

The Volunteer Missionary Educator in a Zambian Village

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to discover and narrate our experience as a volunteer missionary educator on the process of acculturation that have helped the Women Villagers (WV). This described the learning strategies, integration in the new culture, and poverty alleviation. Women's empowerment has been advocated as a way not only to reduce poverty risk but also a way to improve a woman's overall well-being. To be able to draw conclusions about the women's learning strategies and what has made them work, We have looked at the experiences of five selected informants whose experiences successfully acculturated. The study employed a qualitative methodology, where information has been collected through semi-structured interviews, which were interpreted and analyzed using the study adopted from Spradley. The key findings were acculturation through education, specifically through projects and programs implemented. The goal was to teach outsiders about culture through both personal and empirical and help people within their culture better understand themselves. Done in an ethnographic way, an ethnographer "depicts people struggling to overcome adversity" and shows "people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles" (to borrow a phrase of Bochner and Ellis (2006). These findings can be put into practice to form better strategies and actions steps in organizational programs, school linkages or any Non-Government Organization. This can also be brought to the knowledge of any educators or missionary volunteers looking to successfully integrate, to make them aware of how their choices and goals, even those apparently unrelated, can impact the outcome of their integrated efforts.

Keywords: Acculturation, Voluntarism, Language learning, Immersion, Transformation, Quality of Life. Mini-ethnography

1. Introduction

“Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of a farm workers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another”.

Nelson Mandela

1.1 Rationale

“Education is the process of acculturation”. A process in which an immigrant and their families move to a new place that are not familiar and begun to adapt the new learning and incorporating the languages, mannerism, values, customs, and beliefs of the new country. It refers to changes in behavior and attitudes through contact between individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Berry et al. 2006). When individuals belonging to various cultures work together and immerse themselves, there is possibility of learning from cultures of one another. In this sense, education is process of acculturation (Berry et al. 2010). Additionally, one of the educational objective is to let individual know their basic right and the value of education and to be knowledgeable enough in order to avoid the ignorance (Anonuevo, 2012).

Zambia, here We come! The human desire to work in other country as we called it Oversees Filipino Workers (OFW) is as instinctual as a bird. In search of a better, happier life, or looking for a greener pasture, people will make a move. Many seek to experience what is “different” to open a greater range of possibilities and unlock their human potential. We came here not as an OFW but as a wife and a fulltime mother of our son Jian. Our family has a big move from the Philippines to Zambia, Africa. Leap of faith came, and fear sink in our hearts. An opportunity came for my husband (Mr Chavez) to work in one of the biggest Smelter Company in African Continent, particularly in Solwezi, Zambia. A huge move that never crossed in our mind, not even planned nor in our bucket list. We are an Expatriates as they say, foreigners of this land who very curious about their people, language, food, shelter, clothing and most especially their culture.

Our journey started when we met this Filipina Mercedarian Nun, knowing their vocation and charism, we volunteered myself and they invited me to join the weekly prayer meeting at St. Augustine Church in the village of Kandundulo, just an hour drive in a bumpy road from our place. Listening to the women from their sharing, our heart sank, we can feel their pain, anguish, and tears. We were moved and touched. That was the turning point that We decided myself to partner with the Mercedarian Nuns as a Missionary Educator. As a teacher, we felt the responsibility to teach the women of what We thought they would need. We believed also that education is not only concentrated inside the four walls of the classroom, but rather, so much more in the outside community. The challenges of the women had driven and inspired me to do voluntarism by helping the women within their culture better understand themselves. The data that were gathered through this undertaking can be used for providing guidance and

source of information for the villagers and the entire Diocese of Solwezi. This is the utmost importance since the output of this study will gauge how meaningful and fulfilling voluntarism that it may give impact to the local and international linkages, to the teachers and learners, individuals, and future researchers as well.

Acculturation helps both different groups to learn each other culture also exchange learnings and build a strong connection (Husan et al., 2022). The understanding of acculturation in a broader context encourages common values, behaviors, and practices which are attributed to most people. These commonalities ensure individuals to keep functioning in certain group that are bound by certain rules that help social interaction within the society in general.

1.2 Domain of Inquiry

This semi-ethnography aimed to explore and document our experience as a volunteer missionary educator and how these experiences acculturated myself and the women villagers in Zambia, in the year 2020. Moreover, it explored how community development dimensions could be translated among women in coping with adversity in the village, acculturation process in terms of technology, broader rural development goals management and leadership skills,

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Design

The qualitative research method is most applicable since this study is based in a community and focuses about acculturation in the village with distinct local culture and tradition. In this study, the researcher utilized semi-ethnography as a research design, multiple research design for the combination of projects and programs implemented, and narratology as an approach which narrates the five selected women on their success life stories in the village.

2.2 Environment

The research study was in Kandundulo Village, Solwezi District, North-Western Province, Zambia. Zambia is divided into 10 provinces, and these provinces are further divided into 72 total districts. The poorest provinces are the Western Province, with a poverty level of 82.2 per cent. Solwezi belongs to the North-Western provinces which poverty level ranks in third place. The place is a remote area, away from civilization. There is no water and electricity among the houses. Water pump (Borehole) is available which provides water to the villagers through huge tank using electricity and which can be found in the vicinity of the Catholic church. Generally, people migrate to this place due to genocide and famine centuries ago and form a village and make their own tribe. That is why they have contemporary culture, but they managed to blend their norms, values, and even spiritual beliefs and traditions. This is one of the reasons why more than 70 ethnically diverse people are living in Zambia. Mostly, the villagers grew in number rapidly, moved and searched another place to dwell on and established new tribes, looked for land for pastures and farming. The official language in Zambia is English but Bemba and Nyanja are commonly spoken in cities. Eighty-five

different languages are spoken across the whole of Zambia amongst over 70 different tribes. Tribes are groups of people who all speak the same language, follow the same leader and traditions. They also originate from the same area. The main tribes in Zambia are the Lozi, Bemba, Ngoni, Tonga, Luvale and the Kaonde. The tribe that We went to is Kaonde tribe and speak Kaonde language. So, we needed translator all the way.

2.3 Informants

We as the main informant of this study as a researcher and narrator. In this study. We are the storytellers who presented our personal experiences and strife with the women in the village whose struggles are beyond compare. Since this is a semi-ethnography, the best person who can share her insights is the researcher herself. We opted to be a significant part of this study since We have been exposed in the Non-Government Organization for 26 years, and with this experience We can come up with a valid interpretation and analysis of the phenomenon's occurrence making the study worth reading, and reliable in its context. We purposively included five informants of the stories of women's lifelong learning which We have chosen based on the following criteria: a) ages 25 – 50 b) married with children c) tenured membership in the organization d) regular attendance to community extension session e) and top performers.

2.4 Instruments

We as the researcher were able to directly observe the phenomenon, we accounted significant experiences with the different struggles among the women in the village. I

crafted questions for self-interview which served as the basis of our presentation in the succeeding chapters. This self-interview questions were the self-report questionnaire focused more on myself while the interview guide questionnaire was more on how We conducted the study towards the women. This self-report questionnaire and interview, motivated, guided and lead me more in navigating this journey and have a clearer picture on the outcome of this research.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

In this study, we, as main informants, recalled and recollected our different personal experiences as We was being exposed among the women where the process of acculturation took place. The data that were gathered, encoded, transcribed, and presented on chapter 4. Every Wednesday was our usual scheduled prayer meeting and feed backing of our programs and projects. Weekends was our scheduled gathering for the Couples for Christ and Handmaids of the Lord, were all our informants were members of this Small Christian Community, recognized by the parish of St. Augustine. We can easily monitor the progress of the women as informants of our study through their sharing and interview of their life stories. To examine the potential impact of semi-ethnography by the process of acculturation was by and through educating themselves. We presented it in different storylines and implemented the projects and programs that has been planned and implemented. With the help and guidance of Sister Norma, head of Mercedarian Missionaries of Berriz (MMB) and brother Theotim, church catechist and translator, such projects as recycling, baking, cooking, sewing,

vegetable, crop planting, and fish farming were being materialized. Documentations were gathered as basis for this study and awards of certificate, and token to all informants were provided. We wrote all these experiences on personal note and with the use of our smart phone, some photos have been saved and served as our evidence. With the help and We were inspired to write our story for we consider this journey as a blessing, an opportunity, and a privilege to serve these group of people.

