*SCC 50: Conflict among leaders is solved by leaders themselves meeting and agreeing on their different roles to avoid conflict of interest.*

*SCC 67: Conflicts among SCCs members who are from the same clan are well solved among the families affected.*

The response from SCCs shows that age of respondents had an influence on the way conflicts were solved. 66% of the respondents were above forty years of age. This means that they could be relied on to offer solution in cases of conflicts within the SCCs. The findings above were also confirmed from the respondents who were interviewed during the study.

*Respondent 3: We encourage SCCs members to treat each other as a family. Since all families have challenges, they should learn to overcome them from within. SCC that are faced with family conflicts are advised to solve them at the family level through their clan leaders to ensure their relationship does not affect the smooth running of any SCC. All those who are involved in conflict are supposed to take charge of their actions. Those who are involved for example in gossiping should be approached and be made aware of the effects of their utterances than confronting them. In doing so, a peaceful community will be in existence.*

*Respondent 45: Leaders should act as role models in the SCC. They should learn to listen to each other and serve SCC as per their respective leadership position. We urge leaders to work as a team and assist the church in achieving its mission on peace building.*

*Respondent 74: During our weekly meeting we always emphasize on love as the greatest virtue. We believe where love exists conflicts are minimal. In our bible sharing, we are reminded we are peace maker and that is why when closing our meetings we must end with greeting each other as a sign of peace. Since you cannot greet an enemy, one is forced to forget the differences and shake hand as a sign of peace.*

From the findings above, it can be pointed out that SCCs members respond to conflict in different ways, depending on how important they feel it is to maintain a relationship with the opposing individuals and depending on the amount of power they think they have in solving conflicts. That is why they opt for community based approach as the first approach in solving their conflicts.

Ntabona (2001) explains that African communities had several ways of resolving conflicts by using traditional institution, which embodied moral authority. He gives an example of Bashingantahe institution in Burundi, which consisted of people, empowered in order to be responsible for truth justice and peace in their environment and wherever they were. Kagabo (2001) further gives credit to Bashingantahe due to its role in seeking peace during crisis, and partly, because of the potential it has continued to contribute to the peace process in Burundi.

Similarly, Magondu (2011) avers that negotiation was also very important. Negotiation is a process to achieve one's goals through communication with at least one other party, with the presumed outcome an agreement is achieved. It is the process whereby parties discuss matters of concern amongst themselves without involving a third party. It is a non coercive, voluntary method unlike judiciary settlements and arbitration. Its advantage is that it eliminates the moderating effects of a third party and the parties themselves map out their future relationships.

The involvement of all actors in peace building is crucial in coming up with long term peace building and reconciliation strategies as pointed out by Njoroge (2011). Intellectuals and professionals will give their interpretation based on their wide experience on the theoretical level. Elders at the grassroots will give their views according to the experience at the grassroots and community level. However, in addressing questions about the nature of involvement

between the professionals and the village elders, it is important to distinguish between the initiatives of community members working for change within their own societies and those who work in cultural contexts other than their own. Efforts to professionalize the field should in no way disempower people from advocating for inclusion or working to strengthen inter-group relations in their own communities.

Community based approach of conflict resolution aims at getting a solution from within among the parties involved. The findings of the study also showed that in conflict people must come to an agreement to resolve their differences without involving a third party. Solution must come from within because members already know the cause of their conflicts. This should be the first step in solving any form of conflict in any group. It was reported that SCCs members prefer using community based approach to avoid interference by members who do not belong to the same SCCs or even those who are from different faith. It is one way of keeping secrets within their SCCs which if exposed might split the entire SCC and even affect others.

It can be concluded that SCCs encourage members to use community based approach. This is done through encouraging members to resolve their differences through communication because they know the root cause of their conflicts better than any other person. Leaders should act as role models and learn to listen to each other. They should work as a team and emphasize on love as a way of solving conflicts in the SCCs and community at large .In doing so, they will create a peaceful community.

SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County have managed, to a certain extent, resolve conflicts among its members by adopting community based approach. Peaceful environment has been created because members have learned to solve their own problems and conflicts as they occur. However, there are instances when CBA is not always successful, especially when conflicts have a high level magnitude, and the effects cannot be contained within the family or clan.

There were reported cases of limited positive dialogue whereby members were shy to point out and condemn a wrong issues and intolerance among some members. There was also intolerance among some members especially in situations where people did not respect neither listen to each other's views in solving conflicts. In addition, there were cases of interference by members from other faiths in the neighborhood paralyzing the efforts of CBA at SCCs level. Besides other measures, the SCCs showed that one of the mechanisms that have worked is mediation that is aimed at reconciling the conflicting parties as discussed below.

