

ECONOMIC FACTORS HINDERING EVANGELISM IN THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN TANZANIA - IRINGA DIOCESE

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to find out the factors hindering evangelism in the Western District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania-Iringa Diocese. Specifically, the study aimed to examine the economic factors hindering evangelism in the study area. The study was done at Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga Congregations. The study adopted a case study research design in which a qualitative research approach was used. Interviews were used to collect qualitative data from 90 key informants. The data from the field was prepared, organized, transcribed and reviewed. The study found that, evangelism is hindered by economic factors such as insufficient funds dedicated for evangelism programmes and activities, absence of reliable transport for evangelism work, inadequate and poor church buildings, meagre salaries for ministers and other church workers, unwillingness of the pastors to work at the study area, poor giving of Christians, lack of musical instruments for evangelism work, absence of houses for evangelists to live in, and lack of enough trained ministers caused by insufficient funds. The study recommends that, despite the evangelism which is done in the study area, the Church needs to engage in building better Church buildings, increase payment for church ministers, buy musical instruments and to provide transport facilities to the church ministers to improve worship conditions in the study area. The study also recommends that the Church need to increase the financial capacity by teaching Christians the education of giving tithe to the Church to increase the economy of the Church. Not only that, but the Church needs to engage in projects like tree planting and other productive projects to increase the economy of the Church.

Key Words: *Evangelism, Lutheran Church, Diocese*

1.0 Introduction

This article deals with the identification of the economic factors hindering evangelism in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania Western District - Iringa Diocese.

1.1. Background of the Study

Evangelism means to announce news or to preach the gospel (Marshall, 1996, p. 347). Evangelism may be defined as the dimension and activity of the Church mission; those dimensions include deliverance from slavery to the world and its power, embracing Christ as Savior and Lord, becoming a living member of his community (Bosch, 1991, p.409-420). Evangelism as part of God's mission, involves the salvatory plan for all humanity, it is also an act of mediating the Good News in Christ, which transforms life and sets us free" (ibid, 1992, p. 412). Evangelism is essential and the core of the mission, of which the Church has been called to participate. Such participation implies being an instrument of God's mission in bringing Good News to all people (Tuttle, 2010, p. 399).

Evangelism is very important work in the Church, it must be done with high effort, evangelism is not only done in Tanzania it is done worldwide. Regarding the followers of Jesus and their expansion Sunquist (2013, p.27)) states the following:

The followers of Jesus had a sense of mission and identity with Jesus, they were a marginal group of Jewish outsiders speaking only Aramaic or Greek. Slowly the heartbeat of Jesus's mission for all nations and languages pulsated in the body of Christ, crossing cultural and imperial barriers in Africa, Asia, and Europe, China to Spain and from Scotland to Ethiopia.

The explanation above shows how evangelism was taken as an important aspect to be done by Jesus followers worldwide. Evangelism has been done in all the world where Africa and Tanzania are part of the world.

2.0 Description of the study area and methodology

Study area is an area where the research is going to be conducted while methodology is a method that will be used in doing the study.

2.1 Description of the study area

Iringa Region is found in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania. This region borders the dry belt of central Tanzania, it is bordered by Njombe Region to the north and south, Dodoma and Singida regions to the north, Mbeya Region to the west, and Morogoro Region to the east. The word

Iringa is derived from Kihehe language of the dominant local tribe, the Wahehe. The word *Lilinga*, means 'fortress'. Iringa, as it is seen today, was built around 1890 by the German Army as a fortress town to use as a base to put down the Hehe uprising led by Chief Mkwawa. Iringa Region is in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania. This region borders the dry belt of central Tanzania in the north. Iringa Region rolls out between latitudes $7^{\circ} 05' 32''$ and 12° south and longitude $33^{\circ} 47' 32''$ to 36° east of Meridian. (Iringa Region Commissioner's Office, 2007).

The study was carried out in Western District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania Iringa Diocese which has twenty-one congregations. The study was conducted only in three congregations namely Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga. These congregations are highly earmarked by the Western District as areas of Evangelism. The area has 15,200 population but it has only 2,113 Christians, and 13,087 are not Christians. The area has also many backsliders; therefore, evangelism is highly needed in these Congregations. (Pawaga Ward Office, 2017).

