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**From Dependency to Self-Reliance –
a Case Study in the Slum of Korogocho, Nairobi**

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1. Introduction

1.1. Objective

Every human being has the right to live in dignity and security and must be empowered at least to cover his/her basic needs. In the slums, most people are denied these basic rights. This paper presents examples of men and women who were able to improve their situation, moving from dependency to (relative) self-reliance in the slum of Korogocho.

The factors that lead to urbanization and the mushrooming of slums can be located on the international, the national and the local level. Internationally, unjust trade regulations, the debt burden and the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) are the main reason why underdeveloped countries can't invest in the welfare of their citizens. On the national level in Kenya, high corruption and neglect of the rural areas cause poverty and slum-urbanization. When colonialism was abolished, the color of the rulers changed but not the centralized power structure of the state that keeps the poor away from participating meaningfully in the development of the country.

My research focuses on the local (micro-)level and what can be achieved realistically by the slum dwellers themselves. Under what circumstances is development to more self-reliance possible? What factors prevent development on the local level? These people can't rely on the government or international institutions. To wait until help arrives would mean to perpetuate the situation and to promote passivity and a begging mentality. This paper seeks to explore opportunities for slum dwellers to take action on the grass-root level in spite of a hostile global situation.

1.2. A Christian Approach

My point of view will be a Christian one, inspired by the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church. That means I won't just discuss economic development but in integral relation to human and spiritual growth.

A model for a Christian vision of development is the episode of the crippled beggar who gets healed by Peter and John in the Temple (Acts 3:1-10). "Look at us... I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." The crippled man didn't think that his life situation could ever be changed and got used to

receiving alms. A lot of slum dwellers have adopted the same mentality and have lost hope in a different future. How can we help them to walk by themselves? The churches are called to make people self-reliant – spiritually and materially – instead of perpetuating dependency. Charity and alms as immediate responses to an urgency are appropriate, but the dignity of the person obliges, in the name of Jesus, to intervene for a liberating change. As the examples will show, this change renews the way to look at and to act in life.

1.3. Some Facts about Korogocho

(Information from pastoral workers and personal experience)

In Nairobi, about 60% of the four Million inhabitants live on only 5% of the land. The city has about 200 slums (officially called: informal settlements) whose number and size are growing constantly. The pulling factor is the hope for a better living.

Korogocho is the 4th biggest slum of Nairobi, established in the late 1960s in the north-east of the city next to the city dumping site. About 120,000 inhabitants live illegally on 1.5 km² land (about 250 house units per hectare) that is owned by the government and a private individual. There is almost no infrastructure (lack of proper roads, sanitation, sewers, water, electricity, or green spaces for recreation), and the houses are below minimum standard (mud or cardboard walls and plastic or iron sheet roofs). Half of the population is under 25 years, and the majority of people didn't go to secondary school and don't have a regular job. The average earnings per day are less than 1 US\$.

The hopeless situation leads to alcohol and drug addiction, criminal activities and idleness. Women often have to sell themselves as prostitutes to survive; HIV/AIDS is widespread: according to estimations by health workers, about 1/3 of the people are infected.

The mixture of men and women from every part of the country has created a subculture with its own structures, norms and values. As a consequence, the youth, born in the slums, don't know anymore the cultural background from where their parents came. There even has developed a new slum dialect called 'sheng'.

1.4. Methodology

Since my intention is to present viable steps towards self-reliance, I have searched for successful projects and initiatives in Korogocho that have helped people effectively (6

research sessions). This doesn't overlook the difficulties and failures. Interviews with one priest of the Catholic outstation St. John (the center of the parish is Kariobangi, Nairobi), the church council leader of St. John, the local chief of the settlement, an Italian lay-missionary and with ordinary people analyze realistically the current situation (5 research sessions).

In the literature review, I discuss causes of urbanization, the problem of upgrading slums and the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church as a reflection on human development.

In my conclusion, obstacles to and proposals for development shall be presented and the interrelation between faith, human growth and economic self-reliance examined.

The size of this paper (11 research sessions) doesn't allow portraying all the initiatives by the various organizations and churches that are working in Korogocho. I have limited myself to Catholic initiatives and hope that others may find themselves represented in the struggle for a society where every person lives in dignity.

