

**ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION: A CASE STUDY OF  
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH WOTE, MAKUENI  
DISTRICT, KENYA.**

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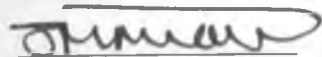
**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**NOVEMBER, 2010.**



## DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.



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16<sup>th</sup>.11.2010

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This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University Supervisors.



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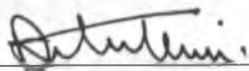
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## **DEDICATION**

This research project is dedicated to the following for their assistance, motivation, courtesy and understanding: My Dad, Mr. Joseph Mwau Kilonzo; My Mum, Mrs. Esther M. Kilonzo; My Siblings: Gedion Mutuku, Joyce Nthenya, Patrick Mwongela, David Kiamba, Penninah Nzula, Simon Kyalo and Philip Musyimi. My Relatives: Grace Kilonzo (Aunt), Gedion Munyaka (Cousin) and Anna Mutindi (Cousin).etl.

## ABSTRACT

The life support systems of our environment have in no doubt been intensively and extensively destroyed. It is thus not surprising that interest in ecological restoration is growing rapidly worldwide because the crisis has put humanity's survival at stake. Thus the need for urgent measures towards ecological rehabilitation is inevitable if the trend has to be reversed.

The nature of the ecological crisis, which is a global concern and a common threat to all, demands contributions from all spheres of our culture – politics, economics, science, philosophy, and Religion. Unfortunately the religious dimension has almost been ignored and put at the periphery on ecological issues.

This study, therefore, sets to investigate, through a case study, the role of religion in ensuring environmental sustainability. The findings of this study have been collected from both primary as well as secondary sources. The primary methods used include in- depth interviews, questionnaires and observation. Secondary sources include books, magazines, newspapers, journals, reports, public lectures and the internet.

It was the objective of this study to explore the Kamba traditional ways of conserving the environment, the role of the Roman Catholic Church Wote on ecological rehabilitation, the impact of the ecological crisis on various aspects of human life and the response of the local community towards ecological restoration.

The study begins its inquiry by giving a brief overview of the place of religion in environmental matters, particularly Christianity, Buddhism and African traditional religions. The study affirms that all world religions and the traditional religions have a fundamental place in reversing the ecological crisis by utilizing the religious insights on ecology found in them.

The study shows that environmental destruction in Wote area is caused by poverty, ignorance, laxity by law enforcers, population growth, unemployment and lack of livelihood skills. The consequences of environmental degradation in Wote are found to affect all aspects of human life- Agricultural production, quality of life, human rights, human relations, scarcity of water, and poverty. The study validates the hypothesis of the study that there exists a very strong

relationship between poverty and environment and that for the human rights to be upheld, the rights of nature must also be respected.

Further into the study, the investigations illustrate how the Roman Catholic Church Wote can utilize the concept of inculturation as one way to environmental stability. This acknowledges the indigenous people and the traditional methods of environmental management and sustainable development. Small Christian communities (SCC) are seen as an effective avenue of this inculturational approach towards ecological restoration. Attempts are also made to answer questions of how, why and when the disconnect between the Akamba traditional view of cosmology and the 'modern' way of perceiving nature occurred.

The study further shows how the local community of Wote has responded to the ecological crisis through the establishment of communities of hope. Moreover, an intrafaith relation on ecological matters is also seen to take root in Wote after the realization that the crisis is a common threat for all. It is concluded that ecological restoration in Wote, either through inculturation, or creation of environmental awareness, may be a far fetched dream or elusive if no priority is given to poverty eradication, sustainable livelihoods and internalization. The study thus suggests a number of ways – to the church, the government and the local community- that would facilitate ecological sustainability in Wote.

In a nutshell, it is mainly through human actions that the world is undergoing grave ecological devastation and there is now no doubt, at all, that all lifeforms including humanity are faced with the crisis. Therefore the decisions and actions taken now will, to a large extent, determine the condition of our environment we will pass to posterity.

If no change of our lifestyles and practices, that are unfriendly to our environment, the future generations may receive the life- support systems in conditions that can not sustain life for long. For that reason, it behooves all stakeholders to arrive at the decision to initiate comprehensive ecological rehabilitation measures.

## DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

- 1. Environment:** In this study, the term is used to refer to the natural surroundings of humankind. It encompasses all living and non-living things occurring naturally on earth.
- 2. Ecology:** Ecology is generally defined as the study of the relationships between living organism and their environment. Thus the term in this study will be used to refer to the relationships between humankind and their environment (Natural surroundings)
- 3. Justice:** It is generally used to mean what is right, fair, appropriate and deserved.
- 4. Environmental liberation:** The term as used in this study connotes the attempts to free the environment from all forms of injustices and make it achieve its rights.
- 5. Ecosystems:** Is a dynamic complex of plant, animals and microorganism communities (biotic factors) and the non-living environment (abiotic) interacting as a functioning unit.
- 6. Human well-being:** Human well-being has multiple constituents, including basic material for a good life, health, good social relations, and security. It can be measured.
- 7. Quality of life:** It is used in the study as a descriptive term that refers to people's emotional, social and physical well-being and their ability to function in the ordinary task of living.

**8. Sustainable development:** It is a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that this needs can be met not only in the present, but in the indefinite future.

**9. Environmental sustainability:** It is the process of making sure current processes of interaction with the environment are pursued with the ideas of keeping the environment as pristine as naturally possible based on ideal-seeking behaviour.

**10. Poverty:** It is used in this study to refer to the deprivation of those things that determine quality of life, including food, clothing, shelter and safe drinking water.

**11. Ecological Restoration:** It is an intentional process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed and restore it to its health, integrity and sustainability.



## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>UNESCO</b>	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNEP</b>	-	United Nations Environmental Programme.
<b>U.N</b>	-	United Nations.
<b>MDGs</b>	-	Millennium Development Goals.
<b>NEPAD</b>	-	New Partnership for Africa's Development.
<b>ASALs</b>	-	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands.
<b>SCC</b>	-	Small Christian Communities.
<b>ATR</b>	-	African Traditional Religion.
<b>NRM</b> s	-	New Religious Movements
<b>COH</b>	-	Community of Hope
<b>IGA'S</b>	-	Income Generating Activities
<b>IKS</b>	-	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
<b>TEK</b>	-	Traditional environmental knowledge

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the problem

Environmental issues are global phenomena and they draw more serious concerns than before. This is because the world is experiencing ecological crisis which is threatening humanity and the entire ecosystem. Indeed environmental conservation and rehabilitation remains to be one of the urgent problems facing humanity.

Environmental degradation has and will have adverse and far reaching effects, not only for the present generation, but also for the future generations to come. It is because of its complex, widespread and long-term contribution to survival that the question of environment is drawing a lot of attention from individuals, organizations, religions and nations.<sup>1</sup>

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it is increasingly obvious that human beings are set on a path of unprecedented environmental destruction and that a profound moral and spiritual change is urgently needed.

A report of the high-level panel on threats, challenges and change, "*A more secure world: our shared responsibility*"<sup>2</sup> classifies environmental degradation among the six clusters of threats- any event or process that leads to large scale death or lessening of life chances and undermines states as the basic unit of the International System - with which the world must be concerned now and in the decades to come.

Due to the environmental degradation, the world is experiencing global warming, mountain glacier and snow cover have declined on average, forests are in the decline, animal and plant species are on the extinct and water is becoming a scarce resource. Archbishop Desmond Tutu in the book, *The Earth Story in the New Testament*,<sup>3</sup> concedes that, 'Planet earth is in crisis. More and more life systems are being threatened. Scientists estimate that at least half, and perhaps as many as 80% of the world's animal and plant species are found in the rainforest. The rainforests are the lungs of the planet, producing

much of the oxygen that human and the oxygen dependent creatures need to survive. The rainforest, alas are still being destroyed'. The ecological crisis is a threat without boundaries; it recognizes no states or even nationalities. This has therefore made it to become a major world issue.

The African continent has a wealth of natural resources including minerals, land, biological diversity, wildlife, forests, fisheries and water. It has the largest tropical rainforest and the second largest freshwater lake in the world. Indeed the region offers significant potential for human, social and economic development but it is facing enormous challenges. It is experiencing widespread land degradation and desertification; loss of biodiversity; deforestation; declining soil productivity; pollution and deterioration of air quality. It is at the receiving end of the environmental degradation. Environmental destruction has remained a major contributor to the high levels of poverty in Africa. Depletion of natural resources in Africa has resulted to many conflicts in the region. Africa as a continent is faced with a big challenge of effectively managing its natural resources for the good of the future generations.<sup>4</sup>

Abdul Hakin, a former president of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), in the publication Africa Environmental Outlook (2006) underscores the point that social, economic and political development in Africa is underpinned by the quality and integrity of the natural resource base. The regions environmental assets provide opportunities for Africa to achieve the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and make good progress towards meeting the target of the millennium development goals (MDG).<sup>5</sup> Africa cannot, therefore afford to lose its environmental assets through degradation. This is particularly important given that Africa relies directly on natural resources to generate revenue and meet livelihood needs.

Environmental state in Kenya is not sustainable in that in the last twenty years or so, our forest cover has been reduced by about a third (1/3) from 2.9% to 1.7% of total land

cover. Deforestation is still at an alarming rate and we may end up having a land cover of less than 1% if the trend is not reversed with immediate effect. Today only 17% of Kenya's land is arable land. The rest is arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs).

The country experiences a decline in soil productivity, prolonged drought and famine which have resulted to loss of animal and human lives. Recently, the government of Kenya declared hunger as a national disaster and sought international funding so as to be able to feed its people. These effects can, to a large extent, be attributed to the high levels of ecological destruction in the country. Environmental destructions have also put pressure on water availability because rivers, lakes and wells have begun to dry up.

In a public lecture titled, "*The Impact of Climate Change in Africa and Its Implications for Peace and Security in Africa*", Ondigo, vice chairman of the intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC), emphatically noted that environmental degradation in any society affects all sectors of the economy and institutions. Indeed Ondigo casted some doubts whether Kenya will achieve the goals of vision 2030 without incorporating the environmental aspect in the vision. These sentiments were, on 17/08 /2009, echoed in a document titled, *Kenya: Atlas of our changing environment*, launched by minister for environment, John Michuki and UNEP executive director, Achim Steiner. They argued that the achievement of vision 2030 goals will, wholly, depend on how the country manages its natural resources.

Hussein Nazr in the book, *Man and Nature*, argues that to destroy the natural environment is to fail in one's humanity. It is to commit a veritable crime against nature.<sup>6</sup> It is becoming quite impossible to make any further enjoyment from our environment. Many have begun to worry about its condition. There is a new consciousness that 'Mother nature' has her rights.<sup>7</sup>

It is this state of affairs that should seriously turn the attention of the church to the environmental crisis. It is a wake up call for the church to realize that environmental mission is also part and parcel of the mission of the church. How then is the church



struggling to secure the earth community's well being because environmental issues have an ethical dimension? This study therefore attempted to focus on the church's involvement in ecological restoration in Wote area, Makueni District.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Ecology has become a centre-stage question which should involve scientists, philosophers, economists, theologians and all other stakeholders in society. However, the religious dimension of ecology seems to have been ignored. The ecological problem, at any rate, is no longer a purely biological matter; it has become something that impacts on politics, ethics and religion. Some people have forecast a future catastrophe in which humankind will find themselves trapped in dead end and unable to maintain a viable environment. There is no doubt that the deterioration in the environment has serious implication for the future of human beings.

The news media are full of stories concerning environmental disasters of one kind or another, from global warming to endangered species to destruction of the forests to low productivity. It is not hard to notice that the environmental issue receives very little attention in Christian circles. There is a very strong relationship between humanity's suffering and problems on one hand and the environment on the other hand. Most of our suffering and problems stem from or, are linked to the way we live, to the conditions of our surroundings.<sup>8</sup> Thus environment is a central factor for human survival and progress and it determines and makes life and living possible.<sup>9</sup>

The area under study experiences high levels of ecological destruction. There is massive and extensive deforestation, especially through charcoal burning. This has resulted to scarcity of water which is a vital resource for human survival. In fact the only source of water in the area is Kaiti River which, itself, is a seasonal river.

In the recent years the area begun experiencing low and irregular rainfall patterns hence low agricultural productivity. The end result has been extreme poverty which has further

made the people to exert more pressure on the remaining few natural resources. Due to low agricultural productivity in the area, the residents rely on relief food from the government.

The view of nature as a resource is destroying the environment. The 'mother earth' as C.M Mwikamba calls it in the book, *Mission in African Christianity*, has been mutilated, injured and hurt. This has affected her varied inhabitants including humans, who are but a small fraction.<sup>10</sup>

Just like other regions, in Wote area there is, everywhere, the desire to conquer nature, but in the process the value of the conqueror himself, who is a human being, is destroyed and his very existence threatened. In deed due to the current environmental crisis in Wote area, humanity's survival is at stake.

That the harmony between the natural environments has been destroyed is a fact that most people admit. The earth is the Lords and everything in it, the world and all who live in it.<sup>11</sup> This implies that humanity's duty is that of a custodian. R.J Berry seems to emphasize the need of stewardship in his book, *Gods book of works*. He notes that unless we behave as good stewards of our natural world, greed and misuse will lead to a non-sustainable future.<sup>12</sup> The environment, flora and fauna, are prerequisites for human existence. Without the created visible and invisible world, human cannot survive. It was after setting the necessary and conclusive environment for human life did God create humanity.

However, despite all these, the residents of Wote seem to have completely ignored the deep and strong insights from the creation stories. They have instead, gone ahead to inflict injustice on the environment instead of conserving and protecting it. Rather than nature being taken like a married woman from whom a man benefits, but also towards whom he is responsible, nature in Wote area has almost become like a 'prostitute' to be benefited from without any sense of obligation and responsibility towards her. The end result has been and continues to be a devastating situation both on the side of the

oppressed (environment) and the oppressor (human being). The ecological crisis affects not only the physical environment but also humanity in all his human aspects.

It is therefore in light of the above issues raised that one is, undoubtedly tempted to ask: What distinctive contribution can or has the Church made towards ecological rehabilitation in Wote area? How has the ecological crisis affected the social-economic and cultural aspects of the people in Wote? Is there any place for the Akamba traditional heritage in the ecological crisis?

Religion is increasingly seen as an important factor in human development as this has created a need for practical and academic explorations of the relations between religion and human development. Behind this lies a deep conviction that an interpretation of the gospel that is limited in its meaning to personal piety and morality is a serious watering down of the full Gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup> The Gospel is a life-renewing gospel, bringing renewal to every area and to every dimension of human life including the ecological dimension.

Therefore a new environmental consciousness needs to be urgently developed in Wote if this generation doesn't want to bear the responsibility for the loss of much of the abundance and diversity of life in the area and face the prospect of an increasingly impoverished region.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study area are as follows:

1. To explore the Akamba traditional methods of conserving environment.
2. To investigate the role of the Roman Catholic Church Wote on ecological restoration
3. To explore the impact of the ecological crisis on the social-cultural and economic aspects of the people of Wote.
4. To find out the response of the community towards ecological rehabilitation

#### **1.4 Rationale of the study**

Resolving the ecological crisis of our planet is no longer a problem we can leave to the scientists alone. The debate on environment is as much about religion and morality as it is about science. UNEP realizes and stresses that success in combating environmental degradation is dependent on the full participation of all actors in society, an aware and educated population, respect for ethical and spiritual values and cultural diversity, and protection of indigenous knowledge.<sup>14</sup> Religion, therefore, has a role to play in ecological restoration.

Today, the residents of Wote cannot claim to derive much enjoyment and satisfaction from the natural environment which God once declared to be good. There is urgent need for the residents to change their perceptions and attitudes towards their environment. It is very crucial that these attitudes be based on a sound understanding of the cosmos for the environmental question cannot properly be dealt with unless key religious and ethical values are brought to play.

The study was therefore crucial in attempting to find out how the church can bring about attitude reformation. This is because the ecological problem of Wote calls for multidisciplinary approach and therefore it is not a challenge thrown only to politicians, technologists and economists, but also a challenge set-at the doorsteps of theologians and at the chancel of churches. Besides, ecology needs the deep truth which lies within the major faiths of the world if people are to recognize their responsibility for and with nature.

Wote area and indeed the whole of Makueni District is one of the hardship areas in the country and it has been adversely affected by the ecological crisis. This study thus objectively, attempted to fill the missing data on how the residents of Wote have been socially, culturally and economically affected by the crisis.

The need to survive and exist in a dignified state, too, provides a rationale for environmental concern in Wote. Survival of the human species is the ultimate value and that ecology is a central pillar to human development. The study was therefore to increase awareness to the residents of Wote area and the church leadership that human beings cannot continue to survive without a healthy planet. This will bring a new consciousness to the people that they must act to preserve, rehabilitate and protect the environment in order to assure the future of their children. The knowledge that environment is linked to all their aspects of life will increase their awareness that ecological reconstruction is necessary for survival.

Then, lastly the findings of this study will benefit the church leaders and the individual Christians and residents of Wote in general on how they can use their culture to reclaim the previous 'goodness' of the area and gradually liberate the people from their social, economic and political hardships brought about by the ecological crisis. This is because, as followers of Christ, they must continue with the liberative mission of their master, Jesus Christ, who was and is a liberator.

### **1.5 Literature review**

The environmental crisis is one that is well documented and there is immense and diverse literature on the whole topical issue. However, there is no much literature which has been written on the church and ecological reconstruction.

Jose Morales notes that the ecological crisis has shown us that in dominating nature and adapting it to suit humanity; things have gone so far that the natural conditions for our future survival are being jeopardized.<sup>15</sup> He foresees a catastrophic future for human beings because the environment will be unable to sustain them. Jose urges for an urgent move to liberate the environment before such time.

The current awakening of an acute ecological awareness, which takes account not only of the physical environment but especially of a new spiritual outlook, is indeed a positive

feature of contemporary culture. The increase in ecological awareness, according to Morales, has led to all kinds of concrete initiatives and projects and there is no question but that all aspects of human life and his environment need to be harmoniously integrated.<sup>16</sup>

Morales, however, fails to show how the modern man can harmoniously integrate his human aspects and his environment so as to salvage our planet.

Paul Taylor, extensively and intensively, elaborates what he calls, 'The Biocentric outlook of nature', which has a belief system as its major component.<sup>17</sup> The belief system constitutes a philosophical worldview concerning the order and place of humans in it. When one conceives of oneself, ones relation to other living things, and the whole set of natural ecosystems on our planet in terms of this outlook, one identifies oneself as a member of the earth's community.

To view the place of humans in the natural world from the biocentric outlook, according to Taylor, is to reject the idea of human superiority over other living things. The outlook supports the moral attitude of respect for nature. Taylor further seems to champion the concept of inherent worth and notes that the creation has some value. Paul's work does not, however, give the role of religion in instilling this concept to humans today so that they may see themselves as but one species – population among many.

Environmental awareness, as Berry points out, is not merely a scientific issue; it is the battle for our survival and quality of life.<sup>18</sup> Berry predicts an environmental doom if the current trend on environmental degradation goes on. Berry notes a very strong link between development and environmental conservation which is indivisible. A people that destroys its environment as it 'develops' has no long term future. In a phrase which has entered common parlance 'sustainable development' must be the strategy of all nations.

Berry further notes that the environment does not exist as a sphere separate from human actions, ambitions and needs. Sustainable human existence, therefore, depends on a

reasonable concern for conservation, the management of the natural world. Wote area does not only need conservation, but also environmental rehabilitation.

In the book, *Changing Worlds*, Robin Gill observes that environmental debate is as much about religion and behaviours as it is about science and that religious faiths has sufficient power to change peoples hearts and behaviours across the globe.<sup>19</sup>

Religious faith has something distinctive and powerful to contribute to the environmental debate. Gill highlights three key beliefs held by people of many different religious traditions which when seriously adhered to can liberate the natural environment. One belief is that life, both human and non-human is created and God-given and should therefore be respected and appreciated. The second belief is that creation is meaningful. Gill's argument is that the universe is not arbitrary or fortuitous. It has a purpose or a meaningful end. In God they receive purpose or a meaning. The third belief is that human beings have a sacred duty towards God's creation.

Once convinced that life is already sacred and valued by God who created it, human beings will have every reason to believe that he or she, in turn, has a duty towards the creation. This is the principle of stewardship.

The ethical imperative of stewardship, which must underlie all environmental policies and initiatives, is echoed by D. Western. in his book *Conservation in the Twentieth Century*. He defines stewardship as the duty to look after our world prudently and conscientiously.<sup>20</sup> The key to this activity of trusteeship, curatorship or tenancy is a conscious understanding and duty to care for our environment. As noted by Robin Gill above, human beings have obligations to God and to then person and things over who we are Stewards, not only to profit the landlord but also to benefit and do justice to the whole creation. Human beings are just but custodians of the earth.

