



Edited by Andar Parlindungan and Julian Elf

The Relevance of Advanced Education for an Interreligious and Intercultural Global Community

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship

Documentation of the UEM Alumni Conference in Hattingen,
Germany, 30 August – 7 September 2019





This book is dedicated to
Rev. Agustinus Purba, MA,
a participant of the conference
who died of Covid-19
shortly before the publication of this book.

The Relevance of Advanced Education for an Interreligious and Intercultural Global Community

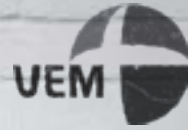
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Language and Literature in Marburg. Since February 2016,
Volker Martin Dally has been the General Secretary of the
United Evangelical Mission. Previously, Dally was director
of the Leipzig Mission (2011-2016).*

The theologian has extensive ecumenical experience.

*For example, from 2006–2010 he worked as a lecturer
at the Balewiyata Theological Institute of the East Java
Christian Church (GKJW) in Malang, Indonesia.*

Photo: Fotostudio Kepper / UEM

Foreword

Scholarship Programme: A Translation of Faith in the Communion of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM)

Over the last twenty years, the UEM has awarded several hundred scholarships. We currently have 71 scholarship holders in the programme, 32 women and 39 men, as of May 2020.

The UEM invests a great deal in this method of training professionals in the member churches, both materially and in terms of personnel within the organization itself. Why are we doing this? A few exemplary points will be used to illustrate the value of these programmes for the common future of the UEM.

As the UEM, we are a communion of very different countries with a variety of cultures and languages. Our scholarship programme is intended to promote exchange between individual members, not only through person-to-person encounters as part of regular visits, but also through intellectual exchange and the expansion of professionalization in the individual fields of work.

Whereas in the past the scholarships were primarily focused on studies in theology, in the last ten years the proportion has increasingly shifted towards development policy scholarships. One reason for this is that the members of the UEM have established a broad range of public services in their respective countries. For the education of their theological personnel, they now make use of the many local opportunities they have created for highly qualified theological education that meets the needs of the culture. The priority of the theological scholarships has changed to give preference to spiritual-scientific exchange, rather than the professionalization of theological personnel with regard to the service in the church. This also means that the UEM can now fulfil more requests from members to supplement the broader ministries of the church and its institutions. Scientific exchange in the fields of diaconal work, medicine, agricultural sciences, church music, economics, and administration is of great importance to UEM members today.

Various aspects have led UEM members to see a greater need here now than in the past. In general, it has become clear that with the increasing demands for professionalism and the growing fields of work within the churches and institutions, theological personnel are not automatically qualified to take on certain tasks. Trust in God and trust in the power of prayer also includes learning the corresponding skills. Even in biblical times, tasks were distributed such that the growing structures of the church of God could be maintained accordingly. Thus we read about the appointment of men to assist Moses (Ex 18:13-27) and the election of relief workers for the poor in the new Christian church (Acts 6:1-7), to name just two examples out of many.

The further training of staff through scholarships prepares the members of the UEM for existing areas of work and for upcoming challenges. Professionalization can considerably reduce future incidences of undesirable appointments. Close supervision of the scholarship holders allows us to determine at an early stage whether the person will bring in innovative ideas and can meet the requirements of the task. At the same time, we can expect that the awarding of a scholarship will create an internal bond between the UEM and its members, so that the scholarship recipients will wish to remain in the service of the communion over the long term. To this end, it is of course necessary that the members of the UEM can then offer the graduates of the scholarship programme appropriate positions in their institutions.

It is important that the members of the UEM clearly perceive their opportunity and responsibility with regard to the scholarship programme. The UEM does not award scholarships in order to train and educate suitable people for the organization itself – this is a very special side effect when filling positions within the organization – but rather so that scholarship recipients will want to commit themselves to their sending church early on and remain loyal to it. What the existing structures encourage us to take for granted in the case of theological training can only be achieved in other areas of work by assigning appropriate tasks within the church. If the members of the UEM do not want to lose out on scholarship graduates in the competition for prospective specialists, they must prove themselves to be committed and attractive employers. Otherwise these women and men who have received specialized training at great expense will very quickly move on to state institutions or other organizations and companies.

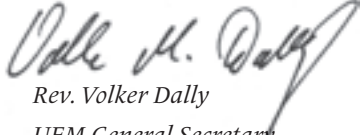
The material award of the scholarship is therefore accompanied by nonmaterial support. In those places where the members of the UEM have succeeded in retaining the sponsored persons, they take up important key positions at the end of their scholarships and work successfully as multipliers, whether in the leadership and diaconal institutions of the churches or as medical doctors, development specialists, lecturers, or experts in other areas. With the intercultural and scientific experience they have gained, the alumni make an essential contribution to the development of their churches, but also to the economic, social, and democratic development of their countries of origin.

This developmental benefit may not be immediately apparent at first glance, but the experience of the international community, together with the internationalization of training institutions through scholarship holders, contributes in no small measure to the positive development of a common world. From this point of view, the UEM scholarship programme also translates faith into other cultures. This translation of faith is not limited to vocabulary and grammar, but includes exposure to foreign cultures and

traditions, and leads to a consolidation and enrichment of one's own faith as well as the faith of one's counterpart. We of the UEM see this as global learning in an ecumenical perspective. It is obvious, however, that such learning should not be limited to the actual duration of study. The successful graduates of these programmes have a special task here.

We are currently expanding our UEM alumni network, as it offers the possibility to continue the spiritual and scientific exchange within the UEM community beyond the study phase. Today, many former scholarship holders from the three regions are working to contribute their gifts and acquired knowledge in the international context. Whether a pastor from Tanzania or Indonesia working in Germany, a doctor from one part of the world in another, a musician abroad, an expert in interfaith dialogue, or a representative for advocacy issues, each of them is part of a community that is committed to proclaiming the Kingdom of God in word and deed.

**We could hardly imagine a better investment
in the future of the UEM and its members.**



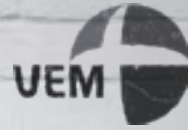
Rev. Volker Dally
UEM General Secretary



Rev. Dr Andar Pasaribu Parlindungan,

from Indonesia. He is a pastor of the Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP). Parlindungan was a scholarship holder of the EWDE (Evangelisches Werk für Diakonie und Entwicklung, Protestant Agency for Diakonie and Development) for a doctoral degree at the Missionsakademie Hamburg, Germany. Topic of his dissertation: "Frieden statt Mauern" – Jerusalem im muslimischen Denken und Bewusstsein als Zeichen der Hoffnung auf Frieden im Heiligen Land" (Peace not Walls: Jerusalem in the Islamic Thoughts and Awareness as a Sign of Hope for Peace in the Holy Land). Since 2014 Andar Pasaribu Parlindungan has been head of the Department Training and Empowerment at the United Evangelical Mission and a member of the UEM board.

Photo: Fotostudio Kepper / UEM



Claudia Schletter

Claudia Schletter, born in Lüdenscheid, completed a training in administration, followed by studies of Linguistics at the University of Applied Sciences of Cologne. As a teacher of German as a second language, she gained experience in intercultural interaction. Since 2010, she has worked as administrative assistant in the UEM department Training and Empowerment. Together with Dr Andar Parlindungan, she is responsible for the administration of the UEM scholarship programme.

Photo: Fotostudio Kepper / UEM

"Let Us Celebrate the Lord for the UEM! May God Bless the Work of the UEM!"

We were intrigued by these words as we were reflecting on my inspiration for this book. These statements of gratitude were expressed by Berthe Nyiransabimana of Rwanda, who was granted a scholarship by the UEM and now holds a bachelor's degree in theology. Berthe is not the only alumna who expressed her appreciation to the UEM after completing her studies. All of the participants invited to the alumni conference in 2019 confessed that the scholarship had given them academic qualifications and capacities that enabled them now to contribute positively to the church and social developments in their own countries. It is a fact that financial constraints represent a high barrier to the continuation of academic experiences for many students in Asia and Africa. In many countries, education is not always seen or provided in a progressive way, even though it is considered to be a significant tool for the development of social growth. Education is not yet understood as a crucial human right; hence, it is defined and operated in a capitalistic manner on behalf of private and privileged groups who benefit from unlimited financial greed.

The UEM, since its inception, has been aware of how these unjust social structures degrade one of the most important human rights in the world, namely education. This is why the UEM has allocated a large amount of funds to help many talented and committed students to fulfil their potential and continue their academic careers. The intention of the UEM to expand its financial reach can be perceived as our serious effort to combat the injustice in global structures in service of achieving global inclusion and an equitable society, where justice and peace prevail as God's ultimate mandates. The slogan "Let us celebrate" is an invitation to all to see our world in a new perspective, with hope and the constructive dream that attaining higher education can successfully shape a just and peaceful society.

Scholarships: Sustainability and financial considerations

It is an unfortunate reality that many faith-based organizations have decided to reduce their budgets for scholarships. The UEM, however, has continued to maintain its vision to sustain the present work of the scholarship programme into the future. The programme is one of the working fields in the UEM's development pillar, which supports higher education schemes for the younger generation in various academic disciplines. Education at all levels that liberates and builds up equitable societies is the aim of the UEM scholarship programme. After completing their studies, scholarship recipients are expected to return to their respective countries to contribute academically and professionally to their social communities. They are also expected to be multipliers in their communities, so that the educational input they receive will be applicable and sustainable in their respective contexts.

It is undisputed that the UEM member churches in Asia and Africa are products of colonial education that created discriminatory educational structures. The colonial educational system generated the substantial loss of communal cultures and identities in many parts of Asia and Africa. Countless social problems such as acts of terrorism, environmental damage, corruption, and regional violence, including within religious communities, are a reality of our contemporary world system. The current systems of education have not succeeded in building noble character and critical thinking, but are instead addressing only an intellectual space. The commercialization of education, underpinned by injustice in economic systems of neoliberalism and neocapitalism, has narrowed the opportunities to acquire qualified education for a large number of those in our global society.

The UEM understands that education is a human right: all people, regardless of their religion, race, culture, or economic background, are entitled to a qualified and liberating education. Many experts believe that the legacy of colonial education in most of the countries in Asia and Africa has persisted in the form of oppressive education. Such education does not provide space for freedom of thought, action, or innovation. It has abandoned the provision of local wisdom in educational systems. The UEM, on the other hand, not only offers young people the opportunity for cognitive study through its scholarship programme, but also encourages them to develop critical thinking, to have empathy for suffering communities, and to make frequent use of cultural and local philosophical wisdom in their working experiences.

The conference was intended to give alumni an opportunity to exchange experiences and share the challenges they have faced as multipliers in their respective working environments. This weeklong meeting served as a place where they could exchange their stories of challenges and opportunities and use these as case studies for joint action to achieve just and peaceful societies in the midst of social diversity.

One of the greatest challenges in pursuing higher education is the fact that it is costly and takes a lot of time to complete. At the same time, funding for education competes with other pressing matters such as the alleviation of poverty and hunger, often resulting in budget cuts to address the latter issues. This is a dilemma faced by many countries and donors. Many donors concentrate on emergency aid rather than investing in higher education, because the results are visible more quickly. Naturally we need to find a balance, but investing in higher education is very important if we want to tackle poverty and injustice in the long term. To fund higher education is to create a better world for our children and grandchildren.