2. Field Research

2.1. The Meaning of Development for the People in Korogocho

At the beginning of my research, I asked a youth group at St. John and some single mothers what development (Kiswahili: maendeleo) means for them (app.: research no. 1, 28/1/2006). They answered the following:

- To live in security (no rape or theft)
- To be informed and to have a good education
- To have free school education and vocational/technical training
- To have a job and to earn enough money to sustain a family
- To know how to survive the next month, not just the next day
- To have a house with comfortable furniture
- To have a personal toilet and bathroom
- To have good infrastructure (streets, water)
- To have clean water
- To have accessible social institutions and medical treatment
- To have an intact family life: to be married, husband has not run away, husband is no drunkard, husband remains faithful (no mistress)

- To grow physically, economically, emotionally and spiritually
- To develop one's talents

One of the youth commented that often the name 'Korogocho' is so feared that they are seen as criminals and denied a job just for the fact of living here.

2.2. Initiatives Stimulating Self-Reliance

One of the two responsible Comboni Missionaries at the outstation St. John in Korogocho explains that slums are a form of social and economic apartheid (app.: no. 2, 29/1/2006). The government doesn't care, and some years ago the existence of informal settlements were not even recognized. These people simply didn't appear in any census. The missionaries are proposing to legalize the settlement of Korogocho through a communally owned land title that is administered by the nine village committees. Communal ownership would prevent the commercialization of single plots.

The priest explains the concept of the missionaries to walk together at the pace of the people and to share the Gospel, which has the power to change lives. When politicians or NGOs want to upgrade slums, usually they focus on economical and social charity projects. But these projects have no long-term impact. They are often cosmetic interventions. The day an NGO leaves the place, the project also breaks down. "Money alone doesn't empower people. We have to 'upgrade' first the mentality of the people and involve them to shape their future. Personal commitment and the integral vision of human, economic and spiritual growth are indispensable. Only the churches offer this service at the moment."

A special concern of the priest is the formation of the youth who are the future of society. He explains that "they feel betrayed by the state and, as a consequence, Nairobi is one of the most violent cities in the world. Besides the youth, women have to be promoted because they are the backbone of society and of the families. Men easily run away from their responsibility. In Korogocho, 55% of the families are headed by single mothers."

Among the different initiatives that have grown through the help of the Comboni Missionaries, I portray the women cooperative Bega Kwa Bega (engl. = shoulder to shoulder), the Mukuru-Recycling-Centre (engl. = rubbish) and the St. John Sport Society. Additionally, Jamii Bora Trust (engl. = best family), a micro-finance institute, is presented because it sustains many businesses in Korogocho.

2.2.1. Bega Kwa Bega

The cooperative was founded in 1992 to rehabilitate abandoned single mothers, most of them earning money as prostitutes. The women received manual training to produce baskets, necklaces, dolls and t-shirts. At the same time, they formed an interdenominational Small Christian Community (jumuyia) to pray together and to share the Word of God. The idea was to create a united family in solidarity that cares for each other. Meanwhile, the majority of the women-prostitutes who started the project have died of infections caused by HIV/AIDS. Today, about 70 women are members of the cooperative.

They began to export their crafts through the fair-trade organization Equo-Mercato to Italy and now are also selling their products to Germany, Spain, Japan and USA. The women earn only if they receive orders. That means they have to maintain the business contacts and be competitive with new products and designs. But the achievements are many. A lot of women have changed their lives and have improved mentally and in their physical health. All of them are able to cover the basic needs of food and shelter and send their children to school.

The cooperative is owned by the members. One of the project coordinators comments: “Unfortunately, some of the women have the mentality of employment and demand that they have guaranteed orders and a certain salary by the coordination committee. Instead, the project should animate the members to become creative and to work with diligence. Other problems are a trend of decreasing solidarity, and some women are distracted with harmful activities like brewing changaa [self-made high-percentage liquor].” (app.: no. 5, 10/2/2006) But in general, the coordinator gives a positive evaluation because the project has saved these women from desperate and dangerous backgrounds.

For a personal testimony, I interviewed a 35 year-old woman who was born in Korogocho and grew up as an orphan with her siblings. The contact among them was not good. She dropped out of primary school in Standard 7 and asked to join Bega Kwa Bega in 1994. She has three children from different fathers. “I appreciate the connection between work, manual training and socializing in the Small Christian Community. Before I came to the cooperative, I had no contact with the Church, but now my daughters are integrated in the parish as altar girls. That gives them a good environment where they can find better friends than I had. My faith in God gives me strength and hope to go on. I don’t know how I would have ended up without the help of the other women.” (app.: no. 5) She considers herself co-owner of the cooperative and is aware that the profit depends mainly on her own effort. But she is willing to work hard for a better future of her children. This is the only chance she has got.