The word of John Ruskin as quoted by R.J Berry summarizes it all.

*God has lent us the earth for our life, it is a great entail.  
It belongs as much to those who come after us and whose  
names are already written in the book of  
creation, as to us; and we have no right by  
anything we do or neglect to do to involve them  
in unnecessary penalties, or deprive them of benefits  
which was in our power to bequeath.*<sup>21</sup>

The above quotation frequently resurfaces. A variant was attributed to Mrs. Thutcher in the United Kingdom government's white paper, "*The Common inheritance*" (1990:10) as also quoted by Berry:

*We do not hold freehold on our world, but only a full repairing lease. We have a moral duty to look after our planet and hand it in good order to future generation.*<sup>22</sup>

This is a conception which has developed as sustainability or sustainable development. None of the proponents of stewardship have offered the ways in which man can be a good steward. Moreover, there is no strong stewardship in Wote area and this is evidenced by the high levels of environmental crisis.

Seyyed Nasr points out that one of the chief causes for lack of acceptance of the spiritual dimension of the ecological crisis is the survival of scientism which continues to present modern science not as a particular way of knowing nature but, as a complete and totalitarian philosophy which reduces all reality to the physical domain.<sup>23</sup> Francis Bacon, one of the leading proponents of science, as quoted by Nasr, notes that the main creation of science was to gain power over nature, dominate her and force her to reveal her secrets not for the glory of God but for the sake of gaining power and wealth.<sup>24</sup> The scientific view destroys man's centrality in the cosmic order as shown by the biocentric outlook of nature.



Nazr seems to put more emphasis on science and ecology and how the scientific view has detached modern person from perceiving nature as sacred. He fails to come up with mechanism on how the spiritual dimension can be used to counter the scientific view in order to protect and conserve nature. Behold, the ecological crisis in Wote is not due to scientism.

Diasaku Ikeda in his book, *Human Values in a Changing World*, strongly asserts that the destruction of the environment must offer mankind a good opportunity to revolutionize attitude towards nature.<sup>25</sup> Ikenda observes that although movements for the conservation of the environment have been started and some have already borne fruit, their scale is till too small.

Wilson Bryan who had the dialogue with Ikeda on man and nature, seem to echo the arguments of Nasr that the whole trust of man's scientific efforts has been to establish control over nature.<sup>26</sup> To a very considerable degree, man has succeeded in providing a man-made environment in which all the features that provide the background of his day-to-day living are the artificial product of his own devising. Yet, ultimately, as noted by Wilson, beyond all the contrivances, basic dependence on nature remains.<sup>27</sup>

There is now, a strong, if not always articulate, demand among men to return to nature, to preserve its life enhancing qualities and to experience increased harmony with nature. This however, calls for 'inner revolution' of the attitudes of man towards nature where each individual human being awakes his or her inner self to an awareness of oneness with nature.

Although Ikenda and Wilson concede that religion is the only way to bring about this essential inner revolution<sup>28</sup>, they fail to give us how it can be achieved. This study has endeavoured to illustrate that the church through its ecological insights and awareness creation and establishment of communities of hope bring about inner revolution.

In the book *Ethics*, Thompson has observed that the tendency of human beings to seek to benefit human first of all, and then, by extension, feel some responsibility towards other species has led to environmental crisis.<sup>29</sup> Looking from a utilitarian point of view, Thompson has noted that the care of the environment has been seen as a moral issue first and foremost because destruction of the environment involved harm to mankind.<sup>30</sup> Using the utilitarian perspective in assessing our responsibilities to the environment may not bear fruits because human being is given the first priority in his endeavour to achieve happiness. Hence we are unable to tell the long-term effect of environment change on humans.

Just like Robin and Taylor, Thompson Champions for the natural approach where he emphatically notes that everything on the planet earth has its place within an overall scheme of things and should be valued apart from any specific or demonstrable benefit to mankind.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, the people of Wote have ignored all this and went ahead to inflict injustices on their natural environment.

Gitau in his thesis "*Toward a Kenyan African Christian Theological Basis for Environmental Conservation*" aims at unearthing insights on Africa and Biblical traditions on how they view the environment and thereby assist Kenyans on how they can relate with nature. The study centred on the Gikuyu and Maasai communities and Gitau was able to establish that the African traditional societies viewed nature as sacred and this assisted significantly in salvaging it. He further noted that humanity lived in a religious environment where partnership with nature thrived.<sup>32</sup>

Gitau, deeply explores, how the Bible is rich with deep insights on environmental issues. He stresses the need for Christians to be responsible and faithful stewards in looking after God's creation entrusted on them. The church in Kenya, as Gitau points out, has not yet become vocal as it should be in fighting the ecological crisis. However, Gitau does not focus on the Kamba community, who are the residents of Wote, and how the church can inculturate their cultural heritage in rehabilitating their environment.

Wilson B. in his article, "*Our Struggle for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creations*" reaffirms that the medieval man understood his survival to be based on the divinely constituted order of things that individual human beings as well as human communities were supposed to keep their proper places in relation to God.<sup>33</sup> Central to indigenous traditions is an awareness of the integral and whole relationships of symbolic and material life.

The traditional societies lived in harmony and understood very clearly that their survival dependent on their relationship with the environment. Unfortunately, according to Wilson, the modern man has abandoned this order and instead material nature has become a mere thing, something outside man.<sup>34</sup> This is already radically inimical to nature and put it at the mercy of man's pragmatism and utilitarianism.

Wilson reminds mankind that every thing created in the universe is the work of God and has to be honored and valued. He further warns Christians that the fact that they are not of this world. (John 17:14) does not give them the mandate to misuse what God has created and declared to be good. Wilson proposes a re-examination of African Christianity, particularly its theology on creation.

Ray Bohlin in the article "*Christian Environmentalism*" seems to echo Gitau's and Wilson's observations that Christians have failed to realize that they have a sacred responsibility to the earth and the creatures within it.<sup>35</sup> Even though man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1: 26, 27) and given dominion over the earth, Bohlin asserts that a responsibility goes along with bearing the image of God. In its proper sense man's rule and dominion over the earth is that of the steward or a caretaker, not a reckless exploiter. What the church can do to correct its failures in the environment mission is a question which Ray fails to answer.

Mwathi E. in his M.A thesis, *“Sustainable Development and Environment”*, vividly explores the central role played by environment towards achieving sustainable development in any area. He observes that for sustainable environment to be established in poor communities, alternative sources of income need to be put in place. This is because the poor communities will always depend on their immediate environment for survival.<sup>36</sup>

Through the various projects he investigated, Mwathi found that many of them have collapsed due to environmental destruction in Kiambogo area. Although Mwathi proposes alternative sources of income for the people in the poor communities to achieve ecological sustainability, he does not clearly show the role of the church in coming up with this alternative means of income and their sustainability. He further failed to show practical ways the church can take to ensure people change and adapt to the new ways of income.

Jimoh Omo in his article, *“Environment and Development”*, concurs with Mwathi’s observation and comments by firmly asserting that conservation and protection of the environment is a prerequisite for integral development in any society.<sup>37</sup>

Omo sees religious people and philosophers as custodians of African culture and can help to sharpen the inherent feeling in human beings about their place in nature.<sup>38</sup> He, however, does not show how the modern religious people and philosophers, who he calls custodians of African culture, can positively use their position to reverse the ecological crisis. The study extensively and intensively gives some of the ways the religious people can utilize the African culture toward ecological restoration.

C.M Mwikamba in his article, *“Shifts in Mission: An Ecological Theology in Africa”*, reaffirms that the ecological crisis has been a major world issue and big challenge to all the nations and world religions.<sup>39</sup> He keenly observes that modern man has begun to

come to the realization that nature has rights and that the death of nature is the death of humanity.

Mary Getui in the article, “*Mission of the church and concern for the environment*”, echoes Mwikamba’s sentiments when she argues that environment is crucial for the existence and survival of mankind.<sup>40</sup> According to Getui Christian Mission should be a process of total concern for the well being of the faculties of a person in community.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, since environment is a vital pillar in holistic human development, the church cannot afford to ignore it in its missions.

Both, Mwikamba and Getui are of the strong view that the church should wake up and fully embrace the environment mission. They also challenge the church to make use of the African traditional heritage in trying to make mankind live in harmony with his environment and as a responsible steward towards God’s creation.

Despite the missing gaps, the literature has given deep insights on the environmental issues affecting mankind today. This study has attempted to fill the gaps left by objectively investigating the role of the church in ecological reconstruction in Wote area.

## **1.6 Theoretical framework**

The study is informed by two theories: - Theology of development and liberation theology. The approaches are wide but only areas relevant to this study will be briefly picked.

The datum for theology is faith and faith is not merely belief but has an existential attitude. The better we understand our faith and the revelation which it is based, the more understanding shall we be able to express that faith over the whole range of existence. Theology and development are vitally connected and hence human development is a concern of theology.

Kodwo Ankrāh comments on the concept 'development' as follows:

*Development is not a new thing in human history. The process is as old as man himself. And through out history man has been both, the object and agent of development. Development thus means nothing more than man acting on his environment to improve his condition of life.*<sup>42</sup>

Theology of development, therefore, has to put in perspective issues on man, society and use of the worlds resources.<sup>43</sup> Theology of development puts more emphasis on integral human development. In other words development concerns the whole man. It is crucial to note that development is both material and spiritual, it is individual and collective and it is quantitative and qualitative.

The church cannot therefore ignore its vital responsibility in addressing key topical themes in development. One such central theme in development is ecology. We cannot achieve holistic human development if our environment is destroyed. ♡

Liberation theology, a term first used in 1973 by Gustavo Gutierrez, a Peruvian Roman Catholic priest, is a school of thought among Latin American Catholics according to which the gospel of Christ demands that the church concentrates its efforts on liberating the people of the world from poverty and oppression. For many years, human being has been the focus for liberation theology. Several organizations, both national and international, have been at the forefront advocating for justice and rights of men. They have, indeed, strongly advocated for human liberation.

This approach has been biased because it is not inclusive of the whole creation. This has been at the expense of justice and rights of nature. In line with this study, liberation theology needs to be seen from a wider approach. It needs to be broaden to incorporate liberation of the whole creation. The theory of liberation should therefore be seen to embrace the concept, 'integrity of creation'. The integrity of creation is foundational of ensuring justice and liberation for our environment. This is because integrity of creation

will call for respect of human dignity, respect for nature, living in solidarity with others and using the goods of this earth in a spirit of stewardship.

When humanity comes to the awareness that they are part of creation, that they live side-by-side and not above everything else, then liberation of our mother nature will be attained. The church is, therefore, obliged to aid in alleviating the injustices inflicted, not just on mankind but also on the environment.

The attempt to liberate the environment, the oppressed, should also concern itself with liberating humanity, the oppressor, from the negative attitudes and behaviours that make him or her to inflict the injustices on nature. Thus the oppressor and the oppressed must be liberated.

The fact that the church has a direct contact with individuals and communities at all levels of the social fabric and that it shapes and influences people's attitudes and behaviours, positions it to effectively and efficiently make use of these approaches in the fight against the ecological crisis. The two approaches will ultimately result, not only to ecological sustainability, but also to an improved quality of life and material sufficiency.

The church has therefore an obligation to utilize their capital, gospel message and personnel in liberating the environment and by extension attain integral human development.

How then can the Catholic Church in Wote put into practice the above approaches to the ecological crisis?

### **1.7 Hypothesis**

The study is based on the following hypothesis:

1. The residents of Wote area have not effectively embraced the principle of stewardship towards their environment.
2. Poverty is a big challenge towards attaining ecological stability in Wote.
3. A link exists between the quality of life and the quality of the environment.
4. Respect for Rights of nature, to a large extent, upholds Human Rights and vice versa.

## **1.8 Methodology**

### **1.8.1 Target population**

The study targeted the people of Wote area in Makueni District. The population of Wote is mainly composed of natives of the area. The target population comprised of church leaders and priests, church members, the residents of Wote area and government officials in the Ministries of Environment and Natural resources, Ministry of Agriculture, Education, Water and Ministry of Forestry.

### **1.8.2 Sample size and Sampling procedure**

The study relied on one hundred (100) respondents representing the various groups making up the target population. A sample of two respondents was picked from the church leadership, two from the Ministry of Agriculture and two from the Ministries of Water and Forestry. These six instruments were sampled using the purposive sampling techniques so as to get in-depth insights on environment in Wote. The remaining ninety four respondents were picked from the church leaders, church members, government officials and the residents of Wote using random and purposive sampling technique. In addition, to ensure a representative sample, stratification sampling technique was employed using the age criteria.

Out of the 100 respondents 25 ranged between 20 - 30 years, 35 respondents lied between 30 - 40 years, 24 ranged between 40 - 49 years and 16 of them had fifty years and above.

### **1.8.3 Data Collection Procedures**

A number of data collection procedures were employed which was tested to affirm their validity before actual use. The study, thus, heavily relied on primary and secondary methods of data collection as follows:

#### **(i) Questionnaires**

The questionnaire method was highly relied on and it was administered to the residents, government officials and church members who were able to read and write. Eighty



questionnaires were dispatched to the respondents and every effort was made to make sure that there was stratification in the distribution.

Both closed and open-ended questions enabled the researcher to elicit good qualitative data from the respondents. The questionnaire method was advantageous to the study because it enables the researcher to cover a large geographical area of Wote. It also gave standardized response that made it simpler to compare the different responses during data analysis.

#### **(ii) Questionnaire – Interview method**

At some time the study combined both interview and questionnaire methods to gather information from respondents. Specifically, this method was used to guide key informants through interviews in order to collect in-depth information from government officials, pastors and priests, the residents and the elderly respondents.

Qualitative interviewing techniques was used and this was achieved through semi-structured one-to-one interviews. The semi-structured in-depth individual interview provided the researcher with more freedom to raise topics, formulate questions and more in new directions. The respondents had also a chance to expound on their <sup>points</sup> responses.

#### **(iii) Observation method**

This was another key instrument of data collection for the study which was guided by the objectives of the study. Observation was employed especially to gather information on the state of the environment in Wote area, the observable effects of the crisis and the response of the church and the local community towards ecological reconstruction.

#### **(iv) Secondary data**

The secondary data was obtained from the existing documents or materials containing information on ecology.

#### **1.8.4 Data analysis and Presentation**

Systematic analysis of qualitative data was adopted to have an in-depth insight into the data collected. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis is involved. The analysis of the collected data was guided by the objectives of the study. Quantifying data analysis techniques used included percentages and figures.

The analysed data is presented using simple tables, figures and graphs. After the analysis and interpreting of data, a report of the findings was compiled and submitted.

- <sup>1</sup> Mary Getui, "Mission of the Church and Concern for the Environment", in Nasimiyu A. and Waruta D., (eds), *Mission in African Christianity* (Nairobi, Acton Publishers, 2000) p.43
- <sup>2</sup> UNEP, "A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility". (A Report of the High-level panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, a UNEP Publication 2004) p.2
- <sup>3</sup> C. Norman. And V. Balabaski. *The Earth Story in the New Testament* (Pilgrim Press, 2002) P. vii
- <sup>4</sup> J.N.K. Mugambi. *The Church and Reconstruction of Africa: Theological Considerations* (All African Conference of Churches, 1997) P.v
- <sup>5</sup> UNEP. *Africa Environmental Outlook*, (UNEP Publication, 2006).p.1
- <sup>6</sup> Nasr Seyyed, *Man and Nature: Spiritual crisis of Modern Man* (Allen and Unwin Ltd; 1968) P.1
- <sup>7</sup> C.M. Mwikamba. "Shifts in Mission: An Ecological Theology in Africa," in Nasimiyu A. and Waruta D., (eds.), *Mission in African Christianity* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2000) P. 11
- <sup>8</sup> Mary Getui. "Mission of the Church and Concern for the Environment", in Nasimiyu A. and Waruta D., (eds), *Mission in African Christianity* (Nairobi, Acton Publishers, 2000) p. 41
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid; p. 42
- <sup>10</sup> C.M. Mwikamba. "Shifts in Mission: An Ecological Theology in Africa," in Nasimiyu A. and Waruta D., (eds.), *Mission in African Christianity* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2000) P. 11
- <sup>11</sup> Psalms 24: 1
- <sup>12</sup> R..J. Berry. *God's Book of Works* (London: T and T Clark Ltd, 2003) Pp. 183 - 4
- <sup>13</sup> Stuart Fowler. *The Church and the Renewal of Society* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University, 1988) P.32
- <sup>14</sup> D.A Posey (ed.). *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity* (UNEP Publication, 1999) p. 21
- <sup>15</sup> Jose Morales. *Creation Theology: Four Court Press*, 2001. p. 238
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid; p. 240
- <sup>17</sup> Paul. W.Taylor. *Respect for Nature* (Princeton University Press, 1986) Pp. 112 - 5
- <sup>18</sup> R..J. Berry. *God's Book of Works* (London: T and T Clark Ltd., 2003) pp. 163 - 4
- <sup>19</sup> Robin Gill. *Changing Worlds* (London: T and T Clark Ltd, 2002) p. 307
- <sup>20</sup> Western D., *Conservation in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford University Press, 1989) p. 63
- <sup>21</sup> Words of John Ruskin quoted by R. J. Berry in his book, *God's Book of Works* (T and T Clark Ltd, 2003) p. 172
- <sup>22</sup> Words of Mrs. Thutcher who was a Prime Minister in United Kingdom as quoted by Berry in his Book, *God's book of Works* (T and T Clark Ltd; 2003) p. 172
- <sup>23</sup> Nasr Seyyed, *Man and Nature: Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1968) p. 3
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid; p. 12
- <sup>25</sup> D. Ikenda. and Wilson B. *Human Values in a Changing World* (Lyle Stuart: USA, 1987) p. 335
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid; p. 336
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid; p. 335 - 6
- <sup>29</sup> Mel Thompson .*Ethics*. (London: Hodder Headline Ltd, 2003) p. 149
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid; p. 149
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid
- <sup>32</sup> S.K Gitau. "Toward a Kenya African Theological Basis for Environmental Conservation (PhD Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1997)
- <sup>33</sup> Wilson B. "Our struggle for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.", in Mugambi J.N.K. *The Church and Reconstruction of Africa* (All African Conference of Churches, 1997) p.164
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid
- <sup>35</sup> <http://www.surfinthespirit.com /environment /Christian environmentalism>.
- <sup>36</sup> G.E Mwathi. "Sustainable development and environment." (M.A Thesis, University of Nairobi, 2006) P. 126
- <sup>37</sup> Jimoh O.F. "Environment and development: Mutual Interests and Safeguards. In Gerald J. and Wanjohi (ed.) *Social and Religious Concerns of East Africa* (Nairobi: Fotoform, 2005) p. 232.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid; p. 233
- <sup>39</sup> C.M Mwikamba. "Shifts in Mission: An Ecological Theology in Africa," in Nasimiyu A. and Waruta D., (eds.), *Mission in African Christianity* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2000) p. 11

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<sup>40</sup> Mary Getui, "Mission of the Church and Concern for the Environment", in Nasimiyu A. and Waruta D., (eds), *Mission in African Christianity* (Nairobi, Acton Publishers, 2000) p.42

<sup>41</sup> Ibid; p. 40

<sup>42</sup> Kodwo A. Development and the Church of Uganda (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1998) P. 3

<sup>43</sup> Alister Kee. *A Reader in Political Theology* (USA: Western Press, 1975) P. 69

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

#### 2.0 Introduction

Despite the generous beauty of this world and the abundant happiness that it offers, we live in what has often been called an age of anxiety<sup>1</sup>. It seems that we have manufactured for ourselves, needlessly, an entirely new kind of worry<sup>2</sup> through environmental degradation. Humanity appears to be heading for disaster: the future has become a threatening thing. There has been the view that humans live in a new geological period, the anthropocene era where humans have become a force of nature, triggering changes in immense ecosystem - changes which could rebound, threatening our own livelihood, and the lives of future generations<sup>3</sup>.

Indeed, humans seem to be polluting and destroying the environment, wasting the limited resources in this planet at a phenomenal speed while at the same time witnessing a notorious 'population explosion'. Humanity depends on its environment for survival; we destroy the environment, we destroy not only humanity but also the other lifeforms which depend on it. In his message during the celebration of the world day of peace on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1990, the late Pope John Paul II<sup>4</sup> argued that the ecological crisis is a common responsibility. He saw the world peace threatened not only by the arm of race, regional conflicts and continued injustices among people and nations, but also by lack of due respect for nature, the plundering of natural resources and by a progressive decline in the quality of life.

As also noted by Gichinga Ndirangu<sup>5</sup> in his article, "*Climate change time-bomb definitely ticking for Africa*", climate change, a global phenomenon, is now recognized as a key challenge because of its potential to trigger serious social, political and economic problems, and upset the ecosystem.