2.6 Data Analysis

In analyzing ethnographic data based upon our experiences, we used the four levels or stages in interpreting and analyzing this study adopted from Spradley's DRS (1979, 1980). These levels of analysis are: (1) domain analysis; (2) taxonomic analysis, (3) component analysis, and (4) theme analysis. In domain analysis stage, we identified relational patterns and focus on the cultural meanings of the objects (or phenomenon) used in culture and their interrelationships. Second, we did taxonomic analysis where We decided how many domains the data analysis encompass and where We also developed taxonomy to elaborate the relationship of subcategories and the internal organization of the domain. Third, we did componential analysis where We analyzed the data for similarities and differences among cultural terms in the domains. Lastly, was the theme analysis where We uncover different cultural themes. The discovery of the cultural meaning and the generation of theory was considered as the outcome of the study.

3. Results and Discussion

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: A PROCESS OF ACCULTURATION

*“We want to understand the world from your point of view.
We want to know what you know in the way you know it.
We want to understand the meaning of your experience,
to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them,
to explain things as you explain them. Will you
become our teacher and help me understand?”*

— James P. Spradley

As an educator and doing this community development, quite unexpectedly, our curiosity about their culture turned into a foray. We have learned what our vulnerabilities as well as our strengths are. Those person who are knowledgeable enough are more likely to make better judgement and can internalize their own prejudice (Vasquez, 2014). These made me realize then that there was a need to break or even soften school or university shells and put into consideration of providing quality education especially in the remote areas in any parts of the world. So much realization with a very candid transparency of what costs to be caring and generous person sensitive to everyone's vulnerability. This prepared me in so many ways beyond school, and it developed our sense of social responsibility and awareness in general. We are certain with so much conviction, that We could share through our own experiences of

learning about semi-ethnography, that indeed, we make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give in a way of extending sociological understanding and responsibility even in a foreign land.

Relating to James P. Spradley epigraph and We quote “We want to understand the world from your point of view. We want to know what you know in the way you know it. We want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become our teacher and help me understand?” As an anthropologist by himself, this quotation set as the beginning of our work as an educator, or a signal contend to do field work as a hallmark in doing ethnography that entails vast range of activities that often obscure in doing the most fundamental task of field work wherever the place maybe. This means partaking their culture, learning their language, asking questions, taking notes, interviewing informants, eating strange foods, doing things that empower them, teaching them for new learning, observing, and watching ceremonies, and living with people whose lives were different from the other. In our view, it allowed me to see a very demanding process but very rewarding too, in the since that We was able to work alongside with them, for them to trust me enough, and allowed me into their lives, adapting, exchanging, or borrowing their traits or certain culture, values, and practices. We believe that was the fruitful part of this journey in doing acculturation.

This village community that We was partnering with, underwent a process of acculturation which meant the villagers developed through social and psychological interaction, some cultural changes occurred, wherein the two parties stemmed from balancing of two cultures while adapting to the prevailing culture of the community. According to Berry &, Hou (2016), when two different culture immersed they tend to have a better understanding and share expertise than having no intercultural action. Both the villagers and the educators adopted, adjusted, and acquired to a new cultural environment, incorporated themselves into the new more prevalent culture, and participated in some aspects such as cultural activities but still held onto their original cultural values and traditions. Autoethnography is about understanding the relationship between the self and others (Chang, 2008). In this group of women villagers, acculturation often resulted on the changes to culture, health care, religious practices, and other social institutions, which in effect was seen at multiple levels in both the informants and the researcher who were assimilating into the culture. In the case of the researcher, this process of acculturation as a foreign-born referred to the socialization process in which she blended the values, customs, norms, cultural attitudes, and behaviors of the host culture and most significantly on the matter of food, clothing, and languages. This was linked to the daily adjustment and changes of behavior as well as physical well-being and as numerous changes in psychological level. The evidence occurred despite the definitions of acculturation entailed a two-way process of change, focused primarily on the research and theory of adjustments and adaptations made by the minority’s individual such as the volunteers, women villagers, and indigenous people living in the areas.

In this chapter, we attended to expose our personal experiences among the women with proper documentation and evidence. We recalled every significant point in all projects and programs implemented to make them more attractive to the research consumers.

Theme 1. Technology Transfer

Zambia is poorly developed and behind among the developing country in Southern African Region, when pandemic came, people suffered a lot. The performance caused a major failure to the development initiatives and contributed to the poverty-stricken Zambia. Illiteracy is widespread and is a huge hindrance for the country's economic growth. Even the use of technology is very rare, as you can seldom see people having cellphones, and if they have one, usually it is keypad and not android. That is why technology transfer is needed and must be updated to cope with the demand of the society and to ease living conditions. There are so many factors to be considered, and the process must be guided by the policies, procedures and values each organization involved on it. The intervention from different missionaries and other Non-Government Organizations' (NGO's) is greatly appreciated and most welcome in the community.

Our routine as an educators and Lay partner missionaries in the Mercedarian Missionaries of Berriz (MMB) headed was by sister Norma, she picked me up at our place and drove just an hour in going to the village every Wednesday to have a prayermeeting and monitoring of the projects implemented by the Diocese (Church construction). During the prayer meeting, as always, We heard their stories about how tough life was, that they were poor, no money, and they only ate twice a day. Majority of them just took a cup of tea during morning or drink *Moncoyo*, an extracted juice from corn. We did not agree with their reasoning because as We observed the surroundings, they were rich in fruits and vegetables. We even showed them a plant called Taros that were available on their surroundings wherein the roots and leaves can be eaten as food, but they believed as poisonous (*bulembe*). We told them that if not properly cook it will cause reaction to the body. The following meeting, we brought the plant with roots on it, the same plant around them. We cooked some roots at home by boiling it thoroughly until soften and ate it in front of them and that was the time, they believed that it was not poisonous at all. We realized then that one aspect of their complains and frustrations was due to lack of education. As a Technology and Home Economic (THE) major, we used to bring cooked and baked products as our snacks every after-prayer meeting. As We gave them the food, they asked questions like “*aje-jikonde nyi? Aye-tambanyi?* Is this a banana? Is this sweet potato? We were surprised when they shared to me that bananas and sweet potatoes were only eaten raw when ripe and cleaned. That was the turning point that We decided to teach them how to cook Banana Cue and Sweet Potato Cue as they called it in local term *Kasaka* Cue which means all fried food. We agreed that they will bring bananas and sweet potatoes next meeting.

Vignette 1. We taught them how to cook Banana Cue and Sweet Potato Cue



Image 1. Explaining the Procedure in Cooking Banana and Camote Cue

Wednesday came, we were ready with our mini gasulette, wok pan, utensils and some other ingredients needed for cooking like oil and sugar. When we arrived at the place, we saw that each of them brought a plastic of banana and sweet potatoes and was eager and excited to learn. This was how We taught them. First, we let them wash their hands, peel the bananas and sweet potatoes, and slice it according to size. We switch on the gasulette, put the wok pan with oil on it and let the oil heated for 2 minutes, making sure the temperature was not too hot. We showed them the 2 ways of frying by way of coating sugar on it or without sugar. When oil was ready, we put first five slices of banana and then followed the sweet potatoes, sprinkling white sugar on top of it. The second method was diluting sugar on the oil until melted and the finish product coated with melted sugar. Once We was done, we let them taste the finished product. Sharon said “*Jojitashi kuja Ake kajo, poso kawamisha*” which meant it was our first time tasting it. Others told me; we can peddle this around the village. So, we divided them into 2 groups and let them cook the rest of the bananas and sweet potatoes they had. We also brought some barbeque sticks to show them that this was the way we sold them back home, or they can put it in a roll bag and sell. We also showed them the costing if in case they were interested to peddle or sell it in the market. Then Dorothy on his own words said “*Bena kusaka kuteka abwe pano bapotesha mumukwakwa babena kupunda amba, tantaminai makonde.... tantaminai ntamba....*”. Which meant, we want to cook this and peddle along the street and shout banana cue...sweet potato cue. Two among the women tried this at home and appreciated the technic they have learned. What was important here was the learning gained that banana and sweet potatoes were not only eaten raw but can try other method and procedure and can be a source of income too by selling it around the vicinity.

Even though this was a remote area, and their level of learning was so behind, and technology were laid back, maybe 1990s, but technology transfer can be achievable through teaching face to face and actual demonstration. It ushered in the fundamental structural changes that

can be integral in achieving the significant improvements and awareness among the villagers. Although languages were one of the barriers as a means of transferring the knowledge to them but constant and consistent follow up were helpful to meet the desired outcome. Planned motivational activities were done to guide them through the necessary changes in integrating the new technology and new processes of learning could also enhance their knowledge and skills.