2.2 Study Methodology

This study used case study design; the study also employed both primary and secondary data source to collect data. Ninety People were interviewed, those people included: church elders, evangelists, pastors, and Christians. The secondary data were collected from documentary reviews; this was obtained from journals, books, research reports and meeting proceedings. In this study, the researcher used interviews; interviews were used for the purpose of asking more clarification and emphasis by asking the respondents more questions. This research also used secondary data which were collected from both published and unpublished materials such as dissertations, books, articles, etc.

3.0. Results and discussions

The data presented will address the objective which is to identify the economic factors hindering evangelism.

3.1 The economic factors hindering evangelism

The objective asked the respondents regarding the economic factors that affect evangelism to be conducted at Kinyika, Pawaga and Kanani congregations of Western Church District of the

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania-Iringa Diocese. The questions were extremely important for it was thought that the ministry of the church cannot effectively be administered if the church is economically unstable. This is particularly so for mission and evangelism activities that require to make decisive programmes and resources for visitations to focus areas of evangelism. All respondents were asked to describe the factors hindering evangelism in these three congregations. The qualitative response to the question is coded and tabulated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The economic factors hindering evangelism

F a c t o r s d e s c r i b e d	Count
Inadequate and poor church buildings	9 0
Meagre salaries for ministers and other church workers	8 7
Unwillingness of the pastors to work at the study area	5 1
P o o r g i v i n g o f C h r i s t i a n	6 4
Absence of reliable transport for evangelism work	8 7
Lack of musical instruments for evangelism work	4 5
A b s e n c e o f h o u s e s f o r e v a n g e l i s t s	8 0
Insufficient funds dedicated for evangelism programmes and activities	5 7

Multiple response

Source: Field data (2021)

The results of the study show that anonymously, ninety respondents believed that inadequate and poor church building detract people from not only coming to church for worship services but also for positive response to evangelism. It must be understood that evangelism activities are not only done through house to house or personal evangelism, radio programmes, or TV broadcast, or open-air meetings, but also through worship services. A church built in bad shape is unlikely to attract people to join the church. The kind of the building tells a lot who the adherents are. But again, absence of churches in some missionary areas affects missionary work of evangelism. Figures 1 and 2 below weretaken from the study area are good evidences.



Figure 1: Church building used for Sunday services and other church ministries

It is from this background of the church buildings of bad shape that one respondent contents that:

Having church buildings that are not inviting for Christians or worn out buildings, is a very big problem in our area. This causes new converts to backslide. The situation is even worse in areas where we have no church buildings dedicated for church ministries. This problem of lacking Church buildings causes some converts to neglect coming for worship services because they feel shy to worship under the shade of the tree as though they are traditionalists. The situation becomes intolerable during the rainy season. Some of the churches which are grass-roofed make water leak during rainfall and this is so even for worship services conducted under trials. In such a scenario, no serious person can respond positively to evangelism knowing that at the end he/she will be worshipping in such churches as though God is poor.

It was also reported by one of the pastors that some of the Christians at Pawaga, Kanani and Kinyika are public servants, such as teachers, nurses, drivers, and other governmental and non-governmental institutions leaders. These people feel uncomfortable to attend worship services or any other church organized activity in the Church building with leaking roofs, brick seats, dusty

ground, and so on when their offices and houses are better off. The following photograph is worth showing here.



Figure 2: Wood and grass-built church for worship and other church activities

What can be deduced from the findings is that the Evangelical Lutheran Church has not done much in rural areas as far as evangelism is concerned. Planting churches through evangelism requires strategic plans of housing converts in church buildings that are accommodating Christians of all types. Absence of dedicated churches and poorly built churches signals to converts that the church is not serious with its ministries or rather that their condition is equated with the type of the church built or chosen tree to conduct services.

The results further demonstrate that eighty seven out of ninety respondents were of the view that meager salaries for church ministers and other workers working at Kinyika, Pawaga and Kanani and the corresponding parishes deter evangelism to be effectively conducted. Among fifteen evangelists, twelve of them responded that meager salaries for church ministers and other church workers is among the factors hindering evangelism. One of the respondents from the category of the evangelists pointed out that:

Pastors, evangelists, and other leaders of the church in these congregations have the social, economic and educational needs as do other people. We need food, clothing, housing, and education for our relatives. We send students to schools like other people do. We go to the same markets as other people do. Depriving us from reasonable salaries is discouraging us from provision of quality services to the congregants.