It is this state of affairs that has recently, than ever before, attracted an enormous amount of attention, concern and initiated a great volume of discussion and debate all over the world. This confirms the complex and urgency of the ecological problem.

The environmental crisis is no longer seen, purely, as a matter of science, politics and economics as many have reduced it to. It is also concerned with spirituality and ethics. It has become a multidimensional and multidisciplinary issue. Thus Religion which is a major pillar in any culture can not be undervalued or put in periphery in the fight against ecological crisis.

Religion remains one of the most influential institution in our society. Its underlying belief and value system influences both the individual and the society and determines the way they perceive and relate to a particular thing or issue. It gives them their respective worldview. It therefore follows that the way humanity relates to the environment is largely dictated by the value and belief systems of their Religion. The Iranian – American philosopher, Seyyed Hossein Nasr echoes this argument when he says:

*The environmental crisis is fundamentally a crisis of values, and that religions, being a primary source of values in any culture, are thus implicated in the decisions human make regarding the environment<sup>6</sup>.*

The above statement reasserts that the ecological crisis can not properly be dealt with unless key religious and ethical values are brought in to play. Religion and ethics have what it takes to give direction on the ecological crisis.

There are various attempts which continue to be made scientifically, politically, geographically and economically to contain the alarming increase in ecological crisis. Unfortunately, however, Religion generally seems to have been ignored as having a role to play in the environmental reconstruction process.

The Assisi declaration (1986) by all world great religions on their attitude towards nature was a general agreement that the environment is part of the religious agenda. Thus, the religious dimension on environment must be properly highlighted and instilled in society. It challenges all world religions to reflect and utilize the deep truth which lie within them if people are to recognize their responsibility for and with nature. If this can be attained, then there would be difference in all human aspects. All religious traditions have a central role in reversing the ecological crisis.

This section will therefore give a brief overview on how African traditional religion, Buddhism and Christianity relates to environment.

## **2.1 African traditional religion and ecology**

African Traditional Religion, just like other religious traditions, is a complex phenomenon. John. S. Mbiti<sup>7</sup> sees African religion as comprising six essential parts: Beliefs, Practices, Ceremonies and Festivals, Religious objects and Places, Values and Morals, and Religious leaders.

African religion forms the basis of the African way of life in all aspects. It is indeed these components of African religion which directs the people's way of life and gives them worldview of issues in society. It is in light of these that the study endeavors to give an overview of the African religion and environment

### **2.1.1 An overview of the African respect for nature**

Traditional African religious beliefs and practices have been undermined as having a place to play in the ecological crisis facing humanity today by several stakeholders such as the scientists, politicians, economists etc. Indeed to the modern person, the increased awareness of the need to care for our environment may suggest to him/her that the traditional African society had no concern for the environment. This would be a wrong perception in regard to the African respect for their environment. Environmental protection and conservation is undeniably

not a recent phenomena to the traditional African societies, but has been in existence since time immemorial.

Traditional African societies appreciate and know about environmental degradation and the need for protection and conservation of their environment. This finds expressions in their various religious beliefs, traditions and practices. The aspect of relationships, is not only among human beings but also between humanity and the rest of the universe, and is fundamental in the African way of life. The universe, in the African worldview, is a composite of divine, spirit, human, animate and inanimate elements, hierarchically perceived, but directly related and always interacting with one another<sup>8</sup>. These elements, Magesa, call them forces of life or vital forces<sup>9</sup>. Thus, in the African worldview there is no dichotomy between the visible and invisible world. It is this network of relationships between and among the vital forces which becomes the basis of African ethics and values. Anything which seems to bring disharmony in this network of relationship is considered evil. Thus traditional African societies ensure that they live in harmony with the rest of the universe.

The life forces works towards enhancing human life and society<sup>10</sup>. Therefore the African societies understand that, destroying their environment would affect their quality of life and also create disorder in the interconnected moral universe. Magesa puts it clearly when he observes that:

*The world of forces is held like a spider's web of which no single thread can be caused to vibrate without shaking the whole network.*<sup>11</sup>

Traditional African societies emphasize on the integrity of all creation. There is no demarcation between sacred and secular world, as is the case today. The traditional African people understand themselves as part of the environment. Mbiti in his book, *African Religion and Philosophy*, observes:<sup>12</sup>



*African religion sees nature as a friend of man and vice versa. He is an integral part of nature and the priest of nature. The destruction or pollution of environment brings harm to all life in general and injures human welfare in particular. Therefore man has to preserve nature and use it wisely, indeed mercifully for his and its survival.*

The African view of the universe is profoundly religious<sup>15</sup>. The sacredness of the universe enables the African to accord it respect and always ensure a harmonious relationship with it. The visible creation is perceived as part of God's revelation which possesses some kind of divine power.

The different African traditional societies perceive some of the natural objects and animals as sacred. Such natural phenomenon and animate elements seen as possessing spiritual powers are preserved and accorded respect and veneration. For instance, certain trees in various societies can not be cut because they are considered as sacred and endowed with healing powers. The indiscriminate tree cutting experienced in Wote and other parts of Africa could not be tolerated by the traditional African beliefs and practices.

Rivers, seas, mountains, caves and forests were also seen as sacred places of abodes of gods. As divinities, certain human activities that threatened their beauty and significance were considered a taboo. Thus pollution and destruction of these water bodies and sites could not be allowed in African traditional societies.

Indeed, it is this environmental knowledge evident in their beliefs, traditions and practices that enable the traditional African societies to preserve conserve and derive abundant life from the environment. Their awareness of the integral and whole relationships of invisible and material life was central to the environmental knowledge. The African cultural heritage can be of great assistance in our fight

against ecological destruction. However in the course of African history, there seems that some external factors interfered with our traditional ways of treating the environment. This is because in the traditional African societies, environmental knowledge was a recurring focus during the life of an individual. Unfortunately, along the way the cycle was disconnected. (To be explored in chapter four). Hence resulting to the current ecological crisis.

The African traditional understanding that the loss of natural harmony meant losing continence guarding life should be a big lesson to humanity today. It should bring, to modern people, an awareness of fostering sustainable human-earth relations for future generation.

## **2.2 Christianity and ecological restoration**

The debate whether Christianity is an environmentally friendly religion or not continues to linger in the minds of many. The bottom line of this discourse, squarely, lies on two Christian principles: Dominion and stewardship. This section, therefore, endeavors to briefly explore these two principles in relation to ecological rehabilitation.

### **2.2.1 The Dominion principle**

Genesis 1:27-28<sup>14</sup> has been quoted and continues to be quoted by many believers and non-believers who consider Christianity to be unfriendly towards the environment and who want to legitimate their exploitative activities toward nature. This relevant portion of the scripture reads:

*And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them: and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth, and subdue it, have dominion over the fish of the sea and the over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.*

In deed, generations of Christians have interpreted the Genesis Command as almost mandating an exploitation and totalitarian dualism.

This is the background to Lynn White's (1967)<sup>15</sup> article, "*The Historical root of our ecological crisis*", which stirred up debates in religious and academic circles. White argued that the environmental destruction witnessed today can, to some extent, be attributed to Christianity. This is the Biblical belief that nature, seen as inferior to people, can be controlled by man, has brought a lack of respect for sacredness of nature. White summarizes this when he says:

*We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim...we shall continue to have a worsening ecological crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence*<sup>16</sup>.

White conclusion was that:<sup>17</sup>

*What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things about them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature, and destiny – that is, by religion... In its western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen... Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions not only established a dualism of man exploits nature for his proper end.'*

Ian Mchorg<sup>18</sup> reasserts that the Genesis story in its insistence upon dominion and subjugation of nature encourages the most exploitative and destructive instincts in man, rather than those that are deferential and creative.

The defensive response to this criticism is misinterpretation of Biblical versus. The command to have dominion and subdue the earth, Berry observes, was given by God in the context of being made in His image<sup>19</sup>. It was not a license for unfettered exploitation, but an obligation to look after Gods work responsibly on His behalf<sup>20</sup>. The word translated 'dominion', implies rule, but the Israelites ideal of kingship was of a servant, not oriental despotism.<sup>21</sup> The Hebrew understanding

was of a ruler totally responsible for his subject welfare – Care, feeding, protection etc. Westermann eludes Berry's conception of 'dominion' by noting that:<sup>22</sup>

*As lord of his realm, the king is responsible not only for the nation; he is the one who bears and mediates blessings for the realm entrusted to him. Man would fail in his loyal office of dominion over the earth were he to exploit the world's resources to the detriment of the land, plant life, animal, rivers and sea.*

Humanity's wrong misconception of the principle of dominion has resulted in the ecological crisis. Everyone is almost realizing that the earth is losing its ability to sustain life. This is manifested in atmospheric changes, water pollution, loss of biodiversity, decline in soil fertility and forest cover.

Humanity is now asking the question: what should be the way forward? Nicholson<sup>23</sup>, a pioneer conservationist proposes that the first step must be plainly to reject and scrub out the complacent image of man the conqueror of nature, and of man licensed by God to conduct himself as the worst earth's pest.

### **2.2.2 Christian ecological stewardship**

Those who critique Christianity of promoting exploitative attitude towards nature are nevertheless in agreement that the necessary key to both past and future is in adapting right attitude to nature.<sup>24</sup> White is explicit when he says:

*Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not... what we do about nature depends on our ideas of man- nature relationship.*<sup>25</sup>

Far from being the root of our environmental crisis, Christianity offers not only a credible explanation for our crisis but also the very solution for the crisis. Thus, the view that Christianity should bear a huge burden of guilt for our current ecological crisis as argued by Lynn and others should not hold Christianity in their

fight for environmental sustainability. Christianity offers deep insights towards ecological reconstruction, particularly the principle of ecological stewardship.

### 2.2.3 Ecological stewardship

The ecological crisis is no longer an imagined phenomenon. It is real and is threatening our very existence. Humanity is now facing the harsh reality after the wanton destruction of its own environment. This calls for prudential considerations for a speedy remedy. The crisis should be sending warning and alerting bells to humanity that the very basic religious principle has been forgotten and totally overlooked – the principle of stewardship.

Marsh in his book, *man and nature*,<sup>26</sup> notes that man has too long forgotten that the earth was given to him for usufruct (fruitful use) only, not for consumption, still less for profligate waste. Therefore, if Christians still believe positively in the goodness and even the holiness of God's creation, the visible environment, they face an urgent task of defending that paradoxical doctrine very energetically<sup>27</sup>.

In the Christian faith there is an irrefutable truth that God owns all. God owns everything in the world. This is evident from the holy Bible, for instance; Palms 24:1-2; Psalms 89:11-13; Leviticus 25:23; Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalms 50:10-11. These reaffirm that humanity only takes care of the earth on behalf of the owner, the creator (God).

The 'big' attitude in the modern world – 'I own it attitude' – has led to poor stewardship. To a large extent, the ecological crisis arises from our habitual but extraordinary assumption that the earth belongs to us, to humanity, and to this generation in particular. However by no conceivable title does this world belong to us.<sup>28</sup>

Christianity, as a world living religion, continues to influence human history in various aspects of human life. Likewise, it has a potential to positively contribute towards ecological stewardship. There is an urgent need for a more realistic idea

of our own understanding, a habitual awareness that we live here on earth not as free holders but as tenants and stewards, responsible always to someone else, the giver of life.

The moment humanity comes to the habitual awareness that they hold their dominion over nature as stewards and trustees for God, then immediately they are confronted by an inalienable duty towards and concern for their total environment, present and future. This duty towards the environment does not merely include their fellow men, but all nature and all life<sup>29</sup>. Obeng<sup>30</sup> in his article, *healing the groaning creation in Africa*, sees the church as an efficient instrument to bring about healing on our environment through Biblical insights and as creation awareness centers.

Genesis 2:15, 'And the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it.' Carries with it the root of the theme of stewardship. It is a biblical teaching which Christians cannot afford to fail to urgently and seriously embrace it. It connotes not only that the earth has been given to us for our enjoyment, but also that it has been entrusted to our care.

#### **2.2.4 Challenges facing ecological stewardship**

In spite of the principle of ecological stewardship running across the whole Bible, God's creation continues to groan seeking for justice. It is a principle which has not yet been fully embraced even by residents of Wote. What hinders the ecological stewardship?

The misunderstanding, by believers and non-believers, of the dominion principle (as explored in 2:3.1) seems to legitimate destruction and exploitative activities against nature. Moreover, Preston Bristons in his article, *the root of our ecological crisis*, sees the ecological stewardship being challenged by the assumption that this world does not matter in the eternal scheme of things:

*The mind and heart of Christians are focused less on this life and more on the life to come, and rightly so. Biblical prophecy predicts the destruction of this world and the creation by God of a new heaven and a new earth. If this world and every in it is headed for destruction, then why should we worry about some ecological destruction along the way.*<sup>31</sup>

It is such Biblical teachings which have and continue to direct and determine Christian's attitudes towards their environment hence missing the stewardship principle. There is an urgent need, therefore, for the Christian ecological stewardship to be rightly understood and embraced if a reverse of the ecological crisis is to be achieved in Wote and elsewhere.

As God's stewards over his creation, we are expected to express faithfulness and accountability. To be faithful is to be genuine and trust worth. This implies that as God's stewards we must do as the creator would do if He were presiding over his own goods. The faithfulness quality is well demonstrated in 1corinthians 4:2; and Luke 12:42 – 44. God gave man responsibility and commands over His creation to subdue the earth, dress it and keep it. This is what the creator will do to his creation. Thus faithful stewardship is a pivotal quality and a call to good environmental care.

The parable of the talents as given in Matthew 25:14 – 30 illustrates the concept of accountability which is fundamental for stewards. As God's stewards of the environment we will be answerable and held responsible on how we managed and utilized the earth entrusted to us. We will give an account on how we utilized His precious gift - His earth. Revelation 11:18 seems to give a foretaste of this when it says that God will destroy those who destroy the earth.

If Christians internalize these two qualities - faithfulness and accountability – in their ecological stewardship, the ecological crisis, to a large extent, will be solved.

### 2.3 Buddhist perspective on ecology

Ecological issues need the deep truth which lies within all the major religious traditions of the world if people are to recognize their responsibility towards nature. Realizing the extent of ecological crisis; Buddhism has not lagged behind in asserting her stand on matters concerning the environment.

Protecting and preserving the environment is one of the basic laws which were set by the Buddha some twenty five centuries ago for the adherents of the faith to follow. In fact he is seen as the first environmentalist who introduced the concept of sustainable development.<sup>32</sup>

To live in harmony with nature is a crucial Buddhist practice. According to Nick Wallis<sup>33</sup> in his article, "*Buddhism and Environment*", if one, imaginatively, enters the world in which the Buddha lived and taught the picture that emerges is one of the culture that lived in far greater harmony with its environment. This strong connection between humanity and nature is well illustrated in the story of Buddha's life, in which all the most significant events occurs in the countryside and are associated with trees.

Michael Pye<sup>34</sup> in the book, *Buddha*, clearly highlights the major events in Buddha's life: his birth, meditation, Enlightenment and death. He illustrates how Buddha's mother, who was a queen, had been sent off by the king in golden palanquin with a great retinue to go and give birth in her own town of Devadaha. On their way they passed a beautiful woodland of Sal tree called Lumbini where Gautama Buddha is born as his mother grasped the branch of a Sal tree.<sup>35</sup>

Buddha's early experience of states of meditation also takes place in a forest near Uruvela in the country of Maghada, beneath the rose apple tree.<sup>36</sup> His Enlightenment at Bodhi-tree and his sermon at Deer Park<sup>37</sup> where his teachings were first effectively expounded still asserts the value accorded to nature by Buddhists.



Moreover, Buddha's final journey on earth ends with his peaceful death between the hospitable grove of Sal trees.<sup>38</sup> In light of the foregoing, Buddhism seems to be profoundly portrayed as an "ecological religion".

Most religions, for instance Judaism and Christianity, are anthropocentric religions – humans are supreme and nature is there to serve humans. This approach has resulted to depletion and destruction of natural resources. However, Buddhism is an eco-centric. Consequently it recognizes and respects the whole creation. It does not recognize human supremacy. According to Buddhist teaching, human beings are just another component of interdependent, interwoven and interconnected different component of the environment.<sup>39</sup> They embrace the principle of mutual interdependence where every part of creation is crucial for a stable ecosystem. Buddhists believe that the health of the whole (creation) is inseparably linked with the health of the parts and the health of the parts is inseparably linked with the whole.<sup>40</sup>

Bodagama Chandima<sup>41</sup> observes that in Buddhism, environment and natural resources are considered as things not inherited from past generation, but things borrowed from future generation. Unless humankind embraces this world view, the world may become unsuitable for future generation. Mwikamba echoes this when he asserts that the death of nature is the death of humanity.<sup>42</sup>

Buddhism teaches its followers to think of the future generation, to show kindness and compassion to both the born and unborn human beings. This is expressed through utilization of natural resources in a sustainable manner. Buddhists believe that the earth belongs to the past generation; present and the future and not for one generation.

The Buddhist noble Eight fold noble path – right vision, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right efforts, right mindfulness and right concentration – contributes tremendously towards environmental protection and conservation<sup>43</sup>. On right livelihood, for instance, every person is required to weigh out how his/her action would impact, not only, the current generation but also future generations. Thus, they would not pollute or destroy their environment since such an act would adversely affect future generation. The Buddhist precepts direct the faithful to seek a right livelihood, an essential dimension of which is concern for the life of all creatures.

Humanity is trapped in bondage of materialism and consumerism. The greed for more and more possession has adopted a violent and aggressive attitude towards nature. According to Thich Tri<sup>44</sup>, this bottomless greed has pushed mankind to satisfy excesses unnecessary demands, and take them into endless competition, leading to self-destruction and environmental damage. The environment has no capacity to provide the natural resources needed to satisfy the unlimited desires of humanity. This situation over stretches and depletes the little available resources. Buddhism realizes this dilemma and advocates for simple life. According to Jose Kalapura<sup>45</sup> the simplicity of life involves developing openness to our environment and relating to the world with awareness and responsive perception. It enables human beings to enjoy without possessing and mutually benefits each other without manipulation. Buddha advocated for a simple, gentle, non- aggressive attitude towards nature. The life of frugality conquers greed and desires hence playing a crucial role in promoting environmental protection.

Buddhism recognizes the role of leaders in promoting environmental sustainability. Leaders in any society are just custodians, but not owners of natural resources. The resources have been entrusted on them to protect and preserve and hand them over to the future generations. Indeed Buddhism is ranged against

government which seeks to improve their economic growth by destroying the environment. This is not sustainable development.

Buddhist dominated areas in Asia have been able to protect and preserve the indigenous vegetation as raw material for herbal medicine. They are more inclined to traditional medicine and this has made them to preserve the forests.

An overview on Buddhism and environment would make one note that their harmonious living with the environment is completely different from the competitive opposing living and fighting against the nature as seen in the west and other areas which have adopted the western worldview. Buddhism as a religion and more a philosophy of life and a system of ethics make use of the cultural heritage of the people. This contributes a lot to the protection and preservation of the environment. It gives deep insights in to humanity's relation with nature.

### **2.3.1 The Buddhist declarations**

On September 1986 during the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the World Wide Fund for nature (WWF) in Assisi, the five major world religions (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and Buddhism) met and each gave its authoritative statements on ecology and nature. Buddhists firm and clear position concerning ecology and nature was evident in the following statements as highlighted by Basset<sup>46</sup> in the book, *Earth and Faith*.

1. Buddhism is a religion of love, understanding and compassion and is committed towards the ideal of non-violence. As such it also attaches great importance towards wildlife and protection of the environment on which every being in this world depends for survival. Buddhists believe that positive causes bring about happiness, while undertakings generated through ignorance and negative attitude brings about suffering and misery.
2. The underlying reason why beings other than humans need to be taken into account is that, like human being, they too are sensitive to happiness and

suffering. We should therefore be wary of justifying the right of any species to survive solely on the basis of its usefulness to human beings

3. We regard our survival as an undeniable right; as co-inhabitants of this planet, other species too have this right for survival. And since human beings as well as non-human sentient beings depend upon the environment as the ultimate source of life and well being, Let us share the conviction that the conservation of the environment, the restoration of the imbalance caused by our negligence in the past, be implemented with courage and determination.

In the declarations they emphasized the words by His Holiness the Dalai Lama:<sup>47</sup>

*---. Such destruction of the environment and the life depending upon it is a result of ignorance, greed and disregard for the richness of all living things. This disregard is gaining great influence. If peace does not become a reality in the world, and if the destruction of the environment continues as it does today, there is no doubt that the future generations will inherit a dead world.*

These declarations reiterate the strong commitment of Buddhism in its endeavor to promote ecological reconstruction in the society.