2.2.2. Mukuru-Recycling-Centre

Next to Korogocho lies Nairobi's dumping site. Here, all the rubbish, including toxic materials, is left without any precaution for the inhabitants.

The Mukuru-Recycling-Centre was started in the year 1991 with about 40 men and women who collected rubbish individually at the dumping site and sold it at a low price to middlemen. A former Comboni priest brought them together to form a cooperative and to unite in an interdenominational Small Christian Community. The cooperative was designed to protect its members from exploitation by the middlemen. It gave them the support to bargain directly with companies to gain a higher price for the raw materials (glass, metal, paper and plastic) collected at the dumping site. The cooperative received from the Catholic parish a loan to finance the project and from the local chief a place to meet and to separate the rubbish.

Today, they have about 60 members who each earn up to 150 Ksh a day (2 US\$; exchange rate in this paper is 1:75), depending on the personal effort. The cooperative is divided into four subprojects: one offers the middlemen services to the dumping site scavengers, another offers waste collection services with special emphasis on waste papers, a third recycles organic waste and the last produces fuel briquettes (white charcoal) from a combination of waste paper, saw dust and coffee husk. In 2002, the Mukuru-Recycling-Centre received a United Nations Award for their creative employment initiative.

A lot of members have a criminal history or have been addicted to alcohol. They were able to change their lives because of the support of the cooperative and because of the Christian communion. One of the coordinators spoke to me about his life (app.: no. 6, 17/2/2006). He moved to Korogocho with his parents in 1970. "In class, the teacher called me the dirtiest pupil. Because of poverty, I dropped out of primary school in Standard 6. Since then, I strolled around the dumping site, looking for casual jobs and, like everybody else, smoking bangi [plant similar to Cannabis] and drinking changaa. For many years, I have been an alcoholic. The mother of my first two children left me because of this. During the addiction, you know that there is God, but he is far... Even to have courage to go out of the house, I had to be drunk. At the climax of my crisis, I attempted to commit suicide by hanging myself but, fortunately, the rope got loose under my weight." This was the point when he felt that God called him for a different life. He joined the Anonymous Alcoholics (AA) in the Catholic parish. The group has helped him to set goals in his life and to overcome the addiction. Today, he is supervising other alcoholics. He also has married again and got

four more children. Working at Mukuru, he is able to sustain his family and to send his children to primary school.

2.2.3. St. John Sports Society

The St. John Sport Society (SSS) is an initiative of the Catholic parish to promote integral human development. A sport activity is more than improving physical fitness and more than winning a game. Those who want to perform well need to develop a set of qualities that will help them also in other areas of life. Among these qualities are self-discipline and endurance, the will to work hard and to concentrate totally on the activity, to collaborate in a team and to keep the time-table, to loose without anger, to win through fair-play and to respect the opponent. The following sports are offered: football, netball, volleyball, basketball, karate, taekwondo, boxing, bodybuilding/weightlifting, darts and athletics.

Besides the training, each sport group engages in community service projects at least every two months, for example cleaning up the neighborhood or visiting the sick. It underlines the interrelation of the slum dwellers and that nobody should live and survive by him/herself. The groups also have moments of prayer and Bible sharing and receive formation in practical things (first aid, HIV/AIDS prevention...).

I spoke with two bodybuilders who are thankful that the SSS has brought people together (app.: no. 9, 4/3/2006). Before, everybody tried to survive alone. One of them explains: "I decided to come to the training to break my monotony and to associate with people. Also I had become overweight and wanted to improve my health." The bodybuilding served him as job-training. Today, he is a security guard, is married and can sustain his three children. He has stopped drinking and confirms that the rules of the Society have had a positive impact in his life.

The other bodybuilder gets rid of his stress during the training. He has learned self-control and patience and has found a job as a bouncer in a nightclub. "Many alcohol-addicted friends admire me for my good-looking body and want to imitate me. I always answer them that they first have to stop drinking." This is an example of how the youth of the SSS have become role models who inspire others. The latest community project of the bodybuilders is to work as security guards during the night in Korogocho because the police are not trustworthy in their duty.

The SSS has helped people effectively to come out of their mental trap. Although this is not a means to automatically get a job, the youth find friends in a healthy environment and put their time and energy into a meaningful activity. This has led many of them to change

positively in their behavior towards their family and children. The values of self-discipline and collaboration are an important basis to escape self-bewail and idleness.