Our home backyard has plenty of banana trees and of different types. Baking banana cake was just simple as one two and three. Bringing food to share to the women was practiced. We told them that this cake was made from the fruit of banana. As usual they cannot believe it and it seemed like We was back in the old era. That time, there was a banana grown nearby the venue and We showed them that this was the perfect type used in baking cake. There were many types of bananas We saw first time and We tried to use it, but the taste was different.

Vignette 2. We taught them how to bake banana cake using pot and charcoal



Image 2. Demonstrating the procedure in baking banana cake

“Twakosha kwepika byepi pukunya matobo wa makonde nyenga? Mambo tufwao chitofu wamalait wa kwigijisha. Ketwakosha kukowata umo” Translate “how can we bake banana cake sister? We do not have oven to use. We cannot afford to have one”. The more We was interested and motivated to teach them. We scheduled baking in the following week, a good timing that the harvested banana ripened. We assigned them to bring pots, charcoal, pen, and notebook. The day came; they brought the utensils needed and the rest of the ingredients. The utensils and ingredients needed in baking banana cake were available in their market, these were: pot, charcoal, two bowls for dry and liquid ingredients, rubber scraper(ladle), wire whisk, baking pan, cups, and spoon. The ingredients were: 2 cups mash ripe banana, 4 cups sifted all-purpose flour, 2 teaspoon baking powder, 2 teaspoon baking soda, 1 teaspoon iodized salt, 2 cups white or brown sugar, 1 can evaporated milk, 1 cup oil, 5 eggs, ½ cup

water, 1 teaspoon vanilla extract, some nuts, and raisins (optional). We gathered the women and started demonstrating the lesson. We assigned somebody to ready first the charcoal and placed it at the corner of the church building to trap the heat and some covering using used roof sheets. Procedure: First bowl, combined first the flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt and mixed using ladle. Second bowl, put in sugar, oil, eggs and mixed using wire whisk until mixed. Alternately added the flour mixture with the milk and water until combined. Add in the vanilla, mashed banana, nuts and raisins and mix. We let them participate on the measuring, mixing, and combining the ingredients. We let somebody put some oil on the baking pan so that the batter will not stick on it and easy to loosen when cooked. We poured the batter mixture to the pot and covered with lid. The burning charcoal was now ready with stone on it. Slowly putting the pot on top of the stone and put some charcoal on top the lid. We made sure the heat was balanced on both sides to avoid burning. After one hour the cake was ready. We sliced it and was perfectly cooked, served them enough for the group. Ba Royce on her own words *“Kena kosha kuswa amba twakosha kupanaja pukunya matobo kwigijisha marasha! Pano nekamongi namwene amba kishika. Haleluya...Amena!* Translated *“We cannot believe we can bake banana cake using charcoal! But now, we witnessed that it is true! Hallelujah...Amen!”* We proved to them that we can bake cake even without oven or electricity. They were so happy, satisfied, and was surprised on the outcome of the event. *“Twasanta biigi pakwitufudisha”* which meant thank you so much for teaching us.

The education sector was the only one that can bridge the gap in knowledge and technology transfer among the rural areas in Zambia. There is an on-going community school that We supported which needed so much help because even the teachers are just an ordinary villager and not even graduated from high school. This school starts at the grassroots level, which is preparatory and primary, ages 5 to 10 years old. Noticed that there is in a demand for a real teacher that can run and manage the school. Knowing and tracing back the history of their education, they attained political independence way back October 24, 1964, from Britain, up to 75 years of colonial administration and the countries educational system provided mainly in the hands of missionaries. Missionaries played a great role in molding the young on the first hand. Zambia owed a great deal from the early missionaries for its educational system. Discussing educational development without mentioning the missionaries is incomplete. Had it not been for the missionaries, primary and secondary education could have delayed much longer coming to Zambia than was the case. The missionaries laid the foundation on which Zambia continued to build up to these days.

Being an educator and witnessed this narrative until now, the truth hurts. Grateful enough that MMB started their mission last 2003, one of their commitments with the poor is “To give special attention to women, accompanying them so that they can live in dignity as daughters of God and develop their potential” (Berriz, 2008). The struggle for better education and to have a good facility, still government efforts and are continuing and unabated. Many factors to be considered like infrastructures, roads, electricity, provision of sufficient clean water in every household, good housing as well as good working condition are not attended. No wonder why educational development is lagged even in urbanized areas.

Theme 2. Broader Rural Development Goals

In Solwezi, the town where copper mining and smelter are located, the industrial development thing was just recently done due to politics. Copper mining emerged as the most important economic activity in the country, introduced by the British South African company at the close century. Economic development was inherited at independence resulting in the development of a limited export enclave type of economy. Noted that the reason why we are here in Zambia it was because our husband was hired to commission the smelter company that produced copper way back 2014. We stayed in the place provided by the company that most of our neighbors are expats. We learned from them that at independence Zambia was still underdeveloped with a lot of people displaced from rural areas to urban areas and making the provision of jobs to the urban dwellers the greatest problem that Zambia had to face even up to date. The most basic objectives of Rural Development Programs have been alleviation of poverty and unemployment through creation of providing employment to marginal farmers and laborers, provision of training to rural unemployed youth and basic social economic infrastructure.

It has long been recognized that the components of development are man, money, and machines (embodied technology). Each is inseparable and essential and no two can succeed without the third and this critical mixture is difficult to attain even to date, plus the basic problem to tackle for the international community is the one-sided relationship under which the possession of know-how and capital resources is unequally distributed. The reason of these is that critical elements-man, has not received enough attention, particularly as regards training and may be worth mentioning here that Zambia technical education is indeed weak. The education system has not been guided by Zambia's manpower needs and has failed to provide Zambian with the education and skills needed to build and develop the country. We once visited the classroom of one member of our CFC community teaching grade 7 and he showed me that one textbook per subject is the only concrete materials for the entire class with 60 students. The emergence of the export enclave and the colonial Government's inability to plan and formulate effective economic policies militated against any development in the whole of Zambia.

Vignette 3. We introduced Waste Management

As an educator, We cannot help but to teach them. Not a dole out system but to equip them to be self-sufficient. Not to give them fish but teach them how to fish. Recycling is an easy way to help conserve nature. Anyone can do it, for it is not difficult. You can also re-use things and turn them into something creative and useful again. You might have heard of the slogan, "There is gold or money in garbage." Every individual engagement in the group contributes a lot to the growth of the community (Mela et al. 2023).

Kandundulo Village is a rural community, an area which is underdeveloped and not civilized, based on geographical conditions. Providing education for proper development of human resources must consider this as one of the key focus areas for rural development initiatives.

Witnessed that there is no proper waste disposal and segregation management since trashes along the street and in the canals are the usual scene. We observed that every time we had snacks and the juices contained in plastic bottle, they would just throw the container anywhere not even putting in the trash can. It seems like they do not care if they throw it and that is it, without thinking the effect of their actions to the environment.

We introduced and discussed to them the 3R's and the keys to proper segregation which We focused our next project on reusing and recycling out from trash. We brought our visual aid like the printed materials showing how many years the plastic degraded and the proper segregation method plus how to make composting to be used as fertilizer on plant. 3R's means Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. **Reduce** simply means living more carefully so that one has less rubbish to get rid of, avoiding waste is the preferable option of waste management. For example, when buying one uses his own grocery bag to avoid plastic, switch off the light when not in use to save energy or use glass in brushing teeth instead of faucet running to reduce water waste. Reducing your consumption of plastics by filling a reusable water bottle with tap clean water is a good practice rather than buying bottled water that includes plastic that are not typically compostable so they can become a serious environmental nuisance and hazard. Another, at the supermarket, we see a lot of fruits in a clamshell plastic packaging, instead of buying it We can just bring a reusable tote bag which We fill it with our grocery items thereby reducing the use of plastic.

Reuse means to use the same items more than once, preferably many times rather than disposing it after one use. For example, reuse glass bottle to other purposes like glass vases and other decorations. Another is by saying no to using straws and disposable coffee cups, instead, bring a stainless-steel insulated travel mug with a lid and a metal straw whenever getting coffee or tea on the go. Whenever We go to the supermarket, grab some cardboard boxes, or use some eco-friendly or reusable bags, in fact many supermarket chains offer the customers disposable plastic bags, instead a great way to carry your groceries is to use your reusable container.