The role of alumni for a better world

The main idea of this conference was to elaborate and explore the empirical narratives of the former scholarship holders and enable them to evaluate the positive influence of the alumni community after completing their academic studies. The atmosphere of the conference was created to form a space for the intercultural and international exchange of knowledge and experience. The daily programme was designed for attendees to engage in narrative exchanges about their respective working fields, related to the discourse of democratization, equality, and social justice across regional and cultural lines. Dialogue was the main vernacular of this conference, enabling the participants to explore facilities for developing a network among the alumni and to discover social pro-

jects in the field of democracy and social justice. The structures of dialogue were designed to explore relevant theories and practice in order to broaden intercultural capacities and contribute to development and social justice. The intercultural capacities of the participants, also known as “local wisdom”, were a significant tool in forming a common understanding for a tolerant and peaceful community. They expressed that their academic experiences during their time on campus had made them more progressive in how they adjusted their ways of thinking to the local contexts. The alumni also showed themselves to be capable of combining the philosophical and scientific theories with real social and political dimensions. All in all, through the conference our alumni were inspired to refresh their commitment as multipliers with a positive impact on global society and divine creation.

The conference provided a space for alumni to evaluate their contributions to the community with a critical eye. They were open to reformulating a common format and possible collaborations in order to achieve equality and justice. Here are some short impressions of the innumerable constructive thoughts and narratives we heard from the participants.

Oinike Harefa (Indonesia) holds a master’s degree in theology from Silliman Divinity School in Dumaguete, Philippines and is currently working as a lecturer at the theological seminary of the Nias church. Harefa concludes her article with the strong assertion that education plays a very significant role for women and lay persons to bridge social, political, and hierarchical gaps in faith-based organizations. She suggests that a transformation of educational systems and perceptions is needed if Indonesia is to reach a common vision of equity and justice. Education should encourage marginalized groups such as women and the laity to be more active in overcoming social complexities locally and globally.

Hoyce Mbowe (Tanzania) holds a doctorate in theology from Bonn University and is the executive director of Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation (MEF) in Kitwe, Zambia, Tanzania. Mbowe criticizes the role of biblical hermeneutics in the struggle for emancipation of women in the Maasai society in Tanzania. She has realized that the marginalization of female roles has its roots in the Bible, which created theological clashes within society. She has taken a decisive position by interpreting the selected biblical texts and bringing them into scientific and deep hermeneutical confrontations, so that an emancipatory reading of the Bible can promote gender justice in the context of the Maasai community.

Amavie Nana (Cameroon) holds a Master of Theology in Mission Studies from Silliman Divinity School. Nana declares that his advanced academic education has empowered him to make a meaningful contribution to interreligious mutual understanding and cultural diversity. He has realized that the Cameroonian society and the Evangelical Church of Cameroon are currently going through difficult times because of the threat of terrorism and the political and tribal domestic tension. His training in mission studies has empowered him significantly to exercise an inclusive servant model of leadership when facing the challenges of religious and cultural tensions in the Cameroonian context.

Hellen Mushi (Tanzania) holds a master’s degree in mass communication sciences and is currently the director of the radio ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, North Eastern Diocese. Mushi emphasizes that a radio station is one of the

most influential social approaches in the Tanzanian context to fulfil God's mission in the social and political sense.

Danar Sri Wijayanti (Indonesia) holds a Master of English Linguistics from the University of Indonesia and has been a teacher of English as a foreign language since 2007. Wijayanti confesses that her educational experiences have shaped her personal character and made her an open-minded and inclusive colleague as part of the teaching staff in a predominantly Muslim area. In her words, "students should be equipped with the understanding that they live in a world where their differences enrich each other. Differences in religion are good, as they show us a different perspective on the way people have faith. Similarly, differences in culture are great because each culture comes with its own uniqueness."¹

Dennis Solon (Philippines) holds a doctorate in theology from the University of Heidelberg and is now a professor of diaconic management in Bethel, Germany. Offering his biblical insight, Solon explores the strong linkages that scientific researchers of the Bible have indicated between biblical hermeneutics and ethical themes with a bearing on our present social realities. He identifies the following linkages: "nonviolence and non-retaliation in Matthew; radical discipleship in Mark; hospitality in Luke; and Jesus in the context of many religions in John." He acknowledges that biblical dimensions are intertwined with comprehensive social ethical issues and explains how the Bible interacts with these realities in diaconal approaches.

Dyah Ayu Krismawati (Indonesia) holds a doctorate in theology from Wuppertal Protestant University and is the head of the Asia Department of the UEM. Krismawati describes how her advanced academic process has allowed her to better develop her capabilities to interact with various societies in an intercultural and interreligious way. She treasures her working experiences as they have enabled her to extend her networks with civil society members in Indonesia such as religious institutions, social workers, local artists, entrepreneurs, etc.

Abednego Keshomshahara (Tanzania) is a former UEM scholarship holder and is now Bishop of the ELCT, North-Western Diocese, in Tanzania. He completed his doctoral studies in theology at the University of Bielefeld. He saw firsthand the challenge of misleading theologies that lead communities to depend on miracles without working or learning, or to pray without going to hospitals. He is convinced that spiritual guidance should be interconnected with the churches' social and ethical responsibilities for Christian stewardship and advocates microfinance credit societies as a way to reach the common goal of poverty eradication.

Agustinus Purba (Indonesia) holds a Master of International Diaconic Management, is a former UEM scholarship holder, and now leads the Karo Batak church in North Sumatra as its moderator. Purba confirms that diaconic work must be placed at the heart of the church. His church is well known as a diaconal church that enthusiastically provides services to a marginalized population, especially the refugees of the Mount Sinabung eruptions. As he explains, the "competencies needed in this management position included applying and developing disaster management. We tried to manage the disaster by implementing a participatory approach. The cooperation built was interreligious, interethnic, and interchurch."²

¹ P. 56.

² P. 75.

Berthe Nyiransambimana (Rwanda) holds a bachelor's degree in theology and currently works as a parish pastor in the Cyangugu diocese of the Anglican Church of Rwanda. Her academic background in theology has empowered her to make significant contributions to her rural congregation. In her theological training she developed skills targeting several living aspects in her congregations, namely the church planting ministry and women's ministries, as well as discipleship, conflict management, and parish development. As she explains it, "I coordinate women's activities. We provide diaconal services by helping those who are in the most need, such as single mothers, who face many life challenges. We also train island women in the structure of a healthy diet and provide them with chickens to lay eggs to feed children under five years old."³

Brighton Katabaro (Tanzania) holds a doctorate in theology from the University of Hamburg, Germany. In his article, Katabaro describes his experiences of founding the Karagwe University College (KARUCO) in Tanzania. He was entrusted by the ELCT Karagwe Diocese to be the coordinator of KARUCO immediately after his doctoral studies. It was a challenge to his leadership skills to initiate the construction of a university without any financial budget or resources from the church. However, his international academic experiences had equipped him to build and foster various networks on a national and international scale.

Mannes Purba (Indonesia) holds a Master of Music and Liturgy from the Asian Institute of Liturgy and Music (AILM) in Manila, Philippines. In his contribution, Purba highlights the meaning of worship as a source of energy. His academic experience at AILM has supported him in coordinating many musical and liturgical events within his church. He was also consulted to assist with many church musical events in Indonesia. Purba is convinced that the development of church music in Indonesia should be rooted in the local cultures and philosophies and that these should slowly replace the long-standing influence of Western musical and worship traditions.

Loli Simanjuntak (Indonesia) is an internist and the current medical director of the Fatmawati State Hospital in Jakarta, Indonesia. In Simanjuntak's article, "Serving from the Heart", she describes how her studies enabled her to treat HIV/AIDS patients in a remote area in Tapanuli, North Sumatra. During her service she treated HIV/AIDS patients who were not receiving care from the government or the church. She witnessed that her chance to study was God's design for her to serve the community of people in Indonesia whose incomes are mostly below the poverty level: "I always thought, 'I am a debtor', as Paul said in Romans 8:12, so I intended to pay my debt and return to serving in the village."⁴

Vicky Sasapu (Democratic Republic of Congo) is a medical doctor in otorhinolaryngology (ENT) at Virunga Hospital in Goma, DR Congo. She specialized in ENT at Abomey Calavi University in Cotonou, Benin. Her major concern was the lack of medical knowledge, beliefs, and practice around ENT diseases in her regional community. She writes of her certainty that if preventive and educational approaches were properly available, many health problems could be eliminated and the unnecessary deaths and financial expenses resulting from widespread ignorance of conventional medical treatments could be avoided. She also seeks to stem the misuse of traditional treatments, which in local cultures often include suspicions of witchcraft or poisoning.

³ P. 80.

⁴ P. 109.

Pascal Bataringaya (Rwanda) is the church president of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPR) in Rwanda and holds a doctorate in theology from the University of Bochum. Bataringaya emphasizes the struggle for reconciliation in order to achieve a peaceful global community. Based on Rwandans' bitter experience of the genocide in 1994, his dissertation was entitled, "The Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer for the Church and the Society in Rwanda". He confirms in his article here that justice and peace in Rwanda cannot be achieved without a common conviction of Christian faith. Faith requires justice, trust, and brotherly love that overcomes the fear of the other.

Pascal Ekolongo (Democratic Republic of Congo) is a medical worker in Mbandaka, DR Congo and holds a master's in community health management from the Institut des Techniques Medicales in Mbandaka. Ekolongo highlights the role of education in establishing a healthy society. His own educational background took him into the fight against the Ebola crisis in his neighbouring regions. Ekolongo affirms that his education has encouraged him to offer his life for healing despite the financial restrictions, since it is education that enriches human beings in their experience of love, trust, collaboration, simplicity, humility, solidarity, and unity.

Proceedings of the conference

In daily and final evaluations, we were consistently satisfied that the conference had reached its goal to broaden intercultural understanding and communication, crossing boundaries of nations and identities. All participants had the opportunity to analyse their current social conditions. During the six days of interaction, the participants enriched one another through the practical exchange of local knowledge and long-standing international experiences.

The discussion process helped to answer several questions about how the various work assignments of the alumni pertained to the process of democratization, peace, and community development in conditions of religious and cultural diversity. The participants could benefit from illuminating opportunities to perceive various projects in other parts of the world and learn from them: projects on Ebola treatment and prevention, community health and poverty alleviation, peace and reconciliation, contemporary worship and music, interreligious and intergenerational dialogue, strategies to achieve economic justice, and diaconal work for refugees. Each project illustrated how higher education can make an enormous contribution to the process of democratization and the role of religions in a secular society. A vivid dialogue among the alumni has fostered a new discourse for joint and sustainable action to create an international network among the alumni.

On the first and second day of the conference, the participants were introduced to the current social reality in Germany. The German people are presently undergoing a learning process regarding the integration of migrants, refugees, and foreign workers, and are experiencing a radical social change that often creates tensions within a community. Dr Ulrich Möller, head of the ecumenism department of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia, reported on several activities by his church to support the integration of refugees in Germany. The conference participants were surprised to learn of the German churches' commitment to support the incoming refugees, especially those from Muslim countries. Esther Mujawayo from Rwanda shared her tragic personal experience of the genocide in Rwanda and described how she is presently helping people in Germany to heal from the

experience of domestic violence. The alumni participants also visited three religious houses of prayer, namely the As-Salam Mosque, the local synagogue, and the City.Cafe church in Wuppertal. The alumni learned from their visits that these religious groups make for a diverse community in Wuppertal. At the end of the conference, the participants created an alumni network that will connect them together for the mutual exchange of information, opportunities, and challenges from their various working fields.