#### **6.4.2 Use of mediation**

A mediator is a more active and powerful third party whose role is to ensure that dialogue continues and to reconcile the warring parties and appeases the feelings of resentment between the parties to the conflict. Mediators not only facilitate discussions, but they usually impose a structure and process on the discussions that is designed to move the parties toward mutual understanding and win-win agreements (Magundu, 2012). Mediators are sought from within the communities or societies of the parties concerned. Then people who enjoy social recognition for their experience and integrity are sought for as well. A mediator is often connected with one of the parties. In this way, more than one mediator is used. Usually, a smaller or larger group is

used, made up of people selected to resolve a particular conflict or of an already existing committee or council of mediators (Njoroge, 2011). Similarly, SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County use mediators as their arbitrators in an attempt to make people involved in conflict to come to an agreement. This was evident from the following data collected from the questionnaires.

*SCC 3: We opt for mediators when conflicts are beyond our control as SCC members. Mediators are neutral participants and their suggestion offers a better solution to all in conflict.*

*SCC 30: Mediators assists in initiating dialogue and breaking all barriers of communication. This offers a quick solution to conflict and peace is restored.*

*SCC 55: Mediators such as priests offers spiritual guidance which creates room for dialogue and reconciliation.*

*SCC 74: Through mediators we are able to create room for discussion and air out our differences and out of discussions we resolve our differences.*

This was also echoed in the in-depth oral interview where respondents stated that:

*Respondent 10: In case of unresolved conflicts within the community level, we advocate for mediator ether a priest, catechist, a clan elder a representative of CJPC or an elderly person in the affected SCC. They are expected to listen to the cause of conflict from the two sides. They may probe them with different questions in order to get a clear understanding of their conflict. Solution is based on nature of the conflict but the final answer is always reconciliation through open communication.*

*Respondent 16: We encourage every family to organize for a Jumuiya mass at least once in a year for spiritual guidance. Some of the conflicts within the SCCs can be solved through spiritual guidance through such church activities. The families and even leaders with unresolved conflicts at community level can be able to discuss their grievances with the priest during such occasions. The priest will give a solution with biblical reference to guide the affected and even initiate counseling sessions as a way of follow up in order to avoid re-occurrence of the conflict.*

*Respondent 98: The affected members may also seek assistance from representatives of CJPC or an elderly person in the SCC. They report the dispute and seek for advice .The CJPC official or the elderly person might initiate dialogue to get an understanding of the cause of conflict and reconcile the two parties. They may also suggest on an agreement to be adhered to avoid such conflicts in future.*



*For example issues like in misunderstanding among members or leaders are easily solved by elders of CJPC officials.*

The findings above reveal that conflict is resolved through mediators. SCCs use the priest, catechist, CJPC representatives in the SCCs and elderly people in the SCC. They act as third parties and give advice and solution depending on the nature of the conflict. It was reported that they are consulted because they are trusted and are believed to have knowledge on how to deal with various issues. They listen to the cases by involving the conflicting parties and initiate a dialogue or even discussion and at the end offer a solution to the conflict.

In support of the findings above, Bob-Manuel (2000) says that among the Ndendeuli of Tanzania, mediators play active roles in conflict solving by suggesting an agreement and get as far as pressurizing the parties into accepting it. Pressurizing can be done through talking or singing, shaming and ridiculing. This method can be used in contexts where it is acceptable and in instances where the cause of the dispute is self-evident. In an effort to change the behavior of troublemakers, through ritualized or ordinary conversations, anti-social and conflict-causing conducts are put to shame. This is by individuals gifted in poking fun at others, in jocular ways. Comedians and singers among other social commentators can here be of great influence.

The clients often prefer approaches based on mediation to others (Sussman, 2009). One of the most chief concerns is the fact that mediation, when conducted in a positive way, often reaches better results for the disputants. This happens because parties have an active role in the definition of the outcome, whereas in other approaches they may not have it. Unlike negotiation, when two parties seek mediation as a way to solve their dispute, they are often more willing to reach a

solution. The simple fact of agreeing in a common mediator and granting him the authority for conducting the process is a sign of good will and determination in achieving a solution for the problem. Disputants following this approach are usually more willing to work together than against each other. Moreover, the slightly more structured nature of mediation and the existence of the character of the mediator are often seen as positive by the parties, as they feel an increased sense of security and confidence on the whole process.

Elders are respected as trustworthy mediators all over Africa because of their accumulated experience and wisdom as pointed out by Njoroge (2011). The roles of these mediators would depend on traditions, circumstances and personalities, accordingly. These roles include pressurizing or manipulating, making recommendations, giving assessment or conveying suggestions on behalf of a party. The mediators can also remain passive, as they are there to represent important shared values. There is no predetermined model, so they are entitled to change their roles from time to time as they perceive the needs at various times. The entire approach is flexible and dynamic, while every part of the talk is related to and influenced by the social context.

Mediators are also in a position of a making judgment based on their understanding of the conflict at hand. After listening to the causes of conflict from the conflicting side, he/she ensure fair judgment for all without favoring any side.