Recycle means to process used materials into new products to save resources and energy. For example, newspapers can be used for wrapping presents. First thing first is We need to have a container be it be an empty can of oil or from the sacks of rice and label it biodegradable and non-biodegradable as guide for me in segregating our trash. For non-biodegradable, also segregate the glass bottles, cans, plastic container, and cellophane, label it so that it is easy for you to identify. It is important to separate the waste items by type to keep the process of recycling easier and smooth, if observed some local waste management services on recycling options offer services to customers free of charge and will give some bins to make the process easier. We also explained to them with our visual aid on how long it takes for garbage to decompose like for example train tickets – two weeks, orange peel – six weeks, milk cartoons – five years, plastic bag – twenty years, coffee cup – thirty years, tin can – fifty years, batteries – one hundred years, plastic straw – two hundred years, plastic bottles – four hundred fifty years. We demonstrated in detail the proper segregation technique by way of separating the waste or trash in a separate container. For example, one container for plastic, one for paper, one for glass, and one for metal. We can sell the segregated trash to a nearby

collector thereby We can have money to buy other basic needs and at the same time helped save the environment by not throwing garbage anywhere that causes destruction like floods, and they like. The last discussion we had had was the simple steps to composting. Women do not have the idea how it is done and relying so much on the fertilizer sold in the market. One member complained “*Kosha twabyala inge ketuji nafetilisa ne, kunwa keisakukomo ne*”, we cannot plant sister if we don’t have fertilizer, plant will not grow.” The more that it challenges me and eager to teach them.

Composting is our way of life; may it be in school or at home. It is our practice and normal routine. We had a chance to have a huge back yard back home and recently here in Zambia is much bigger and wider. Automatically We taught our gardener on how to do composting, for We do not like using fertilizer sold in the market because there are chemicals on it that is not good for the plants. We, too are avid composters, all our kitchen and yard waste go into a bin that we built. We teach also our house help the proper segregation when she threw our waste from our kitchen. The finished compost we pull out each year can feed half of our vegetable garden in our backyard. Neighbors noticed how healthy our corn, sweet potatoes, and other vegetables, for We always shared to them the harvested products and cannot believe that We grew it from our backyard. We also brought harvested vegetables and shared it to his co-workers, and they cannot believe our set up in gardening and requested to visit our place and was amazed and able to pick vegetables grown around. Our gardener shared the methods we were using to his fellow gardener, and they applied too in their backyard.

These are the simple steps in composting. First, decide what type of backyard compost bin, either open pile or a compost bin. If we have a bigger yard then we can have open piles, is up to us, there is no limit on how big our pile is, we just gather the materials and do it in layer. If using bins, like we have old trash can around, use it into a compost bin, just drill some aeration holes and that is, it preserves the heat and keep the animals out and depends also how much compostable material we’ve generate. Next, our location should be flat, sunny, and well drained. Start with a layer of twigs, wood shaving and chips to allow aeration at the bottom, then cover it with dry leaves, alternate the green and brown materials. The green materials like teabags, eggshells, grass chippings, rice grains, fruit and vegetables, fresh leaves, kitchen scraps, coffee grounds and filters. The brown materials like peat moss, vegetables stalks, twigs, woodchips, dry leaves, paper, sawdust and wood shavings, corncobs, and stalks. Make it sure that in adding kitchen and yard waste you must cover it with dry leaves then continue layering until your bin is full. The contents/pile will shrink as it begins to decompose due to chemical reaction. The chemical reaction requires a balance of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and water. We can get carbon from the brown materials and nitrogen from the green materials. All materials you put into the bin will decay, it breaks down into a dark and crumbly substance called humus. We must not include plastic, metals, glass, Styrofoam, greasy food scraps for it will ruin the process. Just maintain your compost bin, by turning or rotating the compost once a week to help eliminate odor and the breakdown process. Repeat the processes of layering then watch and wait. After six months we can harvest our compost and the finished compost smell like earth, dark color and crumbly, that makes a good source of nutrient that rich in fertilizer, so we don’t need money to buy in the market and that would

be a great saving too. We use our compost by way of sprinkling into your lawn, top dressing for flowerpots and garden beds as fertilizers, thereby creating a healthy soil which means a happy plants, that produce good fruit which nourished our body to become strong and healthy.

Indeed, composting our organic waste at home, for me is just simple and versatile process, no need a lot of time, money or even space that we refuse to do it, by doing so we help reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill and lowering methane emissions. After the discussion, we served them snacks along with the open forum and sharing. They are so grateful about the learning they received that even without fertilizer we can still grow plants by doing composting.

Vignette 4. We taught them how to Reuse, Reduce and Recycle (3R's) Waste Materials

Part of our demonstration lesson on waste management is teaching them on 3R's. When we pass by their market, we noticed a huge pile of mixed trash along the road, without segregating it and has a bad smell. It can cause sickness and can contaminate ground, rivers, and streams. Others are burning it; it releases hazardous gases into the air and leaves behind residual ash that can contain toxic components that are negative to the environment and the people. When waste is incinerated it can also be extremely costly because this new technology of waste management must be guided and abided by the law, one of which is eco-friendly, that can emit both greenhouse gases, air pollutants and toxins, others by effectively disposing and treating it that produced energy or re-using it by-product. By incorporating the 3R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) into waste management, manufacturers not only support the environment but can also significantly reduce their costs. We can recycle many everyday household items to help promote a cleaner, greener environment that can produce less trash that goes into landfills or apply your creativity by DIY recycling to be more productive and at the same time keeping our planet cleaner and greener.

The different learning experience of the learner's helps them enhance their cognitive development (Tchombe 2023). Back home, we used to teach our school children in making pillows out of <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pH6W5dmX8h0f> trash. It was one of their annual projects in social studies subject. We brought one from our classroom as our visual aid for the women. We told them that if our household or our neighborhood uses great deal of foil wrappers, plastic cellophane, we can collect it and make something new out of it by making customized pillows. We helped reduce waste and useful as our knee pads and beddings.

We grouped them into three and provided each group a pair of scissors and sewing kit. We let them select a leader in each group for them to decide as to when and where they are going to collect the materials and agreed to join hand in hand in cutting the strips and assembling the project. We motivated them that those group who could finished the projects would receive some kitchen utensils. We gave them our finished product from our classroom before as their model. We collected and brought some foil and plastic cellophane that we already cut

thinly at home. We demonstrated them the steps in making recycled pillow and the materials needed, first by gathering the needed materials like the cut of thinly strips about one inch wide of foil packs or wrappers. Gather it until we have enough amount to fill our pillow depending on the size we choose. Then create a pillowcase either a plastic/acetate cover or cloth of different color or printed one and choose any design like heart, circle, rectangle, or square depending on your liking. In sewing the edges of the cloth leave a small opening. Start filling the pillowcase with the thinly cut plastic foils and close the opening so that no filling will come out. Some tips tricks and warnings during the process like observing safety when working with kids, especially when handling sharp tools like scissors. We can beautify our output by adding some decorations like lace or crochet stitches on the edges to hide the markings. Select a very nice cloth especially the soft one be it be colorful or plain and stuff it with more foils that cut as thinly as possible to make it fluffier and softer. Our product can be sold to any one or serve as presents for birthdays or Christmas. After two months, we agreed to display the finished product and was surprised the outcome. Most of them created two pillows, and some women used the finished product at home and some accepting orders, price tag depends on their workmanship and creativity.

A. *Making pillows out from trash*



Image 3. Displaying the Finished Product of Pillows from Trash

A “Do it Yourself” project to create and decorate was initiated. Instead of throwing the bottle we can make use of it as home decorations. We had the same grouping of women; We provided each group 1 roll of yarn and 1 bottle of glue. Materials needed are glass bottle (ketchup, sauce, soft drinks, etc.), yarn, glue, scissors, ribbons, and flowerets. We brought the finished product We made at home as their model. We demonstrated them following this

simple steps. Clean the glass bottle thoroughly and let it dry. Put glue on the surface of the bottle and encircle the yarn bit by bit, repeat the process until such time the bottle is covered with yarn. Cut the excess yarn. We can add some flowerets or ribbon around the neck depends on your creativity. Some groups made the project others did not for they already use the glass bottle for oil and kerosene container. One member also collected the empty glass bottle and sold it in the market. But what is important here that they know the value of reusing materials instead of throwing it.