As the steering committee, we were happy to invite sixteen alumni from six countries in Asia and Africa with an appropriate proportional distribution of participants by gender and region, since equity and gender balance are part of our values. The participants came from a variety of professional groups and disciplines: medicine and public health, theology, communication and media, music, diaconia, and education.

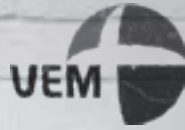
Relevance of advanced education for global faith-based institutions

In an increasingly globalized world, we are faced with various challenges such as terrorism, pandemics, economic injustice, poverty, and technological crimes. We cannot deny that the perpetrators in these challenges are themselves educated people. However, we must keep in mind the bigger picture and see the contributions of educated people to their respective societies. During the current Covid-19 pandemic, former UEM scholarship holders are working hard to fight the virus and offer help to patients. We have witnessed teachers who are still working despite growing poverty, theologians committed to serving their communities, and churches ready to take on the challenges of society. The alumni also have an important role to play in providing reliable information to communities that are often confronted with fake news and provocation. Our experience from the conference shows us that, although the future may be challenging, the UEM has helped to equip the churches to lead the way in tackling local and global problems.

Education must be liberating and must dismantle social systems that are not beneficial to the community. Supporting education through scholarships is helping to create a group of individuals who are committed to the struggle for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. It is regrettable that many Christian theologians still take discriminatory and exclusionary approaches to religious diversity. The scholarship programme of the UEM encourages students to select courses that will shape them into inclusive members of a diverse society. For the UEM, the main goal is not to promote academic excellence that can be measured in grades and numbers, but rather to foster critical contributions that are constructive to church and society.

One of the weak points of the educational systems in many countries in the global South is a dependency on colonialist and Euro-centric education. This creates confusion among students as to how to apply their knowledge to their respective contexts. This is why we strive to find educational models that include local wisdom and are built on intercultural and interreligious exchange, models that are applicable to the local societies and are critical of an apathetic, unquestioning style of learning. The internationalization of education is a goal of the UEM, a learning community, which will continue to strive for a church and a society characterized by equality and inclusiveness.

Dr Andar Parlindungan & Claudia Schletter
Wuppertal, October 2020



Julian Elf, from Wuppertal, Germany.
He studied theology and German language and literature at the University of Wuppertal. After his studies, he worked as a teacher of German as a foreign language and set up an education project for refugees. Now he works for the UEM as officer for the youth network and as study coordinator in the Department Germany. His main working areas are adult education and digital learning

Photo: Assunta Jäger / UEM

The Alumni Network as a Place of Learning

Julian Elf

1. Introduction

In September 2019, sixteen former scholarship holders from the African and Asian member churches of the United Evangelical Mission met in Hattingen to share their personal experiences of their studies.

At the end of their time in Hattingen, the participants founded the Alumni Network. It seems to me as an outsider that this founding process was only fitting, as it became clear that the exchange of experiences and mutual learning had unleashed synergies that would benefit an entire group.

But what actually happened during that week? And why was it only fitting that a network was created? Various moments of community-building contributed to its success. These included the shared daily routines in Hattingen, common membership in the UEM, and an excursion. If we look closer, we can see that learning elements manifested in these moments that are particularly relevant to the network's synergistic effects and mode of work. For even in the initially quotidian encounters, learning processes were being revealed that we should be alert to.

In the following, we will differentiate between the roles informal and formal learning processes can play for the members of the network. We will use individual statements from the alumni articles and the activities during the conference week as examples. One important frame of reference in the assessment of these learning processes will be the UEM learning paradigm known as GLEP (Global Learning in Ecumenical Perspective), which integrates the diversity of the alumni and the learning processes into international contexts.

The focus here is primarily on informal learning processes in the GLEP context, which sketches a holistic picture of a learning community. Diversity is seen as an advantage for learning and essential to the comprehension of the individual learning object as a whole. The Alumni Network of the UEM is an ideal-typical example of these informal learning processes and shows how this global learning approach enables and encourages lifelong learning processes.

2. The Alumni Network as a place of learning

2.1 The formal starting situation

In order to provide insight into the learning processes, the history of the scholarship programme and the resulting network will be briefly outlined here.

The first scholarships were awarded to deaconesses in the 1950s. Scholarships were then funded on an individual basis until the beginning of the 2000s, when applicants

for a UEM scholarship were nominated by their member churches starting in 2001. Since then, some 325 students have been able to complete their studies with scholarship aid.¹

The UEM scholarship programme supports courses of study from the bachelor's to the PhD. Students can apply for research funds or a full scholarship. Support is primarily given to those students who wish to obtain a degree in theology. However, the UEM programme is also geared towards students from other disciplines such as medicine, agricultural science, and diakonia. Some of the alumni now work in strategically important leadership positions in their churches, for example as bishops, church presidents, clinic directors, university lecturers, and others. Some are assisting local congregations, church districts, and other relevant projects.

During the conference in Hattingen, the alumni constituted the structure and working methods of their network and formulated their goals. For example, the UEM member churches in Africa and those in Asia shall each have chairs to coordinate the network and its projects. One of the main goals is to support current scholarship holders. This aspect has its roots in the personal experiences of the alumni: from their individual reports, it became clear how much personal learning experiences can engender success, which challenges alumni are currently facing, and what prospects their study programmes reveal.

It is not easy to generalize about the community that has arisen informally over many years. From the perspective of adult education, however, we can state that formally acquired educational degrees are a primary necessity for the formation of the network, as is the sum of the competences formally acquired by each individual. This combination of plural experience potential and of knowledge acquired during one's studies enables interdisciplinary exchange.

The Alumni Network's claim to diversity is also strengthened when we consider the UEM's identity as an international communion. In addition to the network's interdisciplinary nature, the individual alumni also intend to plan and implement joint projects internationally. In the context of the GLEP learning approach, the working structure is less a challenge than a vehicle for the synergetic effects of the network, since learning can come out of the work process.

The GLEP aspects of the network will be examined in more detail later on. At this time it is essential to look at the individual starting situations of former scholarship holders in order to better understand the learning processes in the Alumni Network.

2.2 Consideration of examples: Initial situation and learning concerns

Because individual learning biographies cannot be shown or analysed in this medium, we will analyse learning processes with regard to informal aspects and GLEP by taking individual starting situations from learning biographies. The individual sample cases demonstrate how we can use the formal underpinnings (as shown above) to locate the challenges and prospects in practice. One interpretive focus, in the context of learning within the network, is on informal learning processes. This allows us to show the reciprocal effect between individuals who are learning and the network as a learning community.

¹ These data were provided by the Training and Empowerment Department of the UEM, which is responsible for awarding the scholarships.

The alumni had the opportunity during the conference in Hattingen to illustrate their individual learning biographies in presentations and to outline personal challenges and problem areas. Afterwards, questions were asked and discussions took place about the respective subject matter, as well as about concrete tasks of the work. The alumni contributions were also an effort to communicate their respective wishes and perspectives to the network.

The following example is a contribution from alumna Oinike Harefa. All alumni contributions can be read in this publication.

2.2.1 Example: Oinike Harefa

"Advanced interreligious and intercultural education for women and laities must be an education that builds bridges and bridges gaps [...]. Such education needs three things. First, education must give more space to women and laities at all levels – local, national, regional, and global – to take part actively. The education provided needs to include not only formal mainstream education, but also informal alternative education. Second, education must aim to strengthen character and the values of love, care, determination, humanity, transparency, and solidarity [...]. Third, education must be built on a shared vision and mission, especially on how women and laities play a mutual role in overcoming problems affecting the global community such as radicalism, immigration, environmental damage, violence and injustice, and poverty. [...]"²

Oinike Harefa is a theologian whose focus is feminist theology. Her remarks show that she is concerned with her individual educational processes and reflects upon her subject-specific competences in her context.

The path of academic education can be viewed here as an opportunity to be a multiplier for other people. In her presentation, Harefa refers primarily to women and the (theological) laity. But she does not disregard that there must always be a general opportunity to participate. Harefa also discusses informal educational processes, as well as the fact that education always has a transformative character with a common vision.

This brief excerpt reveals an educational approach whose intent is a holistic transformation of social aspects and the individual. It should be emphasized that social competences, which are supplemented by formal learning processes, are also becoming increasingly important for the success of such a transformation.

Interdisciplinarity can be a central working principle of the Alumni Network. With its international, interdisciplinary dialogue, the network offers space for informal learning processes. The Alumni Network can ensure a transfer of knowledge to the grassroots level. A concrete example is described in the section on informal learning processes (see below).

2.3 Informal learning and GLEP

The above example shows how significant informal learning can be for alumni. What follows will explain in more detail why informal learning is a reflexive response to these individual approaches and what significance it has for the continuation of the network.

² See page 42–43

Furthermore, this chapter demonstrates the importance of the UEM's GLEP learning paradigm as a reference framework for learning processes in an international context. Above all, engaging with GLEP implies a holistic approach to education that supports informal learning.

2.3.1 Informal learning

Learning in the Alumni Network is mainly characterized by informal learning processes that are distinguished by strong interpersonal relationships. International communication is stressed, especially social media. Semi-local groups benefit from the increasing digitalization of communication, as does the network.

Communication in the network is exchange-based learning, without a direct institutional site. The UEM can certainly be seen as a supporter of the network, but it expedites the exchange only indirectly. Interdisciplinary or discipline-specific exchanges are thus located in the semi-professional realm.³ The members of the network learn without guided processes and without direct intention, in their leisure time.⁴ Their learning is based on their individual expertise in their respective subjects. This clearly shows that informal learning is important in the everyday routine of the network and that its effect on the individual actors and third parties must not be underestimated.

The alumni conference included many instances in which interpersonal communication led to informal learning situations. Since the alumni did not rely on digital communication to share their experiences, the conference may be seen as one result of the learning processes in the network. After all, the main programme of the conference consisted of reports from alumni. There were also encounters with outsiders and excursions to religious centres, which became learning sites for the participants. The discussions following the presentations were a clear illustration of informal learning.

One particularly memorable example of such learning was the discussion following the presentation by Oinike Harefa.⁵ She had drawn a bridge between academic challenges and personal experiences. Harefa specifically indicated the social implications in Indonesia of her topic.

All presentations were held in a formal learning situation, and all discussions were likewise moderated. The general framework conditions must be more precisely detailed in order to explain the effect of the informal learning.

The plenum had agreed to discuss the topic of feminist theology, since the problems of the speaker not only affected advocates for feminist theology in her Indonesian context, but were also confirmed by a Tanzanian pastor. In addition, it was reported that in all of the UEM regions, men had difficulty standing up for feminist theology in the academic context. This can be seen as the starting point for informal learning processes: some of the attendees found this subject very moving and were motivated to exchange views afterwards, outside the guided discussion.

³ See Burger, T./ Haring, M./ Witte, M.D. (eds): *Handbuch informelles Lernen. Interdisziplinäre und internationale Perspektiven*. 2nd ed. Weinheim 2018, page 18f.

⁴ See Kahnwald, N.: *Informelles Lernen in virtuellen Gemeinschaften. Nutzungspraktiken zwischen Information und Partizipation*. Muenster 2013, page 56.