The implication of the findings is that pastors and evangelists, even though called by God to be diligent and readily available for ministerial duties, their work is compromised by meager salaries they get. Most of them may engage their full time in agricultural or other businesses that would guarantee generation of sure income to sustain their families. If this continues to happen, evangelism certainly suffers. At Kinyika, Pawaga and Kanani, this situation occurs because the congregations' income is very low. According to the Congregations report of May 2021, the total offering for Kanani was TZS 408,200/=, Kinyika was 175,750/= and Pawaga was 303,550/=. According to Iringa Diocesan regulation 48% of the total collection from the congregation must be sent to the Diocesan Head Office and 2% of the total collection has to be sent to the ELCT headquarters. This means 50% of the total congregation collection must be sent to the head office of Iringa Diocese and the ELCT headquarters. Forty-eight percent (48%) which is taken by the Diocese head office is used to pay pastors' salaries and other expenses, 10% is taken by the District Church Office. This means the congregation remains with only 40% of which according to Iringa Diocese regulation, 20% must be used for paying the evangelists and other congregation workers. The remaining 20% must be used for another congregation office sundry expenses.

The finding revealed that as of May, 2021 the salaries disbursed for evangelists were as follows: Kinyika 3,000/=, Pawaga 25,000/= and Kanani 16,500/=. The payments reflected the monthly offering for each congregation. This implies that salaries are in accordance to the percentage remaining after the head office, district, congregation sundry expenses, and the ELCT got their portion.

It is obvious from the data about salaries that there is no fair salary disbursement. Salaries are terribly low in that they cannot help even sustaining a single person for a day. In this unmotivated environment, certainly for evangelists to actively engage in evangelism work is questionable.

The results of the study further indicate that fifty-one respondents out of ninety were of the view that one of the factors hindering evangelism is unwillingness of pastors to work at the study area

due to economic status of the congregations. Among thirty Christians, twenty-five Christians were of this opinion. Furthermore, among five diocesan officials, all believed the unwillingness of pastors to work at the study area due to economic status of the congregation is a barrier to evangelism. Though this reason does seem a social cultural factor, but the respondents view the attitude of such pastors as resulting from the economic status of the congregations which affects their monthly income. Pastor residing in urban areas will certainly be reluctant to be allocated to congregations such as Kinyika, Kanani and Pawaga which are in a typical rural environment where good health facilities for their families, state of the art schools to send their children, and other social facilities pertinent to their lives are lacking. To such pastors sending them to rural areas would mean punishing them. Regarding this, one of the respondent states:

Ministers who have been working in Pawaga, Kinyika and Kanani are not residents of these congregations. They are coming far from their working places. Ministers after being posted by the Iringa Diocese to work in Pawaga, Kinyika and Kanani, they feel like being punished. This is because they have been allocated to at a remote area. Christianity in such areas is not well practiced due to traditional religion. Additionally, these congregations have low income which makes ministers not well paid to sustain their lives. This difficult situation makes ministers working in these congregations feel uncomfortable to work effectively. The result of the attitude and feelings of some pastors contributes to poor performance in terms of evangelization and hence making evangelism work to be less fruitful.

The findings disclose that evangelism work needs committed workers, industrious spiritual people, and capable of working in any context, be it rural, semi-urban or urban areas. After all, the Great Command of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 does not specify a location for evangelism but rather to the whole world that is, any context where people live. The command has a promise of the presence of the Lord in the evangelism work that will not only lead the ministers but also provide them with whatever they need.

The data indicate that poor financial support of Christians in the study area affects church evangelism. Among ninety respondents, sixty-four reported that Christians in the three congregations support the churches poorly. Among ten pastors, nine of them reported that poor support is among the factors hindering evangelism. One of the respondents stated:

The economic status of some Christians at Pawaga, Kanani and Kinyika is good. They are rice farmers. From their production, they may get more than 200 bags of rice per year which could generate income sure income. These Christians give only about two kilograms of rice to the church. Some are pastoralists who have

more than 80 cows and 60 goats. However, during Sunday service they give only TZS 200 to TZS 500 each Sunday. Such giving cannot help the church to implement missionary activities through evangelism programs.