B. Empty glass bottle turns into a flower vase



Image 4. Demonstration Lesson on Glass Bottle Recycling

The third project in managing waste was a beautiful container that serves as a center piece, flowerpots, flower vase, tissue holder, beauty product and school supplies holder, container bag and they like. We made five pieces at home in which We gave two as presents to our Filipino and Indian neighbors and the other one as our center piece at home. Since there are some useful plastics such as plastic gallon that can be reused and recycled and it contributes a lot to the growth of the community (Shuvo, 2023).

We showed to the women our handmade products and they loved it. Since, this is an individual performance, we assigned each one to bring empty gallon by the next meeting. Materials needed are one gallon or half gallon size container, hacksaw, sandpaper, zip tie, glue gun, glue stick, fiber fill, cloth, scissor, ruler, pen, ribbons, flowerets. We agreed to do this project every after-prayer meeting outside front of the church. The steps of making the beautiful container are, mark first the gallon using pen before cutting. Cut the gallon following the marking using hack saw, one piece for the base container and the other piece is for the handle. Use the sandpaper for sanding and smoothing the edges.

Plastic gallon of oil turn into a beautiful container



Image 5. Demonstration on Plastic Gallon Recycling

Attach the base and the handle by putting hole on it and connect to secure using zip tie. Put some glue to the base and handle and paste some fiber fill evenly. Measure the desired size of the cloth according to the size of the base and handle, just put extra one inch for sewing. Once we have measured the desired size of the cloth, paste it to the edges of the gallon using glue gun and stick. Trim the excess cloth evenly. Add some ribbons or lace on the edges of the base to cover the trimmings. Next, covering the handle. Apply the desired glue, paste the fiber fill, cover with cloth then sew the edges, put some ribbon or lace to hide the stitches. We can decorate by adding some flowerets at the edge or at the corner of the handle. Our beautiful container is now ready to use.

After our demonstration lesson, we provided, glue stick, fiber fill and some extra cloth. We let them borrow our hacksaw and glue gun and reminded them the dos and don'ts in handling the equipment. We gave it to the group leader as in charge in handling the materials for her to manage if in time somebody will be using it and to monitor also who among the members participated in doing the projects. Next meeting, most of them brought empty gallons. After our prayer meeting, we had activity like cutting, sanding, and tying the gallons. We agreed the date as to when we are going to display our finish products from pillowcase, glass bottle and plastic gallon reusing and recycling. We were surprised and happy with the outcome from this activity in which We rewarded them, each one received one ladle, one bottle of oil and half kilo of brown sugar as our token for their participation. This project ran about three months. Documentations are provided on these projects. The women were surprised and amaze by their finished product, that they can create something unique from recycling and reusing, price tag depending upon their creativity and uniqueness. Many of them accepting

orders, more on pillows and plastic gallon recycling. It was a remarkable feeling seeing them happy for their achievements, such joy cannot be bought by money.

At times, some of our activities and recycled products were posted in social media, a sister nun saw it and invited me as a resource speaker to teach their students at St. Mary Especial School. A school that caters impaired students like blind, mute and deaf. This congregation caters most of impaired and orphans' children along the locality. There, we discuss all about 3Rs and demonstrated again particularly on empty gallon recycling which turn into beautiful containers. We borrowed some of the beautiful container and pillows made by the women as our visual aid, just to motivate them that if others can do it, then we can do it too. Since We don't have a car, we invited one of our Filipina friends to join with me in this journey and was generous enough that they donated some food like spaghetti, bread, and juices, in fact his husband offered their car to be used for free, he even personally cooked the spaghetti. Such gestures melted our heart.

When we arrived there, a group of students welcomed us with a chant, but we cannot understand their language, another group lined up with their beautiful smiles and greetings, another group just doing their clapping of hands. Noticed that some of them are blind, and We assumed those group who were clapping were mute. We was amazed but confused on how the students were able to learn or understand our demonstration lesson with their situations. The sister nun guided us to their bigger room and all students about 50 of them went inside. Without wasting our time, we introduced ourselves and explained to them of our presence and instructed them to divide themselves into three groups, choose a leader and prepare a chant for we will be giving prizes afterwards for those group who performed and actively participated on their task. The association between stimulus-response can be made more effectively by reinforcement (Skinner, 1957). This means that through reinforcement, students are motivated to work effectively and positively because there is cooperation and peer to peer tutoring among them and maximize their own and each other's learning.

While they did their assigned task, we posted our visual aid made of cartolina paper on their black board. During the discussion, one sister standing on our left side doing the signed language for those students who were mute, and on our right-side doing translation from our English language to Bimba dialect and vice versa. Noticed also that there were two local teachers assigned to assist them. Seeing the students so interested and eager to learn despite their ordeal melted our heart. We first discussed to them the Do's and Don'ts in making the project because we are using electrical tools, matches, candle, and other sharp objects. We explained to them the importance of 3Rs' followed by showing the visual aid as to how many years our waste would be decayed. During our demonstration, we called the leader or any volunteer from each group to come and participate, especially on holding the glue gun with glue stick and applying it to the surface, in putting the fiber fill and cloth, cutting, sewing, and trimming the edges of the fabric. We let them participate during the process so that they would be the one to teach the rest of the group. Cooperative learning is characterized by positive interdependence, where students perceive that better performance by individuals produces better performance by the entire group (Johnson et al., 2014). It took me a while to finish the lesson because We must wait until the sign language and translation been delivered

before We proceed. A bit challenging though, but the joy and inspiration to teach them is inside me. After our demonstration lesson, we provided all the materials needed per group with an hour allocated time to finish the assigned task. We noticed that student asked question and helped one another. Dewey(1938) *believes learning involves 'learning to think'*. This means that the processes are not only doing the task or activity but also requires reflection that enables them to solve the problem and prepare them to ask more questions. Here comes the most exciting part of the activity is the judging and giving of prizes basing on the criteria given such as creativity, workmanship, and overall impression.

Their outputs were impressive, the sisters admired their achievements, and they were the ones judging what group is the first, second and third. Some tokens were given to the teachers and the group leaders as our way of thanking in facilitating and in leading the group. Free snacks for all have been provided after the activity like a plate of spaghetti, bread, sausage, cupcakes, and juice. The head teacher made her closing remarks and handed to me a certificate of appreciation. Then, when were about to depart the place, the sisters hold us for a while and letting us witness the presentation from the students. We thought it was just a simple one but was surprised then that the students wore costumes when they performed the Zambian dance. They really prepared something to entertain us. We were touched by the drama performed by the group of impaired students (blind and mute), even sign language was able to convey the messages. Then after that, the sisters invited us to dine with them with the food they prepared. They also introduced to us one of their blind students named Lila, first time in our life to witness a blind student who can read fast using braille. The more We admire their vocation in teaching impaired students. Five of the nuns volunteered to oversee the school were of Indian nationality. They do not have monthly salary, but the local government gave them monthly allowance with minimal amount. While eating, we talked about their plans in the future that if the students can produce many, they will sell their finished products during “Market Day” thereby can generate funds to sustain their needs like electric and water bills. This school rely only on donations from the local, government welfare, and other NGO’s. From then on, we supported all the activity of the school and happy to share something even in our own little way. This experience humbled myself and motivated me to do more and make a difference.

As far as waste management is concerned, pollution is one of the biggest environmental issues. The air gets unhealthier each day. In the study of Laura Parker (June,2019) on her article on the world’s Plastic Pollution explained that “plastic pollution has become one of the most pressing environmental issues, as rapidly increasing production of disposable plastic products overwhelms the world’s ability to deal with them. It is most visible in developing Asian and African nations, where garbage collection systems are often inefficient or nonexistent. But the developed world, especially in countries with low recycling rates, also has trouble properly collecting discarded plastics. Even here in Zambia when we had a chance to have a Zafari tour in one of their beautiful African landscapes, one of the problems that causes death among land-based animals like tigers, hyenas, elephants, zebras, camels, cattle, and other large mammals was consuming plastics and thin cans. We saw posted picture of hyenas died due to the thin can stock in his mouth. We were surprised, we thought it only happens in the ocean, especially when plastic breaks down into micro plastics and on the

water column to the open ocean, impossible to recover the plastic waste. Our waters are loaded with non-biodegradable trash, which leads to poisoning of marine life. It has become so ubiquitous that prompted a global treaty negotiated by the United Nations for the solution to prevent plastic waste from entering rivers and seas. One of the many solutions is to improve waste management systems, recycling, and reduction of manufacturing unnecessary single-use plastics. Despite the effort of people to save the earth from further destruction by way of educating them, many still do not believe nor pay attention, a very sad reality. Perhaps, for some not directly experienced natures' wrath, makes them not really care about the environmental issues the world is facing. As We interviewed the women, if they experience super typhoon and earthquake none of them answered yes. They do not even know what earthquake mean. So lucky that this county never experienced such kind of natural calamities.