⁵ Page 36-43

Moved by the formal learning situation, participants allowed themselves to be vulnerable on this subject. They discovered new aspects of it through the dialogue and reflected on their own assumptions. This shows that the members of the Alumni Network are learning in a dynamic and process-oriented way. The content of this learning can be elicited by a formal learning situation or may arise in conversation. Anyone who regularly takes part in conferences or other heterogeneously composed educational events will be familiar with such contexts: the conversation during tea time, at lunch or "in-between" times. For some, it is the most valuable time in such settings: the moments when participants learn spontaneously, intuitively, and through changes of perspective in dialogue.⁶

As we can see, then, the above-mentioned desire for informal learning to support a holistic approach to education is fulfilled in the network. If the communication channels between alumni are cultivated accordingly, and a platform for exchange is created, then the actors in the network can actively contribute to promoting informal learning situations.

2.3.2 GLEP

GLEP (Global Learning in Ecumenical Perspective) is the conceptual educational framework for informal and global learning.⁷ We can view the Alumni Network as a perfect example of this learning approach from the UEM: as a result of the conference, the alumni are working on the initial formation of a network in an international and interdisciplinary fashion, with a multitude of perspectives. The actors cooperate within the network, detached from hierarchical structures and benefitting local concerns and joint projects (such as structural support for scholarship holders).

We can already regard these collaborative activities as a GLEP learning process. In order to understand the GLEP approach in a more differentiated way, let us make a rough list of the GLEP criteria:

- Planning for educational projects is international and includes multiple perspectives.
- Themes come from a common list of needs from all UEM regions.
- Participants and management teams are international, with equal representation in accordance with diversity criteria.
- Topics for educational programmes are international and include multiple perspectives.
- Every idea is considered and taken seriously.
- Wherever possible, participants in each programme learn in a process- and action-oriented manner, with consideration for practical experience.
- Programme managers see themselves as learning facilitators and try to avoid hierarchies.

The GLEP concept comprehends global learning less as a technical term than as a holistic approach to education.⁸ Learners are not placed in hierarchical relationship to

⁶ See Barmmeyer, Ch./ Würfl, K.: „Wissenstransfer während der Kaffeepause? Was wir von italienischen Unternehmen lernen können“. In: *Zeitschrift Führung und Organisation*. 05/2012, no. 81, page 348-353.

⁷ <https://www.vemission.org/bildungsangebote/globales-lernen-in-oekumenischer-perspektive-glep.html> (accessed 24 June 2020).

⁸ Citing Angelika Veddelor.

a teacher and instead can allow themselves to be vulnerable in educational programmes, according to their abilities, and to be perceived holistically. Learners have a diversity-conscious attitude and work together in an interdisciplinary and international way. This helps to open up education across cultures.

For the Alumni Network, this means in concrete terms that their individual learning biographies enable them to work on specific topics in a process-oriented and multi-perspective manner. The spectrum is apparent in the structural constitution of the network, and its multiperspectivity can extend to projects on topics where the work is shared.

Since the GLEP concept attaches great importance to a shared planning and educational process, mutual incentives and dialogues among participants are especially significant. These can also include informal learning situations.

Taken as a whole, the multifaceted educational processes in the Alumni Network demonstrate that a basis of formal academic education, combined with strong interpersonal relationships, leads to a learning community⁹ that has the potential to initiate transformative processes locally and internationally.

3. Summary and outlook

The alumni conference and the network that has emerged from it shows outsiders the effect of education on the actors and the transformative processes that can be initiated from it. The developments so far illustrate how the organic growth of connections and close personal relationships has come to have a direct influence on informal learning situations. By using digital communication and expanding the network, it is possible to stimulate and maintain this growth. Viewed in the context of the GLEP approach, this growth process is at the same time a learning process, since the members of the network are working together to confront subject-specific challenges. The competence of the individuals has a positive influence on the network, and the network reveals itself as a place of learning that enables informal learning situations. Moreover, the actors can develop their competences even further.

These considerations have shown me, as an outsider, that the way the network works and the development opportunities it offers are a direct reflection of the in-person meeting in Hattingen, Germany.

As a learning community or Community of Practice,¹⁰ the Alumni Network through its learning structures provides its members with low-threshold access to content-rich dialogues, personal exchanges, and coping strategies inside and across disciplines. The goal of a holistic education can be achieved through the network, as demonstrated above, since the actors see themselves as multipliers for third parties and would especially like to support current scholarship holders. In so doing, the alumni community is establishing a sustainable system in which educational processes and personal contacts exert a mutual and beneficial influence on each other.

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⁹ See “Community of Practice”, Wenger, E./ McDermott, R./ Snyder, W. M. (eds): *Cultivating Communities of Practice*. Boston 2002.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

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Scholarship holders from UEM member churches met in Wuppertal and Hattingen to establish an international network of UEM alumni.

Photo: Claudia Schletter / UEM



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Photo: private

The Relevance of Advanced Education for an Interreligious and Intercultural Global Community

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship
Amavie Blaise Kouana Nana

Introduction

Umakanta Saha¹ argues that people and nations in the world are closely connected and interdependent, and that because of this, the world may be viewed as a "global community". People and nations living and interacting in this global community belong to different cultural and religious backgrounds. As an instrument of God's mission on earth, the church has to reflect on how to perform its work effectively in this context of cultural diversity and religious plurality. According to Scripture, education is a valuable part of the church's prophetic mission. The United Evangelical Mission (UEM), which is an international communion of 38 Protestant churches and the Bodelschwingh Foundation Bethel from various traditions in Africa, Asia, and Germany, attaches particular importance to the training of the leaders of its member churches. Through its incomparable scholarship programme, the UEM offers international training opportunities in various areas to its member churches for both church leadership and senior staff at the intermediate level. The UEM scholarship programme is geared in the main towards students who are striving for a master's or doctorate in theology. But it also supports students in other subjects that are important to projects in the member churches.

Our concern in this paper is to point out the relevance of advanced education in the fight against cultural and religious intolerance. More specifically, our reflection seeks to answer the following questions: What is advanced education? How do we understand the concept of interreligious and intercultural global community? What is the current visage of Cameroon as an interreligious and intercultural community? What is the relevance of advanced education in a context of cultural diversity and religious plurality? How can advanced education help the church to carry out its mission effectively in such a context? What about churches such as the Evangelical Church of Cameroon, some of whose leaders and pastors have benefited from the UEM scholarship programme?

In order to answer these questions, our reflection is organised into four sections. The first one focuses on the definition of key concepts. The second concerns the presentation of Cameroon as an entity of the interreligious and intercultural global community.

¹ Umakanta Saha, "The World as a Global Community", <https://www.shareyouressays.com/essays/world-as-a-globalcommunity-essay/103101> (accessed 25 February 2019).

The third section points out the relevance of advanced education in a context of cultural diversity and religious plurality. And finally, in the fourth section, we will be assessing the use and the impact of the quality training provided by the UEM scholarship programme to some leaders and pastors of the Evangelical Church of Cameroon.

Definition of key concepts

Advanced education

Etymologically, the word “education” is derived from the Latin “educatio” (a breeding, a bringing up, a rearing) from the verb “educare” (to educate, to train, to rear, to bring up) and “educō” (I educate, I train) which is related to the homonym “educō” (I lead forth, I take out; I raise up, I erect) composed of “e” (from, out of) and “duco” (I lead, I conduct).²

The term “education” designates “the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life”.³ It is “the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits”.⁴

One may argue that education is a lifelong learning process. That is why opportunity should be offered to people of all ages to learn about and to acquire spiritual, moral, and intellectual values that may help to build a more stable society. According to Dr Martin Luther King,⁵ education should give a person the possibility to become more efficient at attaining goals in life. Education should enable one to discern true from false, real from unreal, and fact from fiction. In other words, education is not just about the knowledge and manners we acquire through learning, but also represents our inner world and the principles we base our lives on.

The concept of “advanced education” may be understood as a progression in the process of learning or training, as well as a higher level of education. Perceived in the sense of higher education, it refers to the final stage of formal learning that occurs after the completion of secondary education. That is why it is also called postsecondary education, or third-level or tertiary education. Andreas Pucciarelli has pointed out that higher education includes the “teaching, research, exacting applied work, and social services activities of universities”.⁶ However, since there are people who do not get to the level of higher education or who do not graduate, advanced education can also be understood as any nonacademic training process that aims to improve the level of understanding of its learners.

Interreligious and intercultural community

The term “community” is derived from the Latin “communitas” (meaning the same), which is in turn derived from “communis”, which means “common, ordinary, public,

² “Educate: Origin and Meaning”, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/educate> (accessed 14 June 2018).

³ “Education”, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/education> (accessed 14 June 2018).

⁴ “Education”, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/education> (accessed 14 June 2018).

⁵ “Martin Luther King’s perspective on the purpose of education”, <https://www.educationpurpose.org/what-is-the-purpose-of-education> (accessed 14 June 2018).

⁶ Andreas K.M.F. Pucciarelli, “Competition and Strategy in Higher Education: Managing Complexity and Uncertainty”, *Business Horizons*, vol. 59, 2016.

general, universal, shared by all or many”.⁷ Communis comes from a combination of the Latin prefix “con” (which means “together”) and the word “munis” (which has to do with performing services).

Originally, the word “community” refers to “a number of people associated together by the fact of residence in the same locality and having common interests”.⁸ According to the Business Dictionary website, a community is “a self-organised network of people with common agenda, cause, or interest, who collaborate by sharing ideas, information, and other resources”.⁹

The interreligious and intercultural character of a community lies in the fact that its members belong to various religious and cultural backgrounds. The term “interreligious” is composed of the prefix “inter” (between, among), which is an abbreviation of “intermediate” (coming between two things in time, place, order, character, etc...), and the adjective “religious”, which describes things relating to religion. One may describe religion as a system of faith: a set of beliefs, feelings, dogmas, and practices that define the relations between human beings and divinity. The word “culture” refers to the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a society (group of people). Kim Ann Zimmermann describes culture as the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine (food), social habits, music, and art.

Global community

The term “global community” refers to the idea of globalisation – whose manifestation is quite evident in our world today – through media documentation, technology, immigration, the experience of studying abroad, etc. In the beginning of the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan had a vision of technology reducing the size of the globe to that of a village, with information floating freely and simultaneously from one end to the other.¹⁰ Gradually, the world has become a global village where people of different nations, cultures, and religions are closely connected and know more about one another. In fact, as Mohammed Abu-Nimer has pointed out, globalisation encompasses the flows of information and of people, and it increasingly connects people in previously unconnected areas.

Religious and socio-cultural reality in Cameroon

Cameroon is a central African country that has a surface area of 475,442 km² and a population of 24 million inhabitants.¹¹ It is home to different religious and cultural groups. Cameroon has a rich and diverse culture made up of a mix of about 250 indigenous populations and just as many languages and customs. The country is nicknamed “Little Africa” as geographically Cameroon consists of coastline, mountains, grass plains, fo-

⁷ D. Harper, “Community”, *Online Etymology Dictionary* (accessed 22 August 2018).

⁸ “Origin and Meaning of Community”, *Online Etymology*, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/community> (accessed 25 February 2019).

⁹ Business Dictionary, “Definition of ‘community’”, <https://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/community.html> (25 February 2019).