Therefore, it can be stated that SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga use priests, catechists, CJPC representatives and elderly people in the SCCs as their mediators. In their role, they solve

conflicts in the SCCs by: initiating dialogue, offering spiritual guidance, suggesting agreement, open discussions with the conflicting parties and through giving final judgment. In applying these strategies, SCCs have been effective in promoting peace through mediators.

### **6.4.3 Reconciliation**

Nyongesa (2014) defines reconciliation as an act by which people who have been apart and split off from one another begin to walk together again towards peace and cohesiveness. Essentially it refers to the restoration of broken relationship or the coming together of people who have been alienated and separated from one another by conflict to create a community again. It is a long-term process that covers all activities intended to promote peace and overcome violence. As a result, it is plausible to note that the overall aim of peace building is to prevent violent outbreaks of conflicts or to make sustainable transformation of violent conflicts into peaceful action. Thus, conflicts can be dealt in a constructive and peaceful manner. In addition, Nordlander (1982) notes that reconciliation always involves two parties which are in conflict with one another or alienation from one another. This conflict may be *unilateral*, where one party is angry with or alienated from the other, or *reciprocal*, where both parties are angry with or alienated from each other.

Reconciliation after conflicts informs structural actions to identify and support structures which would tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse in conflict (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Boutros further notes that reconciliation implies building structures for peace in all phases of a conflict, not merely after the violent phase has been replaced by a fragile peace. Structures that contribute to strengthening and solidifying peace can be institutions that offer forms for peaceful conflict resolution or that prevent violence, such as church institutions.

The study findings revealed that the Catholic Church has its own structures of reconciliation through CJPC representatives SCCs. Data from the field shows that CJPC reconcile conflicting parties in the following ways:

The following were the responses from the questionnaires administered in the SCCs,

*SCC 2: CJPC representative encourage those in conflict to resolve their conflict through accepting their mistakes and seeking for forgiveness.*

*SCC 13: Those in conflict are advised to seek for psychological healing through going for sacrament of penance (repentance) and counseling.*

*SCC 30: Perpetrators are encouraged to apologize to give room for reconciliation.*

Similarly data from the interviewee revealed the following:

*Respondent 23: After resolving conflicts among members of SCCs, they are requested to shake hands as a sign of peace keeping from that time. They have to make promise that from that time they will never be in conflict again and that they will be peace keepers throughout.*

*Respondent 35: Through CJPC, there are always discussions every year during Lent season that tackles various topics such as on leadership, family, society among others that helps SCCs members to manage and control conflicts.*

*Respondent 90: The conflicting parties are called upon and with the help of CJPC representative in the SCCs they are made to submit their mistakes and seek for confession. They apologize to each other and likewise forgive each other.*

The findings above show how reconciliation is done in SCCs with an aim of Peacebuilding and peaceful co-existence among SCCs members. The findings below shows the biblical source of reconciliation and why it is important to reconcile after conflict and how it was done biblically.

Other scholars' erraborates further on how reconciliation is done in the society today.

Blackman (2003) pointed out that, the first chapter of Genesis tells us about God's creation. God created the heavens and the earth. God saw that what he was creating was 'good'. He then

created man and woman and declared them to be ‘very good’. Adam and Eve lived in God’s land under God’s blessing (v28). People experienced shalom (peace) with God, each other and the environment. However, in Genesis 3 we are told that God’s good creation was spoiled by sin. The shalom of the Garden of Eden was destroyed. People’s relationship with God was broken. This resulted in the relationships between people, and between people and the environment being broken. The rest of the Bible is a story of God’s plan to restore his creation – to bring his creation back into a right relationship with him. Isaiah 9 prophesies the coming of Jesus. Verse 6 describes him as the ‘Prince of Shalom’. The New Testament adopts the Hebrew idea of shalom as wholeness in God’s presence. Shalom, or peace, comes through Jesus’ death on the cross. Colossians 1:19-20 says ‘For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Christ], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.’ Jesus brings people back into a right relationship with God, with each other and with creation as a whole. Revelation 21:3-4 tells us that in heaven, God will dwell with his people, and ‘there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain’.

God, who knows us intimately and by name, begins his reconciling work by reaching out to individuals (Dowsett, 2013). The Scriptures are full of examples. In the Old Testament, we read the accounts of Noah and Abraham, Moses and Jonah, Ruth and Naomi, and so many more, and identify with them because they are real flesh and blood people, not some undifferentiated humanity in the mass. Over and over again in these narratives of God’s people of faith, God takes the initiative. Similarly, the Gospels record many personal encounters with Jesus, as he reaches out to people in grace and challenge. Acts and the Epistles likewise name names. These

are identified individuals, diverse in circumstances, character and story, but sharing a common encounter with the living God.