Theme 3. Management Skills

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader”. John Quincy Adams. This quotation implies our journey in leading the Small Christian Community (SCC) at St. Augustine Parish in the village of Kandundulo. Not so much so on how We managed the group but the inspiration We got from the villagers for me to dream, learn and do more and more to become a better version of myself in leading His flock. As far as management is concerned, it possesses skills or abilities in fulfilling a specific task in an organization. But We am not that learned, all We have is the experience and the passion to share out of gratefulness for the chances and the blessings God has bestowed me. We believe skills can be developed through learning and practical experience as you go through in managing the people entrusted to us. They say that a good leader is a good manager and good managers are almost good leaders as well. Often leadership and management skills used interchangeably as they both involve communication, decision-making, problem-solving, planning, delegation, and time management. In our case, we learned to manage as We go along the way. Learning by doing, in partnering the works of Mercedarian Missionaries in entering the field because of their love and concern for others, that desire to help improve the lives of people living in peripheries. The way We lead them is through empowerment by teaching them productive skills that help sustain and increase their quality of life in the family and community. Using the educational activities, hopefully woman can improve their capability to optimize all potential posed by community natural potential and of sociocultural to solve community problems.

Zambian people are so meticulous when it comes to their looks, hair, and the way they dress. We admired their conservative looks, they are more formal than Americans for We always saw them in suits or business attire, especially in church services, special occasions, and in government offices. Women are not allowed to wear shorts or skirts

Vignette 5. We supported and trained them to sew



Image 6. Practical Examination in Sewing

above the knee and shoulders should not be exposed. They really preserved their modesty and tradition. In effect, the market that produces garments for everyday use as well for special occasion is so vibrant and a key to technology diversification. In town and in the villages, sewing machines may it be owned or rented is central to cultural economy of consumption due to enormous social value that local consumers attached to the dress code and to dressing well, which dress is both a means and an end. One time, we could not help but asked our house helper why Zambian women dressing like you are going to a party even in casual days? because We noticed her wearing a formal attire every time she arrived home, she answered me, that is the way it is, that is normal for them.

The group of women has twenty-two members, they were taught to sew dress to make a living. We considered this as a livelihood skill to include their physical ability as a member to carry out activities regardless of their educational levels. An activity that supports social capabilities in their struggle for survival and to improve standard of living. This sewing program ran for one year. We hired teacher to teach them the basic sewing method for six months. Schedule of classes were flexible for we have three available sewing machines generated from NGOs. Sewing classes allocated four hours per day, two hours in the morning and two so hours in the afternoon from Monday to Friday. Women agreed as to the time of reporting and to whom is available on the given days. We monitored their progress every Wednesday after our prayer meeting. The other six months intended for practical and culmination activity. We provided some financial assistance for the wages of teacher, cloth during their practical and final output, food, and tokens as awards during their graduation. Certification and awards like kitchen utensils and groceries to those deserving women. In fact, the one that We wore during their culmination was sewed by one of the women named sister

Agnes. Now, they sew their own clothes for their families, children's school uniforms, and accepted outside services. The first available sewing machine was three pieces only, now there are fifteen, donated coming from Non-Government Organization just to support the women. The group of women has been recognized by the council and supported the program by conducting training and introducing other kind of machine for knitting. The council lent a knitting machine to the women and monitored their progress too. We met the in-charge of the council and they appreciated us in doing our voluntarism with the women. That knitting program still going on even this moment.

Zambia's location is on level upland, it is mostly a plateau that rises to 2,434 m (8000 ft) in the east. Smallholders' farmers are dependent on rain-feed agriculture, most field crops and livestock production for their comfort and food supplies, dependent solely

Vignette 6. We went with them toiling their vegetable farm



Image 7. Selling Their Produce from the Farm

upon weather to provide self-sustaining water energy. But due to climate change plus the country's high rainfall variability and limited irrigation capacity make the production so vulnerable. The frequency of drought is a common occurrence, shorter rainy season about three months has led to increasing crop loss and food insecurity.

The Mercedarian congregation bought a plot intended for the women to cultivate about three hectares. Our first visit with them was to divide the plot in portion and it was up to the women what vegetables they like to grow. We went there by car but stopped on the middle of the bush because it was not passable, we then went by foot. Then one farmer saw us and

asked, “why do foreigners lost in the bush?”. It took us an hour and a half with bumpy road while the other women by foot to reach there. The farm’s location was far and bushy with a lot of grown anthills. The good thing was it was located along the stream. Source of water was good, and the soil was fertile. Women were so happy to discover the location, they even sang and danced thanking God for the blessing and the assurances that plants will grow well. They immediately measured their allocated area and started cleaning and loosening the soil. We cooked our food and had our lunch together under the small hut. We discovered plenty of wild fruits that We ever tasted for the first time and gathered wild plants, orchids and brought them home. Second visit was cultivating and planting. We bought seeds of different kinds like red beans, white beans, and ground nuts. The root crops that they always planted are cassava and corn for these are their staple food. We also introduced potatoes, a type of potato called Russets, which makes the best French fries, fluffy baked potato and delicious because it is high in starch and low in moisture that most foreigners are buying it with high value compared to the local sweet potatoes. We usually planted it at home, so We brought some of our seed potatoes that already cut into small pieces which has two small leaf bud “eyes” and dried a few days, dusted with sulfur to reduce diseases problem before planting it. Planted it in three inches deep and a foot apart. If we have a bigger space, plant it in rows or hills or raised beds, but if we have smaller space, we can use big containers like the size of pail paint container We usually used at home. This kind of potatoes can be harvested when you see its flowers started to bloom, about seventy days (10weeks) after planting.

Our third visit was harvesting. We borrowed a pick-up truck from a Filipina friend to carry all the harvested crops and vegetables. Women just went on foot as they were used to it. They gathered all their harvest in sacks and put it on one place and all of them sang and danced as their offering to God thanking Him for the blessings they received. Their food and snacks during every visit were provided. Sometimes we cooked on site. When we went home, the harvested crops cannot fit to the car. Some women carried the produce on foot. At that moment the women enjoyed their harvest, had food on their table and sold some to the market, with that, they had money and bought things needed for their families. One thing that We admired most from these women, that they never forgot to share some of their first fruit harvest to others. We even refused to accept because We have at home, but then that was their way of thanking and refusing it was a big insult to them. Indeed, even the poor has something to give. Since then, the women maintained in planting crops and vegetables they like. They considered themselves very lucky for the opportunity given to them.

Vignette 7. We introduced them Aqua Farming



Image 8. Harvesting Fish from the Pond

Zambia is a landlocked country, a country that does not have territory connected to an ocean. Landlocked countries grow slower in their economies than those countries which has access to the sea, they pay high price in transporting for not having seaport of their own. Being landlocked reduces a country's average growth by 1.5% annually (Mackellar et al., 2000).

In the place where the farm is located there is stream along the side. Supply of water is abundant, so we decided to make a fishpond. We discussed to them, and the women agreed on it with the help of their husbands and other men volunteers. As planned, two bigger ponds about 30 by 50 meters and sloping depth about 1.5 to 2 so meters at the drainage end. They also constructed a collection pit where water collects before flowing out, it is useful when we drain the pond before harvesting the fish. It took them two months to finish the dikes, putting pipes that control the flow and water level from the source. Putting also tracks and roadways along the pond wall for easy access to the pond. Aside from labor pay, we also provided food and drinks during the making. This project run for about a year with the collaborative effort plus financial assistance from other stake holders, the project has been realized. We also empowered them that fish farming is for personal use or profit or raising fish thereby making better use of our land and our water. We encouraged them, that it only needs their commitment and hard work because this farm is so promising. Aside from vegetables and crops, they can even raise livestock such as pigs and chickens. If their family is not too big it is even more than enough, one you need for food. A couple volunteered to stay and eager to monitor and manage the farm. We contributed any amount in making the small hut enough for the couple. After 10 months of waiting, feeding, and nurturing, we harvested the Tilapia or Brim fish as they called it. Brim fish are sometimes referred to as American bream, sunny, bluegill, or copper nose and are native to North America, this species of fresh water and marine fish belonging to a variety of genera including Abramis. Harvested one large oval fish crate and two buckets full. They divided and distributed two buckets for them to share, and the other fish crate sold in the market. Although the harvest has no profit yet but what is

important, the fishpond is there and lots of finger lings, sooner or later the women can harvest with big return of investment and have their share of food on their table.