¹⁰ Marshall McLuhan, “Global Village: Where Cultures Connect”, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/global-village-wherecult_9_5035779 (accessed 23 April 2019).

¹¹ Cameroon, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/cameroon> (accessed 23 April 2019).

rest, rainforest, and desert, all of the geographical regions in Africa in one country. This also contributes to its cultural diversity as ways of life and traditional food dishes and traditions vary from geographical region to geographical region.

However, the peace and unity of Cameroon are being threatened by the phenomenon of “identity fold” and tribalism. The cancer of tribalism is being disseminated in the country by generalized negative stereotypes about different tribes and ethnic groups. Tribal hatred is gaining ground in Cameroon, and it consequently leads to destructive ideologies aimed at dividing the country. The current “Anglophone problem” that is increasingly dominating the political agenda in Cameroon has its root in the colonial legacies from the Germans, British, and French, but it is also an issue of cultural identity.¹² In analysing the situation, C. Nna-Emeka¹³ states that “the Anglophone crisis has introduced a new element in the understanding of terrorism in Africa as the local population in the English-speaking regions of Northwest and Southwest Cameroon flee from military and security operations while embracing individuals designated by the state as terrorists”.¹⁴

The issue of tribalism and cultural identity does not spare the church in Cameroon. Let’s mention, for example, the case of the Evangelical Church of Cameroon, which is going through very difficult times because of claims based on tribal interests. During the general synod held in Ngaoundéré in April 2017, Reverend Dr Jean Samuel Hendje Toya, a Sawa from Yabassi, was elected as General President of the EEC. He won 205 votes out of 374, against 168 for his challenger, Pastor Richard Priso Mongole, a Sawa from Douala, and vice-president of the outgoing administration. The verdict of the polls was then contested by the Ngondo, the traditional Sawa assembly, which clearly would have preferred that the losing candidate, Rev. Priso, lead the EEC.

In a communiqué signed on 28 April and read out loud in some parishes where the language of worship is Douala, the Ngondo announced from that day on, there would be a “schism of the Douala people of EEC”. This consortium of Douala traditional chiefs, moreover, invited all the faithful of their own ethnic origin to join them in “jealously defending their tribal interests”. Then, they took the case to court and started perpetrating violence in EEC headquarters and in certain main parishes. The EEC has been in trouble since then and remains so today.

Christianity (70%), Islam (20%) and Traditional African Belief (7%) are the three main religions in Cameroon.¹⁴ Free thinkers and followers of other religions represent 3 per cent of the Cameroonian population. The Constitution allows the freedom of conscience and religious worship, making Cameroon a religiously tolerant country. However, the threat of religious radicalism is a reality in Cameroon. The rise of Christian revivalist and Muslim fundamentalist movements is rapidly changing the religious landscape and paving the way for religious intolerance.¹⁵ The acts of violence and terrorism that have been perpetrated in northern Cameroon since 2013 are considered a real

manifestation of religious extremism. In view of the above, one may argue that there is an urgent need for peace education in Cameroon.

Closing the March parliamentary session in the Senate on Wednesday, 10 April 2019, Senate President Niat Njifenji Marcel commanded the government to redouble its efforts in the sensitization and education of Cameroonians on tribalism. He insisted on the fact that Cameroonians receive lessons on civic education, citizenship, multiculturalism, religious plurality, and peaceful coexistence so as to curb tribalism and religious extremism and radicalism.¹⁶

Advanced education as a weapon against cultural and religious intolerance

As we mentioned earlier, education is not just about the knowledge and manners we acquire through learning. It also represents our inner world and the principles we base our lives on. Victor Hugo affirms the significance of education for the betterment of men and for social cohesion by saying, “every child we educate is a man we gain”.

Most young people attending colleges or universities are fairly aware of their cultural and religious identity. Their attitude or behaviour very often depends on what they have learned during their basic education. For instance, if they have been taught radicalist ideas instead of the values of peace, mutual respect, dialogue, and good cohabitation with those who are culturally and religiously different from them, it is quite obvious that they will demonstrate religious intolerance and violence in schools, colleges, and universities, hence the need to integrate education for cultural and religious tolerance into the school and university curriculum.

In their paper presented in 2017 at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Cynthia Broderick and Kevin Fosnacht point out that incidents of religious intolerance and discrimination have become too common in American society, and that today’s college campuses are not immune to these incidents. They come to the conclusion that “it is imperative that institutions address the issues of religious and spiritual intolerance on today’s college campus, and foster campuses that value religious pluralism and collaboration. It is imperative that all colleges and universities intentionally address issues of religious plurality and cultural diversity and actively strive to reduce, and hopefully eliminate, these incidents of religious discrimination.”¹⁷

In the same vein, Ioan Sauca argues that “in order to face the challenges of living in increasingly pluralistic societies, in a world of economic and cultural globalisation, climate change, neglect of human rights and attempts to justify growing violence in the name of religion, the churches need leaders with knowledge of other religious traditions and with a sensitivity to confessional and cultural differences”.¹⁸

¹² Piet Konings and Francis B. Nyamnjoh, “The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon”, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 35, vol. 2 (1997), pp. 207-229.

¹³ C. Nna-Emeka Okereke, “Analysing Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis”, *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, vol. 10, no. 3 (March 2018), pp. 8-12.

¹⁴ “Religion in Cameroon”, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Cameroon (accessed 8 May 2019).

¹⁵ “Cameroon: The Threat of Religious Radicalism”, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/cameroon-threat-religious-radicalism> (accessed 10 May 2019).

¹⁶ “Cameroon: Senate President Niat Njifenji Marcel Condemns Tribalism”, <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/cameroon-senate-president-niat-njifenji-marcel-condemns-tribalism> (accessed 10 May 2019).

¹⁷ Cynthia Broderick and Kevin Fosnacht, *Religious Intolerance on Campus: A Multi-Institution Study*, Houston, Texas, November 2017.

¹⁸ Ioan Sauca, “Study at Bossey”, <https://institute.oikoumene.org/en/study-at-bossey> (accessed 17 May 2019).

In the face of religious tensions that are running high between Muslims and Christians in his country, Indonesia, Andar Parlindungan argues that “the need to educate Indonesian pastors about Islam is acute”.¹⁹ In 2005, he planned to work with Muslims to create a centre that would provide education for religious tolerance, foster human rights, and combat poverty.

The church’s prophetic mission includes the educational function. From this perspective, the World Council of Churches’ Ecumenical Institute at the Château de Bossey has specialized in ecumenical theological formation and education since its creation in 1946. With its holistic method of education, which combines academic research, cross-cultural learning through life in community, spiritual experience, and exposure to and encounter with other faith communities, the Bossey Institute is a special place where people from various faith backgrounds learn to engage with diversity in creative and productive ways.

The United Evangelical Mission (UEM) is also convinced that advanced education can effectively contribute to reducing religious intolerance and discrimination in our societies. This is why the UEM is firmly interested in training church leaders in the field of ecumenical missiology and interfaith dialogue. However, our concern now is to know how church leaders make use of the knowledge and values they have acquired during their training, especially in the field of religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue.

Personal experience as a beneficiary of the UEM Scholarship Programme

I had the opportunity to benefit from the UEM scholarship programme, which enabled me to study from May 2013 to March 2015 at Silliman University Divinity School in the Philippines, where I obtained the degree of Master of Theology in Mission Studies. After completion of my study course, I went back home and was assigned to work for three months (from July to September 2015) as the acting director of the Foyer du Marin (Seamen’s Mission) because the main director (a German) had to go on leave. Then, in September, I was appointed to lead a parish of about five thousand members from various cultural backgrounds in the city of Douala, the economic capital of the country. Four months later, I was elected to my present position as the president of the Deido-Makepe District, which includes four significant parishes with about 9,500 members, supervised by nine pastors. I have occupied this position since December 2015.

These various positions granted me the chance to consolidate my leadership skills, to implement the principles of good governance, to perform evangelisation and prophetic advocacy, to deal with the issue of multiculturalism, and to highlight my knowledge in peacebuilding.

To be more concrete, my appointment as acting director of the Foyer du Marin, then as senior pastor of the Makepe-Tonnerre Parish, and finally as district president of Deido-Makepe has led me to refer to the enriching teachings and exchanges that we had during our training at Silliman University on the issues of leadership, management, and good governance. I still remember that the values and qualities that comply with

Jesus’s model of leadership are the following: love, truth, humility, righteousness, fairness, integrity, honesty, faithfulness, self-control, transparency, accountability, etc., and this truly prevents me from practising irresponsible leadership. Dan Hotchkiss²⁰ argues that good governance and effective administration are important and necessary for Christian communities because, as the salt of the earth and the light of the world, the church is like a city set on a hill before a watching world.

The parish of Makepe-Tonnerre where I was sent in September 2015 was in conflict, and one of my challenges, therefore, was to bring calm back into the community. This conflict was related to the problem of tribalism (cultural identity) and poor management. God granted us the grace to make use of the skills acquired during our training in Dumaguete to bring about reconciliation, stability, and development within the community. However, the collaboration between my colleagues and myself has not always been easy. There have often been very tense moments because of divergent ideas.

During our two years of training in the Philippines, I kept in touch with my sending church and communicated via email from time to time with my church, namely with our regional president. However, the church did not support me during this period. My wife and children were totally ignored and abandoned, without housing, food, or an allowance for the children’s school. I had to work very hard to cover all these expenses. I was obliged to support my family every month with a large part of my scholarship. This situation really affected me very negatively.

I have no problem collaborating with people from different faiths, nationalities, ethnic groups, and generations. It may happen from time to time that we have a common prayer service with our Muslim brothers and sisters. During the time I was working as deputy director of the Foyer du Marin, I experienced very good collaboration with our German colleagues Rev. Heike Proske, Rev. Posselt, and Rev. Manfred Khule. In my home church, I have good relationship with all my colleagues from different ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds.

I believe that it is very important and helpful to exchange with scholars from other cultural backgrounds and to share their experiences and values in order to improve efficiently. I expect our international network of alumni to be a remarkable framework of exchange, edification, empowerment, and improvement for all the participants. I pledge to give the best of myself to meet the requirements of our network of alumni, and thus contribute to the achievement of its goals.

We truly appreciate the quality training that church leaders are receiving through the UEM Scholarship Programme. I have benefited from it, and I testify that my way of looking at people of other faiths has evolved through the course on interfaith dialogue during my training in Dumaguete. However, my expectation towards the UEM is the following: In cases where the scholarship awarded by the UEM does not support the wife and children of the beneficiary, I suggest that it be required in the application file that the sending church submit a letter of commitment and a financing plan to demonstrate how the sending church intends to take care of the candidate’s family during the candidate’s course of study.

¹⁹ *Luther Seminar News*, “Meet Islamic Studies Student Andar Parlindungan”, July 2005. https://www.luthersem.edu/elerts/article.aspx?article_id=35&elert_id=5 (accessed 17 May 2017).

²⁰ Dan Hotchkiss, *Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership* (Alban: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 2009).

Conclusion

Our reflection consisted in pointing out the relevance of advanced education for the global intercultural and interreligious community. Our goal was to show that advanced education can be considered an effective tool to address the issue of religious plurality and cultural diversity. After defining the keywords, we mentioned some facts showing that Cameroonian society as well as the Evangelical Church of Cameroon are currently going through difficult times because of the threat of terrorism and internal tensions of

political and tribal character. Then we referred to some thinkers and researchers from various contexts who argue that advanced education can be used as an effective weapon against religious and cultural intolerance. Finally, we spoke of our own experience to show how our training in mission studies helps us enormously in exercising responsible leadership and effectively addressing the issues of religious pluralism and cultural diversity in the Cameroonian context. We have not failed to express our hope and commitment to collaborate within a network of alumni and our expectations towards the United Evangelical Mission.