In addition, Blackman (2003) reiterated that Christians should be committed to reconciling people to God. In Corinthians 5:18-20 Paul tells us that God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. He calls us 'Christ's ambassadors' to share the message of reconciliation with others. This is our call to witness to those who are not yet reconciled to God through the cross. In the Bible, reconciliation with others accompanies reconciliation with God. Our response to God's saving grace is expressed through our response to others. The Bible shows that broken relationships are at the root of poverty, marginalization and conflict. We are living in a world where human rebellion against God has led to self-centeredness, which in turn results in exclusion, mistrust, greed and injustice. God's intention is reconciliation and community. There are many places in the New Testament where Christian unity is emphasized, and guidelines about how to live at peace with one another are given.

African indigenous societies used different methods to resolve conflicts and bring about healing. Bob-Manuel (2000) shows that when an agreement is eventually reached, the good news is shared with the groups and communities concerned. The agreement is then affirmed as a social contract in a ritual way, which varies from society to society. The affirmation may range from a handshake in public to an elaborate ceremony as required by tradition. The purpose of this is to spread the news about the satisfactory conclusion of the conflict resolution process. This also places an additional obligation on the parties to observe the agreement. The society plays an important role by assisting in implementing the agreement. From this stage, all the parties and

the entire community can check whether or not the parties are really adhering to their commitment. If a party needs face-saving, empowerment or encouragement, sympathetic members of the community often render valuable assistance. Such assistance was needed as mediation had taken place between rebel leaders and the surrounding community. These rebel leaders then were to be accepted back into their societies without being labeled.

Like the conception of change in the conflict transformation perspective, reconciliation can be present and necessarily prescriptive at all personal, relational, structural, and cultural levels. At the personal level, for example, repentance and apology from perpetrators have psychological effects and discourse impacts on the self-perception, thus shaping the identities, of both victims and perpetrators. Apology also serves to build the unity between victims and perpetrators, a change desired in the relational dimension of conflict transformation (Zartman, 2009). For meaningful reconciliation to take place (Cheseman, 2008) notes that all parties to the conflict must be central in all efforts to make and sustain peace situating implementation of peace agreement in the personal and social lives of people, and transforming social relationships which have been characterized by conflict, injustice and violence.

Reports on CJPC show that submission and confession that involved a person accepting his or her crimes and subsequently owning them up in public was the most common form of reconciliation. This was followed by mediation, implied dialogue, peace workshops and peace visits (Gecaga, 2002). While submission and confession involve an absolution by church ministers, mediation requires church ministers to be intermediaries between the conflicting

parties; and, dialogue calls for the facilitation of friendly interaction with conflicting communities.

From the findings and scholarly work above, reconciliation can be achieved if all perpetrators are made to understand the effects of their conflicts in order to get along lasting solution in creating a peaceful environment. Reconciliation involves use of some structures within the church or community in an effort to build peace. In this study, the Catholic Church uses CJPC officials or representatives in all SCCs as their structures in peace building. They have been able to apply various strategies in reconciling conflicting members.

For peace to be promoted in the SCC, the conflicting parties are always encouraged to reconcile in a friendly way after agreeing on solution which suits all them all. Some seek for forgiveness to the offended as a way of healing. Those who had barriers in communication, apologize, shake hands and embrace dialogue. There are those who opt for the sacrament of penance after making peace with their offenders. Finally, there are those who opt for guidance and counseling after accepting their mistakes and seeking for confession. Guidance and counseling is meant to assist them to reform and to forgive and forget. They are to begin a new life full of love for one another.

Therefore, we conclude that reconciliation is an important tool of conflict resolution and peace building that has been used by the SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County to enhance peaceful co-existence among the SCC members as well as community members. This has been achieved through the efforts of CJPC representatives in the SCCs. They have ensured



reconciliation through encouraging perpetrators to accept their mistakes, seek for forgiveness, and go for the sacrament of penance, through discussions during lent season as preventive measure against conflicts and through guidance and counseling.

### **6.5 Challenges of Peacebuilding**

SCC in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County has been in the forefront in solving conflicts among its members as they occur through CBA and mediators and through the church structures of CJPC at SCCs level. Through this they have been able to reconcile conflicting Christians. However, this has not been without the following challenges as pointed out during the study.

There is lack of knowledge on how to solve conflicts as they arise. This could be based on the understanding that conflicts are normal in any human society. Some conflicts might have been ignored for a long time leading to disintegration of some SCCs and community at large. What seemed to be a normal occurrence has had a negative impact to the people affected leading to approaches such as CBA being insufficient to manage. Lusambili (2016) added that lack of this information may have meant in the event of other conflicts, there would be increased human suffering and thus slowing the peace building process.

Some people have a negative attitude towards others therefore hindering all efforts of resolving conflicts at community level. They tend to be problematic even with mediators because of the negative stand. This makes the efforts of SCCs members and the mediators futile at some point and reconciliation to be achieved take longer than expected.

Sometime favourism interferes with conflict resolution and promotion of peace. This happens especially at community level CBA has not been effective due to favourism based on clanism and friendship. Some wrong judgment has been made in favour of some members in the SCC. Even with mediators, sometimes they are coerced or compromised and give a wrong judgment leading to endless conflicts and divisions in the SCCs and society at large.