## 2.4 Conclusion

The above brief insight on ecology drawn from a traditional, a 'western' religion and an eastern religious tradition indicate that ecological issues are an integral part of their teaching. In deed various religious traditions may differ and have differed on various issues in society, but matters on environment unites them together as they deliberate on how to salvage it. In addition, no religion can order the destruction of the environment. Any such a move would dull their sensitivity to the presence of God in the natural world.

The threats posed by environmental destruction are imminent and already hitting humanity severely. It is morally and ethically wrong to pass on, to the future generations, environmental system that can not support and give quality life.

Ironically, morality and ethics has always been closely associated with religion. The religious component of any culture provides the moral and ethical dimension of the other elements of culture. Thus religion emerges as the prime factor in ordering human awareness to ecological reconstruction. The religious dimension in the fight against environmental destruction can not therefore be undermined and put at the periphery.

As a result, the urgent need for all religious traditions to immediately make use of their ecological insights and act on the ecological crisis is now inevitable. They all need to seriously get involved with the development of a more comprehensive worldview and ethics to assist in reversing this trend which threatens both the human race and the rest of creation.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>4</sup> [http://www.ncrlc.cm/ecological\\_crisis.html](http://www.ncrlc.cm/ecological_crisis.html)
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- <sup>6</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ecotheology>
- <sup>7</sup> John S. Mbiti. *Introduction to African Religion*, EAEP, Nairobi, 2000, P.11
- <sup>8</sup> Laurent Magesa. *African Religion: The moral Traditions of Abundant life*. Pauline Publication Africa, Nairobi, 2000, p.44
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- <sup>10</sup> Ibid; 54
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid; 50
- <sup>12</sup> John. S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, EAEP, Nairobi, 2003, p.44
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid; 45
- <sup>14</sup> Gen. 1:27-28
- <sup>15</sup> L. White. 'The Historical roots of our ecological Crisis', Science, NY, 155
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid;
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid;
- <sup>18</sup> L.McHorg. *Designed with Nature*, Doubleday, new York, 1969, 26
- <sup>19</sup> R.J Berry. *God's book of work*, T&T Clark, London, 2003, p.84
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid; 84
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid; 84
- <sup>22</sup> C. Westermann. *Creation*. SPCK, London, 1971, p.52
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- <sup>24</sup> R.J. Berry. *God's book of work*, 2003, p.86
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- <sup>27</sup> C.Derrick. *the Delicate Creation*, Tom Stacey ltd, London,1972, p.53
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- <sup>29</sup> Ibid; 95
- <sup>30</sup> Emmanuel Obeng. "Healing the Groaning creation in Africa", in Mary N. Getui. &Emmanuel Obeng, (eds),*Theology of Reconstruction: Exploratory Essays* (Nairobi, Action publishers, 2003) p. 20
- <sup>31</sup> <http://www.answersingenesis.org/tj/vi/i/1/ecology>
- <sup>32</sup> <http://www.longquanzs.org/articledetail.php>
- <sup>33</sup> <http://fwbo.org\buddhism&environmental.html>
- <sup>34</sup> Pye Michael. *The Buddha*, Gerald Duckworth ltd,1979
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid; p. 110-111
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid; p.25
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid;pp.40-41
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- <sup>39</sup> <http://www.longquanzs.org/articledetail.php>
- <sup>40</sup> <http://fwbo.org\buddhism&environmental.html>
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- <sup>42</sup> C.M Mwikamba 'The Right of Nature', p. 17

<sup>43</sup> J.N.K. Mugambi (Ed). A comparative Study of Religions, Nairobi University Press, 1990, p. 102-3

<sup>44</sup> <http://mail.sargon.com/.anson\ebdhao06.html>

<sup>45</sup> Jose Kalapura, Science-Religion Dialogue and Ecology : Asian perspective

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid; p.9

## CHAPTER THREE

### FACTORS INHIBITING ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY IN WOTE

#### 3.0 Background information on wote

Wote location, the area under study is an administrative unit in Makueni District. Makueni District is situated in lower eastern Kenya and its geographical coordinate are 1° 48' 0" South, 37° 37' 0" East.<sup>1</sup> Wote has a population of 24,906 (1999 Census) and an area of 137.5km<sup>2</sup>.

It is constituted by four sub-locations as shown in **table 1** below:-

Sub-location	Area(km <sup>2</sup> )	Population
Unoa	53.7	10,326
Kamunyolo	25.6	6,591
Mumbuni	38.9	5,565
Itaa	19.3	2,424
<b>Total</b>	<b>137.5</b>	<b>24,906</b>

*(Source: Makueni District statistics office.)*

Makueni District is classified under the arid and semi arid lands of Kenya. The topology is twofold; lowland and highland. Wote lies in the lowland area and its climate is hot and dry. Thus it is predominantly composed of the indigenous trees. The exotic species of trees have not been able to withstand the high temperatures and the ant problem

Significantly, Wote is surrounded by three crucial hills (Nzeuni, Unoa and Nthangu hills) which have, unfortunately experienced severe deforestation by the residents. According to Mr. Musyoka<sup>2</sup>, a district forest officer, these hills contributed a lot to the sufficient supply of water and high agricultural productivity experienced in Wote in the 80's and 90's. They often moderated the climatic conditions.

However, the wanton destruction of the forest cover has seen the residents experience sharp water shortage, high temperatures, air pollution and land degradation which has



now posed one of the most serious challenges to food security and sustainable development in the area. It can, indeed be speculated that if the residents of Wote clears the remaining indigenous trees at the current rate, the possibility of the area turning into a desert can not be overlooked. This illustrates the urgency for counteractive measures in Wote if the natural resources are to have the capacity to sustain life in the area.

### 3.1 Causes of ecological destruction in wote

Giving their opinion on whether the environment in Wote has been taken care of, 86 % of the sampled seventy two (72) respondents stated 'No' as shown in **figure 1** below. In addition, while categorizing the state of Wote environment, 71% of the respondents described it as very poor with only 19% classifying it as good. **Table 2** illustrates this.

**Figure 1: Percentage response of 72 sampled respondents on whether the environment in Wote is taken care of.**



**Table 2: The table gives the percentage responses of the sampled respondents on the state of environment in Wote.**

<i>State of environment</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Very good	0	0
Good	14	19
Very poor	51	71
Poor	7	10
Total	72	100

The picture that is portrayed below is of an environment that is ragged, depleted, deeply hurt and that has almost lost its aesthetic value.



***Part of Unoa Hill which has been depleted***

There is extensive deforestation and encroachment of the hill slopes which has increased the rate of soil erosion leading to soil infertility. Water catchment's areas have been destroyed and water tables are falling further down. Sand harvesting, which Mr. Mwathi<sup>3</sup> described as 'sand scooping', is done irresponsibly leaving the rivers bear and opening another form of environmental degradation – 'stone harvesting.'

The various forms of degradation in Wote have almost made human happiness and peace to be almost an illusion. The residents of Wote are now facing the grave question of their survival. The study was able to establish various factors which have lead to the current environmental state in the area and which have left the residents struggling to confront their repercussions. The underlying causes of the ecological destruction in Wote are a dynamic interplay of socio-economic factors. In questionnaires and interviews, the study inquired of the respondents' opinion of the main causes of the ecological destruction in Wote area.

Thus they were able to bring to light the major causes as:-

<b>Causes</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Poverty	66	92
Ignorance	53	74
Population increase	44	61
Unemployment, Lack of skills	26	36
Reluctance on law enforcement pertaining environment	7	10

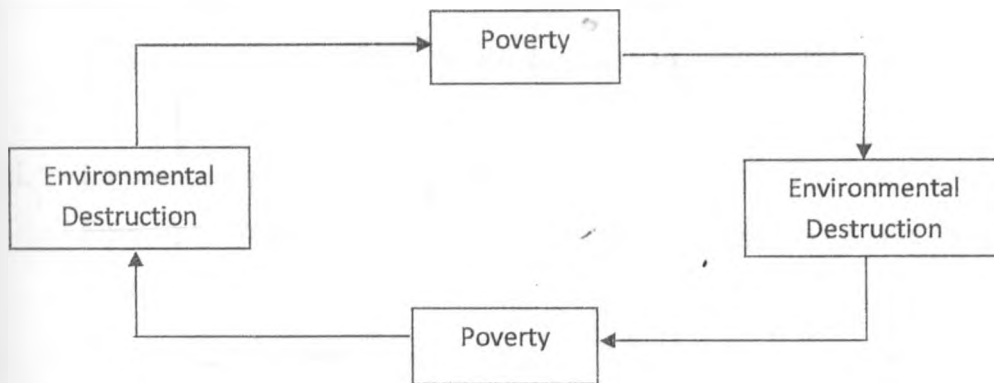
#### **(a) Poverty**

The interplay between poverty and environmental degradation remains to be like the hen-egg story. Which one really leads to the other? It emerged out from the study that 92% of the sampled 72 respondents were of the opinion that poverty is a major causal factor to the worrying state of their environment. The need for survival -day after day- pushes the residents to exploit the available natural resources. One respondent, Muthiani Muteti, a charcoal burner and sand harvester, had the following remarks:-

*We all do this to be able to place food on the table, to feed ourselves and our families. Otherwise we need to survive at all cost on whatever is available for now...*<sup>4</sup>

According to international fund for agricultural development<sup>5</sup> people in poverty stricken areas are often forced to make trade offs between immediate household food requirement and environmental sustainability both in production and consumption.

However, in their quest for survival due to poverty, the residents of Wote have found themselves in a more agonizing situation with the poverty levels increasing. This leaves them with no choice but to exhaust the limited resources hence worsening the ecological crisis. The end result is a vicious cycle between poverty and environmental destruction.



### **(b) Ignorance**

In the recent past there has been combined effort by different sectors of society to raise awareness on the importance of environment and its preservation and conservation in Wote. However, 74% of the respondents rated ignorance as a major factor, among the residents, contributing to environmental destruction.

Despite the general knowledge they have about environment, the residents seem to have put it at the periphery. Three crucial and related aspects of ignorance emerged among the residents of Wote:-

- i. Ignorance on the impact of environmental destruction on the socio-economic aspects of human life. The residents of Wote seemed to have little or no

knowledge, at all, of the effects of the ecological crisis, despite the presence of observable manifestations brought about by their unfriendly activities towards the environment. Notwithstanding the acute water shortage, decline in agriculture productivity, conflicts, loss of aesthetic in the area due to environmental destruction, the residents have not given them a second thought. They still continue with their unfriendly activities against the environment.

- ii. Ignorance on the intricate delicate relationship between nature and man. This form of ignorance is critical and a major threat to ecological sustainability. Lack of clear understanding on man-nature relationship may lead to anthropocentrism where the human race places itself at the centre of the universe and thus perceive and evaluate the rest of the creation in terms of its utility for use. Harmonious man-nature relationships should therefore be well guarded and sustained.
- iii. Ignorance on the survival of the future generations. The unawareness that several future generations will still depend on the environment, for their survival, has contributed immensely to the environmental crisis. If the residents of Wote holds to the view that the earth belongs not only to them (current generation) but also to the future generations, they would reconsider all their activities, practices, and attitudes towards nature.

Failure by the residents of Wote to respect nature, not only puts their survival at stake, but also threatens the survival of future generations. The ecological principle of interconnectedness asserts that each and every living organism is tied to all other living organisms. We must admit that no creature can exist independently of other or exist in a vacuum.

According to Ikenda<sup>6</sup>, these most exquisite and delicate network of relations among universal phenomena can be called the threads of life. If single threads of the cosmic web snaps, it will affect the entire cosmos.<sup>7</sup> Ikenda's concept is in line with Magesa's

argument on forces of life. (As explored in section 2.1.1 of this study). Ignorance, therefore poses a major threat to ecological stewardship and sustainability in Wote. The church should use the concept 'Threads of life' to raise awareness on the need for ecological reconstruction. The church may achieve this by advocating for practices such as tree planting, proper farming methods, economic activities that are eco-friendly and also rooting for right attitudes towards nature. Such activities will enable the residents come to the realization of the true and delicate connection between humankind and nature because they all aim at enhancing human life.

### **(c) Population Growth**

Although population growth is a natural human fact of life and an important source of development, it emerged out to be the third most contributing factor to environmental degradation in Wote. The phenomenal growth has caused an increase in human demand on the earth's limited resources. As population expanded forest begun to be cleared for agriculture and settlement, the land subdivided into small portions which do not now produce enough for their livelihood and the land is almost bear.

The population can not now be maintained devoid of rapidly depleting its natural resource and without further degrading the capacity of the environment to support it. It is certainly becoming major cause of the ecologic crisis.

It is therefore of necessity for the church leadership in Wote to advocate for family planning methods among its members through sermons, in relation to the environment. Although this being an ethical issue may raise a heated debate and controversy among the people; as some pro-life groups may emerge, but the church leaders should, skillfully address it and convey out clearly the benefit it has on the environment and the residents in general. Unbridled population growth may lead to an increase in the mortality rate for the current and for succeeding generations due to the severe environmental condition.

#### **(d) Unemployment and lack of skills**

The whole issue of unemployment is not only regional but a critical national economic concern. It is a factor which indirectly, seems to contribute to the ecological crisis. Some unemployed but skilled residents of Wote have taken into activities that are not eco-friendly as they wait to be employed. For instance, two unemployed respondents, a mechanic and a business administrator have engaged in charcoal burning and sand harvesting.

On the other hand, there is a category of residents who have dropped out of school before attainment of any skills for their livelihoods. This category of people has therefore gone a head to utilize, irresponsibly, the limited natural resources for their livelihood. They have, indeed, subjugated the environment through deforestation, charcoal burning, stone and sand harvesting with the aim of making the ends meet. This presents the church in Wote with a challenge as well as an opportunity to urgently the emerging phenomenon. They have a potential of changing the attitudes of the skilled but unemployed residents to come up with creative activities that are friendly to the environment and not activities that are an end to themselves. Unfortunately, however, the main barriers to this may be the leader's failure to realize the potency they have in regard to this issue. This calls for the church to go an extra mile from the Sunday sermons to addressing real life issues affecting the youth. One of the ways to achieve this may be to engage the youth one on one; and stir up the minds of the skilled members towards right livelihoods, such as self-employment. They also have a role to instill skills among the unskilled residents as a way of opening opportunities towards right livelihood.

The Catholic Church in Wote has slowly begun to adopt this approach by setting up training centers and convening seminars geared towards economic empowerment.

#### **(e) Law enforcement**

Lack of law enforcement by the relevant government ministries and departments such as the ministry of water, forestry, Agriculture and National environmental Management

Authority (NEMA) was described by 10% of the sampled respondents as a factor aggravating the environmental situation. The human meddling of the hills, forests and water catchments areas have led to decline in rainfall amount, land degradation, high temperatures, decline in food production and sharp water shortage. Unregulated sand and stone harvesting have left the rivers bare and the river banks destroyed.

The church in Wote can respond to this by first and foremost being law abiding citizens hence becoming role models to the other members of the society. In addition to this, the church leaders and members should confront the relevant authorities to undertake their mandates concerning the environment.

### **3.2 Impacts of environmental degradation**

Subsequent to decades of massive and extensive destruction of the environment, the residents of Wote are now facing the repercussions of their irresponsible actions. The manifestations of a destroyed ecology are unsympathetically confronting the residents. The study was able to establish the following consequences of environmental destruction in Wote.



**(i) Women and Environmental Destruction**

**Table 3: It gives the ways and percentages on the opinion of the sampled respondents on the question of the major destroyers of environment in Wote.**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Ways</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Youth	- Sand harvesting - Charcoal burning - Overgrazing - Stone harvesting - Deforestation	43	60
Men	- Poor farming methods - Charcoal burning - Clearing land for settlement - Stone harvesting - Sand harvesting	27	37
Women	- Cutting trees for firewood - Poor farming methods - Deforestation	2	3
Children	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>72</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4: Percentage of the sampled respondents (72) on the question of which segment of the population is severely affected by the ecological crisis:**

Segment of population	No. of respondents	Percentage
Youth	7	10
Men	4	6
Women	44	61
Children	17	23
TOTAL	72	100

In the final analysis, the ecological crisis affects every one in the planet but the degree varies. According to the evidence collected from the study, as shown in tables 3 and 4 above, women are seen to contribute 3% to the environmental destruction but adversely affected by the crisis at 61%.

The United Nations population Fund (UNPFA)<sup>8</sup> observes that the direct and critical relationship between women and natural resources draws its strength not from biology – that is, not because women are born female – but from gender, and the socially created roles and responsibility that continue to fall to women in household, and communities. Because of the primary responsibility for rearing children, for ensuring sufficient resource to meet the nutrition, and health care of the children, majority of women in Wote spend more time searching for clean water, firewood, food and fodder for domestic animals.

Given the alarming state of environmental destruction in Wote and the women's daily interaction with the environment, it strongly emerged that they are the most intensely affected. A new trend seemed to be developing where by women headed households are emerging due to some husbands 'migrating' from the severely hurt environment. Women are becoming more and more responsible for the day -to- day survival of their families.

The increased workload among the women have deprived them humble and sufficient time for leisure and self development.

It is thus essential that the church in Wote, as a social institution, tackles the ecological issue and increase women's participation in the ecological reconstruction process so as to play a part in the liberation process, not only for the environment, but also for the women.

The church may achieve this by:

- (a) Involving women in economic empowerment forums.
- (b) Educating women on tree planting and appropriate agricultural methods.
- (c) Using women as agents of environmental awareness creation.
- (d) Assisting women form self-help groups for assistance livelihoods.

## **(ii) Poverty**

As previously indicated above (Section 3.1a), there is much controversy surrounding the poverty-environmental degradation nexus. Nevertheless, it is worth to emphasize that the state of our natural environment affects all the human aspect of life. The residents of Wote have misused and abused their stewardship authority over nature and instead polluted and destroyed hills, rivers, soil, forest and other natural resources. Today they are reaping the results of destroyed living environment of their own.

The residents are now facing harsh reality of environmental destruction through poverty and low quality of life. The high level of poverty experienced in Wote affirms to the fact that the quality of environment in which one lives determines the quality of life. There is acute food shortage which has imposed constraints on the residents' livelihood. The poverty stricken households rely on relief food from the government, churches and non-governmental organizations such as United Nations Food Programme, World Vision and Red Cross.

### **(iii) Agricultural Productivity**

Mr. Mwathi<sup>9</sup> a district crop production officer, and Mr. Mwaura<sup>10</sup>, the district agricultural officer, acknowledged that in the recent past, agricultural productivity in the area has drastically declined. Although this decline could be attributed to several factors at play, the officers were categorical that the environmental crisis has played a major role in it.

The decline in productivity was observed in the various agricultural sectors – livestock production, animal production, crop production and horticulture. This has mainly been due to low soil fertility caused by soil erosion and chemicals, poor farming methods and the inadequate and unpredictable rains which has been attributed to deforestation. Cotton farming which once thrived in Wote died off and the cotton ginnery sold to a sole proprietor who imports the raw material outside Wote. Maize farming has almost been abandoned by the residents who instead opted for other more resistant crops – oranges, pawpaw, peas and mangoes.

It is regrettable that the area which at one time experienced surplus in various sectors of agriculture could now be facing an acute deficit of the same due to environmental destruction. The remark of Mutuse Malinda (70 year old) that attributes the phenomenon to destruction of the environment summarizes it all as follows:-

*I never , in my life, imagined of a time like now – with so high temperatures, where there are no rains, no food, no water, no forests – could ever hit our community.<sup>11</sup>*

### **(iv) Severe Water Scarcity**

Destruction of the environment increases the vulnerability of its resources to diminish, to get depleted and this contributes to the scarcity of crucial resources. Although water is a vital resource, it is often taken for granted. However, water scarcity is now a growing concern in Wote. The residents now face an acute water scarcity after their encroachment of water catchments areas and massive destruction of forests.

According to Rose Mary<sup>12</sup>, the deputy district water officer, rivers and wells in the area have almost dried up hence prompting the residents to trek long distances in search of this vital resource of life. She further expresses great fears that the shallow wells and boreholes may already be drying up because the water table is rapidly going down. Water scarcity in Wote has compounded several other problems: conflicts, contaminated water for consumption, decline in irrigation farming and water related diseases.

With the population swiftly increasing in Wote and a rising demand for water for irrigation and domestic use, the current state of ecological crisis may make it even more critical.

#### **(v) Aesthetic and Environment**

It is no doubt that the environment is a source of natural beauty. The biodiversity of trees and animal, mountains, rivers and all other non-living beings depict a beautiful and conducive environment in which human being can derive enjoyment and have peace of mind.

Unfortunately, however, this can not be said of the environment of Wote area. The high rate of deforestation, encroachment of hills, charcoal burning, sand harvesting and stone harvesting has almost deprived the environment its natural beauty. The area is almost bear with harsh living conditions and generally seems unappealing.

