

Socio-Political Inclusion

See: Story

Mabadiliko was a multi-ethnic county with diverse rich cultures and traditions. Their main economic activities were farming and trade. The neighbouring county of Twende, though not well endowed with good rains, was blessed with natural resources and a rich culture too. Twende was economically better than Mabadiliko and had good policies on how to share the benefits derived from their natural resources. There was equitable distribution of resources amongst the various groups based on their well-identified needs. This governance system was made possible by the community elders' oversight roles and the inclusiveness and active participation of all.

With time, the community of Twende opened up to foreign cultures and adopted practices that affected their leadership style and daily activities. The community that for generations had prided itself of cohesion and equitable resource sharing and distribution, started falling apart. Resources were no longer distributed on a need basis but rather on one's influence. Eventually, people started fighting over leadership slots to protect their own interests as opposed to working for the benefit of the Twende community. Some groups ended up being excluded in the process.

At some point, the residents of Twende requested for a review of the governance system. Their desire was to get a formal and democratic system where elections would be conducted every three years and address all social and political inclusivity. Many candidates vied for the available leadership positions during the polls. One of them was Mr Tumbo, who had returned from abroad. The residents had a lot of hope in him due to his wealth, overseas experience and advanced studies. He presented a beautiful manifesto and promised to uplift the living standards of the residents. He won the election with a landslide and to his supporters, change was inevitable.

Within the first three months in office, he exhibited his true character: arrogant, not taking advice from the elders, religious leaders and other stakeholders. He appointed his political, social and business friends to senior positions and rewarded them handsomely. In doing so, he neglected the provisions of the laws on inclusivity of the marginalised, minority, gender, youth and persons with special needs. He failed to engage residents in public participation forums. Mr Tumbo presided over the political, economic and social deterioration of his community. He mismanaged the resources, suppressed peoples' voices and brought the economy and the peoples' welfare to their knees.

The people realised that his entire manifesto and pre-election promises were all meant to hoodwink them to vote for him. Residents started to regroup and agitate for change and better service delivery. They on several occasions convened at Mr Tumbo's office compound where they staged sit-ins, making his office inaccessible. The police could not intervene as the processes were peaceful and within the law. This prompted Mr Tumbo to seek dialogue with the citizens and addressed issues of exclusion, public expenditure management, fair allocation of tenders to youth, women and people with special needs. The results of the people's initiatives and action started bearing fruits. Public participation in economic and social issues was enhanced and Twende County's past glory was restored.

Judge: Situational analysis

In any modern democracy, it has been established that stable and sustainable political systems require constant input from all parts of society. The inclusion of all these groups into the political processes is important for the health of the political system and for socio-political integration in general, i.e. for communal and individual's identity with the nation state and its governments.

Kenya has suffered greatly due to bad social and political policies and practices that entrenched exclusion and marginalisation. The political class has extensively exploited the social vulnerability of the people, widening the drift of ethnic differences at the expense of national identity. From the experiences of elections since 1992, we can conclusively argue that there are close links between social exclusion and violent conflict and insecurity, both in terms of causes and consequences. This can range from civil unrest to violent armed conflict and terror activities. Severely disadvantaged groups with shared characteristics (such as ethnicity or religion) may resort to violent conflict to claim their rights and redress inequalities. Group differences are not enough in themselves to cause conflict, but social exclusion and horizontal inequalities provide fertile ground for violent mobilisation. Hence, the concept of social inclusion can help in conflict resolution because it identifies some of the causes of conflict. By analysing why some societies with sharp horizontal inequalities suffer conflict and others do not, it has become evident that conflict occurs most frequently when socio-economic and political horizontal inequalities are combined.

Despite having a progressive Constitution, vibrant laws and policies, Kenya still has a long way to go in maintaining law and order. The gap between the rich and the poor is unacceptably huge in a society that seeks justice and peace. Kenya's quest in its Vision 2030 to grow by 10 per cent every year must ensure inequality is reduced and all people benefit equitably from development initiatives and resource allocation. There is also need for attitude change. We need to shed off selfishness,

embrace patriotism, and strengthen the workable systems of social inclusion in the civil society and the government. There is need to activate and promote legal avenues that provide for public participation and citizen's engagement in the policy-making, formulating strategies and actions to overcome exclusion of groups or individuals. This will ensure inclusive benefits of growth and development, socio-political tolerance, social accountability and creation of awareness to the public on issues of governance, service delivery and respect to the rule of law.

Readings

Joshua 5:9-12

Psalm 32

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Spiritual reflection

Just as the people of Israel did not reach the promised land by themselves, God had to intervene. We need to be reconciled to God and other members of the community. When we are cut from others, we eventually cut ourselves from God. The young man in the Gospel separated himself from his family but this led to misery. The elder son also wanted his brother to be excluded but the father reiterated that they were both his sons.

Act: Reflection questions

1. How is our governance system as a country and what suggestions can you make to improve it?
2. What is my role in promoting socio-political inclusion?
3. How do you foster socio-political inclusion individually and in the Small Christian Community?

Examination of conscience

1. Have I ever employed someone based on his/her ethnic origin?
2. Do I use stereotypes and prejudices to describe other people?
3. Do I discriminate people based on their gender?