2.2.4. Jamii Bora Trust

This micro-finance institute is a non-profit organization, founded in 1999 in Nairobi by 50 mothers of street beggar families (app.: no. 7, 21/2/2006). They were supervised by the Norwegian Ingrid Munro. In the 1990s, she used to give alms to these beggars. Instead of perpetuating the dependency, she helped them to invest money in a fund and to build up small businesses like selling fish with the loans received out of this fund. At present in 2006, Jamii Bora has over 115,000 members in Kenya, about 500 are from Korogocho.

The idea is to empower people to help themselves and become self-reliant. If a person believes in him/herself and wants to improve in life, the lack of money shouldn't be the obstacle. Jamii Bora sustains small business enterprises, manufacturing and gives loans for school fees and housing. The institute is independent from donors and pays the 310 staff worker salaries from the interests.

The principle is simple: five people form a group and each member has to save at least 50 Ksh (0.66 \$; exchange rate 1:75) per week. The loan will be at most the double of the savings. If one of the group members wants to receive a loan, the others have to agree and sign the contract. The loan has to be paid back within 50 weeks with an interest rate of 0.5% per week. For example, 4000 Ksh (53 \$) are returned by at least 100 Ksh (1.33 \$) per week.

All members have to take a health and life insurance. This is compulsory. The health insurance costs 1200 Ksh (16 \$) annually which can be paid in weekly rates of 30 Ksh. The member and up to four children under 18 years are covered. The spouse can be insured with the same amount. The insurance pays all in-patient hospital bills, including maternity and HIV-treatment, but not out-patient bills. The reason for this service lies in the simple fact that saving a mother's life saves her children from becoming orphans who probably end up on the street. The life insurance consists of 1% of the loan. In the case of death or permanent disability, the family of the member receives the double amount of the life insurance savings without responsibility to cancel existing debts. Jamii Bora pays any outstanding loan balance.

To ensure the credibility of a borrower, only a person introduced by a member of Jamii Bora is accepted. Also the other group members have a control function. First of all, the group motivates the individual to put aside the weekly savings. Secondly, to receive a loan, the others have to know that the borrower is able to pay back the amount. If there were any doubts, they wouldn't sign. The trust relation inside a group and with the Institute is the best

guarantee. Jamii Bora keeps close contact to its members and visits all sustained businesses on a regular basis. It still happens that loans are not paid because members get seriously sick or want to cheat, but these are exceptions.

Jamii Bora offers counseling through the Tumaini-programme. The unique thing is that the social workers come from the same background: those who were street beggars work among street beggars, those who were plantation workers help plantation workers and those who are handicapped counsel the handicapped. The social workers encourage with the example of their own lives that it is possible to get out of poverty.

Besides the counseling, nurses make home visits, and the Levuka-programme accompanies drug addicts and alcoholics in the member families. Especially drunk husbands can destroy any effort of a woman to run a successful business by stealing the money or injuring her severely. Members are also trained in literacy, home economics, computer and management skills for a fee of 500 Ksh (6.6 \$).

The experience of the project is very positive. People have expanded their businesses and have moved to better houses. They send their children to school and have improved their health. About 100 groups (= 500 persons) come from Korogocho. These slum dwellers are very disciplined and trustworthy members, says the officer at the branch that supervises this area (app.: no. 7).

2.3. Responses from Pastoral Workers and the Local Chief of Korogocho

An Italian lay-missionary who has lived in Korogocho for 12 years supervises different job-initiatives (app.: no. 10, 5/3/2006). He trains people to set clear targets in life and to discover their talents. On realistic opportunities to step out of poverty he says: "The victim mentality and the dependency syndrome are the biggest handicaps. People blame the government, the society or the church. They survive on a day-to-day basis, begging and waiting for a miracle. But money is not the only thing that is needed. An unmotivated person who receives money will lose it immediately. On the other hand, a person who has a target in life and is willing to fight hard for it will advance even with limited financial resources."

Unfortunately, diligent people with a clear target in life are few. His experience is that single mothers usually work hard if they see an opportunity. Men are more difficult to be helped. In all his years living in Korogocho, he has never seen a healthy person fail to improve and to become more self-reliant if the inner motivation was there! An exception are

people with terminal diseases or cases of theft and police eviction. The lack of security is a serious issue.