The vegetation cover of an area, to a large extent determines the aesthetic value and influences the other aspects such as food security, water supply, health, human relations and academics. According to Kevin Conrad<sup>13</sup> in his article, *The Greatest Crime*, deforestation and forest degradation may be the greatest humanity's crime against our planet. They change weather patterns, major cause of biodiversity species and habitat loss, reduce drinking water supplies, decrease human well-being, cause soil erosion, desertification, increase disease and thus public health cost, decrease natural pollination rate and agricultural productivity. Moreover, Ikenda<sup>14</sup> observes that plants awaken an aesthetic sense and poetic emotion in people, and lessen their aggressiveness, thereby cultivating their more human feelings.

To reverse the trend and regain the aesthetic value of Wote, concerted efforts by all the stakeholders, including the church, are vital and urgent. This is because human life is supported and influenced by its environment.

#### **(vi) Migration, Conflict and the Environment**

Migration is often seen as the result of a failure to adapt to a given situation. However, migration has always been an integral part of the interaction of human beings with their environment.

This study identified an emerging trend in Wote where by, due to the adverse impact of environmental degradation, some residents, particularly the youth and the young married men are moving to Wote town and other towns in Kenya.

The study identified the push factor as hunger, lack of access to water, exposure to disease, and the loss of livelihoods in the area. In relation to this, one of the respondents said:-

*I can not stay in the village where the shambas produce no food, the place is very hot, no water and there is no livelihood. I better move to the towns and survive from there.*<sup>15</sup>

With the foregoing, one may be forced to speculate that this form of migration owing to the effects of ecological destruction may increase the likelihood of conflicts and high crime rates in areas of destination as the migrants attempt to sustain themselves.

In a public lecture entitled, “*Sustainable Urbanization: Some Critical issues*”,<sup>16</sup> during the 10<sup>th</sup> Gandhi memorial lecture, Dr Anna Tibaijuka referred to such migrants as ‘environmental refugees’. According to Anna, the environmental refugees have fled their land because the environment can no longer sustain them. It is this new phenomenon that is making Africa the fastest urbanizing continent.

There is a strong relationship between demography, environment and conflict in Wote. As population increase and the demand for scarce natural resources go up, conflicts

which have severed the human relations have emerged. Competition over sand, water and land has led to fight among users and family members.

#### **(vii) Human Rights and Environmental Degradations**

Every human being is entitled to some rights by virtue of being human. Article 3 to 27 of the universal Declaration of human rights<sup>17</sup> sets forth the rights to which all human beings are entitled, including the right to life, the right to social security, right to work, the right to rest and leisure, the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care, and the right to education. The human rights are by and large geared towards human dignity – the quality of being human. In addition, the United Nations conference on the human environment<sup>18</sup> held at Stockholm in June 1972, proclaimed the right of human being to a healthy environment.

Unfortunately, these universal Human rights are almost been challenged in Wote due to the ecological crisis. The human dignity is on the decline. As the state of environment worsens in Wote, the more impaired are the human rights. Human rights and the environment are closely interlinked. In their pursuance of human dignity through human rights at the cost of nature, the residents have assumed that nature too has no rights. It is this assumption, that nature has no right, which has led to the human dignity to be at stake in Wote.

Jurgen Moltmann observes that human dignity is merely a special example of the dignity of all the living- the dignity of all God's creatures.<sup>19</sup> Therefore just as human dignity should be respected, so too the dignity of nature. The United Nations Conference on the human environment (Stockholm, 1972) not only proclaimed the right of human being to a healthy environment, but also their responsibility to protect and improve that environment for future generations. The declaration states that:-

*Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well being and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generation*<sup>20</sup>.

The right to an adequate environment was further reiterated in the world commission on environment and development report dubbed, “*our common future*”.<sup>21</sup> However, I am in agreement that the harmonization of human rights and rights of nature is crucial and essential without which the environment will suffer from negative human attitudes followed by adverse effects on human well-being.<sup>22</sup> It appears paradoxical when human rights really become a factor contributing to environmental destruction as it is in Wote area. Jurgen points this paradox in the statement:-

*Unless Human rights come to be the integrated into the fundamental rights of nature, they themselves will become factors in the destruction of nature, and will then also ultimately lead, paradoxically enough, to humanity's self-destruction.*<sup>23</sup>

### 3.3 Conclusion

From the above findings, it is emerging out that factors leading to environmental destruction are interlinked and continue to severely degrade the environment. This has almost rendered the environment's potential to sustain life impossible. Failure to urgently prevent and mitigate the ecological impact in Wote will and has indeed posed a major threat to plant, animal and human survival. Hence the need for immediate practical steps to achieve ecological sustainability.

The call by United Nation Conference on the Human environment (Stockholm, 1972) that human beings have solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generation should be embraced. Ecological crisis being a common threat for all also calls for a common responsibility to reverse it. The report entitled, *Our Common future*,<sup>24</sup> observed that humanity has



the ability to make development sustainable and to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It further warned that, unless humanity changes many of its lifestyle patterns, the world will face unacceptable level of environmental damage and human suffering.<sup>25</sup>

It is thus the responsibility by all citizens, communities and institutions at every level, including the church, to get practically involved to help out in reversing the ecological trend. The most fundamental challenges to break in Wote are the links between poverty and environmental degradation. Effective action against poverty, household food insecurity and environmental destruction require first and foremost the empowering and equipping of the local community to take up the reins of resource utilization and management.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> <http://www.maplandia.com/Kenya/eastern/wote/>
- <sup>2</sup> Mr. Musyoka, District Forest Officer, interviewed on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2009
- <sup>3</sup> Mr. Mwathi, District Crop Production Officer, interviewed on 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2009.
- <sup>4</sup> Mr. Muthiani, interviewed on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2009 at Kaiti River.
- <sup>5</sup> International Fund for Agricultural Development, Combating Environmental Degradation, 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2007
- <sup>6</sup> Daisaku Ikenda. Dialogue on life, Ushio shuppansha ltd., japan, 1976, p.27-28
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid; 33
- <sup>8</sup> United Nations Population Fund, Women and the Environment, 2001
- <sup>9</sup> Mr. Mwathi : op cit
- <sup>10</sup> Mr. Mwaura, District agricultural officer, interviewed on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2009
- <sup>11</sup> Mr. Mutuse Malinda interviewed on 29<sup>th</sup> may 2009 at Wote mission centre
- <sup>12</sup> Mrs, Rose Mary , Deputy district water officer, interviewed on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2009
- <sup>13</sup> Kevin Conrad, ' The greatest crime', in UNEP, Our planet, UNEP Publication, September 2008
- <sup>14</sup> Daisaku Ikenda; op cit. p.36
- <sup>15</sup> Mr. Victor Muia, interviewed on 30<sup>th</sup> may 2009
- <sup>16</sup> Dr. Anna Tibaijuka, 'Sustainable urbanization: some critical issues'. a public lecture at University of Nairobi on 22/07/2009
- <sup>17</sup> 'Universal Declaration of Human rights' at : [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/universal\\_Declarations\\_of\\_human\\_rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/universal_Declarations_of_human_rights)
- <sup>18</sup> 'Declaration of the UN conference on the Human environment', at: [http:// www.unep.org/ Documents.miltilingual/ Default.asp?](http://www.unep.org/Documents.miltilingual/Default.asp?)
- <sup>19</sup> Jurgen Moltmann. " Human rights, the Rights of Humanity and the Rights of Nature", in Han Kung & Jurgen Moltann (eds), The ethics of world religion and Human Rights, s c m press, London ,1990,p.122
- <sup>20</sup> OP. cit
- <sup>21</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development, 'Our common future', Oxford University press, 1987.
- <sup>22</sup> Jurgen Moltann; op. cit. p.122
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> Op. cit; World commission on environment and development
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# INCULTURATION AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS: A MEANS TOWARDS ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION IN WOTE.

### 4.0 Introduction

Ecological issues contain ethical aspects. It therefore follows that as noted by Clarke, any meaningful, long- term corrective to environmental abuse depends on ethical evolution.<sup>1</sup> Humanity has to grow up ethically to a full realization that the environment deserves an ethical status just like any other creation. Lack of this eco-consciousness in every day life in society has led to biotic arrogance with the desire to exploit and eliminate the natural resources. The end result of this ego-centered approach has been the severe eco-crisis facing humanity today.

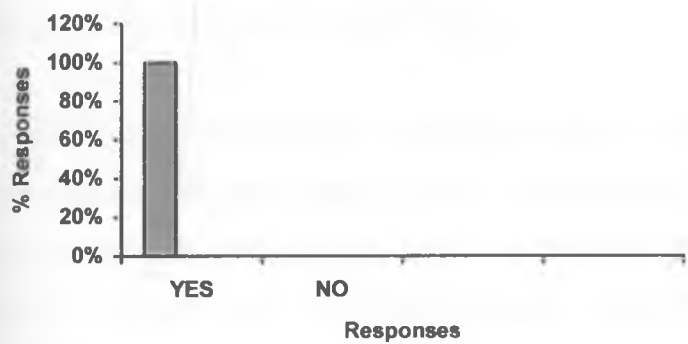
Organized religion has demonstrated the capacity to move beyond Man-God and Man-Man concerns to the transcendent one of man with his entire living and non-living environment.<sup>2</sup> Hence as the ethical custodians of our society, the Churches must be in the forefront giving solutions to the ecological crisis and realizing that it is part of its mission on earth.

### 4.1 The Roman Catholic Church Wote and environment rehabilitation.

One of the fundamental questions in the study was to get the respondents opinion on whether ecological matters should be a concern for the church today and the justification. 100%, as shown in figure 2, of the sampled respondents expressed the view that ecological issues should be fully integrated into the church's mission. Majority based their opinion on the genesis narrative of the Garden of Eden in which Adam and Eve are commanded by God to dress it and keep it.<sup>3</sup> Indeed; this command expresses a sense of guarding and caring for the environment, rather than exploiting and misusing the environment. This administrative rule over the earth conferred to humanity by the creator further asserts mankind as a steward. In other words, the earth belongs to the creator and therefore mankind rules on behalf of God. Consequently in exercising their stewardship

responsibility, it must be within the ethical framework (commands) given to them by their master, the creator.

**Figure 2: Shows the percentage responses of the sampled respondents on whether ecological issues should be a concern of the church.**



**Table 5: Illustrates the percentage responses of 70 sampled respondents' opinion on how active their local church is on ecological matters.**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Very active	2	3
Active	42	60
Not active	26	37
Total	70	100

**Table 6: Percentage response of 70 sampled respondents on how often they hear ecological sermons in a year.**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
More often	2	3
Often	28	40
Rarely	24	34
Not at all	16	23

Despite this divine noble mission, only 60% of the respondents, as shown in table 5, saw the Church as being active on ecological issues while 37% pointed the Church as not concerned with ecology at all. In terms of ecological sermons, 3% of the respondents hear them more often, 40% often, 34% rarely and 23% do not hear of ecological sermons in their churches. This raises the fundamental question: To what extent is the church in Wote committed to the ecological mission.

As already explored extensively in chapter three, the alarming rise of ecological crisis in Wote area has hit hard, almost, every institution and aspect of human life has awoken them to action to mitigate the causes and also adapt to the impacts of the crisis. The Catholic Church Wote has slowly begun to directly look at the crisis by initiating activities to counter the environmental destruction. From the study, the Catholic Church Wote is seen to get involved in environmental issues, directly and indirectly, in three major areas:

#### **a) Economic Empowerment**

The use of natural resources and economic prosperity are almost seen as conflicting interests. However the Catholic Church in Wote has taken a vital initiative to correct this misconception and portray the two as complimenting goals. The Church advocates for sustainable use of the natural resources for economic prosperity and sustainability.

It has indeed come to the realization of the Catholic Church Wote leadership that unless the residents of Wote are economically stable, ecological sustainability will remain, ever, elusive. The Church therefore organizes seminars on economic empowerment to equip the residents with eco-friendly economic activities. As it was alluded by Fr. Makewa<sup>4</sup> of Wote Parish, the Catholic Church leadership has taken the initiative of organizing economic seminars to enable its members and the local community have sustainable livelihood. As further explained by Makewa-the priest in charge of Wote catholic church, the Catholic Church Wote have an investment forum where they invite experts from

Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, and Livestock farming experts. It is within the Wote investment forum where the residents are educated on the best crop and animal species suited to the area.

Moreover, better farming methods, land management and control of soil erosion are also taught to the residents of Wote. It is through such forums and seminars which lead the people to adopt economics activities that are eco-friendly and that can be sustained in the area. This approach offers, to a large extent, a practical framework for poverty reduction in Wote in a more sustainable way, hence saving the environment from exploitation and depletion.

#### **b) Environmental Awareness**

Humanity continues to commit, on a large scale, crimes against nature and a major ecological disaster has hit them severely. Respect for all creation has been eroded and instead human beings utilize the environment on ego-centered basis; to satisfy their needs only.

The environmental crisis calls for a sense of urgency for radical changes in public policy and also individual lifestyle and perception of the environment. Thus, awareness creation on environmental issues is a paramount step the Catholic Church has taken towards achieving ecological reconstruction in Wote. This form of awareness, although at a very slow pace, is changing the residents' attitude towards the environment and trying to recapture the amount of respect the environment deserves.

The church has achieved this vital mission through sermons and tree planting campaigns. The Church has indeed endeavored to inculcate eco-consciousness into everyone's life. Even though 23% of the respondents had not heard an ecological sermon for the last one year, the Roman Catholic Church Wote is committed to achieving an ecologically sustainable society through awareness creation and making ecological issues become part of their religious teachings.

However, this been a crucial starting point in relation to creating environmental awareness in Wote, the Church needs to be more assertive and regular in highlighting and expounding the importance of conserving and protecting the environment. Moreover, it would be more effective if the Church leaders move a step ahead to implement the ecological teachings and sermons.

Through environmental education and awareness, the residents of Wote will understand and appreciate the inter-relationship that exists between them and their environment. It will create a new perspective that acknowledges the inter-dependence between humanity and the natural environment. The church should therefore advocate and ensure that this approach becomes a continuous lifelong process beginning at the early years of an individual and running through all stages of life.

### **c) Imparting skills**

As explored in chapter three, poverty and lack of eco-friendly ways of income remains a major threat to a stable ecology in Wote. Realizing this challenge, the Catholic Church Wote has not limited itself to the spiritual aspects only, but has also taken the initiative to impart useful skills to the residents.

The Roman Catholic Church has set up youth polytechnics and training centers which equip the residents, especially the youth with skills. Such skills position the beneficiaries for a sustainable livelihood. Courses offered in these training centers include; carpentry, masonry, tailoring, shoes making, motor vehicle mechanics and wiring, welding, computer and office management courses

Though an indirect approach to environmental rehabilitation, it will enable the residents to concentrate and get fully involved in right sustainable livelihoods while avoiding unfriendly economic activities to the environment such as charcoal burning, deforestation, sand stone harvesting etc.

#### 4.1.1 Challenges the Church faces

Apart from the spiritual aspects of the church, the Catholic Church Wote has done fairly well on the other aspects of human life except the ecological aspect. In deed it is exemplary in the construction of schools, both primary and secondary, polytechnics, hospitals and dispensaries, centers for the disabled and destitute members of the community. Why then not in the ecological aspect? The study was able to identify one bottleneck the Church faces in its fight towards ecological reconstruction and from which several other challenge take root.

Ignorance on ecological issues, particularly among the Church leaders, was identified as a major challenge in tackling the ecological crisis in Wote. Ignorance on the part of the clergy and Church leaders, to a large extent contribute to the high levels of ecological ignorance reflected among the residents. It is the Church leaders who should be in the forefront strongly advocating for ecological restoration and informing the flock on environmental issues. They may not be in a position to properly articulate the issues and show the way to the people if they are not informed.

Moreover, this form of ignorance to such a critical group of people in society brings with it a compound challenges in achieving a sustainable ecology. First and foremost, it bars the church from entrenching environmental issues and policies in the mainstream of the church agenda and hence it is put at the periphery and given little or no attention at all. This is well reflected in how often they preach ecological sermons and how committed they are on environmental initiatives. In addition, the study established that the church lacks clear policies in their mission to address ecological matters.

By the church not taking ecology as a weighty issue and as part of its mission, it has not, effectively, come into partnership with the relevant stakeholders that address the environmental aspect

As elucidated by Fr. Dominic Mulinge<sup>5</sup> of Kathonzweni Catholic Church, the church has never taken environmental issues with the seriousness it deserves. He further



acknowledged that he urgently needs to rethink the religious teachings along ecological terms and gain a deeper knowledge on God, man and nature. This approach would lead to eco-friendly perceptions, teachings, beliefs and practices.

#### **4.1.2 The way forward**

More than ever before, the Catholic Church Wote needs to urgently, strongly and boldly develop a new approach to the ecological crisis. It needs to integrate environmental issues among the many other missions it was called to accomplish by God.

First and foremost, the church leaders need to undergo environmental training so that they are empowered and given a new understanding of the crisis in Wote. Equipping them would imply that they are in a better position to disseminate environmental knowledge to the residents as they create awareness among all sections of the society through diverse methodologies.

Secondly, the social welfare committee which oversees the welfare of the members within the church should be expanded in its mandate to also oversee ecological matters in the area. This is because ecological crisis will, directly and indirectly, affect the social welfare and dignity of the residents. The committee can not therefore afford to neglect environmental issues. Such a committee on ecology is cardinal because it will be;

1. Educating the residents on ecological issues
2. Organizing for seminars and forums on how to rehabilitate the environment.
3. Initiating afforestation programmes in the area
4. Creating environmental awareness from Sunday school to all other church groups

The church needs to work in collaboration with government ministries such as ministries of Forestry, Agriculture, Water, Health etc in order to compliment its ecological activities. Regular sermons on environment need to be heard from the clergy for the residents to understand the place of ecological matters in the mission of the church on earth. In other words, the church leaders should emphasize and re-emphasize on ecologically sustainable

society in their religious teachings. This is a mission the church can not afford to delay any further or take it lightly.

Perceiving environmental issues as something 'earthly' and out to serve humanity alone is a misconception which puts the environment in Wote at a more serious threat. This is totally different from the Kamba traditional worldview on cosmos where there is no dichotomy between the material world and the spiritual world.

The church in Wote therefore has a crucial task of ensuring that these traditional Kamba beliefs and worldviews on ecology are integrated into the Christian faith which most people follow. In other words, it is the only institution which is well suit to carry out the process of inculturation. This role of the church (agent of inculturation), in relation to ecological restoration, will further be explored deeply and extensively, in the sections that follow below.

#### **4.2 The Traditional Kamba Community and the Environment.**

To ever imagine or think of Kamba religion is almost misleading since religious beliefs and practices are inter-woven in the whole of life and do not constitute a department of their own..<sup>6</sup> Theirs is an integrated worldview where religion is not something one does on occasions, but something they live every day. All activities are regulated and guided by deep religious beliefs and values.

The environment and nature are infused in every aspect of Kamba traditional Community and culture. This is largely because cosmology and beliefs are intricately intertwined with the natural phenomena and environment. There is no clear divide between the physical and the spiritual, between the animate and the inanimate, between the living and the dead<sup>7</sup>. All these are believed to possess some degree of life force and are all independent on each other.

The holistic Kamba traditional knowledge of their natural resources and environment constitutes a rich human heritage. Unfortunately, however, these traditional ways of life and cosmological world view have been, and continues to be threatened, hence disturbing

the environment<sup>8</sup>. Theirs is an integral and whole relationship of the living and non-living beings.

The Akamba traditional culture acts as the community's bases on which their intimate relationship to the environment is firmly rooted. It is in the background of this information that this section seeks to establish, among the Kamba traditional community, what held and sustained the harmonious co-existence between human beings and nature, how the disconnect occurred and the role of the church in the Inculturation process in relation to ecological restoration in Wote.

#### **4.2.1 Traditional Kamba Community Ecological Beliefs and Practices.**

Unlike Christianity and other revealed religions, the Akamba traditional religious thought has no scriptures; it is mainly oral and expressed in every day life. The Kamba traditional ecological beliefs and practices are either, directly or indirectly addressing the issue. From the study, these methods varied in nature.

##### **i. Shrines**

Although traditional world view among the Kamba teaches that almost every living and inanimate objects surrounding a person is sacred on some level, there are natural places that are more sacred than others. These are places where spirits reside and the spirits can be contacted by humans.

The shrines, places of worship (Mathembo in plural and Ithembo in singular) are areas of worship, celebrations and sacrifices. Traditional shrines are mainly found in natural places protected for that purpose. In Wote area shrines were and are part of forests, rivers, trees and mountains. They are highly venerated and respected. According to Mzee Kimondo<sup>9</sup>, a traditionalist, the Mathembo acts, primarily as the places of contact between human beings and the supernatural world. It's the meeting point between the visible and the invisible world.