For years of being with the women, empowering and nurturing, it humbled myself and taught me a lot about the simplicity of life. There is joy in simple living, no stress and pressure. It made me realized then that living in a farm is a good retirement. No wonder why the nuns live a simple life. Their lives of being missionaries is so fulfilling and worthy to be emulated. We witnessed that although they received training in their organization and know their specific role, but when they are in the battlefield, they must be self-motivated and knows what to do without being directed, they want to involve even without invitation. In today's world, seldom we can see this kind of act, an act of bravery and selflessness. They live also according to their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Their joy and satisfaction derived from their accomplishments, even just a few pats on their back are enough for them. Life skills are adaptive abilities and positive behaviors that allow individuals to act effectively on daily life's demands and changes. Life skills are the ability to overcome stress and frustration in a changing life (Francis, 2016). It is capability that person needs to dare for facing life and life problems fairly without feeling anxious, depressed, then proactively and creatively looking for and finding solutions so that he is finally able to overcome to create a prosperous life.

Theme 4. Leadership Skills

As an Educator, "Leaders are made, they are not born" (Lombardi, 2012). Meaning they are made by hard effort, which is the price which all of us must pay to achieve any goal that is worthwhile. In other words, work hard for success, it should not be forced or authoritarian but subtle that anyone would emulate. The goal of leadership is to increase one's well being and their fulfillment (Burmansah et al. 2023).

It has been a while We taught them some livelihood skills just to overcome their basic needs and ends met. So, we decided to lead them through spirituality. Although we usually have prayer meetings, we discussed and shared a lot from the bible, but when trials and problems strike on their way, women do not believe in God but rather on witchcraft. If something good happened to them like successes, good harvest, etc., they are credited to God, but failures and bad luck is from the witchcraft. It was difficult to convince them that success and failure, difficulties, trials, problems are part of the journey in life, and that God allowed it to happen for He has plans and purposes on it. That everything we have is all by the grace, mercy, and love from above. So much more suffering in the village not only materially but more so spiritually. As lay missionaries appointed by the Bishop of Solwezi (see appointment in appendices) motivated me more to introduce this program from the CFC global community. We are not appointed nor commission as CFC Missionaries here in Zambia, ours is just voluntary out of gratitude. First, we discussed and submitted this proposal to the pastoral head explained to him the details of our plans with positive response. We relay the progress of our plans to our CFC elders assigned in African continent and assured to us with their help and assistance. This Filipino couple missionary originally from the Philippines, volunteered

to do mission, their home based is in Durban South Africa. They ride two airplanes to reach our destination. Finally, we said “Yes” and decided to commit ourselves to start the program, first time ever in the Diocese of Solwezi. We set a meeting in our place and invited the couple missionary to come and discuss the program to the Diocese of Solwezi with the presence of Bishop Charles Kasonde, pastoral head Fr. Sydney Lumbida together with four priests and three nuns in our house. We were humbled and pleased that they love and embrace the program and willing to support in every step of the way. The bishop instructed the parish priests to announce the invitation every after mass on Sundays and weekdays among the three parishes. We gave letters and ask permissions for the venue and facilities used during the activity. With positive responses from the invitation and affirmation for the facilities, all plans were set. It was a three-day Christian Life Program with 17 couples. We sponsored one couple from the village of Kandundulo. We managed to give this couple monetary assistance for their travel from and back to the village. The program was successfully implemented with the help from the CFC missionary couple and Mercedarian nuns. We had one household (five couples) from the parish of St. Kizito, one Household from the parish of St. Daniel and one household from the parishes of St. Peter, St. Stephen, and St. Augustine. Every household has a leader, and from these three households is equivalent to one unit, that makes us a Unit Head in Solwezi. Prayer meeting done depending on the venue we agreed, sometimes in our house or at the churches they located. Aside from prayer meetings, we also meet for our prayer assembly once a month. When pandemic came, our prayer meetings done virtually for the household heads but for the members, it was done face to face for they do not have access to the internet.

We decided to lead them to religious life by introducing the program of Handmaids of the Lord (HOLD). Being a member of the CFC community for 28 years, We believe this program for the women would help nourish their spirituality. HOLD is under the umbrella of Couples for Christ (CFC) community. A wholehearted service as its **Vision** is to bring glad tidings to the poor. The **goal** here is

Vignette 8. We Lead them to Religious Activities



Image 9. Dedication Rites of Couples for Christ and Handmaids of the Lord

to uplift their spirituality, boost their morale and know the purpose and meaning of this driven life that reflects on the character of Mary, the mother of Jesus, that somehow apply in everyday life as a daughter, a sister, a wife, and a mother through and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Its **Mission** is for personal transformation, equipping leaders to be more effective servants and evangelization by bringing her family and other women in different states of life. **HOLD aims** to provide Christian support environment for single mature women, those whose husbands are incapacitated or in prison, wives of overseas workers, widows, separated or divorced and single parents. Regardless of religion or denominations are everyone is welcome to this program. This is free and voluntary without registration and monetary involvement.

One can be a member of this Religious Organization, by attending the Christian Life Program (CLP). Composed of three modules which has four talks equivalent to twelve sessions. Every module composed of the following topics: The Basic Truths about Christianity; God's Love, who is Jesus Christ, what it means to be a Christian and repentance and faith. Second module composed of the following topics: The authentic Christian Life and Ideal Loving God, Loving thy neighbor, the Christian family, and life in the Holy Spirit. Third module is composed of the following topics: Living a Spirit filled Christian life; receiving the power of the Holy Spirit, growing in the Holy Spirit, life and mission of Handmaids of the Lord and transformation in Christ plus their dedication rites. The first module presents the absolute basics of Christian Life and theology, second presents the kind of life that calls us to do, our personal response and third is receiving Jesus as our Lord and savior and our life commitment to Jesus. We started the program last July 2018. All the women in our prayer group attended the program, every Saturday afternoon for the duration of three hours. Every weekend, we went to the village and conducted the talks together with CFC informants

(couple) and HOLD (women) for they have the same topic, but during the sharing, they were grouped accordingly. We always interceded them in our prayers and allowed the Lord to work in them at each passing week and that they were open to the changes that God will make in their lives during the program. Although challenging in transmitting the messages due to language barriers, good thing that one of the informants served as our translator and was generous enough to render her services to us voluntarily. The program was supposed to be completed in 12 weeks (three months) but it took us four months and had our dedication rites last December 8, 2018. We had a total of 7 couples and 17 Handmaids of the Lord members. The program is still going on even this time of pandemic, because CFC-HOLD is considered as one of the Small Christian Community (SCC) in the parish of St. Augustine. Regular meetings are conducted every other Saturday, plus Sunday services in the Church. With this program, we managed to pastor all the members by schedule, basing upon the manual guide and the yearly evangelization plan of the CFC community with the help and support from the elders, leaders, and CFC couple missionary assigned in African continent. Even this time of pandemic, Prayer meetings, Talks and Training are implemented virtually among the leaders of the group to uplift their spirit and to empower them in leading the flock God entrusted to us. For the past years that we were serving with our brothers and sisters, we saw their smiles, felt their joy, and witnessed their sincerity in serving with their fellow brothers and sisters in the parishes. All these for the greater Glory of God. All aspects of our endeavor – preparation, fundraising, travel, and immersion were centered on the Gospel values, charism, and commitment of MMB and CFC under the Catholic Faith.

CFC VISION

Families in the Holy Spirit Renewing the Face of the Earth

Moved by the Holy Spirit, one with the Catholic Church, blessed to witness to Christ's Love and service, Couples for Christ is united global community of family of evangelizers that sets the world on fire with the fullness of God's transforming love.

CFC MISSION

Building the Church of the Home,

Building the Church of the Poor

We are Couples for Christ. We are committed to live in God's righteousness and holiness, evangelizing people through a life of love and service; we shall work for the renewal of families that will serve God and build generations of Christian leaders; we shall pursue Total Christian Liberation through social justice, respect for life, and work with the poor.

CFC STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Couples For Christ adheres to a set of beliefs and ideals, from which flow its Christian values, attitudes, and behavior, as well as its teachings, programs, and approaches to Christian renewal within the context of family relationship.

WE BELIEVE in marriage as an indissoluble institution as taught by our Lord Jesus Christ (Mt. 19:6); and that God created marriage primarily for love between man and woman, and for the procreation and proper rearing of children.