The evaluation of the church council leader of St. John goes in the same direction but is more pessimistic about possibilities to improve life and to promote self-reliance in Korogocho: “The people are divided, and there are many private interests. The local chief is not interested in upgrading the slum, and corruption and bribery are characterizing the work of the police. For example, the police are interested in the outlawed changaa selling because they receive a big portion of the profit. For many the only way to develop economically in Korogocho is through robbery, prostitution and changaa brewing. Legally, there are few opportunities to improve by personal initiative. Therefore, the majority has resigned and does nothing.” (app.: no. 8, 26/2/2006)

Also the participation in the parish life is ambiguous. According to the church council leader, there are only few committed people. Many hope to receive solidarity from others but are not willing to give. There are a lot of egoistic reasons why people join churches, and they still have a long way to go to change the hearts of the people that will lead to a caring and unified community in Korogocho.

My last interview was with the local chief of Korogocho (app.: no. 11, 6/3/2006). He affirmed the need for action but has no means to implement sustainable development. There is a promise from the government to hand over the land to the people, but the chief couldn't show me any written document. Another idea is to build standard houses with long lasting materials. But until now, there has never been a government project implemented in Korogocho.

It was striking to notice that the chief has no accurate information about the environment where he works. He lives outside and comes to the office in Korogocho from 9 am to 4 pm. According to him, the population is about 70,000 (real number: about 120,000), and 50% of the youth would finish Form 4 in secondary school (real number: about 15%). It shows how far politicians and their administrators are from the life in informal settlements. Confronted with this reality, slum dwellers have to improve their environment alone. Step by step.

3. Literature Review

3.1. A Social Analysis of Slums

In the introduction, I have already described the environment of Korogocho. The following section explains some of the causes of urbanization and evaluates attempts to upgrade slums.

3.1.1. Causes of Urbanization and Slum Growth

In Africa, about 40% of the population lives in towns and cities. Nairobi is growing at a rate of 7% annually, with an expected population of about 17 million in the year 2020 (cf. Zanutelli, in: Pierli/Abeledo, 2002, p. 14). The people move to the city in hope for a better life and to find work. Sources of employment, higher education and medical attention are found almost exclusively in urban centers (cf. Marenya, in: Pierli/Abeledo, 2002, p. 57). Since the migrants can't pay high rents, the majority end up in slums and squatter camps, excluded from the cultural life and the benefits of the city.

After independence, the majority of African countries followed a capitalistic model which has amplified the inequalities between the rich minority and large masses of the poor (cf. Moschetti, 1997, p. 15-16). It drained the countries resources by replacing traditional farming with the agribusiness of the multinationals, by concentrating land in the hands of a few, by exploiting hand labor and by widespread corruption. Moschetti continues: "Instead of developing the country, this economic model exploits it, generates poverty and unemployment, deprives farmers of their subsistence means and consequently, instigates the rural-urban pull phenomenon... The migrant is not so much *attracted* by the city, but feels *rejected* by a rural world that seems to be growing poorer every day... This rural exodus often combines with large numbers of refugees and displaced persons... For them slums and shanty towns become a last haven and choice." (ibid. p. 16-17)

In the 1980s, the World Bank introduced Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) to balance the budgets of developing countries (cf. ibid. p. 26). The measures included the cutting of public expenses by mass entrenchments and privatizing vital sectors like education and medical care. As a consequence, the rate of impoverishment has accelerated.

3.1.2. Upgrading Slums – an Ambivalent Enterprise

Usually, slums are illegal settlements. A surprising aspect to many is the fact that slum dwellers pay rent to landlords who are not the owners of the land. In Korogocho, the land is owned by the state and a private individual. The first settlers just marked a plot and built their houses. These people live for free. But when it became popular to move there, shacks were built by landlords who, after paying a plot allocation fee to the local administration, rent the houses to slum dwellers (cf. Kwach, 2002, p. 9). The demand for housing is so high that landlords receive down payment even before the construction is completed.

The tenant has a roof that protects him/her against rain, but there is absolutely no service from the side of the landlord. Most plots have no toilets, water taps or electricity. A pit latrine is shared by around 100 people. Because of the bad housing conditions and low income of the people, the village committees of Korogocho have decided unilaterally, with permission of the local administration, to pay only 50% rent (cf. *ibid.* p. 11). Landlords who refuse to accept this agreement get no payment at all. A court case has been filed against the decision by the Korogocho Owners Association (KOA). But since the whole settlement is illegally occupied, the construction and renting of houses has no legal basis, too.