There is no church that does its ministry without money. Money is required for salaries, sacraments, evangelism, office facilities and construction purposes. Poor support on the part of Christians means making the church fail to meet its midterm and long-term plans that require funds for human and physical resources. In such contexts where funds are limited due to poor Christian support, this situation has the implication that the good news of Jesus Christ is unlikely to be propagated and thus it leads to difficulty in getting people to be converted to Christianity.

Of ninety respondents who gave their opinions regarding the factors that hinder evangelism at Kinyika, Kanani and Pawaga, eighty seven were of the view that absence of reliable transport for evangelism workers impedes evangelism in the area. Among fifteen evangelists, fourteen of them reported this problem. In addition, all five Diocesan Head Office respondents reported that the issue of transport is among the factors hindering evangelism. A respondent from Iringa Diocese Head Office had this to say:

Transport is very important to facilitate the evangelism work in Pawaga, Kinyika and Kanani. For a longtime pastor working in Pawaga, Kinyika and Kanani had no transport. In the year 2020 Iringa Diocese made a great effort to get of getting the motorcycle for these congregations and they succeeded. Iringa Diocese got the motorcycle for pastors leading these congregations from Begakwa Bega (friends of Iringa Diocese from America). This means since 1990's, they were walking on foot for more than 20 kilometers from the main station of the congregation to its church streets. However, the evangelists are still not having transport for evangelism facilitation. In this way, it is difficult to expect evangelism to be more practical.

In principle, evangelists are the ones who do a major work of evangelism in their respective areas. But due to the lack of transport, their work cannot yield good results. One of the respondents described that:

Evangelists need transport which will help them to reach to their working places. For example, from the main station of Kanani congregation to Mgega Church Street it is 9 kilometers. Mgega parish lacks the evangelist house, therefore, the evangelist stays at Kanani main station and goes 9 kilometers on foot to Mgega Parish to lead the worship and other activities of the church street. This situation of walking for 9 kilometers makes the evangelist to reach at Mgega tired and it is difficult for the evangelism to be effective.

The findings confirms that evangelism in such a situation will certainly be ineffective. The church requires among other things, congregations and respective parishes, have in place the morning

devotion, counseling services, resolving Christians conflicts, house to house visitation, Sunday services, confirmation classes, Sunday school instructions, meetings and other activities. Effectiveness of the work of an evangelist who walks nine kilometers from home to the station is disputable. It is postulated that due to long distance walking, the evangelist may just go to his work station just once or twice a week. It follows that all activities vested onto him/her will not be accomplished for just two days per week. But again, other activities like morning devotion can be divorced. The implication will certainly be that the work of evangelism which is a core function of the church will either be divorced or be done slightly.

The results of the study also depicted that those forty-five respondents out of ninety respondents were of the view that evangelism is hampered by lack of musical instruments at these congregations. Twenty-five among thirty Christians reported this problem. Musical instruments are tools that when used insight and motivate people to come for worship or public gospel proclamation (open air gospel meetings). Music, when well played, attracts both Christians and non-Christians in a similar way. In this case, music is an effective tool to call people to participate in the evangelism events organized by the church.

This result infers that not all respondents consider music as important in the evangelization process. However, its presence adds value to the evangelism work. Music is also critical in worship services. Music makes worship live and inviting. Both youth and adults African culture music has a crucial role in making them active participants in any organized event. Church music also calls Christians to worship and make them love worship services that are active. One respondent commented that:

The congregations lack musical instruments because they lack money to buy those instruments. Some converted people backslide because they find the worship is too boring compared to the worships of other denominations which are active because of having music played using musical instruments. The Anglicans and Roman Catholics dominant Christian denominations at Pawaga, Kinyika and Kanani, have and use musical instruments which motivates Christians to be interested with their worship.

Despite the importance of such musical tools for evangelism and church worship, Kinyika, Kanani and Pawaga congregations cannot afford to buy such essential facilities for

enhancement of evangelism. The problem is exacerbated by lack of funds that could help procure the instruments.