## **6.6 Summary**

The findings of the study show that SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County experience conflicts such as poor leadership, gossips, misunderstanding among members, and conflict between leaders, communication breakdown and differences in opinions among others.

SCCs encourage members to use CBA to resolve their conflicts. This is done through communication because they know the root cause of their conflicts better than any other person. They work as a team and emphasize on love as a way of solving conflicts in the SCCs and community at large.

SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga use priests, catechists, CJPC representatives and elderly people as their mediators. Mediators solve conflicts in the SCCs by: initiating dialogue, offering spiritual guidance, suggesting agreement, open discussions with the conflicting parties and through giving final judgment. In applying these strategies, SCCs have been effective in promoting peace through mediators.

Finally, reconciliation has been achieved in the SCCs through the efforts of CJPC representatives in the SCCs. They have ensured reconciliation through encouraging perpetrators to accept their

mistakes, seek for forgiveness, and go for the sacrament of penance, through discussions during lent season as preventive measure against conflicts and through guidance and counseling.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that SCC in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County experience conflicts like any other groups in any society. The conflicts have been highlighted in the form of personal, family and group conflicts. For a healthy living among the members of SCCs, the chapter has shown that to a great extent, the SCC members have been successful in resolving these conflicts through community based approach and use of mediation and reconciliation. While the Church and community leadership has been useful in mediation, the CJPC representatives in each SCC have been useful in facilitating reconciliation. We therefore undoubtedly underscore that SCCs have largely achieved their role in promoting peace at the grassroots level in the Catholic Church. This is however not without challenges such as lack of knowledge on conflict resolution, negative attitude towards others and favour.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter gives a consolidation of findings in chapters four, five and six. The chapter provides a summary of the findings based on the research objectives and draws conclusions from the discussions of the results. The chapter also makes recommendations and suggestions for future research based on the findings and limitations of the study.

#### **7.1 Summary of the Findings**

##### **7.1.1 Small Christian Communities Involvement in Evangelization in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County**

The present study realized that SCCs contributes a lot towards evangelization. This was made possible by employing the use of catechism, bible sharing, inculturation and charitable activities. Evangelization is done through catechism by subjecting new converts and the members of SCCs into catechetical instructions where they are taught about the teachings of the Catholic Church whereby baptism is given a lot of emphasis. This is because, for one to be converted into the Catholic faith, they must be baptized. Catechism equips SCCs members with evangelization skills. The teachings from catechism offer knowledge to the members of SCCs which they impact on each other's and on their neighbors.

Evangelization was also done through bible sharing through a model of seven steps. This model is adopted from Lumko seven steps of reflection of the word of God which exposed SCCs members to a better understanding of the bible and hence effective evangelization. Each step of reflection plays a key role in equipping Christians in the SCCs with evangelization skills. SCCs

members gained evangelization skills through application of bible knowledge to their day-to-day activities and this knowledge was shared with their neighbors and the society at large.

Through inculturation SCCs members were able to evangelize through incorporating their various cultural values in to worship. This was done through worship whereby they offered foodstuffs and also conducted some of their rites of passage in the Christian way such as initiation where initiates were presented to the church for prayers after the end of the seclusion period. The act of incorporating and embracing their cultural values created an avenue for evangelization as they have been able to accommodate many who have been rejected in their faith because of some cultural practices.

Finally, through various charitable activities SCCs have been able to evangelize to many who have witnessed these charity activities. Through their actions in taking care of the needy and less fortunate in the society, they have managed to win hearts of many. Their works of charity and compassion have had a positive impact on many who have been transformed and converted into the catholic faith.

### **7.1.2 Small Christian Communities Involvement in Promotion of Social Justice in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County**

The findings revealed that SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County ensure social justice is achieved through application of the principles of social justice. Human dignity has been achieved by taking care of the sick, the physically and mentally challenged and the underprivileged such as orphans and street boys. They ensure these groups get their rights and basic needs. They also

have encouraged good neighborhood by treating each other well without any exceptions. People are sensitized on their rights especially on equality for all genders. They have developed a culture that protects and cares for all in promotion of justice.

Common good has been achieved through sharing and caring for the needy with an aim of making them feel they are part of the community. There is also sharing by working together not for self benefits but for the good of all in the SCC. There are contributions in interdependence whereby all have a voice in decision making in their SCCs.

Solidarity has been achieved through working together in the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood through sharing with the needy. SCCs members ensure fair treatment of each other by working together as a team. They share and solve challenges affecting them in their SCCs. They assist each other in times of need through the spirit of co-operation.