The alumni visited the Bergische Synagoge in Wuppertal.
Photo: Martina Pauly / UEM



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Indonesia, is an ordained pastor of the Banua Niha Keriso Protestan (BNKP). Currently, she serves as head of the Programme and Oikoumene Bureau in the BNKP Synod Office.

The former UEM scholarship holder also lectures on Missiology and Contextual Theology in the BNKP Sundermann Seminary in Nias, North Sumatra, Indonesia. She graduated from Jakarta Theological Seminary in 2010 and earned her Master's degree in Theology from the Silliman University Divinity School in 2018. She is interested in feminism, environmentalism, peace and justice studies.

Photo: Marion Unger

Build the Bridge and Bridge the Gap

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship

Oinike Natalia Harefa

Introduction

The main goal of education is to become an instrument for holistic social transformation. The question now: Has interreligious and intercultural education reached out and involved women and laities? Interreligious and intercultural education for a long period has belonged to elites and experts who are mostly men. Similarly, the interreligious or intercultural education or trainings that are often held have generally involved more elites or experts such as theologians rather than laities. However, interreligious and intercultural education is needed by people at all levels of society, including women and laities. If advanced education is needed, it must be able to become a bridge between experts and lay people and to bridge the gap of the dominant educational system, which still provides higher opportunities for men than for women.

Experiences as significant sources in interreligious and intercultural education

In 2012, I had the opportunity to become one of the South-North volunteers organised by the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) in Germany. For eight months, I served at the Himmelsfels Foundation in Spangenberg. The Himmelsfels Foundation is a camping ground for various spiritual activities specifically for young people. During my period as a UEM volunteer, I was involved in programme and service activities. In programmes, I often handled creative activities for youth and occasionally became a resource person for international learning time. I also carried out service activities such as cleaning locations or preparing food. In these contexts, I experienced interreligious and intercultural meetings with other people different from myself.

At Himmelsfels, I met Germans who rarely went to church but had a pronounced sense of humanity. I met a family of Turkish Muslims who often invited me to visit their house. I befriended a Cuban woman who had no religion but fought fiercely to earn for her children in her home country. I made friends with a Somalian Muslim woman from a very poor country who often brought us food when we made dolls together in the sewing studio. I met a Jewish rabbi who, despite the dark history of the Holocaust in Germany, wanted to contribute to a humanitarian project in Himmelsfels. Why do I remember them? Because my experiences and encounters with them have changed my point of view on people from different religions and different cultures. Previously, I had negative assumptions and stereotypes about people of different religions, cultures, and

nations. When I lived and worked with them, I began to have a different perspective. Encounters and experiences with those who are different will change all the assumptions and stereotypes that are embedded in our minds beforehand. Personally, I am very grateful for opportunities like this. On the other hand, I also think about other people who have never had such experiences. For me, the more we experience life with different people, the more we can keep our minds open when encountering differences. Conversely, the absence or lack of experiences and encounters with other religions and cultures causes a closed mind when confronted with differences. It is important to understand other theories of religions and cultures, but more important to have our life experiences become part of our living narratives with different people.

In 2016, I got a scholarship from the UEM to continue my studies at Silliman University Divinity School (SUD) in Dumaguete, Philippines. I learned about mission studies in a broader perspective. During my study at SUD, I experienced a different kind of Christian spirituality. In the Philippines, the Catholics retain a model of Christianity from the Spanish colonization era. For instance, it is easy to find the figure of “Señor Santo Niño” (the Roman Catholic image of the child Jesus in a gilded cape) in churches, houses, and shops, a figure that is really distant from the daily reality of most Filipinos, who experience poverty and suffering. From the Protestant side, I experienced spirituality from the Sunday service that I followed almost every week at the United Christian Church in Philippines (UCCP) on the campus. I also encountered many fellows from the Philippines and received their hospitality as part of Filipino culture. I completed my course of study in March 2018.

When I returned from the Philippines to Indonesia, the executive boards of Banua Niha Keriso Protestan (BNKP) directly ordered me to work as the head of programmes and the oikumene bureau in the BNKP synod office. This working area is heavier on administrative work. Through this work and services, however, I had the opportunity to experience encounters in the interreligious and intercultural context with different churches, partners, and religions. Fortunately, I also asked to teach missiology and contextual theology at the BNKP Sundermann Theological Seminary in Gunungsitoli, Nias. Lecturing is more proper to my capacity following my graduate study because I can share my knowledge with the students while also learning from them. In addition, I am often involved in the feminist movement and pay attention to environmental, cultural, and social concerns.

Interreligious and intercultural education should give more space to women

Women involved in interfaith and intercultural studies as experts are still outnumbered by men. When I searched for references on this subject to prepare my thesis in 2018, the experts I quoted in the Christian approach to other religions were still dominated by male theologians such as Karl Barth, Hendrik Kraemer, Gavin D’Costa, Karl Rahner, Jacques Dupuis, John Hick, Raimon Panikkar, SJ Samatha, Paul Knitter, Amos Yong, and S. Mark Heim. Later, the names of female theologians such as Jeannine Hill Fletcher, Kwok Pui-lan, and Jenny Dagers emerged and put forth wonderful ideas, showing that we could not be taken lightly in interreligious and intercultural disciplines.

In line with this problem, Fletcher revealed that behind the exclusion of women in interreligious and intercultural conversations, there are structural problems of religion at stake. The androcentric structure does not include women in normative practices. For example, when an interfaith dialogue is held but the expected participants are church leaders, the role of women will automatically be eliminated because in general the existing church leaders are men. Likewise, in interreligious and intercultural training that is only open to experts and practitioners, women will be completely absent,¹ even though genuine dialogue should involve all parties, including women and laities, because we are all part of the global community.

Despite all of the challenges, advanced interreligious and intercultural education today and in the future looks very promising for women. In the development of intercultural promotion, UNESCO counts women as “new voices”. Women as “new voices” are the agents of cultural change, who have important roles in the process of validation and the reinterpretation of culture and practice. Women do not only act as “carriers of value” but as “creators of value”, which we can see in the contributions of the feminist movement. These values are formed through language, codes of ethics, and systems of values or beliefs that will be inherited by women and passed on to their generations. Women have autonomous abilities that enable them and their communities to move and create transformational value together. This is why women continue to exercise their rights to public access, to civil and political freedoms, and to equality in the private sector, and why they continue to call for multidimensional justice in contexts such as households, markets, and property ownership.²

Women have a special, intrinsic uniqueness because they have different life experiences and therefore different perspectives and different approaches to responding to interreligious or intercultural problems. In Indonesia, for instance, women have played an important role in resolving conflict and peacebuilding. In Ambon, a group of Moluccan women were involved in the conflict resolution. For them, violence would never be a solution to religious or ethnic conflicts; they looked for alternative solutions by initiating interpersonal meetings among women. They shared their stories and experiences about conflict and their desire for the conflict to end. Moluccan women also collaborated with young people who had previously been recruited as bomb makers but now accompanied women in their movement. In addition, this group also strengthens women for reconciliation and peace by closing the information gap that foments prejudice, mistrust, and suspicion between Christians and Muslims in Ambon.

Another example is the group Ambon Bergerak. This group consists of ten people who provide information and reports to each other through the media they receive from Twitter, Facebook, emails, blogs, and short messages. This group tried to filter out the rumors and report quickly if a message was a hoax.³ In addition, there was also the story of Lian Gogali, a Christian activist, whose house was burned in Poso. She later established a school for women called the Sekolah Perempuan Mosintuwu (Mosintuwu

¹ Jeannine Hill Fletcher, *Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology, “Who Speaks for Peace: Women and Interreligious Peace Making”* (New York: Fordham University, 2017), 12-13. <https://journals.equinoxpub.com/index.php/ISIT/article/download/31725/pdf>

² UNESCO, *World Report: Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue* (Paris: the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, 2009), 54.

³ Sumanto Al Qurtuby, *Peacebuilding in Indonesia: Christian-Muslim Alliances in Ambon Island” in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 359.

Women's School), which aims to unite the broken relations between Christians and Muslims, build gender awareness in the domestic and public domains, and create mutual understanding and respect between religions.⁴ These examples show that women have a lot of potential to contribute ideas, experiences, and solutions to problems. Women will increasingly develop more and greater strengths if they are given better opportunities in advanced education, specifically in interreligious and intercultural disciplines.

Education for women also needs to be a priority in this era because women are most likely to become victims of conflicts, given that opportunities and access to education may be unavailable to them. As a result, women are very vulnerable to become victims of conflicts among religions, cultures, ethnicities, and nations. On 16 May 2018, a woman and her four children became suicide bombers in Surabaya, Indonesia along with her husband. On 12 March 2019, a woman who was the wife of the terrorist Abu Hamzah carried out suicide bombings in Sibolga, Indonesia with her child. There are many studies and analyses that have been carried out on these cases, one of which is a study of the role of women who choose to become more proactive in religious radicalism. Nina Nurmila, for example, sees that religious fundamentalism causes men to be superior to women and women to submit to the orders of men, including carrying out acts of terror.⁵

Women and laities in global community: Interreligious and intercultural

Technology and the media today give people a wider and closer connection to information around the world. Previously, the world could only be explored by direct travel, but now it can be discovered in a short time just by gadget. These devices turn the world into a global village that connects people from different religions, ethnicities, and cultures intensely in cyberspace. Global information is no longer accessible only to elites or scientists or men, but also to women and laities. Our village that we thought was only ours now is owned by the global world through Internet access. On the other hand, the presence of the Internet causes the global world to become such a small village that it can be accessed by anyone. The encounters in the global world, in both real and cyber spaces, can cause tensions in the local community in some areas.

Identity vs hospitality

Local traditional communities coming up against global influences often have concerns about the risky identity of their groups, regions, or tribes. Identity becomes an even broader issue if it is related to religious or national identity. Easy access today to a

⁴ Sumanto Al Qurtuby, "Reconciliation from Below: Indonesia's Religious Conflict and Grassroots Agency for Peace" in *Peace Research: The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflicts Studies*, vol. 44/45, no. 2/1 (2012/2013), Canadian Mennonite University, 145-6.

⁵ Nina Nurmila, "The Influence of Global Muslim Feminism on Indonesian Muslim Feminist Discourse" in *Al-Ja>mi'ah*, vol. 49, no. 1 (Yogyakarta: Al-Jami'ah Research Centre of State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga, 2011), p. 59

global community drives us to no longer see identity as something solid or stagnant, however, but as a liquid/dynamic process. As long as humans build relationships with different people, we are encouraged to jump into the dynamic process. Encounter with different identities leads us to learn more about other identities that influence us at deeper levels of the dialogue of life. A pure dialogue requires a learning and sharing process that could guide us to *hybrid* or even *multiple* identities. The continuing processes of learning and sharing can create *the new us*. As long as we continue to be open to the encounter process, there are always possibilities of identity transformation. Facing these meetings with various identities requires us to be open to different or foreign people.