Each shrine has a traditional priest who took care of it and presided over all the religious activities. The traditional priest is a highly respected spiritual leader with authority. It all involves pouring libation, performing rituals, saying prayers, and making offering and

sacrificing. No human activity such as grazing, agriculture and human settlement is allowed to take place in or near forests and trees where shrines are located. As Mbiti echoes, it is only for ceremonies, rituals, prayers and sacrifices.<sup>10</sup>

As explained by Mutiso Wambua, there is the belief that anyone who desecrates these sacred places of worship would face the wrath of the ancestral spirits. This is beside the heavy fines of five goats from the elders. Thus the sacred places of worship in Wote, indirectly, played a major role in protecting and conserving the environment.

Unfortunately many of these shrines in Wote have been destroyed and the areas put under cultivation. The idea of shrines is no longer with majority of the residents of Wote. They have no respect even to the operational shrines. Indeed many of the shrines have become more as traditional symbols than as places of worship.

Kwa Mweene and Kwa Muviti shrines in Wote have already been destroyed together with the surrounding environment. However Kwa Kilui shrine which is currently operational and consisting of four members (Mzee Kimondo and four women), offers protection to the forest and land as compared to the Kwa Mweene shrine which is non-functional.

The photos below illustrate this:



***Kwa Kilui Shrine***



***Kwa Mweene Shrine***

## **ii. Kinship and Communal Ownership of Land.**

The Kamba traditional concept of kinship is a key world view value which contributes greatly towards environmental conservation and protection. It directly determines the people's relationship with their environment. Kinship system among the traditional Kamba community comprised not only of the ancestors, the living dead, and the living, but also the unborn and the surrounding. There exists a very intimate relation in the system whereby each member of the structure shows concern for the other in all what they do.

John Mbiti<sup>11</sup> underscores this important value and sense of kinship system among the traditional African societies when he observes that whatever happens to the individual is believed to happen to the whole group and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The kinship concept is part and parcel of every individual's day to day life. In other words, they internalize the value and inevitably say: I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am.<sup>12</sup>

It is in relation to this that they can not destroy the environment from which they all depend for subsistence and survival. They well understand that the environment does not belong to the present generation only, but also belongs to the past and future generations. Hence the communal ownership of land is an expression of the kinship value and ensures

that no one act individually to destroy the environment. Consequently, this prompts the traditional Kamba community to conserve and protect it. Thus from Kamba Traditional sense of kinship will all life stem their environmental ethics.

### **iii. Kamba Traditional taboos, beliefs, proverbs, wise sayings and ecology**

The Kamba traditional beliefs have great impact and influence on how the people relate with their environment. They act as guidelines on what to do and not to do. The beliefs and taboos varied from one issue to another. The beliefs and taboos evolved as the community responded to issues and situations of life. This study explored some of the beliefs and taboos and proverbs related to ecology and the following were highlighted by the respondents:

- i) Prohibition from cultivating near rivers
- ii) It is a taboo to cut certain trees (particularly sacred trees).
- iii) The belief that the natural world is a revelation of the supernatural.
- iv) The belief that the forests, rivers, mountains and rocks are gods dwelling places.
- v) Trees near rivers (especially Mikuyu) are not cut because they are sources of water.
- vi) The belief that they please their ancestors and gods by not destroying the environment.
- vii) Prohibition from building near or under the shade of a sacred tree.
- viii) The philosophy that when you harm the environment it will harm you.
- ix) The earth is not a gift from our parents; it is a loan from our children.
- x) We never know the worth of water till the well is dry.
- xi) Only when the last tree has died and the last river have been poisoned and the last fish been caught will we realize we cannot eat money.
- xii) The belief that moral laws are God given

### **iv. Traditional farming Methods**

The traditional farming methods among the traditional Kambas of Wote are eco-friendly. They cause no harm to the environment. Instead they add value to the environment.

Conservation of tree groves for bee keeping not only help to conserve and protect the trees and the percentage of forest cover in the area but also reduce run off and soil erosion.

Intercropping and shift cultivation maintain the soil fertility hence avoiding soil degradation. Traditional crops such as cassava, peas, sweet potatoes, root potatoes etc also enriched the soil

#### **v. Rituals, Ceremonies and Rites of passage**

As it is with other traditional African societies, rituals and ceremonies are the most important points to the religious life of the traditional Kamba community. They convey and reinforce the deep meaning and values expressed through myths and which the group hold sacred.

In espousing this central role played by rituals and ceremonies in regards to ecology, Roger Cottlieb observes that, significantly, African rituals are concerned with the sacralization of the environment and nature.<sup>13</sup> He further notes that nature provides the perfect space for worshipping and practicing rituals.<sup>14</sup> Whether communal or individual ritual, it is all carried in a natural environment. For instance, as it was explained by Kithuka Mbiti, the seclusion period which offers an opportunity for the boys to be taught the cultural elements and values of the community occurs in the forest.<sup>15</sup> Thus without a natural landscape and reverence for the spirituality and mystery found in nature, much of the power of African culture would be greatly diminished.<sup>16</sup>

#### **4.2.2 The Kamba Traditional Environmental knowledge**

Indigenous knowledge Systems (IKS) is a new global concept which is synonymous to Traditional knowledge (TK), Indigenous Technical Knowledge (ITK) and Local Knowledge (LK). The concept has been, broadly, defined as the knowledge that indigenous community accumulates over generations of living in a particular environment. The IK is entrenched in the community's practices, institutions, relations and rituals. It is an integral part of the culture and history of the local community. The

IKS is very useful, broad and inclusive. It is thus unique to every culture and society. The IKS covers all aspects of life, including management of the natural environment. Thus traditional environmental knowledge (TEK) is part of the IKS.

Traditional Environment Knowledge (TEK) is defined as accumulative body of knowledge and beliefs, handed down through generations by cultural transmission; concerning the environment.<sup>17</sup> The Kamba traditional environmental knowledge plays a pivotal role in maintaining harmonious relations between the people and the rest of creation. It highlights the relationship of living beings with one another and with their environment.

In the Kamba traditional society, TEK is transmitted and handed down from one generation to another through various methods. As it was vibrantly explained by Mutiso Wambua,<sup>18</sup> the young boys would be summoned to 'Thome' where they would be trained on various issues pertaining the community, family and ecology<sup>19</sup>. The environmental knowledge would, in particular be imparted on them through stories, narratives, proverbs, riddles and teachings on the importance of certain trees in the community. For instance, Kithuka Mbiti<sup>20</sup>, a respondent aged 72 years, undoubtedly recalled one of the ecological stories taught while in 'Thome' where by a middle aged man decided to break a taboo and cut down a prohibited tree from a forest and he was never seen again. According to him such stories and the TEK in general prevented them from exercising environmental destruction.

Indeed, as it was further explained by Mutuse Malinda<sup>21</sup> who described the modern generation as being 'disrespectful to nature,' the TEK enabled them to acknowledge the special responsibility they have towards the rest of the creation because humanity possess the gift of foresight. Thus it is through these cosmological stories, riddles, proverbs and lessons that the Akamba traditional environmental knowledge became a recurring focus during the maturing process of the individual members. Hence members of the community, from their early years of growth, grow up knowing how to conserve and



protect the environment. They grow up with a positive attitude towards nature and knowing the importance of the environment to the survival of humanity. This is in fact, a big challenge to the modern social institutions, particularly religion, to instill and impart environmental knowledge to children.

#### **4.2.3 The Disconnect**

Even though the Akamba traditional environmental knowledge plays a crucial role towards environmental sustainability, it is regrettable that this indigenous knowledge, which directly and indirectly relate to ecology, is the most marginalized today. Where and when did the chasm, the detach occur? The study identified two major factors that may have led to the disconnect:

##### **Colonialism and mission Christianity**

The coming of Christian missionaries and colonialists in Ukambani at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the community's vibrant cultural space diminish gradually. The missionaries and the colonialists collaborated in destroying the Kamba cultural elements and this in extension meant ecology would not be spared.

The colonialists replaced the council of elders, as explained by Mzee Kimondo<sup>22</sup>, which was the culture based institution of governance with the council chiefs who acted for the interest of their masters, the colonialists. The council of elders was the custodians of the community's traditions and heritage. On the other hand, the missionaries in their proselytizing zeal denounced and labeled scores of the Kamba cultural traditions and practices as 'works of the devil.' The traditional diviners and healers were hardly rebuked and the practices 'demonized' through evangelization. The colonialists collaborated in this endeavor by imposing a requirement of licenses for every gathering.

The introduction of formal education by the missionaries and colonialists, whose content degraded and reviled the Kamba traditional practices and beliefs, opened an entry point

for the indigenous people to slowly embrace the western values and practices without much reflection

The schools and the mission centers became powerful agents of socialization among the local people, instead of the family, elders, and guardians or at ‘thome’. Subsequently, generation after generation, the indigenous people gradually abandoned their environmental knowledge to a point where even some generations have little or no idea of the Kamba TEK. Thus the remarks by Mutuse that the modern generation is disrespectful to nature stand. The disconnect is well illustrated in table 7 below as was found out from the study.

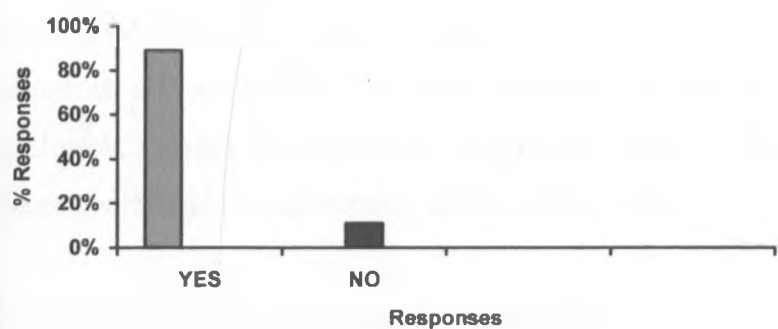
**Table 7: Illustrates how much the different age categories know about the Kamba TEK**

Age category (years)	Very much (%)	Much (%)	Little (%)
20-30	5.6	16.7	77.8
31-40	3.0	67.7	29.0
41-50	7.7	30.8	61.5
51 & above	50.0	40.0	10

**Table 8: Shows the percentage response of 72 sampled respondents to the question of how well they understand the Kamba traditional ways of life relating to environment.**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Very much	8	11
Much	32	44.4
Little	32	44.4

**Figure 3: It shows the percentage response of the sampled respondents opinion on whether Kamba traditional ways of life advocated for environmental protection and conservation.**



The 89% of the respondents (figure 3) were of the strong opinion that the TEK could be used to salvage the ecological crisis. Ironically, however, only 11% of them had more knowledge on the TEK.

Table 7 presents a worrying trend where by at one extreme respondents aging fifty years and above are more aware of the Kamba TEK while on the other end the young generation have little of the TEK. There is therefore an urgent need to target the young generation and instill the traditional environmental knowledge if, indeed, ecological reconstruction is to be achieved through our traditional culture.

The loss of the TEK in Wote area has led to an alarming environmental crisis which threatens the residents' survival. The traditional societies had an intact society until the disconnect occurred through the process of colonialism and evangelization. As a result the traditional process of socialization was disrupted. In addition, with language being the entry point to any culture, the establishment of formal education gradually weakened the traditional methods of socialization. The end result is wide disconnect with our traditional ways of life.

Before the disruption, the process of socialization inculcated the indigenous people into the society's way of life and in particular how to relate to the whole creation, including their environment. It ensured a mature integration in to the universe. The urgent need for cultural restoration that would bring back the traditional life ways that maintained a harmonious co-existence in the whole creation can not therefore be sidelined at all cost. The church, though the process of inculturation, can utilize its position and potency to achieve ecological reconstruction in the society today.

#### **4.3 Inculturation and ecological restoration.**

Owing to the fact that there is a plethora of definitions of the concepts culture and inculturation which has been advanced differently both in wording and emphasis, this study defines culture in its widest sense as the totality of peoples way of life. UNESCO defines it as a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs<sup>23</sup>.

The components of culture therefore include politics, economics, metaphysics, ethics, theoretical tools, practical tools and aesthetics.<sup>24</sup> The culture of a people is thus so central and paramount that it determines and influences their world view. It determines how people act and perceive things and issues. Indeed culture, as noted by Aylward shorter, is the prism through which people view the whole of their experience.<sup>25</sup> In every culture there is a set of beliefs concerning the ultimate nature of reality.<sup>26</sup> As Paul Tillich further reiterates in his book, *Theology of culture*, and also as explored in section 2.0 of this study, religion is a vital component of culture in that it is the substance of culture and culture in this case is the totality of forms in which the basic concern of religion expresses itself<sup>27</sup>. This is where the interplay between religion and culture comes to play. Thus through religion peoples express their world view. In other words religion actualizes itself through cultural forms.

The Akamba traditional culture is intricately intertwined in their religion. Judith Mbula puts it rightly when she observes that the Akamba religious aspects are well expressed and reflected in their belief system; their beliefs are largely based on individual's self-awareness, his relationship with his environment, his relationship with others, and the world beyond.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, when the Christian missionaries erected their first tent in Kamba land, no attempts were made to learn, understand and appreciate the Kamba traditional culture. Instead the missionaries and the colonial agents developed cultural prejudice against the indigenous culture. They believed that both the African institutions and African 'character' was retrogressive and had to be completely transformed. Ogbu Kalu describes the Christian missionaries as posing as soldiers marching on to war against African religiously.<sup>29</sup> Thus they weakened the religion which underpinned the indigenous worldview and culture. They had a *tabula rasa* perception of the African culture.

The Kamba traditional worldview of a monistic world- a traditional thought that viewed the universe as one- was destroyed. The African concept of 'wholeness of life' was challenged and a clear- cut division between what was sacred and what was secular developed.<sup>30</sup> As a result the intimate attitude and respect they had towards the environment declined hence an ecological crisis emerged. The impact of missionary Christianity to African culture and ecology is well summed up by Emmanuel Obeng:

*A mark of missionary Christianity was to view other cultures with suspicion. African religion and culture for example was considered inimical to the Christian faith. Thus Christianity stressed a rejection of everything African and the adoption of western way of life as an outward indication of conversion to Christianity.... Through this rejection, Christianity inflicted a cultural degradation of African people. What has been destroyed is not only African culture but a spiritual legacy with the land which emanates out of a deep interdependence with the creation.<sup>31</sup>*

From the foregoing it is crystal clear that the need for cultural restoration is urgent and pivotal in as far as ecological reconstruction is concerned. There is need for inculturation. Inculturation is a term used in Christian missiology to refer to the adaptation of the way the Gospel is presented for the specific cultures being evangelized.<sup>32</sup> It therefore involves the presentation and re-expression of the Gospel in forms and terms proper to a culture. Shorter defines inculturation as the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures.<sup>33</sup> The process carries with it the notion that the Christian message interact with a local culture and both benefit. The definition by Crollius seems to be more comprehensive when he defines it as the integration of the Christian experience of a local church into the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience not only expresses itself in elements of this culture but also becomes a force that animates, orients and renews this culture, creating a new unity and communion, not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the church universal.<sup>34</sup>

The Kamba traditional religious values which promote and sustain environmental sustainability need to be stressed and appreciated as one way of achieving ecological reconstruction. As P.A Dopamu observes in his paper, "*Towards understanding ATR*",<sup>35</sup> there is no denying the fact that Christianity and Islam are the dominating religions in Africa and that they are of great spiritual value with which ATR can no longer compete. But Dopamu makes a wake up call towards realization that these religions originated from particular cultures and developed within particular cultural settings and that they are heavily tainted with the cultures of the propagators so that in adopting them, Africans also adopted the cultures of the propagators.<sup>36</sup> For instance, Christianity originated from the Jewish culture who adopted it into the culture. When it went to the Greek, Roman, European, Asian and the western cultures, it also merged well with them. However, when it was brought to Africa the missionaries used the implantation method and weakened the African culture instead of strengthening it. If Christianity adapted itself in the other cultures, why not in the African Culture? We have failed to realize that all the cultures be

it African, western, Jewish, Asian culture etc, are subject to the judgment of the Christian faith. They are measured against the essential core beliefs of the Christian faith not against any other culture. It is therefore true that what occurred in Africa was more of acculturation than inculturation.

The process of inculturation is central in recapturing the richness of reality offered by the African traditional Religion and in particular the Akamba traditional religion towards the ecological restoration in Wote. The Kamba traditional culture which related to ecology and which is greatly enshrined in their religious aspect can be of great value in interpreting Biblical ecological concepts through inculturation. Presenting and re-expressing Christianity to residents of Wote in the context of their traditional religion, experience, language, symbols and culture in general would be a milestone towards environmental reconstruction.

#### **4.3.1 The place of the Roman Catholic Church in the inculturation process.**

Today, the call for inculturation remains to be very strong. Christianity is central in achieving inculturation as a way of restoring environmental sustainability in Wote. During the 1994 African synod, the late pope John Paul II described inculturation as the synthesis between culture and faith (ecclesia in Africa #7). In addition the documents of Vatican II Council recognized, appreciated and saw the need of utilizing the local culture of people. It encouraged the process of inculturation. Thus the Vatican II document can rightly be regarded as a decisive stage towards inculturation.

It was, indeed, during the papacy of Pope John Paul II that the contents of the documents, including inculturation, came in to a full play. The following remarks by Pope John Paul II concerning inculturation in Africa, as quoted by Cormac Burke in his article, *"Inculturation: John Paul II and the 3<sup>rd</sup> world"*, reaffirms the significance of Christianity and the process in reconstructing the continent on various aspects including ecological reconstruction:

*Africa is still in search of herself. In search, that is, of her real identity, where she has combined the best of her traditional values with the uplifting power of Christianity. I put before you today a challenge to reject a way of living which does not correspond to the best of your local traditions and your Christian faith. Many people in Africa look beyond Africa for the so called "freedom of modern way of life". Today I urge you to look inside yourselves. Look for the riches of your own traditions, and look to the faith which we are celebrating. The African countries -and the Asian and the Latin American, - with their young population, their natural vitality and their traditional values, need to be reminded, in terms of truest human values, they are not backward. Their values, sustained and uplifted by the gospel, are desperately needed by a world that is in danger of a radical dehumanization.<sup>37</sup>*

This powerful statement challenges the church in Africa to rise up to the occasion and take up the responsibility of inculturating the faith with the culture of their people. The Catholic Church Wote need therefore to embrace the process by making the Gospel take root in the Kamba traditional values, discover them and use their richness as well as uplift their weakness in the fight against ecological crisis in the area. If rightly utilized, inculturation will bring forth a liberation theology where by the 'groaning creation' in Wote will be 'healed' and residents will be liberated from the impacts of the ecological crisis. It will bring happiness and improve the human dignity.

Even though the Kamba traditional culture embodied a way of life; that is, it was largely responsible for shaping the thought patterns, the feelings and the way the people acted towards their environment, these traditional life ways which related to ecology are currently the most marginalized. As explained by a respondent, many residents of Wote have dropped the traditional practices related to ecology terming them 'ungodly', 'satanic' and 'backward'.<sup>38</sup> These are indeed the impact of the implantation method employed by the missionaries to condemn the Kamba traditional way of life.



Fortunately, or so to say, the church, through the inculturation process, has a golden opportunity to effectively and resourcefully utilize the traditional values, practices and life ways in the ecological crisis in Wote in several ways:

Sermons, encyclicals and exhortations could be an entry point by the Catholic Church in Wote to integrate the traditional values and practices with the Christian faith. The clergy should show the residents that, just as traditional Africans perceived, nature is Gods revelation to humanity. Through nature God reveals his works and mighty and it should therefore be respected. It is generally believed all over Africa that the universe was created and the creator of the universe is God<sup>39</sup>. There is no room in the African worldview for a universe that came about by chance. In the Kamba traditional religious view, the natural phenomena tell without words the magnificence power of God. The religious significance they attach to the environment expresses and reflects their inward and intimate experience with the creator. Thus the churches teaching of natural theology should be revisited and such traditional worldviews incorporated.

Emphasis should be made that the universe as a library through which humanity learns life lessons from. The traditional society perceives the environment to be sources of wisdom and knowledge. The theme of the universe as a library runs across the Christian Bible. Jesus uses ordinary creatures such as birds (Matthew 6:25-26), trees (matthew7:15-20) grass (luke12:27) etc to put forth His lessons to the people. They portray an ecological concern. In the OT, for instance the Bible uses ants to teach the lesson of laziness and hard work. The book of Job chapter 12:7-9 urges human to learn from the earth:

*“But ask the animals and they will teach you or the birds of the air, and they will tell you, or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the lord has done this”.*

The religious sermons and teachings should stress on the responsible use of land and encourage the traditional herbal medicine, traditional food crops and indigenous plants.

The ecological sermons should have the potency to inspire mindfulness about nature, mindfulness that is almost often absent in every day to day life, as opposed to the Kamba traditional ways of life. The Kamba traditional religion inculcates a life of communion, union and responsibility.