The observation shows that eighty out of ninety respondents said that the absence of houses for evangelists to live in contribute to stagnation or rather slow progression of evangelism in the area. Among fifteen evangelists, all the fifteen evangelists who were among the respondents responded that absence of houses for evangelists to live in hinder evangelism. As it was discussed earlier, leapfrogging evangelism cannot be realized when the evangelists live far away from their working stations. Evidences from the respondents show that normally evangelists go to their work stations once per week to lead worship services and then return to the main station of the congregations where they reside. Failure on the part of the church to build houses for evangelists in the parishes is attributed to lack of funds. In such scenarios it is not possible for evangelism work to be assiduously administered.

The final economic factor hindering evangelism was insufficient funds for evangelism programs and activities. Out of ninety respondents, fifty-seven held that insufficient funds are a barrier for evangelism programs and activities to be carried on at the study area. Among ten pastors who were among the respondents, all of them responded that, insufficient funds are among the problems hindering evangelism. The interview indicates that the Diocese in consonance with the church district and congregations organize visitation programs for evangelism. Specific people are called for evangelism work in all three congregations. In other instances, the congregations do organize the evangelism campaign for their areas. One trip to facilitate evangelism in the area takes three to four days only because of little funds apportioned for the work. One Respondent emprises that:

To reach every area of these focus areas for evangelism, spending two weeks would be appropriate. The two weeks would be dedicated for evangelism campaigns and teaching for new converts to mature in faith. Financial constraints hinder such plans.

Economic stability of the church is critically important for its activities to prosper. The overarching concern here is the absence or dwindling budget for evangelism work in the study area. Poor economic resources for the church means failure to accomplish God's call to

evangelism. The findings are in line with the literature reviewed which views church financial downturn as major constraints for effective evangelism (Oh, 2009; Heisey, 2013; Ma, 2014; Onongha, 2019). This can be illustrated with the saying that goes, *money is everything*. Lack or absence of funds in the church contributes to poor salaries of ministers which ultimately demoralize them to do their work effectively and efficiently. Lack or absence of money means weak realization of evangelism programs and activities. Without fund, the church cannot procure musical instruments for evangelism work and the houses for evangelists cannot be built. It is a fact that areas where there is no guaranteed income, pastors and evangelists will not be willing to be allocated in those areas by the church. This is so because family life to be sustained requires among other things, funds. In Tanzanian context, some of the areas cannot be easily reached unless you have transport, such as car or motorcycle. The church with nothing swims into its hand is incapable of facilitating purchase of motor vehicles for evangelism purposes to its ministers.

The church should strive to be self-reliant and self-supporting. This would help to successfully implement its short and long-term plans. This would also make the activities and programs of the church sustainable. Dependence on donors such as those that provide motorcycles for pastors is good, but it has the danger of depriving the church of critically using the resources available for income generating activities to support the current foreseeable plans for the growth of the church.

4.1. Conclusion

From the study findings, it can be concluded that lack of church buildings, little payments of ministers, lack of transport, lack of musical instruments, lack of houses for evangelists and lack of enough funds as identified are economic factors hindering evangelism in Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga Congregations of Iringa Diocese.

According to the findings, pastors and evangelists working in Kanani, kinyika and Pawaga Congregations have the idea that evangelism in Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga is not effective because they are not cared for with enough salaries, transport and houses to live in. On the other side, Diocesan officials have the opinion that evangelism is not effective in Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga Congregations because ministers working in these Congregations are not working hard.

Elders and lay Christians of Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga congregations have the idea that evangelism in Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga is not effective because ministers engage much in their work to get basic needs. Furthermore, lay Christians and Church elders have the opinion that the work of evangelism in Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga is not effective because there is a lack of indigenous ministers who know the environment well and identify how to get the people to join Christianity.

4.2. Recommendations

The researcher recommends that the church has to find the means of raising funds to enable the church to build the church for worship. It is good if people will have a comfortable place to worship God. The Church needs to find a way of making sure buildings are available for people to worship. The researcher also recommends for the need of raising funds for payment of ministers. Ministers need to be cared for by making sure that they live and get their basic needs. This way will make them hard. Ministers need to be given the transport to make easier to reach the parishes for them. The church needs to buy musical instruments as they are important to make the worship to be active. Moreover, the church needs to build houses for evangelists so that evangelists can live in the parishes and lead the Christians easier. Ministers to stay far from the Christians will not bring good results of evangelism.

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