Hospitality is a terminology that we must develop in today's global community. As Michele Hershberger wrote in her book entitled *Hospitalitas: Orang Asing atau Teman?* (original title: *A Christian View of Hospitality: Expecting Surprises*), there are several Biblical narratives that can enlighten us about meeting others.⁶ Among the narratives is the story of a widow of Zarephath in I Kings 17:8-16: her meeting with the stranger seemed difficult, but the calling to give food was very clear. There is also a story about Samaritan women in the Gospel of John 4:1-26, in which one showed her hospitality to Jesus by giving him a drink. Jesus himself had never received hospitality from strangers, whom he considered to be part of his community. The Apostle Paul on his journey to preach the gospel also received hospitality from a woman named Lydia in Acts 16:13-18, who invited him to her home. From these stories, we can see that in biblical narratives, the role of women in showing hospitality was enormous.

The issue of identity vs hospitality, often seen as a binary choice, is a daily personal matter for women at the grassroots. Amazingly, in all these narratives, women win both of them: women do not see that identity and hospitality are two different things that are opposite to each other, but use them both as a strength to change themselves and their communities. This is what I meant earlier when I stated that interreligious and intercultural education should provide more opportunities and access for women to play roles. This access to education needs to be open to women from all levels of life to participate. There is tremendous potential in women to be developed in a global community.

Christendom vs Christ-womb

In the history of the Gospel, Christianity has been and is partly still dominated by the spirit of Christendom, or the spirit of arrogance when dealing with different religions and cultures. When Christianity and the church experience encounters with the global community, it is a challenge to redefine what is Christianity/church and its calling. Lesslie Newbigin once wrote, "We are called, I think, to bring our faith into the public arena, to publish it, to put it at risk in the encounter with other faiths and ideologies in open debate and argument, and in the risky business of discovering what Christian obedience means in radically new circumstances and in radically different human cultures."⁷ Newbigin challenges the claim of truth in the ideology of every religion in the

⁶ Michele Hershberger, *Hospitalitas: Orang Asing Teman atau Ancaman* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2009), 28-33.

⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 59-60.

public sphere, especially in the global community. All claims of truth must be tested in the public domain, especially when providing answers to community struggles and humanitarian responsibilities. If the claims of truth contrast with the call of humanity, then it will only lead to the destruction of society. On the other hand, Christianity and the church are also challenged to proclaim the truth without being guided by the spirit of arrogance, apologetics, authoritarianism, or selfishness. Christianity needs to redefine its vocation to be relevant to the example of Jesus Christ as he showed throughout his life, his suffering, his death, and his resurrection. Postcolonial criticism also leads to a discussion of Christianity when dealing with a pluralistic world. On the one hand, Christianity and the church need to continue to define themselves, and on the other hand, they are called to respect differences.

Septemmy Lakawa, a female theologian from Indonesia, argues that mission theology now requires a new path. Christianity and the church need to consider the metaphor of *embracing* when dealing with different religions and cultures.⁸ Christian mission today is a mission that embraces *otherness* and opens up space to be patient and humble for *waiting* as a result of this openness. The call of Christianity is not just a matter of self-identity or other-identity, but more than that: to *relate* with others. No one knows what the results of these relations will be; we just need to wait. As written in I Corinthians 13:12, "For now, we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known."

In embracing others, there is an inner side that needs to be emptied and to be filled with the presence of the other. The kenosis of Christ event and the metaphor of the womb are important. The womb is a space inside a woman's body that is open to be filled by a different body. In a womb, the empty space is filled with the life that grows and becomes a new human. The experience of having a womb is an experience that is personally owned by women. When a woman talks about the womb, she does not talk about another human body, but about her own body, about the suffering she experienced or the joy she felt from the existence of the womb in her body. That body experience, in my opinion, is a very important source for women when talking about emptying themselves and allowing other lives to grow in relation to themselves. When talking about Christ emptying himself, women were connected because of Christ-womb, which is serving for life. Embracing others is rooted in the kenosis of Christ, who gave room and life for others, as well as in women's personal experiences.

Conclusion

Advanced interreligious and intercultural education for women and laities must be education that builds bridges and bridges gaps, as I have written in the title of this paper. Such education needs three things. First, education must give more space to women and laities at all levels – local, national, regional, and global – to take part actively. The education provided needs to include not only formal mainstream education, but also informal alternative education. Second, education must aim to strengthen character and the values of love, care, determination, humanity, transparency, and solidarity.

⁸ Septemmy E. Lakawa, "Changing Landscapes of Mission: Challenges and Opportunities" in *International Review of Mission* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014), 54.

Such education should contain conflict management with critical awareness, so that the conflicts that occur become positive and constructive. Third, education must be built on a shared vision and mission, especially how women and laities play a mutual role in overcoming problems affecting the global community such as radicalism, immigration, environmental damage, violence and injustice, and poverty. This is how advanced education can reach the global community.



Hellen Mushi, Tanzania.

Hellen Mushi from the North-Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania completed her Master's studies in Mass Communication in 2016 at the St. Augustine University in Mwanza, Tanzania. As director of the church-based radio station "UTUME FM Radio", she employs her professional skills and her creativity to establish a creative radio programme. As the only broadcasting channel in the Tanga region, it is not only a means of communication and quality information but also makes an indispensable contribution to the missionary work of her diocese.

Photo: private

There is no Better World Without Communication

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship Hellen Mushi

According to Rodriques,¹ communication is the exchange and exact replication of thoughts, feelings, facts, beliefs, and ideas between and among individuals through a common system of symbols to cause certain actions or changes in behaviour.

Communication is vital for human existence, and for the progress of humanity. No person, group, or society can exist without interaction with others. Think for a moment what would happen to us if we did not talk with anyone at home, didn't listen to lectures at school or college, didn't speak to friends or colleagues, didn't play games or watch television or films. What would life be like in the absence of news, views, facts, figures, and information? Obviously, we would be miserable and would miss out on many opportunities and challenges that offer us security and success in our personal and professional lives.

Radio: A medium of mass communication

Radio is a fascinating medium because of its special characteristics, one of which is that radio can be listened to while the listener does other things at the same time. It continues to be as relevant and potent as it was in the early years, despite the emergence of more desirable media. However, there is room and scope for each medium, including radio. Experience has revealed that new technologies add things but don't replace others. One medium is not displaced by another – each medium reinvents itself in the context of changes in the communication environment. In the current changed media scenario, radio is reorienting itself with more innovative programmes and formats.

The role of radio

The role of radio in mass media is to provide the audience with information, education, or entertainment, or all three in different balanced proportions. The role of radio as a medium of mass communication varies from country to country. There are radio networks that devote themselves exclusively to entertainment. These are commercial enterprises run with profit-seeking interests. They carry a large number of advertisements along with their programmes. There are radio networks, operated by educational insti-

¹ Rodriques, M.V., 1992: *Effective Business Communication*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, p. 28.

tutions, which specialize in educational programming. The third category of radio broadcasts are religious radio and community radio, known as “noncommercial”. Utume Radio falls under this category.

Five strengths of radio are:

1. It is an intimate and personal medium
2. It is a convenient medium that can be consumed anywhere
3. It is relatively inexpensive
4. It can overcome the barrier of literacy
5. It can reach remote rural and tribal areas, thus overcoming geographical barriers

Considering the strength of radio and the nature of its targeted audience, the North-Eastern Diocese (NED-ELCT) decided to establish a radio station as one of the best tools available to fulfil its mission of evangelism, which is to proclaim the gospel of God as revealed through the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. The church mission has a holistic approach, which is to provide both evangelism and social services. With our proclamation, we intend to reach non-Christians and help Christians to live as true followers of Jesus so that the church becomes a genuine expression of the kingdom of God here and now.

Introduction of Utume FM Radio, 97.3 FM

Utume FM Radio, 97.3 FM is located at the Tumaini Restaurant and Hostel building. The building is in Lushoto Town, a few metres from the Lushoto bus stop. The vision of Utume FM Radio is to “make Jesus Christ revealed and known to all people”. The mission of the radio station is to “spread reliable and good news that suits all people for the glory of God”.

The radio station was established from scratch by cofounders Joseph Kweka (Communication Officer) and Hellen Mushi (Assistant Communication Officer), who were fresh from university. We were trusted by the diocese to establish the radio station and put it into operation, even though we had no experience at the start. We are glad today the radio station is on air and we have learned a lot, especially the technical part.

Currently, the radio station covers some parts of Tanga Region including Lushoto District, Handeni District, Kilindi District, and some parts of Muheza District. In Manyara Region, the radio covers some parts of Kiteto District, and Mvomero District in Morogoro Region. The geographical location of Lushoto District means that the radio station does not cover the whole part of Tanga Region. The diocese is in an ongoing process of establishing a signal booster in order to cover the whole of Tanga Region.

The year 2014 was a fortunate one for me: I was awarded a Master’s scholarship from the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) and started my course in September 2014, handing over my official duties to Joseph Kweka.

In June 2016, Utume FM Radio decided to employ five employees as directed by Tanzania Regulatory Authority (TCRA), hence it had a total of seven employees. Luckily enough, Utume FM Radio received its government licence on 18 December 2016 and started to broadcast live on 19 December 2016. By the time I finished my studies, on 24

February 2017, my post as Assistant Communication Officer had changed, and I was appointed as the Utume FM Radio Station Manager.

Objectives guiding the station in fulfilling its mission and vision:

- To educate diocese members and community members at large about different issues around the world
- To communicate to members of the diocese and community
- To entertain diocese members and community
- To provide diocese members and community members with quality information
- To spread the word of God and bring hope for internal life

Progress of radio programmes concerning evangelism

Utume FM Radio has various spiritual programmes that have received a positive response from listeners, including “The Prayer Line” (a special live programme where listeners make phone calls in the studio and request prayers for different needs), “Jibu na Biblia” (a programme where a presenter asks biblical questions and listeners answer using a Bible), “Maisha ya Kristo na Mkristo” (The Life of Christ and Christians), “Neno la Mchana” (a programme that gives airtime to servants of God to teach the word of God), and “Matendo Makuu ya Mungu” (a programme of testimony where people testify to what God has done in their lives).

Listeners from a variety of denominations tune in to our programmes, which speaks to our great credit and to some extent has helped us to fulfil the mission of NED-ELCT of spreading reliable and good news that suits all people for the glory of God.

Utume FM Radio once visited remote areas where the radio station reaches and heard testimony of how nonbelievers (including Muslims) started to believe in God and how the prayers helped them to change the ways of their lives and start attending mass in church.

All of this happened because they heard the gospel via Utume Radio and decided to be baptized and follow Jesus Christ.

Progress of radio programmes concerning community

Community outreach

This method is used to meet listeners in their environment and collect their opinions concerning different issues so that they can be heard and receive solutions from those authorized to make them. Running community outreach is still a challenge, however, because the radio station does not have a means of transport and there is no financial budget to facilitate the trips.

Media programmes

As a radio station, one of our policies is to make sure that we work with people from different denominations, nationalities, and ethnic groups by providing radio programmes that can touch every age group. For example, we have a special programme for kids

known as “Jukwaa la Watoto”, and a women’s programme known as “Sauti ya Mwanamke”, as well as other social programmes that deliver social education for all.

We also invite guests to participate in our radio programmes regardless of their denomination or nationality. Another fact that demonstrates we do not segregate by faith or denomination is that 75 per cent of our listeners are Muslims.