WE BELIEVE that God created man and wife with equal personal worth and dignity; and that God ordained order in the family by giving the man role as head of the family and the woman as his helpmate and support, which roles best express their complementarity.

WE BELIEVE in the inalienable and irreplaceable right and responsibility of parents to educate their children; and those children need to be educated in essential human and Christian values for them to become responsible and mature members of society.

WE BELIEVE that the family, in practicing the gospel message, shares in the life and mission of the Church –through prayers, evangelization and service to others, especially the poor.

WE BELIEVE that Christian family renewal can best be achieved by inviting Jesus to be the Lord of our homes, by allowing the power of the Holy Spirit to lead our family lives, and through the full use of all spiritual gifts at our disposal.

WE BELIEVE in the maternal mediation and intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary in bringing us closer to her son Jesus, Devotion to Mary leads us to devotion to Jesus that will lead to our sanctification.

COVENANT OF THE CFC Handmaids of the Lord (HOLD)

Trusting in the Lord's help and guidance:

1. We Shall live as a follower of Christ:

*Pray daily for at least 15 minutes.

*Read Scriptures daily for at least 15 minutes.

*Live a righteous life and avoid situations which are occasions for sin

*Put good order into our private life and support our parents in building a Christian family.

2. We will work towards the evangelization and transformation of our workplace,

My family and our community:

*Put good order in our work situation.

*Be a witness of the love and power of the Lord Jesus in our work and
in our family.

*Be a good steward of all resources entrusted to me.

*Be a good citizen of our country, obeying its laws and protecting its

environment.

3. We will be a committed and active member of the CFC Handmaids of the Lord:

*Attend our small group meetings regularly and support the good order
of the meetings.

*Faithfully participate in all the activities of the group.

*Relate in love, loyalty to and respect for all our sisters in the Lord.

*Intercede daily for the group and its mission.

4. We will make myself available to the Lord for service:

*Bring other women to Christ.

*Give generously of our time and resources to the Lord's service,
whenever I am called and follow directions of those who have
responsibility for our service.

*Support the work of Couples for Christ and its Ministries.

5. We will study and seek to grow as a Christian person:

*Attend all teachings, retreats, seminars, and conferences of the CFC
Handmaids of the Lord.

*Diligently study all materials given to me.

May the Lord Jesus Christ help me to be faithful in living out this commitment every day for His greater honor and glory and for the good of our sisters.

MERCEDARIAN MISSIONARIES OF BERRIZ (MMB)

The MMB commitment with the poor:

We want to make an option on behalf of the impoverished of our world, as well as, to learn how to situate ourselves with those who live on the "edge of society".

- To give special attention to women, accompanying them so that they can live in dignity as daughters of God and develop their potential.
- To commit ourselves to immigrants, refugees and those displaced by wars, defending their human dignity and rights, weaving networks of welcome and support, appreciating and valuing their cultures.
- To live the option for justice, non-violence, reconciliation, and peace as non-negotiable part of our lifestyles. (2 Co.5:18) We want to promote these options in our educational works and in all our ministries and commitments, thereby creating an awareness of social and political justice. We want to

collaborate in bringing to birth a more human and equal society and world...one which responds more fully to the dream of God for His creation.

- To share our resources and goods with the poor.

Vignette 9. Teaching them on Financial Stewardship

As part of the CFC program, we conducted a teaching entitled “Financial Stewardship”. One month after the dedication rites, this teaching was given to all new members. This was an hour and 30 minutes teaching plus open forum. The talk focused on “Taking responsibility for God’s Work Through our Finances”. There are 3 basic ways we use our finances in the Lord: tithing, resource sharing, and almsgiving. Through this, we acknowledge that everything that we have belongs to God, and we are merely stewards and we owe our prosperity to Him. Tithing is 10% of the person’s income, and it is not part of the covenant in the community, but members are encouraged to do a “Love offering” which means giving with all your heart. For God do not need money, He even own the universe, He just wants to see the condition of our hearts. How we respond to tithing can be a measure of our spiritual growth. It reflects on our stewardship, gratitude, priorities, faith, and conversion. That without God’s blessings, we would not enjoy the things we do. We believe that as we put God first, He will provide whatever we need in life. Our conversion in giving reflects on our Christian generosity, in selflessness, in simplicity of lifestyles, in detachment of material things, and the like. Focus not so much on the 10% but on the 90% we keep for ourselves. Let us not lose the proper perspective that the practical need for money is just His way of giving us the privilege of being His co-workers in building His Kingdom. During the open forum, informants would ask; What if We don’t have enough? Relate on the story of widow’s mite. (Luke 21:1-4). She gave out of her poverty. God promises that He will open the floodgates, not only He will provide, but He will be very generous. However, there might be some situations where we really cannot afford to give, it is acceptable not to give offering. For there are 3 T’s that you can give, your **Time**, **Talent**, and **Treasures**, as it is wholeheartedly given. Good financial stewardship principle includes money management, planning, budgeting, organizing, and controlling. Every one of us has each own priorities in life, and experience different needs, but find that list that fits your priorities and in accordance with your heart. “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if We will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. We will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight says the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 3:10-12). One of the verses that reminded me that “if you don’t trust me” just give me one step forward and see what We can do”. He is telling us to tithe not as obligation but of obedience and faithfulness. It is about how we manage our finances that He entrusted to us, that we are just stewards in general, that everything we have is His, and that we are merely a vessel and holder of His blessings. “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21).

Women cannot afford to tithe regularly or offer their love offerings for they do not have enough, but look what God revealed to them in their way of tithings. Two unforgettable experiences that always linger in our heart. Once upon a time when we went to the farm Saturday morning, we noticed that some of the women dug the soil and picked something. Curious about it, we approached them and asked, “what are you doing?” Only to find out that they collected charcoal under the soil that was burned days ago. We witnessed how difficult it was for them. They used charcoal in cooking their food, an important basic need. The following day Sunday, as scheduled, it was our CFC first fruit offering during the mass. This first fruit offering is a thanksgiving to the Lord, it is our way of giving anything, be it be from your harvest or our income, and offered to the church. We noticed one of the offerors brought a small sack of charcoal, joyfully dancing and singing as she offered. She was one of the women collecting charcoal from the farm the other day. We asked myself why she offered that sack of charcoal when she needed it most. That scene melted our heart, We cried inside because We knew the Lord revealed to me His message through that woman, the generosity out of her poverty. Sometimes in life, the most generous are those without money and the kindest people are those who have been hurt the most. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed (Proverbs 11:25)

Another beautiful encounter, when one of the members offered her services to teach the children ages six to nine as a volunteer teacher to the community, school managed by the Diocese. We admired sister Nely, a wife and mother with one child, offered herself to teach 35 pupils in her class without any compensation. We interviewed her why she did so, she said to me “this is the right thing to do to help the community children, if We will not do this, so who will?” She got me into our nerve for We am a teacher by profession too. It inspired me most and because of that We managed to share their story to our upper household prayer group meeting virtually, this group members located anywhere in the world and without hesitation, they offered financial assistance for the renovation of one classroom to make it bigger, wider, and conducive to learning. The community and the parents also provided benches and tables for the children to set and write on properly. The bishop acknowledged the CFC community for the help extended to this community school. As a reward to all volunteer teachers, we managed to give them free bag, school, and office supplies to all the children and teachers. As we continued journeying with them, there is a huge difference when it comes to their outlook in life. The community gathered as one and without hesitation shared their time, talents, skills, and resources to make this community school a progressive one. Although there is a lot to be done, but one day at a time. Often, we saw brothers and sisters lead and rendered services voluntarily and offered gifts freely. Indeed, God works in very mysterious way.

Missionary Educator, voluntary work is not confined to any specific area of work or expertise; it is rather any avenue by which a Christian is enabled to share the Gospel in a cross-cultural context. One of the basic commitment and responsibility as a Christian is “Knowing God’s Will”, the Lord will not tell everything we want to know, but He will tell us what we need to know to be able to follow His will only by His grace. With all His generosity, those gifts and talents are given to us to be used for His greater glory. The Bible serves us our guide and as

reminders that the Lord is always here standing by our side. So, whether we are not sure what step is next, check out (Proverbs 16:3) Ask the Lord to bless your plans, and you will be successful in carrying them out. And if the long journey is worth the reward (see 2 Timothy 4:7) We have done our best in the race, we have run the full distance, and We have kept the faith. If you just need a little reminder that God is always watching (1 Corinthians 10:31) Well, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do it all for God's glory. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God"(Philippians 4:6).

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