The principle of subsidiarity has been achieved in the SCCs through participation in various activities in the church without interference of the parish priest or any other influential person. SCCs members have assumed personal responsibilities in taking care of institutions within the church such as the orphanage and the rehabilitation centre. They also take part in social life in promotion of civic education during Lenten campaign in the election year. They organize various activities in the SCCs. In support of SCCs, the church coordinates SCCs activities such as seminars, workshops and SCCs visitations as a way of empowering them for active participation. In summary, though the study borrowed from existing literature the principles of social justice, it made a contribution to the existing body of knowledge by examining how these principles are

appropriated by SCCs within specific community – the people of Vihiga County. It explored how SCCs have enhanced justice for all through various activities that ensure enhancement of human dignity, togetherness, independence and interdependence, and in overall, common good.

### **7.1.3 Small Christian Communities Involvement in Promotion of Peace in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County**

The findings revealed that SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga experience conflicts such as poor leadership, gossips, misunderstanding among members, and conflict between leaders, communication breakdown and differences in opinions among others. The issue of peace promotion in literature had been studied from the bigger umbrella of national and global peace, and conflict resolution. This study however unearthed that SCCs are important agents of conflict resolution at the community's level.

The finding of the study showed that SCCs encourage members to use community based approach to resolve their conflicts. This is done through communication because they know the root cause of their conflicts better than any other person. They work as a team and emphasize on love as a way of solving conflicts in the SCCs and community at large.

SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga use priests, catechists, CJPC representatives and elderly people as their mediators. Mediators solve conflicts in the SCCs by: initiating dialogue, offering spiritual guidance, suggesting agreement, open discussions with the conflicting parties and through giving final judgment. In applying these strategies, SCCs have been effective in promoting peace through mediators.

Finally, reconciliation has been achieved in the SCCs through the efforts of CJPC representatives in the SCCs. They have ensured reconciliation through encouraging perpetrators to accept their mistakes, seek for forgiveness, and go for the sacrament of penance, through discussions during lent season as preventive measure against conflicts and through guidance and counseling.

#### **7.1.4 Challenges in Evangelization, Promotion of Social Justice and Peace**

SCCs have played key roles in fulfillment of the church mission of evangelization in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County. However, they encounter some challenges such as inactive participation of men in the SCCs meetings and lack of youths and children. Therefore, their input in evangelization was limited. SCCs also experienced competition from other denominations in the area who are also in search of converts, and this has weakened some SCCs. There was also conflict amongst members especially in the rural areas emanating from within their clans.

In their efforts to promote social justice, some lacked knowledge on how to promote social justice because of lack of information on what social justice entails and how it is achieved in the communities. In addition, due to hard economic times in the society, Christians could not meaningfully help those truly in need of assistance.

Lack of knowledge on how to solve conflicts affected the promotion of peace and peace building. Some conflicts were ignored and termed to be normal but later led to divisions within SCCs. There were cases of favourism in handling conflicts especially where some mediators allowed themselves to be compromised or coerced. The poor judgment was a source of injustice



to those who felt that they had been violated. Consequently conflicts within the concerned parties could not be fully addressed.

## **7.2 Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn from the research findings in line with the three objectives of the study.

### **7.2.1 Small Christian Communities Involvement in Evangelization in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County**

The study concludes that SCCs plays a very big role in evangelization in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County .This was done through four ways as follows: Use of catechism instructions, bible sharing through the seven steps model, inculturation and charity activities. Through catechism Christians have acquired the Church's teachings and the new converts have also been baptized. During catechism lessons, members of SCCs acquire evangelization skills as they are involved in teaching new converts and mentoring them. There is also extensive bible sharing through adoption of seven steps of bible sharing model. The study also concludes that SCCs members have acquired knowledge in Bible interpretation based on their day to day interaction, and this has helped them interact well with the non-Catholics as they evangelize to them. In addition, inculturation is embraced whereby SCCs spread the gospel within their cultural values and this has created a home for many who value their cultures. Finally through charitable works of compassion the SCCs members have been able to positively impact on evangelization whereby a number of Christians have been converted to catholic faith. These activities therefore prove the relevance of SCCs in evangelization in the Catholic Church.

### **7.2.2 Small Christian Communities Involvement in Promotion of Social Justice in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County**

The study concludes that SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County have ensured promotion of social justice. This has been made possible through SCCs involvement in various activities in promotion of human rights guided by four principles of social justice namely: Human dignity, common good, solidarity and subsidiarity.

The four principles are interdependence in that promotion of one lead to achievement of the other. When human dignity is upheld in promotion of human rights, common good is achieved. When the respect for all is emphasized and interdependence encouraged in promotion of common good, subsidiarity is achieved which advocates for active participation for all. Finally, participation of all in decision making led to solidarity for the common good of the community and the church. For the SCCs to claim that social justice is achieved, the study concludes that the four principles should be taken into account in a way that none is sufficient without the others.