The Kenyan Government and UN Habitat have plans to upgrade several slum areas and to build standard houses with sanitary systems. But the strongest opposition comes from the slum dwellers themselves (cf. *ibid.* p. 10): Once the houses are in a better condition, also the rent will rise, and people have to move to other slums. Upgrading benefits only the rich who can afford to live in standard houses. The people don't trust the government that they will be protected because, so far, it hasn't given them security of tenure. Shorter confirms this suspicion: "Behind the concern for maintaining standards of housing and hygiene lies an anti-migrant legislative tradition." (Shorter, in: Pierli/Abeledo, 2002, p. 66) The government is not interested in helping the poor but to drive them out of the city. Upgrading serves as a means of discrimination.

3.2. The Social Teaching of the Catholic Church

This section highlights some declarations made by the Magisterium the Catholic Church that address the challenge of human and economic development and of urbanization. Naturally, because the Church is an international body, the main focus is not the evaluation of micro-level structures but the global situation of humanity.

3.2.1. Pope John XXIII

The first reference to the challenge of urbanization was made by Pope John XXIII in his social encyclical letter *Mater et Magistra* (1959) where he invites governments to improve social facilities and health care in rural areas to prevent an exodus to the cities (n. 123-143). This appeal passed almost unnoticed, but its content is still valid after 50 years: people leave the countryside because of the desperate situation.

3.2.2. Pope Paul VI

In 1967, Pope Paul VI wrote the social encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio* where he outlines a Christian vision of integral development. This entails material betterment, moral progress, spiritual growth (n. 34) and the esteem for the cultural patrimony of the civilizations (n. 68). It shouldn't be surprising that, for the Church, the cornerstone of integral development is our relation to God, the Creator and Redeemer of mankind (n. 15; 42). "[U]nion with Christ... is the highest goal of personal development." (n. 16)

Concerning economic development, he states: "God intended the earth and all it contains for the use of all men and peoples, so created goods should flow fairly to all, regulated by justice and accompanied by charity." [cit. from GS, n. 69] All other rights whatsoever, including those of property and of free commerce, are to be subordinated to this principle... It is a grave and urgent social duty to redirect them to their primary finality." (n. 22) Since then, justice, charity and social duty have become the mark stones for the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church. In the same document, the Pope criticizes the capitalistic model if it is solely constructed on profit, competition and private ownership with no corresponding social obligation: "Unchecked liberalism leads to dictatorship." (n. 26) For the depraving situation of slum dwellers the following conclusion is of interest: "If certain land estates impede the general prosperity because they are extensive, unused or poorly used, or because they bring hardship to peoples... the common good sometimes demands their expropriation." (n. 24) In the case of Korogocho, the government would have to expropriate itself.

The particular situation of the big cities led Pope Paul VI to write in his apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens* in 1971: "Urbanization, undoubtedly an irreversible stage in the development of human societies, confronts man with difficult problems... new proletariats... dwell on the outskirts – which become a belt of misery besieging in a still silent protest the luxury which blatantly cries out from centers of consumption and waste. Instead of favoring fraternal encounter and mutual aid, the city fosters discrimination and also indifference." (n. 10) "The Church directs her attention to those new "poor" ... in order to recognize them, help

them, defend their place and dignity in a society hardened by competition and the attraction of success.” (n. 15)

3.2.3. Pope John Paul II

In 1987, Pope John Paul II addressed the social question in his encyclical letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. 20 years after *Populorum Progressio*, it is an explicit dedication to the encyclical letter of his predecessor and treats the same topics. By then, expressions as “structures of sin” (n. 36), “civilization of love” (n. 33) and “option for the poor” (n. 42) had become familiar in Catholic theology. The Pope invites all people to conversion and solidarity (n. 38). “At stake is the *dignity of the human person*, whose *defense* and *promotion* have been entrusted to us by the Creator.” (n. 47)

On the international level, John Paul II recommends a reform of the international trade system (against unjust protectionism and exploitation of cheap labor), a reform of the monetary system (debt relief), a reform of international organizations (against manipulation by powerful states), a reform of national political institutions (democracy and good governance instead of dictatorship and corruption) and the respect for human rights and freedoms (n. 33; 43-44).

Writing during the period of the Cold War, he underlines the independence of the Church’s Social Doctrine. It is “*not* a ‘third way’ between *liberal capitalism* and *Marxist collectivism*, nor even a possible alternative to other solutions... rather, it constitutes a *category of its own*.” (n. 41) The Church reflects on the realities of human existence in the light of faith and establishes criteria for judgment within the existing political and economic systems to guide human behavior. The Church has a prophetic role to promote a just social and civil order rather than presenting a political program.