The Kamba traditional concept of wholeness of life is central to environmental sustainability in Wote. They are concerned with all the aspects of human life: good life, happy life, Good health, food security, sufficient water, spirituality etc. Thus the traditional Kamba understanding of life is not departmentalized. They, subsequently, understand that destruction of the environment will deny them full realization of the various aspects of life. As a result, any action or thought that lead to the destruction or disruption of their harmonious living with the environment is termed evil, sin.

The foundation and purpose of the ethical perspective of African Religion is life, life in its fullness.<sup>40</sup> Thus any happening that promoted life is termed good, just, ethical while those diminish life termed as unjust, detestable, and unethical.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, just as the Kamba traditional thoughts, words, attitudes and practices that promoted fullness of life were incorporated systematically into the people's way of life, the Roman Catholic Church Wote has an opportunity to campaign while at the same time advocating for practices, attitudes and lifestyles that are geared for an ecologically sustainable area. This may be complimented by use of the Kamba oral traditions- riddles, proverbs, sayings, stories, folktales, songs, myths, laws, taboos- which are veritable vehicles of transmitting the knowledge<sup>42</sup> (Environmental knowledge). Through the oral traditions the people are taught the significance of plants, rivers, animals and generally the importance of environmental conservation and protection for humanity.

Moreover, Christians believe that Jesus came so that all may have life and have it in fullness (John 10:10). This should prompt Christians to be in the fore front on environmental matters. This is due to the fact that nature promotes and sustains life. Whenever the equilibrium maintained by the natural system is destabilized life gets affected. Low quality environment deprive people the fruits of abundant life. There will

be water scarcity, food insecurity, environmental related diseases, electricity rationing and generally low quality of life. Therefore as the church prepares their faithfuls for heavenly life, they should equally reckon with the fact that the same people need to lead a comfortable life on earth.

The Akamba religious aspect of shrines and sacred places of worship contributed, immensely, to environmental conservation. These are normally natural places which are secluded or situated away from people's homes and field. No human activity is allowed near them. The sacred places of worship are outward and material expression of religious ideas and beliefs. This concept can be integrated and inculturated by the Catholic Church in Wote or any other church by setting aside several pieces of land and afforest them with trees and grass. The areas are then preserved for prayers and retreats. They thus become the equivalents of the Catholic shrines in Komarock and Subukia (Nakuru). Just as the Kamba traditional shrines and sacred places were numerous and scattered nearly in every corner of the village, the Catholic Church can have several such shrines in Wote. Such a move would even jump-start the restoration of the natural beauty which has been deprived through the various methods of environmental destruction.

Though not fully embraced, stewardship is one of the most crucial ecological principles, both in the Akamba religious heritage and in Christianity. The Kamba traditional society has the full knowledge that their environment means everything to them and hence they attach a great deal of religious significance to all the natural phenomena. It is for this reason that the Kamba traditional people take care and manage the natural resources in appropriate and sustainable ways. The stewardship concept is well understood and practiced without any form of coercion.

Although, Biblically, the term has not been fully and effectively integrated into the lives of believers, the concept has its roots in the Genesis narrative of creation where the man and woman are placed in the Garden of Eden and given some responsibilities and obligations to essentially work and care for the environment that God created. They are

given authority to have dominion over the entire earth (Genesis 1:26). Indeed they are given administrative rule over the earth from God, to make good use of the natural resources but not a mandate to abuse and exploit it. Adam and Eve were just stewards, managers caring for the Garden of Eden in place of God but on behalf of God. Therefore it can be rightly and precisely argued that Garden of Eden, which represents the earth, was not theirs but the creator's property. These commands given to them by God remains the ethical framework within which they were to exercise the principle of stewardship. There was no choice. The ethical framework given by the creator to Adam and Even on stewardship can be equated and inculturated to the Akamba traditional strong belief that moral laws are God given and have no substitute. The Catholic Church can therefore integrate the Akamba traditional principle of stewardship and the Biblical insights on ecological stewardship.

Closely related to the principle of stewardship is the doctrine of Sabbath. From an ecological viewpoint it can be seen as a symbol of environmental care. Genesis 2:1-3 puts emphasis on the concept of rest for all creation. In addition the Israelites are instructed to let their land furrow in the seventh year before they can recultivate. The Levitical laws require a seventh year rest for agricultural fields:

*For six years you are to sow your field and harvest the crops, but during the seventh year let the land lie unploughed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same to your vines and grapes.*<sup>43</sup>

This is also a practice among the traditional Kamba community of letting the land to regain its lost fertility and vegetation. It prevents soil degradation and ensures fecundity of the earth hence sustaining life. Therefore the theme of rest for all creation and the Levitical laws on land need to be instilled among the residents of Wote as a way of restoring back the quality of soil.

The Akamba traditional sense of community humane living and their deep consciousness of human dignity are cardinal concepts in understanding their harmonious living with their environment. They are values which the church can inculturate and capitalize on for ecological reconstruction in Wote. The church need to adapt them and re-interpret them in Christian categories, and enoble them to the residents. The principle of individualism, among the Kamba traditional society, does not exist; instead they have a communalistic nature. Every human action has a consequence and therefore the realization, by the indigenous people, that a negative action by any member of the community towards the environment can affect the other members cautions them against environmental destruction. The community spirit was developed through the kinship structures of the society.

As noted by Kivuto Ndeti, one of the most significant roles in the kinship organization is the process of humanization (or socialization).<sup>44</sup> That is, incorporating members fully into the Akamba culture. John Mbiti underscores this important belief and sense of the community among traditional Africans. He observes that the individual does not and can not exist alone except corporately and that he or she owes existence to other people,<sup>45</sup> including those of past, present and future generations. Whatever happens to the individual is believed to happen to the whole group and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual and hence the individual can only say, 'I am because we are and since we are, therefore I Am.'<sup>46</sup>

The church has therefore a vital role to inculturate this concept so as to promote a realization of harmonious living with our environment. The Christian principles of brotherhood, sisterhood and the golden religious rule, which cuts across all world religions, of doing unto others what we would like them to do to us, could be used by the church to tame and discourage the lifestyles and attitudes which are not eco-friendly and which do not put into consideration the effects it will have not only on the contemporaries but also on posterity.

#### **4.3.2 Small Christian Communities (SCC) and Inculturation**

Both the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles of Paul, as well as the general epistles, describe a model of simplicity- groups of believers coming together to share God's work, break the bread and share with the needy of the community. They also held their goods and property in common. This is one of the structures or approaches the Roman Catholic Church has adapted. They are referred to as the small Christian communities or Jumuiyas.

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, contemporary SCC has evolved in parts of the globe quite spontaneously. SCC developed as a result of putting the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) into practice. Latin America, Africa and Asia all pioneered the development of a SCC model of church. The African experience did not come from Latin America but developed on its own at different times. It is amazing to see that these SCC appeared simultaneously but separately in all continents. The SCC plays vital role in the lives of its members. It helps them to grow spiritually through sharing God's word and their experience. The SCC offers an opportunity for the members to pray together with the universal church.

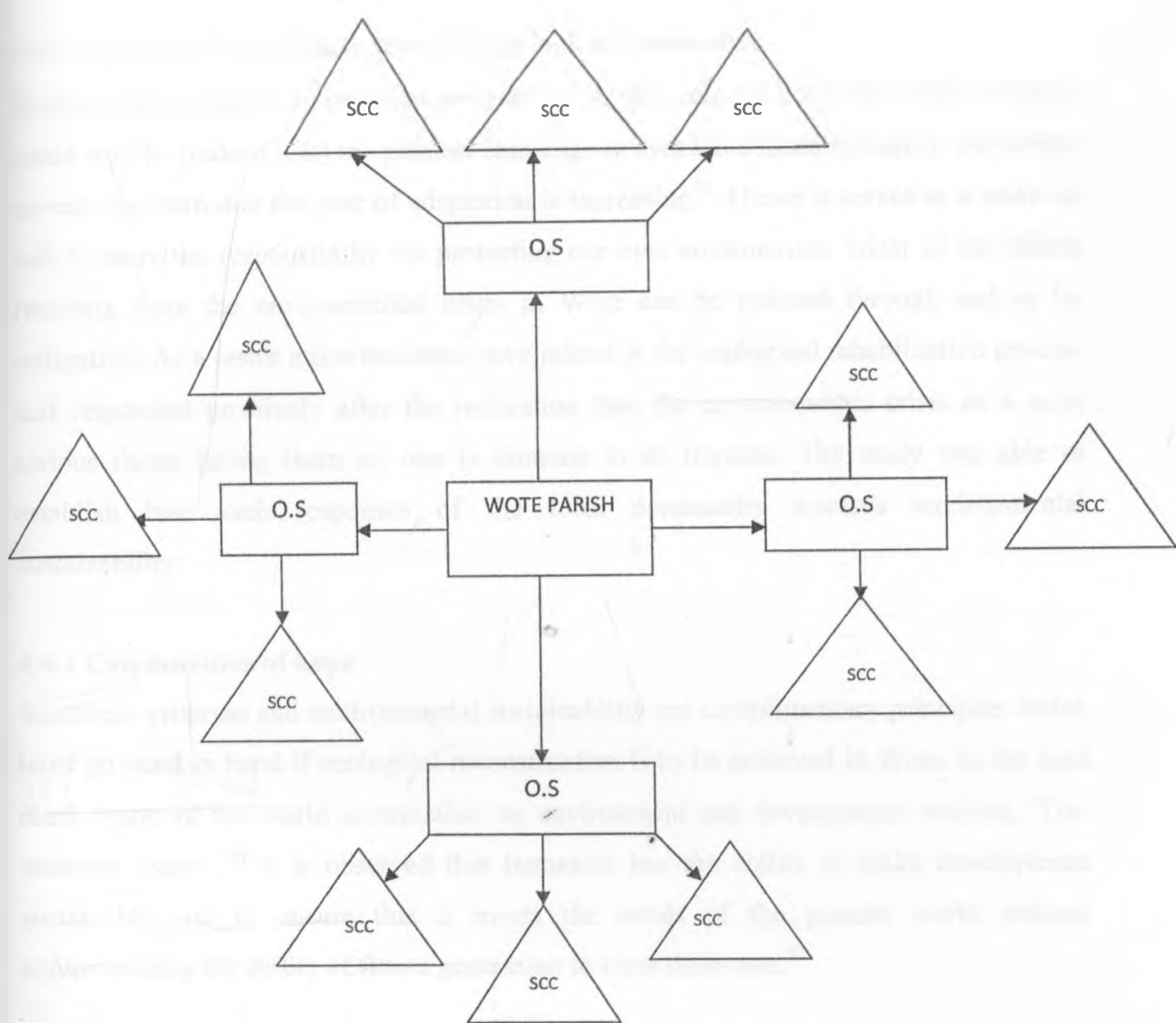
The SCC offers a conducive environment for community building in that members have close contacts with each other and feel the bond of community life and solidarity. This state of co-existence is more effective for changing attitudes and behaviours than is the lecture method. The SCC members try to put into practice the word of God in their concrete daily life. They aim not only to meditate on the word of God but also to live out in their daily life the knowledge they receive from the Gospel so that they could contribute towards realizing the kingdom of God in this world. Thus issues such as the connection between Eucharist and Creation or Eucharist and Ecology could be brought in these forums and the members realize them in their lives.

The SCC in Wote would therefore be an effective entry point for the process of inculturation and ecological rehabilitation than at the parish or outstation level. The SCC are characterized by free interaction and openness where there is intensive and extensive sharing of ideas and experience. An equivalent of SCC in the Kamba traditional society is the social structure referred to as 'thome'- men's forum for discussing issues of society. The men sit at the forum together with the head of the household, while young ladies and the women remained in the hut. This occurs, mainly, in the evening hours after work. In the men's forum information, ranging from ecological issues, family and community issues, is disseminated from knowledgeable elderly people to the young generation through songs, proverbs, sayings, words of wisdom, myths etc. As it was explained by Mutiso Wambua<sup>47</sup>, the thome is normally under trees and fire is lit at the centre as the men sit in a circle. For the SCC, a few families meet weekly in one of their member's family and share experiences, God's word and current affairs. If equated with thome, each family would plant some trees in the homestead and they will thus be meeting under trees as they enjoy the beauty and goodness of nature and God's greatness. From the foregoing it can be argued that the Jumuiyas can be effective forums for sensitization and shaping attitudes of members of society towards being responsible to the environment. They become centers for awareness creation on ecological matters. It is an avenue for inculturation and intertwining the Akamba traditional environmental knowledge with deep biblical insights on ecology. This could be done through the liturgy, prayers, songs and God's word.

However, in spite of the SCC's been avenues for an effective inculturation, one noble thing needs to be done for it to succeed. The clergy, the catechist and the leaders of the Jumuiyas need to be well equipped both with the Akamba traditional environmental knowledge and the biblical ecological insights. Once empowered, they can easily and effectively transmit the knowledge to the SCC members for application. Therefore the parish is called upon to come up with programmes to train and equip the leaders with TEK.

Wote parish under which the area of this study lies is composed of thirty three outstations (See list at appendix 4) composed of several SCC's. According to the parish secretary each outstation has at least ten Jumuiyas (SCC)<sup>48</sup>. In turn each of the SCC is comprised of 10-15 families who meet weekly, in turn, in their homes. It is indeed, therefore, imperative that the church taps this potential within the SCC as an entry point to achieving ecological sustainability in Wote. The structure of this approach can be illustrated in the figure below:





# **KEY**

O S – OUT STATION

SCC – SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

#### **4.4 Response of Community towards Ecological Restoration**

In the article, “*A threat to our human rights*”,<sup>49</sup> Apisal Lelemia notes that climate change could well be (indeed it is) the greatest challenge to ever have faced humanity. He further unveils the truth that the cost of adaptation is increasing<sup>50</sup>. Hence it serves as a wake up call to share the responsibility for protecting our own environment. Most of the effects resulting from the environmental crisis in Wote can be reduced through and or by mitigation. As a result a few residents have joined in the ecological rehabilitation process and responded positively after the realization that the environmental crisis as a most serious threat facing them no one is immune to its impacts. The study was able to establish two such responses of the local community towards environmental sustainability:

##### **4.4.1 Communities of hope**

Economic progress and environmental sustainability are complimentary principles which must go hand in hand if ecological reconstruction is to be achieved in Wote. In the landmark report of the world commission on environment and development entitled, “*Our common future*”,<sup>51</sup> it is observed that humanity has the ability to make development sustainable and to ensure that it meets the needs of the present world without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own.<sup>52</sup>

It is for this reason that the emergence of communities of hope (COH) should be seen as a positive move. They indeed play important role towards sustainable development. These communities help not only in the preservation and restoration of the environment but also the betterment of the community. They thus mitigate further impact of environment destruction.

Economic challenges have led to the residents turning to harmful ecological activities such as poor farming methods, deforestation, sand harvesting, and charcoal burning. Such human activities have in turn posed serious challenges to reducing poverty, which is a major factor contributing to environment destruction and achieving sustainable

environment. However where the community of hope has taken root there has emerged sustainable livelihoods. Sustainable livelihoods have been defined as those that meet the financial needs of average citizens while supporting cleaner, healthier environment and protecting the natural resources base for the future.<sup>53</sup> Several of such have been initiated in Wote:

**(i) Kindu Kiseo Community of Hope**

This community of hope is mainly composed of widows who have joined together to develop sustainable livelihoods. This was after a constant decline in crop productivity due to climate change. They have projects such as mango project, orange projects, vegetable project etc. They too plant traditional food crops- cassava banana tomatoes etc. As it was revealed by Irene Mbuvi<sup>54</sup> the secretary of the community, through out the year the members have a constant supply of their produce to the market.

In addition, within the Kindu Kiseo Community the members have creatively initiated other income generating activities (IGA's) to supplement their main projects. Such IGA's include brick making, seedling beds and supply of spare parts to other projects. Irene confirmed that their community of hope has to a large extent enabled them to be friendlier to the environment and no longer indulge in human activities not eco friendly. The community has even gone an extra mile to creating environmental awareness in schools and churches and opened the opportunity to other members to join them. The plates below show some of the activities of the community of hope.



## ii) Simba J

The youths have not lagged behind in forming communities of the hope. Simba J is a community of hope by fifteen young people. Even though they have not fully developed they have so far established nursery bed for several tree species and food crops needed by individuals and other communities of hope. Through the initiative the Simba J members are able to get some livelihoods. Thus it is one way of protecting and conserving the environment.

The youth communities of hope need some support in terms of skills and ideas in order to be able to sustain the projects. The plates below demonstrate the activities of the community.



#### **4.4.2 Intrafaith and the ecological crisis**

The impacts of environmental destructions are never discriminating, they have no boundaries based on nationality, gender, class, tribe, spirituality, faith, denomination etc, It therefore follows that every individual has a duty towards achieving environmental sustainability.

The acknowledgment of this fact among the residents of Wote has led to the emergence of a new trend where by individuals from different Christian denominational affiliations have joined together to initiate sustainable livelihoods. The various denominations included Africa inland church, the Roman Catholic Church, Redeemed gospel church PCEA and the Salvation Army.

Even though the intrafaith in Wote in regard to ecology is at the individual level it is worth to note that such a move is positive to achieving an ecologically sustainable area. However there is urgent need for the intrafaith to raise to the institutional level and come up with an intrafaith ecological forum that will not only raise the environmental awareness but also jointly initiate and participate in ecological projects such as the communities of hope in Wote

#### 4.5 Conclusion

The topical issues of development is a major challenge to the church in Africa<sup>55</sup> and it can no longer afford to waste its influential position in society by sitting back and watching the people and the continent get torn apart. The church has a direct contact with individuals and communities at all levels of the social fabric than any other social institution.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, in regard to ecology, which is a developmental issue, the church has to tap this opportunity and concretize the people at grassroots level on the issue of Ecology.

The activities of the Catholic Church and the response of community towards environmental issues need to be taken a notch higher if the trend of environmental degradation is to be reversed fast. The African cultural and religious heritage contains the foundations upon which social reconstruction should be undertaken.<sup>57</sup> Therefore the Catholic Church Wote has a role to promote the Kamba traditional culture related to ecology and this calls for the church leaders to be well versed with the indigenous culture.

