

Engagement of the Youth by Caritas Organisations in Kenya .

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My “Young Caritas” experience...



- My 6 Years experience working at the Catholic Diocese of Maralal within the ASAL context came with an element of Job satisfaction because we fulfil our duty as Christians “to love one another that our Joy may be complete” (John 15:11).
- At the National office and I have been engaged in discussions on the youth at different levels through the National CSO coalition, Caritas Africa, SIGNIS Africa and Caritas Internationalis. With every new debate I see the strength of the Catholic Church in its interventions...
- Throughout my **7 years experience** I realize that the Catholic Church provided a unique opportunity for me as a young person to demonstrate the love of Christ by serving communities in need through simple acts such as Increasing access to basic services such as Water , Education and knowing that you made a difference in the life of someone is the ultimate reward for the work we do. (The Love of Christ urges us on)

Problems faced by the Youth in Kenya...

Young people have to keep adjusting in a rapidly changing world as they face the following problems:

- **Poverty and unemployment** (leads to drug and alcohol use, vandalism and premature death)
- **Ill Health** – poor access to affordable health care
- **Harmful cultural practices-FGM**, early marriages, forced marriages.
- **Corruption and poor governance.**
- **Social Networking addiction...**
- **Youth Radicalization**
- **Youth , Politics and ethnic appeals**
- **Kenya Income inequality/ tax injustice and illicit financial flows**
- **Food Insecurity:** Inadequate investment in sustainable agriculture by governments
- **Intra/ Inter ethnic violence**
- **Access to Financing:** to support economic opportunities and investments, (World Bank)
- **Confusion and ambiguity regarding morality issues** , a thin line between “enjoying your youth and destroying your life”
- **Youth are “topics”, “side events”** they don’t have a seat at the table... leadership,

Youth unemployment in Kenya... a ticking time bomb...

- Age 15-34 constitutes a majority of the Kenyan Labour Force. As at October 2018, **1,220,000** million Kenyans were unemployed. (Youth unemployment rate in Kenya is at 11.4%)
- World bank reports indicate that Kenya has to create 900,000 Jobs annually between 2015 and 2025 to absorb the number of youth joining the Market each year.
- Within the African context a young person will work **long hours** under **insecure working arrangements**, characterized by low productivity and **meager earnings**. A typical 18 year old female in rural areas faces challenges such as **early marriage** and **FGM**

- *My question is are we ready, as Caritas, to accept the responsibility of managing the lives and future of our young people in the Church?*



Opportunities for the youth in Caritas



- **Promoting access to Finance and Income Generating Activities** through forming and training of SILC/ VSLA groups and linking them to service providers and input suppliers
- **Youth empowerment forums** for catechesis and experience sharing
- **Capacity Building Programmes** on thematic issues such as advocacy, climate change, food security.
- **Consultancy opportunities** for young professionals.
- **Internship programmes** for College/ University Students provide opportunities for on the Job Learning
- **Short-term contracts** for engagements in activities such as research.

Opportunities for the youth

- **Employment opportunities in Caritas** – Youth get involved in programme work and serve communities through Caritas.
- **Participation and Dialogue** in Advocacy platforms, engagement with government and civil society leaders.
- **Participation in events** such as the “world youth day” , church campaigns eg. Environmental campaign in Kenya.



Importance of Youth Involvement in Caritas Work ...



- **Promotion of Inter-generational work:** Young people are equipped to interact and inform decision making on Thematic Issues.
- **Involvement In Government Consultations:** youth should not just be a topic , they should also make decisions in High-Level Panels.
- **Creation of economic opportunities to create employment** and counter harmful sources of income such as drug abuse etc.
- **Youth Evangelization** through social Development programmes using different forms of media such as Radio, Social Media. (Image: staff of Radio Mchungaji 94.5 fm- Kenya)
- **Participation in Civil Society:** engaging the youth in in political, development and economic processes creates effective policy and builds a generation of empowered citizens.
- **Accountability:** Empowered Youth are able to ask for accountability from their leaders. Also, youth issues are taken into consideration I development processes.

Next Steps...



- Work closely with the Commission for Lay and Apostolate **Establish a brand of young Caritas** in Kenya , in each Diocese.
- **Brand involves-** Design of a Logo, that will be used in each Diocese . T-shirts, Branding and Visibility- Each Diocese to allocate funds for these.
- **Develop a TOR for young Caritas** – Key activities would be fundraising through Income Generating activities, Marking of Caritas Day, Caritas Week and other international days.
- **Reserve a seat for the youth in your Caritas Board.** Youth deserve a seat at the table. We cannot discuss youth issues in the absence of youth. Let us engage them in the conversation. Have a youth representative in the Metropolitan Executive committee.
- **Budget for a stipend** for young interns in your Dioceses.
- **Give Leadership opportunities** to young people in your Dioceses. We need to entrust young people with responsibilities Today!
- Finally, let us create employment opportunities for the Youth!

Let us provide guidance to young people

As a Church, may we never fail to weep before these tragedies of our young. May we never become inured to them, for anyone incapable of tears cannot be a mother. We want to weep so that society itself can be more of a mother, so that in place of killing it can learn to give birth, to become a promise of life. We weep when we think of all those young people who have already lost their lives due to poverty and violence, and we ask society to learn to be a caring mother. None of this pain goes away; it stays with us, because the harsh reality can no longer be concealed. The worst thing we can do is adopt that worldly spirit whose solution is simply to anaesthetize young people with other messages, with other distractions, with trivial pursuits.

(75)

Conclusion...

At times, the hurt felt by some young people is heart-rending, a pain too deep for words. They can only tell God how much they are suffering, and how hard it is for them to keep going, since they no longer believe in anyone. Yet in that sorrowful plea, the words of Jesus make themselves heard: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (*Mt 5:4*). Some young men and women were able to move forward because they heard that divine promise. May all young people who are suffering feel the closeness of a Christian community that can reflect those words by its actions, its embrace and its concrete help. (77)