Concerning our interest to verify how the Church stimulates self-reliance, the two following passages are of importance: “Those who are weaker, for their part, in the same spirit of *solidarity*, should not adopt a purely *passive* attitude or one that is *destructive* of the social fabric, but, while claiming their legitimate rights, should do what they can for the good of all...” (n. 39) and “Development demands above all a spirit of initiative on the part of the countries which need it. Each of them must act in accordance with its own responsibilities, *not expecting everything* from the more favored countries... Each must make itself capable of initiatives responding to its own needs as a society... The development of peoples begins and is most appropriately accomplished in the dedication of each people to its own development, in collaboration with others. It is important then that as far as possible *the developing nations*

themselves should favor the *self-affirmation* of each citizen, ... identify their own *priorities* and clearly recognize their own needs..." (n. 44) Replacing 'countries' with 'slums' gives us a programmatic vision for action.

(Note: emphasis in the quoted text from the original)

Since this encyclical letter focuses on the social question, John Paul II clarifies at the end the relation between human progress and the Kingdom of God. He states that obstacles of development can be overcome because the present history is open to the Kingdom (n. 47). On the other hand, temporal achievements are not to be identified with God's Kingdom but rather reflect or anticipate its glory which we await at the end of history when Christ returns. But waiting as Christian believers can never be an excuse for passive indifference; rather it should be a motivation for personal commitment (n. 48).

4. Conclusion

4.1. Obstacles to Development

The field research points to the following obstacles:

- *Victim mentality*: People don't use their energies and talents to work hard but prefer to survive begging on a day-to-day basis.
- *Families don't exist*: More than half of the families in Korogocho are headed by single mothers. There are also orphan families where older siblings take care of the younger ones. Sometimes, orphans end up as street children.
- *Insufficient education*: Without proper education or further vocational/technical training, the youth have great difficulties to find a job or regular employment.
- *Insecurity*: Those who try to run a small business are in constant danger of being harassed by thieves or the police. Mugging and corruption prevent self-initiatives.
- *Drug abuse and alcoholism*: Life without hope causes many to take drugs and alcohol that destroy their health. An addict can never make a step towards self-reliance.
- *Terminal diseases*: Many people are infected with HIV/AIDS. Others got lung cancer and TB because of the air pollution from the dumping site.
- *Violence against women (in particular sexual abuse)*: Aggressive male behavior is nurtured by drunkenness and video halls that show violence and sex. The primary

victims are women. They are humiliated, beaten, raped, and early pregnancies will hinder girls to progress in school (besides all the other obstacles). Women also might get infected with HIV. Because they are the backbone of society, their death has devastating consequences, especially for their children.

4.2. Proposals for Development

Given the difficult situation, expectations to become self-reliant should be moderate. Many external obstacles are unpredictable and even with the best intentions can't be overcome. It is a good sign that cooperatives like the Mukuru-Recycling-Centre and Bega Kwa Bega successfully exist after so many years. But only a small number of the 120,000 slum dwellers are reached with these projects.

The most important thing is to overcome the victim mentality (see 2.3.). A person who has a goal in life and is willing to fight for it can mobilize a lot. Naturally, this is not to be done as individuals but together. Solidarity among the poor has become a powerful force to change the neighborhood. Many women or church groups are successfully engaged in activities like job-training, empowerment of the most marginalized and environmental care. This is only possible because of a participatory network of mutual trust. Outsiders who supervise projects in the slums must not consider themselves as leaders but accompany and stimulate people in their process of integral liberation.

Churches, if they are not doing already, have to make relevant the Gospel as the source of justice and reconciliation. In accordance with the Social Teaching presented in the literature review, the option for the poor unmask the structures of sin that oppress people. Churches have a prophetic role denouncing injustices towards the government and those in power. In relation with the slum dwellers, they have to stimulate self-initiatives. Development is first of all self-development, following the principle of subsidiarity (cf. Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 44). The credibility of the Gospel will be proved or put into question, depending on how the churches are able to make relevant the liberating message of Christ to the people in their daily lives.

Slum dwellers also need a form of civic education to develop a critical awareness of the social circumstances in which they live. Only if they are united as conscious citizens, politicians will listen to them. This is the precondition to be able to demand ownership of the land. The constant fear of eviction takes away any initiative to feel responsible for the

improvement of the slum environment. Only if slum dwellers are landowners, they will invest and take care of the plot. Therefore, the legalization of informal settlements by giving them communal ownership of the land is of supreme importance. As explained above (see 2.2.), a communal title, administered by the village committees, prevents the commercialization of single plots that would result again in concentrating the land in the hands of a few rich.

