

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN TANZANIA

Consultation of Partner Churches on the Contribution of the Church towards a Just Distribution of Resources, Breklum, Germany 12-20 September, 2015

Dear Director of the Centre of Mission and Ecumenism. Dear Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted and humbled to be part of this consultation on "economic justice." I am happy for the existing partnership between our churches based on the values of reciprocity and mutual understanding. This allows us to listen and talk to and with each other.

I cannot speak for the big Europe, I say big Europe because of its economy and rich culture. I will share my views regarding this topic based on my experience of Africa. Africa and Tanzania in particular passes through a difficult time of transition. Global changes have changed Africa.

In the first place it is good to acknowledge that Africa as a continent has always been connected with other continents. Africa and this is biblically verifiable, has connected and has been a place for immigrants for many centuries. Its hospitable values and humanity has made the region a home to different cultures and religion. This is a positive history of Africa and Tanzania in particular.

However, Africa has suffered the cost of its hospitality. Colonialism has left Africa with indelible marks of material and social poverty. Cold war left Africa into rampant conflicts and economic dependence. The today's free market systems have created economic immorality and injustice. Despite many programmes and projects of development, Africa is still underdeveloped.

I will therefore take you aboard and try to bring into reflection features that make Africa and Tanzania specifically so poor and hence not making tangible progress in fighting against poverty and economic injustice.

Education is a foundation of knowledge and skills. It is a transmission of knowledge to master life in its totality. This begins with knowledge of good and evil in the creation story, the giving of the commandments and the discipleship of Jesus of Nazareth. Based on these foundations, the church has always been in the forefront to offer education.

In Tanzania churches involved with education since their inception in the end of 19th and early 20th century. Wherever a church centre was established, social services such as schools, health stations, and vocational centres were built. The objectives of educational trainings were linked to the missionary objectives to enabling people read, preach and understand and reflect on the Word of God.

Moreover vocational training was linked to the building of missionary centres and services such as health centres which were strategically related to mission. Thus educational objectives were not directly related to the main agenda of economic development, but to evangelism. Again mission centres had little room to play since at this time economic systems were controlled by German and British settlers.

When Tanzania and other African countries got independence in 1950s and 1960s they inherited systems of education that were meant to service settlement and not to develop people for self-reliance. For changes of educational policies for self-reliance that took place in 1960s and 1970s were only aimed at promoting self-reliance of the country. Collective economy policies were promoted against private entrepreneurships. Vocational training was geared to promote agricultural production in *ujamaa* farms, the Kibbutz-model of Israel and Chinese socialism. This was a good policy that promoted sharing of resources. However, it had an advantage of suppressing individual gifts to maximize efficiency in learning and production. Christianity wants promotion of gifts for sharing (1 Corinthians).

Another challenge was that dependence in agricultural products such as sisal, coffee, pyrethrum, etc, made countries in Africa vulnerable to controlled prices at the world market and African countries and Tanzania included made huge losses. Cooperatives were not able to pay farmers. Mistrust and discontent has loomed Africa. Today sensitizing people to mobilise their resources through joint venture is so difficult because of the dark past.

The World Bank, IMF, and World Trade Organizations intended to promote development in the world. However these institutions have been seen as imposing difficult conditions and punish developing countries. According to these monetary institutions economies of African countries were poor. They had registered severe debts. They became completely bankrupt. As a result, these countries were required to undergo political reform and economic restructuring. They were required to promote private investments. Policies were prepared by these institutions, and these countries were forced to accept in order to have credits.

Today Africa talks the language of attracting investors. They need to make favourable conditions for investment. They need to reduce taxes imposed to big investors. They need to announce reasonable tax grace periods. Tax grace periods have allowed transnational investors to enjoy tax evasions. This has left majority of its people poor, and investors cheaply robbed of the land of the people they are attached.

Again in Africa modern social systems created social disruption. Commercialized values of goods and services resulted into modern market systems. Everything now has been given its value and corruption is penetrating every social and economic sector. Few people who have political mandates and rich investors control development for their own interests. Despite indicators of economic growth, wealth

is not proportionally distributed to the whole population - those who have capital gets more, and opportunities for the poor are extremely limited.

It is difficult to build democracy in Africa with such oppressive institutions and corruptive social systems. People simply do not trust each other. There is a lot of discontent among communities and against policies of the states. When people struggle to build strong democratic structures they are heavily suppressed, sometimes through police violent interventions in the name of the rule of law.

This means that is a challenge we have to solve together as partners. The problems are interconnected. While Western countries want Africa to promote democratic institutions, they however have a blind spot on the economic injustices promoted by the free market economy systems which are not easily seen by our Western partners. You have transnational companies globally playing, and these companies go and promise gifts of development to local national gatekeepers. The kind of reciprocity in existence actually benefits companies, because at the end of the day companies want to make maximum profits to be registered in the indices of the world market at the expense of the majority who have no capital.

It is high time that as international community we join hands to advocate for just systems of economy. We can do this through initiation of advocacy forums to sensitize our local communities and global partners to realize the opportunities and challenges of economic systems. We need to advocate against investments that involve only political dynasties in the name of contract confidentialities whereby developing countries are not able to involve people to discuss their fates so that the economic joint ventures benefit all parties.

As developed countries you need to change the mindset of being reactive to different calamities caused by economic injustices to a new paradigm of aggressively supporting educational programmes that will support innovative and creative activities in industrial entrepreneurships, vocational training in different industrial and service sectors, polytechnic and higher learning institutions so as to bridge academic and professional initiatives for creation of employments.

We need as partners to find ways to support small scale entrepreneurships through training and seed funds for affordable credits so that people at the grassroots level may create small businesses that sustain their livelihoods. Churches have established banks and universities. Although these might not be sounding well in your ears, we believe that these might also be centres of action for empowering people with affordable credits. We can reach many young people through these local initiatives by granting them seed funds and lobbying funds for these institutions. These funds might be available to young women and men and to women who aspire to run their small scale businesses, being it in agriculture, manufacturing or services. Through these initiatives we might be contributing to the problem of unequal distribution of resources.

I hope I have highlighted areas of concern. I am also happy to learn from other inputs related to these problems and hope for a fruitful discussion. I am optimistic, together in partnership we can join hands for action.

Bishop Dr Alex Gehaz Malasusa
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