### **7.2.3 Small Christian Communities Involvement in Promotion of Peace in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County**

From the study findings, we conclude that SCCs in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County experience conflicts like any other community. The SCCs have however been able to solve these conflicts through community based approach and use of mediation. In addition, they have promoted peace through reconciliation with the help of the CJPC representatives in each SCC. Conclusively, SCCs have achieved their role of promoting peace at the grassroots level in the Catholic Church, albeit with certain challenges like lack of knowledge on solving conflicts; negative attitude about others; and, favourism in solving conflicts.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

From the conclusions above and challenges faced in evangelization, promotion of social justice and peace, we draw the following recommendations:

#### **7.3.1 Small Christian Communities Involvement in Evangelization in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County**

SCCs need to put a lot of emphasis on evangelization as the key mission of the church. Weekly meetings need to be enhanced and their importance emphasized to ensure participation of all members young and old, male and female. Challenges facing the evangelization processes among the SCCs members should be minimized at all cost by creating a friendly environment where all SCCs members will be in a position to interact freely without any feeling of biasness. We recommend that the church leadership should be more and more involved in building the capacities of SCCs members as a way of equipping them for evangelization.

#### **7.3.2 Small Christian Communities Involvement in Promotion of Social Justice in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County**

There is need for SCCs to be well equipped with more knowledge on social justice as it cuts across all aspects of life as far as human rights are concerned. This is because SCCs takes church as a family model where family values, pastoral care and socialization takes a sociological set up in local communities. This will help in catering for the less privileged and the needy in the SCCs. The church leadership should therefore play a major role in encouraging members to acquire this knowledge, mostly through seminars and workshops.

### **7.3.3 Small Christian Communities involvement in promotion of Peace in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County**

Peace needs to be promoted at the grassroots level anytime there is conflict to ensure a peaceful society. SCCs members needs to be encouraged to learn to solve conflicts at community level as soon as they occur as a way of controlling spread of conflicts which can end up in divisions in communities. The study also recommends that community peacebuilding should transform in to wider peacebuilding and conflict resolution mechanisms that build towards national and global peace. For this to happen, SCCs members should move peace messages beyond their family and clan boundaries and towards their neighboring communities.

### **7.4 Suggestions for Further Research.**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following are the suggested areas for further research:

1. The current study described the SCCs involvement in evangelization whereby the spiritual and social aspects of evangelization were emphasized. There is need for a study to evaluate SCCs participation in economic and political aspects in evangelization in the Catholic Church.
2. The current study evaluated the involvement of SCCs towards social justice. There is need for a future research on the effectiveness of SCC in promotion of justice through the use of Pastoral Theological Reflection Process (PTRP) that is the “See, Judge and Act”.
3. The current study focused on promotion of peace through SCCs at community’s grassroots. Future research can focus on promotion of peace through agents of social justice in the Catholic Church such as Catholic Justice and Peace Commission and how these contribute to national and international peace.

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**Appendix 1. Questionnaires for SCCs Research Consent Form**

Name of researcher: Rose. N. Njoroge  
Maseno University,  
Private Bag-40105,  
Maseno.  
Mobile:.....  
Email:.....

**Topic: An Investigation of Small Christian Communities and Evangelization in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County, Kenya.**

**Please read and complete this form carefully. If you are willing to participate in this study, ring the appropriate responses and sign and date the declaration at the end. If you do not understand anything and would like more information, please ask.**

- I have had the research satisfactorily explained to me in verbal by the researcher. **YES / NO**
  
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from this study at any time without giving reason. **YES / NO**
  
- I understand that all information about me will be treated in strict confidence and that I will not be named in any written work arising from this study. **YES / NO**
  
- I understand that any information from me will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of your research. **YES / NO**
  
- I understand that you will be discussing the progress of your research with others in Maseno University. **YES / NO**

I freely give my consent to participate in this research study and have been given a copy of this form for my own information.

**Respondent Signature:.....Date.....**



**APPENDIX 2 : Research Questionnaires for Chairpersons of Small Christian Communities.**

**Topic: An Investigation of Small Christian Communities and Evangelization in Catholic Church in Vihiga County, Kenya.**

**General information**

**Educational background** ..... **Gender**.....

**Occupation**..... **Age**..... **SCC**.....

**Date**.....

**A; How do Small Christian Communities participate in evangelization?**

1. What is your understanding of evangelization?

.....  
.....  
.....

2. What does the Catholic Church teach about evangelization in the SCCs?

.....  
.....  
.....

3. Which charity activities promote evangelization in your SCC?

.....  
.....  
.....

**B: How do SCCs involve in social justice in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County?**

4. What does the Catholic Church teach about human rights?

.....  
.....  
.....

5. What is your understanding of human dignity with regard to human rights?

.....  
.....

.....  
.....  
.....

6. How do you ensure common good for all is achieved in your SCCs?

.....  
.....  
.....

7. How does your SCC ensure participation of all in social and religious life of the community?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

8. How do you work together in the SCCs to ensure a just society?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**C. How are Small Christian Communities involved in promotion of peace in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County?**

9. What is your understanding of peace?

.....  
.....  
.....