The focus of this paper is development on the grass-root level. Therefore, I haven't discussed measures that are to be taken at the national and the international level. But as active citizens, people should call upon the responsibility of the government. Besides handing over the land title to the slum dwellers, upgrading the infrastructure and the quality of housing have to be implemented gradually without driving the poor away. This is not a gracious reward but a duty of politicians towards their citizens. Also the rural areas have to be developed substantially that people are not forced to move to the cities. This implies the equal distribution of amenities in all the provinces of the country.

4.3. The Role of the Personal Faith and of the Christian Community

In the introduction, I presented the healing of the crippled beggar (Acts 3:1-10) as a Christian model for development. Concluding this paper, the following aspects of an adequate church pastoral can be confirmed in accordance with the concrete experience in Korogocho:

- The solution to a situation of dependency emerges at the grass-root level with the person involved who is marginalized.
- The transformation/empowerment of the man to being an independent person aims at a long-term benefit – ‘healing’ – instead of a short-term relief – ‘almsgiving’ (cf. Lk 18:35.41-43).
- The refusal to give alms displays the anti-dependency stance of the apostles. The New Testament emphasizes that everybody should contribute in the Christian community (cf. 2 Ts 3:10-12). Participation is a sign of a mature faith.
- If God uses mediators, they are not to rule over people but to set them free (cf. 1 Cor 1:24).
- The poor are used to feel inferior. By inviting the crippled man to look up, the apostles treat him as equal. In this line, slum dwellers are not objects of those who help, but they are our brothers and sisters with whom we share the Good News (cf. Acts 14:15).

- The personal experience of the healed man becomes a community experience: others get encouraged and begin to act (cf. Acts 4:21-37).

Many testimonies of my informants confirm the interrelation of faith, human growth, solidarity in the community and economic progress. They were able to change positively due to a conversion to God and a social network. Others who have been able to improve their lives share a similar biography (app.: no. 3, 4): they have had no intact family life; most of them have been addicted to drugs and/or alcohol; many have been living on the street. To get out of their situation, a friend or somebody else had to help, but the driving force that gave them the strength to change was a conversion to God, the experience of being loved. Of those who have been addicted, only a commitment in the Small Christian Community or the Anonymous Alcoholics-group made them achieve their goals.

It might be argued that faith is optional and that economic development can also be reached with a secular concept. But this approach doesn't take into consideration the deep-rooted religiosity among Africans. It has been noted that the traditional institutions and morals are deteriorating because the African identity and spirituality have been lost. The slums are an extreme example. Helping the people to build their lives on the relationship with God has a visible and durable impact. Secular people might accept this approach as a means to reach the desired goal, which for them is economic and social well-being. But for Christians, it is an affirmation of the holistic view of the human person. As God's creatures with body and soul, we can reach full development only if all aspects of human life are promoted intrinsically together.

Appendix: Field Research Summary

The interviews took place in Korogocho except no. 5 in Baba Dogo, no. 6 in Dandora and no. 7 in Kariobangi, all neighboring the slum.

1. 28/1/2006: Interviews with a youth group at the Catholic outstation St. John and some single mothers what development means for them.
2. 29/1/2006: Interview with one of the two responsible Comboni Missionaries in Korogocho. He explained the concept of the missionaries walking together at the pace of the people and sharing the Gospel, which has the power to change lives.
3. 5/2/2006: Visit at a meeting of the Anonymous Alcoholics group. The members shared their difficulties and successes to quit drinking.
4. 6/2/2006: Interviews with former alcoholics and drug addicts about their life and what can be done to lead addicts out of dependency.
5. 10/2/2006: Visit at the cooperative Bega Kwa Bega in Baba Dogo. I interviewed a coordinator and a member about the project.
6. 17/2/2006: Visit at the Mukuru-recycling-center in Dandora. I interviewed a coordinator about the project and his way out of addiction to self-reliance.
7. 21/2/2006: Visit at the Jamii Bora Trust branch in Kariobangi about their activities to lead people out of poverty.
8. 26/2/2006: Interview with the church council leader of St. John about opportunities to development in Korogocho.
9. 4/3/2006: Interview with two bodybuilders from the St. John Sports Society about practicing sport to promote integral human development.
10. 5/3/2006: Interview with an Italian lay-missionary about his experience to empower people. According to him, the victim mentality is the biggest handicap to become self-reliant.
11. 6/3/2006: Interview with the local chief of Korogocho about government activities concerning the upgrading of slums.

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