The inculturation process and the development of sustainable livelihood could be a turning point in Wote in all spheres of human life - moral, social, economic, ecological, spiritual and even political. Undeniably the entire African continent is majorly characterized by political turmoil, very high levels of poverty, debt crisis, economic dependency, moral decline and even loss of cultural identity. Reconstruction of the ecological aspect would mitigate most of these. The Catholic Church wote has to appreciate that ecological sustainability is essential for economic stability, security, peace, spiritual growth, high levels of human dignity and quality of life. It is therefore essential that it prioritizes ecological matters as part of its noble mission on earth.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Ronald Clarke and Peter list, *Environmental spectrum: Social and economic views on the quality of life*, Van Nastrand Deinhold Ltd, Canada, 1974, p 143.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid. 149
- <sup>3</sup> Genesis 2:15
- <sup>4</sup> Interview with Fr. Makewa on 20/5/2009.
- <sup>5</sup> Interview with Fr. Dominic Mulinge on 2/7/2009
- <sup>6</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Akamba stories*, Clarendon press, London, 1966, p.14.
- <sup>7</sup> Benezet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimensions of Community*, Pauline's publications Africa, Nairobi, 1988.p.208-9
- <sup>8</sup> Interview with Kisingili Mutisya on 28/5/2009.
- <sup>9</sup> Interview with Mzee Kimondo, a traditionalist, on 30/5/2009
- <sup>10</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, EAEP, Nairobi, 2003, PP 147-9
- <sup>11</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religious and Philosophy*, Heinemann, Oxford, 1990 p.106
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid
- <sup>13</sup> Gottfred Roger. *African Traditional Religion and Ecology*. Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology, p.263
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid;
- <sup>15</sup> Interview with Kithuka Mbiti on 11/6/2009
- <sup>16</sup> Gottfred Roger; Op.cit
- <sup>17</sup> "Traditional ecological knowledge," at :<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>
- <sup>18</sup> Interview with mutiso Wambua on 6/3/2009
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid;
- <sup>20</sup> Op.cit, Kithuka Mbiti
- <sup>21</sup> Interview with Mutuse Malinda on 29/5/2009
- <sup>22</sup> Op.cit; Mzee Kimondo
- <sup>23</sup> UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity; Cultural Diversity series No.1; stenou.k(ed.); UNESCO Paris, france;2002
- <sup>24</sup> J. N.K. Mugambi. *The African heritage and contemporary Christianity*, Longman, Nairobi, 1989, pp.129-31
- <sup>25</sup> Aylward Shorter. *Inculturation of African traditional religious values*; at <http://www.africaword.net/afre/shorter.htm>
- <sup>26</sup> Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, Oxford University press, London, 1964, p.40
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 42
- <sup>28</sup> Judith Mbula B. *Our Religious Heritage*. Thomas Nelson, Nairobi, 1982, p.40
- <sup>29</sup> Ogbu Kalu, "African traditional religion in Western scholarship," in E.M Uka, *Readings in Africa Traditional* European Academic Publishers, Berlin, 1991, p. 104
- <sup>30</sup> Op. Cit, Judith Mbula, p.5

- <sup>31</sup> Obenge, E, "Healing the Groaning Creation in Africa," in Getui.m, & obeng E, (Eds), *theology of Reconstruction: Exploratory Essays*, Acton publishers, Nairobi, 1999, p. 104.
- <sup>32</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/inculturation>.
- <sup>33</sup> Aylward Shorter. *Towards a Theology of Inculturation*, Mary knoll, Nr, 1988,p.11
- <sup>34</sup> Crollius Arjiroest, 'Inculturation,' in Karotempret S. *Following Christ in Mission*. Pauline, Nairobi, 1995, p.113
- <sup>35</sup> P.A. Dopamu, "Towards Understanding African traditional Religion," in *Op. Cit*, E.M. Ukia, p.34
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid*; p.36
- <sup>37</sup> Cormack Burke. *Inculturation: John Paul II and the world*. at ;<http://eapi.admu.edu.ph/eaprqsburke.htm>
- <sup>38</sup> Response by Pastor Kalunda of African Inland Church, Wote
- <sup>39</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, EAEP, Nairobi, 2003, P.35
- <sup>40</sup> Laurent Magesa. *African Religion: The traditions of Abundant life*. Pauline Publishers, Nairobi, 1995, p.75
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid*;
- <sup>42</sup> *Op. Cit*, P.A. Dopamu
- <sup>43</sup> Leviticus 25:2-5
- <sup>44</sup> Kivuto Ndeti, *Elements of Akamba life*, PhD thesis, University of Syracuse, P. 155-6
- <sup>45</sup> *Op. cit*, J.S.Mbiti. *African Religious and philosophy* p. 106
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid*;
- <sup>47</sup> *Op. cit*, Mutiso Wambua
- <sup>48</sup> Report from Francis Malonza, Secretary Wote Parish on 31/7/2009
- <sup>49</sup> Apisal Lelemia. 'A threat to our human rights,' in *UN Chronicle Green our World*, No. 2, vol. XLIV, June 2007, pp. 18-19
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid*;
- <sup>51</sup> World Commission on environmental and Development. *Our common future*. 1987 at:<http://www.un-documents.net/wced.ocf.htm>
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid*;
- <sup>53</sup> Sustainable livelihoods at: <http://www.ifad.org/sla>
- <sup>54</sup> Interview with Irene Mbuvi, Secretary of Kindu Kiseo Community of Hope, on 22/5/2009
- <sup>55</sup> J.M Mwau. "Theology and development." Seminar Paper, University of Nairobi, 2008.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid*;
- <sup>57</sup> J.N.K.Mugambi .(ED). *The Church and Reconstruction of Africa: Theological considerations*. All African Conference of Churches, Nairobi; Kenya. 1997.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Conclusions

The study explored the causes and impact of ecological crisis in Wote, the role of the Roman Catholic Church Wote in the ecological issues and the response of the community towards the environmental crisis. The following conclusions are deduced from the study:

- a) The study has revealed that ecological reconstruction has not yet been fully embraced as an integral part of the mission of the church in Wote. This is despite the Biblical evidence that inspires and informs environmental conservation (Section 2.0 and 2.2). Religious perspectives have a central role to play in addressing the environmental crisis confronting humanity. The church can not, now, afford to put environmental matters at the periphery. This thus challenges the church to integrate and prioritize ecological issues in their activities. Indeed the study found that the role of religion in the environmental subject can be effective and efficient if they present a theistic worldview concerning the environment and not perceiving ecology as a concern only preserved for the environmentalists, politicians, economists, and other stakeholders.
- b) The study established that among the major causes of environmental degradation highlighted by the respondents (Section 3.1), poverty topped the list. Moreover, the study observes a vicious cycle between poverty and environmental destruction (Section 3.1 a). Consequently sustainable poverty eradication measures in the society can not be fully realized if there is no ecological sustainability. Therefore, these findings have authenticated the study's hypotheses that poverty and environmental destruction are interrelated. As a result, the study has postulated that unless poverty eradication and ecological sustainability are among the top agendas, not only of the church, but all stakeholders of Wote such as residents, county council, members of parliament, Government ministries, and non-governmental organizations, the ecological crisis may persist.

c) A deep analysis and observation of the study reveals that the ecological crisis affects, negatively, all aspects of human life- education, economy, the family, harmonious co-existence, quality of life, human rights, human relations and is even threatening human survival. This brings ecological issues as multi-dimensional and multidisciplinary and the need for concerted efforts to counter the ecological crisis. It also sends an alarm to Religious traditions to re-read their scriptures and see the eco-crisis in the right perspective. The church in particular need to review and also reconsider its position on ecology.

There is need for the church to develop a deep theology of creation- ecotheology- that will put emphasis on the integrity of creation.<sup>1</sup>

Ecotheology is a form constructive theology that focuses on the interrelationship of religion and nature, particularly in the light environmental concerns.<sup>2</sup> Religion has a bearing on ecology and ecology has a bearing on religion and thus they both complement each other.

Such a theistic view of creation will result to liberation of the environment from its 'groaning' nature and also liberate humanity from the severe ecological impact it faces today. Just as Christian faith has played a vital part in helping the community to rebuilt the broken dimensions of society, the environmental dimension of society need to be fully restored so as to enable the people live on abundant life as understood by Jesus Christ (John 10:10), a life free from anti-life forces of deprivation, dehumanization and abuse of God's creation. Ironically, even when humanity thinks he is the 'master', he is the most threatened species in the creation. When humanity has denied nature its rights, nature has responding in very unforgiving matter- acute shortage of water, high temperature, loss of aesthetic, acute food shortage, diseases, conflicts, low quality life etc. thus the deep theology of creation is vital it leads the various world religions to becoming

more eco-friendly- seeing humanity and nature as intimately interlinked and preservation of the environment and its lifeforms as humanity's noble duty.

- d) The study showed that although ignorance stands out to be a major threat to environmental sustainability in Wote, the church has begun to act as an agent of environmental awareness center to the community from the grassroots.

However, the study was able to reveal a deep problem behold the factor of ignorance. Despite the church's level of participation in ecological issues ranging 60%, the few ecological sermons given, the knowledge on the impact of the ecological crisis and the increased environmental awareness, the ecological situation still remains worse. It still 'groans' loud. The increased environmental knowledge within the residents is not reflected on the environment.

It is at this level that the study did ask: What could be the problem? Why the great chasm? What is it that it takes long for the people to act on the environmental knowledge they already have? Why is there a minimal movement, in regard to ecological reconstruction, at the praxis level? An appropriate response to these deep and fundamental questions will, to a large extent, unlock the stalement to an ecologically stable area in Wote and elsewhere. The study found out that the major problem has not been lack of environmental knowledge, but the failure of the residents to internalize the environmental knowledge they have. Internalization is used at this point to imply the intentional action of making the knowledge to be part of them in their lifestyles and activities. Failure to internalize the ecological knowledge would mean that they are not ignorant but they don't put it into praxis.

The phenomenon in the modern society is completely opposite to the traditional African society (Section 4.2), where cosmology is part of the people's activities and lifestyle. Whatever they do reflects their relationship with their environment. They have internalized the TEK, not just in the actions, but also in their thoughts and words. As a result there exists harmonious living between humanity and

nature. If ecological sustainability is really to be attained through the efforts of the church, corporately and individually, the church has to move a step forward from the plat lip- services to ecology to real actions and internalization.

- e) Lastly, the study has shown that inculturation , in regard to ecology, is fundamental towards environmental sustainability.

The African believes and practices, and in particular the Kamba traditional ecological knowledge should not be condemned and termed 'pagan'. For the modern generation to appreciate the values and richness of the cultural heritage, aspects of the traditional religious thought should be stressed.

The study further observed that the church is the right avenue for the inculturation process. However , for it to be effective and efficient , the religious leaders need, first and foremost, be well equipped with the Akamba traditional aspects so as to know which ones are to be integrated with the gospel and which ones are to be dropped. From the study it was clear that the generation have little knowledge on their traditional ways of life. Thus, the children and the youth should be the main target for the cultural restoration in various aspects of human life, including ecology- a role the church has not done effectively.

Moreover, the study has found that for the inculturation process to succeed in promoting ecological reconstruction in Wote, it has to be accompanied by sustainable livelihoods. Indeed lack of sustainable livelihoods among majority of residents was observed to pose a challenge to ecological reconstruction. Hence the church as an institution may initiate sustainable livelihoods for the resident and also give support, either through financing or training, to the communities of hope in Wote area.

## 5.1 Recommendations

### 1. To Wote Catholic Church

- a. In order to be more effective and efficient in addressing the ecological issues in the area, the church should entrench clear ecological policies into the mainstream system of the church.
- b. The church need to become creation awareness centres by regularly initiating environmental public awareness campaigns as a way of educating the society the extent of the ecological crisis.
- c. The church need to strength the SCC towards environmental sustainability by equipping its members with issues and ways of conserving the environment.
- d. The church need to organize, more frequently, economic empowerment forums for the community. This would ensure that members engage in economic activities that are friendly to the environment and that are viable in the region.
- e. The church need to work in collaboration with ministry of environment and natural resources, ministry of Agriculture, ministry of Water and ministry of forestry in addressing the ecological issues in Wote.
- f. The church should develop a strong intrafaith and interfaith relations in Wote aimed at establishing an ecologically sustainable area.

### 2. To Wote community.

- a. They need to commit themselves to tree planting, both individually and communally, as a way of restoring back the aesthetic and sustainability of the environment.
- b. The residents of Wote need to diversity their income generating activities hence breaking away from their total realize on the environment. Thus they need to utilize to the fullest the economic empowerment organized by the by Catholic Church.
- c. They need to preserve the exiting and functional sacred places – for instance Kwa Kilui and Kwa Mwiitu shrines- as a way of conserving the environment.

- d. The residents of Wote need to support the existing communities of Hope and more so establish several others. The communities of hope would counter poverty which in turn will protect the environment from destruction.

### **3. To the Government**

- a. The ministries of Water, Agriculture, local government, forestry, and environment need to advocate for ecological sustainability by initiating environmental awareness campaigns, aimed at environmental conservation and protection. This calls for these ministries to include, as part their mission, ecological sustainability agenda. The Government needs also to come up mechanism of ensuring a ready market for the products produced by the resident's communities of Hope. This would ensure sustainable livelihoods.
- b. The government need to apportionate part of the CDF to support church and community programmes geared towards ecological reconstruction
- c. The Government, on regular basis, needs to initiate economic empowerment activities in the community. These would be measures towards poverty eradication which is a major cause of environmental destruction in Wote.

### **4. Recommendations for further research.**

- a) A deep study on the significance of the communities of Hope in the modern society.

This is crucial because it seems to be a new trend in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a way of confronting the challenges of the century confronting humanity. The study would therefore be fundamental in finding out if this modern trend can be useful in other aspects of life, apart from ecology, such as poverty eradication, morals and ethics etc. There is also need to study the challenges and the future of communities of hope.

- b) How the ecological crisis has affected the political, moral, and spiritual aspects of the rural and urban residents.

There are limited studies, if any, of how the ecological crisis of this century has affected the political realm, moral and spiritual aspects of the people. To what extent has the crisis contributed to the way people vote in their leaders? To what extent has the ecological crisis contributed to the proliferation of New Religious Movements (NRM,s), and the prosperity gospel? Such a study would be able to explore these insights and add them into the existing body of knowledge.

c) The place of the African instituted churches (AIC'S) in the ecological crisis.

The AIC'S foundation lies on the African culture and their formation came about as they tried to protect and uphold the African culture. In addition, the organization for African instituted churches (OAIC,s) is the umbrella body for these churches in the African continent. Since the traditional African culture championed the protection and preservation of the environment, what then has the AIC'S done and or what can they do in regard to the modern ecological crisis facing humanity. What contribution can they put forward and what challenges can they face in this endeavour.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Integrity of creation is a concept that was developed by the World Council of Churches (WCC) to imply that human beings are a part of and are intimately interrelated with every other dimension of creation. Therefore humanity and the environment need to live in right relationship with another and that the human community can not misuse or abuse the rest of creation.

<sup>2</sup> "Ecotheology", at [www.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ecotheology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ecotheology)

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## Appendix 1: Sample of the Questionnaire

### Introduction

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help in the research on the role of the church in **environmental conservation**. The study aims at exploring what the church has done, and, or what the church can do in the fight against environmental destruction in Wote.

#### 1. Personal information.

a. Name \_\_\_\_\_

b. Gender ☐ M ☐ F

c. Denomination \_\_\_\_\_

d. Profession \_\_\_\_\_

e. Level of education \_\_\_\_\_

f. Age (Tick were appropriate)

20 – 30	31 – 40	41 – 49	50 and above
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#### 2. a) What comes in your mind when the term natural environment is mentioned?

\_\_\_\_\_

b) In your opinion has the environment been taken care of in Wote area?

Yes ☐

No ☐

#### 3. How would you classify the state of environment in Wote? ( tick one)

Very good ☐

Good ☐

Very poor ☐

Poor ☐

4. What do you think are some of the ways in which the environment has been destroyed?

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

(c) \_\_\_\_\_

(d) \_\_\_\_\_

5. According to you what would you consider to be the main causes of environmental destruction in Wote? (List)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. (a) Who, in your opinion seem to be the major destroyers of the environment in Wote? (Tick one)

1. The youth

☐

2. Men

☐

3. Women

☐

4. Children

☐

(b) In which ways? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. a). Which segment of the population in Wote is severely affected by the environmental destruction in the area? ( Tick one)

1. The youth ☐

2. Men ☐

3. Women ☐

4. Children ☐

b). How is the above ticked segment of society affected? (You can attach additional sheet)

8. How has the destruction of the environment in Wote affected the following :(You can attach additional sheet)

i. The family \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ii. Education \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

iii. Agricultural productivity \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

iv. The church \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. (a) Do you think protecting and caring for the environment should be a concern for the church?

Yes ☐

No ☐

(b) Give reasons for your answer? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. (a) How active is your local church on matters concerning conservation of the environment? (Tick one)

a) Very active ☐

b) Active ☐

c) Not active ☐

(b) How often does your local pastor/priest preach about environmental issues in one year?

a) More often ☐

b) Often ☐

c) Rarely ☐

d) Not at all ☐

11. a) Do you think the Kamba traditional way of life advocated for environmental conservation? YES ☐

NO ☐

(b) How well do you understand the Kamba traditional ways of life relating to environment?

a) Very much ☐

b) Much ☐

c) Little ☐

(c) Name some of the beliefs, behaviours and practices of the traditional Kamba community which seemed to protect and conserve their natural environment.

---



(d) Which among the above mentioned beliefs, behaviours and practices are used in

Wote today? \_\_\_\_\_

12. (a) What projects /initiatives has the Catholic Church in Wote started?

1.

4.

2.

5.

3.

6.

(b) How do the above projects help in protecting and conserving the environment?

13. What other measures do you think the church can take in order to help in environmental reconstruction in Wote? \_\_\_\_\_

14. What factors in your opinion hinder the church from getting involved in environmental issues? \_\_\_\_\_

15. a) Which other projects / initiatives have been established in Wote by other institutions/ organizations/ churches?

b) In your opinion do these projects/ initiatives assist in preventing environmental destruction in the area? How?

16. a).As an individual and a resident of Wote area, what measures have you taken or can you take to help protect the environment? \_\_\_\_\_

b) In your opinion, what measures can the residents of Wote collectively take to prevent environmental destruction?

## Appendix 2: Sample of the Interview Schedule

### Introduction

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help in the research on the role of the church in environmental conservation. The study aims at exploring what the church has done, and, or what the church can do in the fight against environmental destruction in Wote.

1. Personal information:

a. Name

b. Gender

☐ M☐ F

c. Denomination

d. Profession

e. Level of education

f. Age (Tick were appropriate)

20 – 30	31 – 40	41 – 49	50 and above
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2. a) What do you understand by the term, natural environment?

b) Has the environment been taken care of in Wote area?

Yes ☐

No ☐

3. How would you classify the state of environment in Wote?

Very good ☐

Good ☐

Very poor ☐

Poor ☐

4. In which ways has the environment been destroyed?

(a) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) \_\_\_\_\_

(c) \_\_\_\_\_

(d) \_\_\_\_\_

5. According to you what would you consider to be the main causes of environmental destruction in Wote? (List)

6. Who in your opinion seem to be the main destroyers of the environment in Wote and in which ways?

a) The youth

b) Men

c) Women

d) Children

7. (a) In your opinion which segment of the society is highly affected by the environmental destruction in Wote? (Tick one)

i) The youth ☐

ii) Men ☐

iii) Women ☐

iv) children ☐

(b) Give reasons for your answer. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. How has the destruction of the environment in Wote affected the following:

i. The family

ii. Education

iii. Agricultural productivity

iv. The church

9. (a) Do you think protecting and caring for the environment should be a concern for the church?

Yes ☐

No ☐

(b) Give reasons for your answer?

10. a) Do you think the Kamba traditional way of life advocated for environmental conservation?

(b) How well do you understand the Kamba traditional ways of life (culture) relating to environment?

a) Very much ☐

b) Much ☐

c) Little ☐

(c) Name some of the traditional beliefs, behaviours and practices of the traditional

Kamba community that helped to protect and conserve the environment.

(d) Which among the above mentioned beliefs, behaviours and practices are used in

Wote today?

11. In your opinion how can the church assist the local residents of Wote to effectively utilize their Kamba culture to achieve environmental stability?

12. (a) What projects /initiatives has the Catholic Church in Wote started?

(b) How do the above projects help in protecting and conserving the environment?

13. What other measures do you think the church can take in order to help in environmental reconstruction in Wote?

14. What factors in your opinion hinder the church from getting involved in environmental issues?

15. As a religious leader/civil servant, what are the future plans for the church /ministry etc in regards to the ecological crisis in Wote?

### Appendix 3: List of Respondents

Name	Date
1. Mr. Muthama Muteti	21 <sup>st</sup> May 2009
2. Mr. Musau	21 <sup>st</sup> May 2009
3. Mrs. Irene Mbuvi	22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2009
4. Mr. Mwanthi	28 <sup>th</sup> May 2009
5. Mr. Mwaura	28 <sup>th</sup> May 2009
6. Mrs. Rose Mary	28 <sup>th</sup> May 2009
7. Bernard Mutisya Kisingili	28 <sup>th</sup> May 2009
8. Mr. Kimeu Muteti	6 <sup>th</sup> March 2009
9. Mr. Mutiso Wambua	28 <sup>th</sup> May 2009
10. Mzee Kimondo	6 <sup>th</sup> March 2009
11. Mr. Mutuse Malinda	30 <sup>th</sup> May 2009
12. Mr. Musyoka Malieta	29 <sup>th</sup> May 2009
13. Victor Muia	30 <sup>th</sup> May 2009
14. Mr. Musyoka	30 <sup>th</sup> May 2009
15. Mr. Eric	3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2009
16. Kithuka Mbiti	4 <sup>th</sup> June 2009
17. Rose Muthiani	
18. Fr. Dominic Mulinge	
19. Fr. Makewa	
20. Mr. Kyende	

**Appendix 4: Wote Parish Outstations.**

- |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. UNOA         | 22. MAVINDINI     |
| 2. KITHONI      | 23. MATHANGATHINI |
| 3. MULTIPURPOSE | 24. KITHAATHAINI  |
| 4. NTHANGU      | 25. KATITHI       |
| 5. MWAANI       | 26. KANYONGA      |
| 6. ST. JUDE     | 27. Ivinga NZIA   |
| 7. KIATINE      | 28. MIANGENI      |
| 8. NGUTWA       | 29. MBIMBINI      |
| 9. MUMBUNI      | 30. KAKO          |
| 10. MALIVANI    | 31. KIUUKUNI      |
| 11. KITHIANI    | 32. MITUVU        |
| 12. KIUANI      | 33. IVIANI'       |
| 13. KWAMUSUVA   |                   |
| 14. KASALANI    |                   |
| 15. KASEVE      |                   |
| 16. SENDA       |                   |
| 17. KAMBI       |                   |
| 18. KYEMOLE     |                   |
| 19. KITONYONI   |                   |
| 20. KANGONDI    |                   |
| 21. KIKUMINI    |                   |

*Source: Wote Parish Headquarters.*

**Appendix 5: Some plates taken from Wote.**



**The above two slates shows some residents of Wote harvesting sand and stones at Kaiti River.**







**The above three slates shows parts of kwalui shrine**



**Part of Nzeuni hill that has been deforested and depleted**



**Part of Nthangu hills that has been depleted.**

**The below two plates illustrate some of the activities of the communities of Hope in Wote**