10. What are the causes of conflicts in your SCCs?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

11. How does your SCC resolve conflict through?

- a) Among themselves

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

b) use of a third-party

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

12. Which structure have you put in place to ensure there is no reoccurrence of conflicts in your SCCs?

.....  
.....  
.....

### APPENDIX 3

#### Observation Guide for Small Christian Communities

objectives	Activities	Observation	Remarks
1)SCCs contributions to evangelization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Catechism for both infant and Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults</li> <li>-prayer meetings</li> <li>- Bible reading and sharing through seven steps</li> <li>-leading mass and integration of various Luhya cultures in liturgy</li> </ul>		
2)SCCs as agents of social justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Donations of clothes and food stuffs</li> <li>-Presence of Lenten campaign during Easter season with five topics for discussions.</li> <li>-Eucharistic celebrations in SCCs</li> </ul>		

**Appendix4: Oral Interview Consent Form**

**Name of the researcher: Rose N Njoroge**  
Maseno University,  
Private Bag- 40105,  
Maseno.  
Mobile.....  
Email:

**Topic: An Investigation of Small Christian Communities and Evangelization in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County, Kenya.**

**Please read and complete this form carefully. If you are willing to participate in this study, ring the appropriate responses and sign and date the declaration at the end. If you do not understand anything and would like more information, please ask.**

- I have had the research satisfactorily explained to me verbally by the researcher. **YES / NO**
- I understand that the research will involve interview and audiotape and the time involved will be approximate one hour. **YES / NO**
- I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time without having to give an explanation. **YES / NO**
- I understand that all information about me will be treated in strict confidence and that I will not be named in any written work arising from this study. **YES / NO**
- I understand that any audiotape material of me will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of your research. **YES / NO**

I freely give my consent to participate in this research study and have been given a copy of this form for my own information.

**Respondents Signature: .....**

**Date: .....**

**Appendix 5: Interview guide for Priest, Assistant Priests, Catechists and SCCs members.**

**PART A. General Information**

- i.** Gender.....
- ii.** Designation.....
- iii.** SCC.....Parish.....

**PART B. Information on Small Christian Communities.**

1. How does catechism enhance evangelization in the SCCs?
2. How are the seven steps of bible sharing in the SCCs meeting relevant in evangelization?
3. How do SCCs use inculturation in evangelization?
4. How do charity activities assist in evangelization?
5. What is your understanding of social justice?
6. What does the Catholic Church teach about social justice?
7. How is human dignity exercised in the SCC?
8. How do SCCs promote the principle of common good in promotion of justice?
9. How has subsidiary been enhanced in promotion of justice in SCCs?
10. How is the principle of solidarity emphasized in the SCCs?
11. What are the causes of conflicts in your SCC?
12. How does your SCC resolve conflicts with its quest to promote peace?
13. Which approaches do you apply in reconciliation in your SCCs?

## Appendix 6: Ethical Review Approval Letter.



### MASENO UNIVERSITY ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Tel: +254 057 351 622 Ext: 3000  
Fax: +254 057 351 221

Private Bag - 40105 Maseno, Kenya  
Email: [muerc-secretariat@maseno.ac.ke](mailto:muerc-secretariat@maseno.ac.ke)

**FROM:** Secretary - MUERC

**DATE:** 5<sup>th</sup> January, 2017

**TO:** Rose N. Njoroge  
PG/PhD/00027/2013  
Department of Religion, Theology and Philosophy  
School of Arts and Social Sciences  
Maseno University  
P.O Box Private Bag, Maseno, Kenya

**REF:**MSU/DRPI/MUERC/00356/16

**RE: Small Christian Communities and Evangelization, Social Justice and Loyal Involvement in Catholic Church in Vihiga County, Kenya. Proposal Reference Number: MSU/DRPI/MUERC/00356/16**

This is to inform you that the Maseno University Ethics Review Committee (MUERC) determined that the ethics issues raised at the initial review were adequately addressed in the revised proposal. Consequently, the study is granted approval for implementation effective this 5<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2017 for a period of one (1) year.

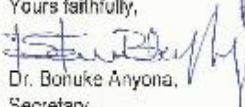
Please note that authorization to conduct this study will automatically expire on 4<sup>th</sup> January, 2018. If you plan to continue with the study beyond this date, please submit an application for continuation approval to the MUERC Secretariat by 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2017.

Approval for continuation of the study will be subject to successful submission of an annual progress report that is to reach the MUERC Secretariat by 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2017.

Please note that any unanticipated problems resulting from the conduct of this study must be reported to MUERC. You are required to submit any proposed changes to this study to MUERC for review and approval prior to initiation. Please advise MUERC when the study is completed or discontinued.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

  
Dr. Bonuke Anyona,  
Secretary,  
Maseno University Ethics Review Committee



Cc: Chairman,  
Maseno University Ethics Review Committee.

MASENO UNIVERSITY IS ISO 9001:2008 CERTIFIED