How Utume FM Radio management interacts with the church and social communities

1) Utume management interacts with the church through:

- Consultation on various issues with leaders of the church at different levels of command, because all official documents such as contracts are supposed to be authorized by the General Secretary of the Diocese and the Principal Dean of the Diocese
- Meetings with leaders of the church, normally twice a month for management meetings and other issues regarding the welfare of the radio station
- Attendance at services, prayer meetings, Sunday services, and other spiritual services

2) Utume management interacts with social communities through:

Social and religious radio programmes. These help us interact with church members and social communities, where they get free time to air their views and opinions concerning different topics which are discussed live in the studio via phone calls and text messages.

The challenges Utume FM Radio faces in running daily radio programmes and news coverage

- Lack of an Outside Broadcasting Van (OB VAN) for running daily media operations, especially gospel programmes where a majority of listeners want to testify to how Utume FM Radio has changed their spiritual way of life. In addition, the year 2020 will include national elections for choosing the president and other members of the Parliament, so the media has a role to play in encouraging society to make good choices in choosing a leader and emphasizing the importance of participating in voting.
- Limited coverage due to the geographical location. This situation can be solved by establishing two signal boosters, one to be located in Mlalo and the other in Segera.
- Utume FM Radio does not have an active strategic plan because it does not have a proper budget and still runs under evangelism work. The radio station needs a professional to help in formulating a strategic plan so as to determine the future of the radio. There is a new policy from the Tanzania Communication Regulatory Authority that all media will be under commercial categories, without consideration for religious radio stations and their mission and vision.

- Utume FM Radio does not have enough production tools in the studio such as microphones, voice recorders, and computers, which presents an obstacle to meeting deadlines in our daily duties.

Within the alumni network, I’m expecting to gain new experience from my fellow participants at the conference and to learn from them because they will be in different fields from my own. I also expect to share my media experience as a media practitioner. Media is a source of information, and no one can live without information because information is power.



Danar Sri Wijayanti, Indonesia.

She accomplished her Master's degree in linguistics at the University of Indonesia in 2013. She has been teaching English as a foreign language since 2007. Now, the former UEM scholarship holder is a translator for the newsletter of the GKJTU and a teacher at a global school in Semarang. She also preaches in Sunday Worship of her local church: GKJTU Pemanthan Kadirejo.

Photo: private

Mutual Respect as a Gateway to a Global Learners' Community

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship Danar Sri Wijayanti

We live in an era of globalization. This era makes it possible to have interaction with people all around the world with just one click using Internet technology. The globalization era lets the world have an interreligious and intercultural global community in which people enjoy international citizenship. Today people are not only part of their local community, but also an international community. We can exchange information in seconds using the Internet and social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and others. This globalization era brings changes that influence almost all aspects of people's lives, including my working field, education.

As a UEM scholarship alumna in education, I would like to share my experience related to globalization and my working field. This paper, presented for the UEM Alumni Conference from August 31 to September 7 in Hattingen, Germany with the theme of "Relevance of Advanced Education for Interreligious and Intercultural Global Community", aims to describe how the scholarship has impacted my life, including my working fields after graduation or completion of my study course, the opportunities and challenges I have faced during my work experience, my interactions with the church and social communities in my working assignments, and my contact with my sending church. It also covers my cooperation with people from different faiths, nationalities, ethnic groups, and generations, as well as my hope and commitment to collaborate within a network of UEM alumni and my expectations towards the UEM as part of the UEM family.

Industry 4.0 and its impact on the educational world

Globalization can't be separated from Industry 4.0, a phenomenon that has caused shifts in our society. According to Forbes writer Bernard Marr (2018), Industry 4.0 represents the fourth revolution that has occurred in manufacturing. Marr emphasizes the significant transformation regarding the way people produce products today, which tends to involve the digitization of manufacturing. Digitization brings great increases in efficiency. For example, in Indonesia, people can see this clearly in the trends in the use of online transportation. Online transportation refers here to the use of Internet applications to order car rides, bike transit, food delivery, etc. The conventional method of public transportation is shifting with new Internet applications such as *Go-Jek* and *Grab*.

Students in this era are also experiencing a shift. Schools used to have a teacher-centred approach, in which the teacher was the source of knowledge. But now, a student-centred approach is becoming current, in which the teacher plays more of a facilitator. The current technology brings changes not only to teaching and learning processes where digitization is welcome, but also to students' aspirations. Students in the past used to dream of becoming doctors, lawyers, politicians, etc. However, we are now seeing newly emerging kinds of jobs such as Youtuber, vlogger, and social media influencer. Today's elementary school students are not ashamed to share their dreams of becoming future social media influencers.

Similarly, the education world can't be separated from these global changes. One of the changes in education related to Industry 4.0 is the changing method of instruction, from the conventional whiteboard and marker to the new familiarity teachers have with Google Lens, Whatsapp, Youtube, etc.. Teachers in the past simply used textbooks and asked students to use more internet sources. But teachers are now making teaching and learning activities more fun with technology, using the students' gadgets. If teachers in the past used conventional methods to give quizzes or assessments, now many kinds of interesting online applications are available for teachers to provide more varied ways of learning. Assessment can be done in a paperless way using teaching applications such as Kahoot, Google Forms, Edpuzzle, and Formative. Students are accustomed to Kahoot quizzes, in which they can use their mobile phone to play a "smart game".

Teaching English to future international students

After finishing my master's degree in Linguistics from the University of Indonesia on December 2012, I immediately started work at an advanced school in Semarang called Tritunggal Christian Senior High School. This school is a very good school designed for upper-class students from wealthy families. It emphasizes English as a second language to prepare students for study overseas. I was assigned to teach English.

I continue to maintain contact with my sending church, the GKJTU, through my active involvement as a translator for the GKJTU newsletter. This is an email-based monthly newsletter which is published by the GKJTU Synod to keep in touch with our partners. The newsletter helps the readers to stay up-to-date with the latest information on GKJTU activities at the synod level, classis level, and congregation level. It was first published in 2008, and I'm so proud and happy to have been actively involved from the first edition until now. In the first couple of years, the newsletter team met up and did the work together in Salatiga. Then, when I started my master's degree in Linguistics supported by the UEM scholarship, I found it easier to work remotely as the translation work was sent by email. Therefore, I was able to translate even though I was living in Depok, West Java for my studies at the University of Indonesia. I am now still able to do the same work by email even though I have moved to Semarang.

Apart from my position on the church's newsletter team, working in Tritunggal Senior High School allowed me to equip the students with English skills both oral and written, as most of them study overseas after completing high school. It also helped me to develop my professional teaching skills, as the school uses an international curricu-

lum for teaching English. This school also provided me with a chance to work under the supervision of a native speaker from America. The native speaker helped me and my team to provide the best English materials for the students, as language skills are very important for them to be able to thrive overseas after they graduate. My encounters with colleagues from other countries have enriched me with cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect. It was interesting for me to have an intercultural global community in my working field.

Even though it's an expensive school for the wealthy in the city, the school allowed me the opportunity to interact with the church and with social communities in my working assignments. As a teacher, I assisted my students in a "Life-Equipping Project", in which they were to spend several days living in a remote area to serve the community and work with the local church to provide service. For example, in the academic year of 2013/2014, my students and I went to Butuh Kidul Village. We lived with some host families there. My students and I did voluntary work to clean the church (GKJTU Butuh Kidul) and to teach kindergarten students in the village. We also provided Bible study service for the local people.

The challenge I faced was that the working environment was too perfect for me, as it was professionally designed for the best teaching career as an English teacher. In addition to teaching English, I was also entrusted to be a class mentor for two academic years after six months of training from January to June 2013. I was the class mentor for the "Fortress" class in the academic year of 2013/2014 and the "Shelter" class for the academic year of 2014/2015. It was too perfect for me because I had a good working environment with students who were mostly the sons and daughters of very important persons in the city. Indeed, the challenge I faced was the need for more space to not only teach English and be a professional class mentor, but also to be able to serve the students spiritually. I realized that my deep calling is not only to assist the students in academic matters but also to assist them to know who their Saviour is, and to grow their faith in Him. I started to realize that I needed a different place of work that would allow me to serve poor students who haven't known Jesus Christ as the only Lord and Saviour.

Marginalized students: Teachable and touchable hearts

In June 2015, I moved to another school, Terang Bangsa Christian Senior High School. It is a school which is based on church ministry, where most of the students were from poor families and are only able to go to school because the school allows them to attend for free. This school provided not only scholarships for the poor but also free lunches for those who couldn't afford to buy their own. Free transportation to the school was also available for those who couldn't attend otherwise. The school was established following a vision from above, a vision that the founder, Petrus Agung Purnomo, had from God to provide schooling for the poor and marginalized.

This school's vision was very much aligned with my personal vision at that time: to get the students not only to learn academic materials, but also to get them to grow spiritually. I think being a teacher is a deep calling, and it provides an opportunity to meet students face-to-face for five days a week. The work of a teacher therefore can include intensive evangelism. It is more effective than preaching at a church, which is mostly

done only once a week. In my opinion, one needn't be a priest to do evangelism. Everyone can do it through their respective profession. Being a teacher is a strategic position to get closer to students, help them with their problems, and guide them to be highly spiritual.

The time I spent in Terang Bangsa was very exciting. I enjoyed my roles not only as an English teacher but also as "class shepherd". I do like the term "class shepherd" as it conveys the meaning that a teacher is also a shepherd who guides the students to Christ. My students' backgrounds of course were very different from those at my previous school, where the students were mostly rich and famous. This school serves students from the lower levels of society, whose families find it hard to earn a living. They are from different ethnic groups such as Javanese, Bataknese, Chinese, etc.

But the unforgettable thing about these students was that they have teachable and touchable hearts. Once, there was a student whose mother was very ill, then passed away. Three days after her mother died, the student's boyfriend broke off their relationship. She was about to commit suicide. It was a challenge for me to help this student. In that case, I knew my role was not only as a teacher but also a counselor. Therefore, I provided intensive counselling for her until she was fully recovered. As a class shepherd, I teach the students God's words and touch their heart to have an encounter with God.

The school provided many opportunities to interact with the church and with social communities in my working assignments. As a class shepherd, I assisted my students in going to church and in their voluntary community service. It's part of the school programme to have the students attend a church youth service and report weekly on what have they learnt from the service. I worked together with a teacher of religion to help the students grow their faith and build good relationships with their respective churches. Students at the school are also encouraged to take an active part in doing community service. For example, in the academic year of 2017/2018, I and my students from the "Luke" class went on a residency programme to Ngaduman, Central Java, a cold area on the slope of Merbabu Mountain. As a class shepherd, I helped them work in the fields with the hosting family, provide games for the local children, and work together with the local church (GKJTU Ngaduman) to join its youth service.

At Terang Bangsa school, I experienced working with different persons from diverse backgrounds. My working experience in that school was not only as a teacher and class shepherd but also as a part of a public relations team. It was an opportunity for me, as my job was to deal with foreigners coming to the school. I provided them with the necessary knowledge about the school and community in Indonesia and helped them deal with the other students. Sometimes the school has foreigner(s) on staff who spend time teaching the students. They come from different countries such as Spain, Germany, and the United States. I also experienced teaching a secondary-level English class, which provided an opportunity for me to work with a guest teacher from the Netherlands. The intercultural global community was strongly felt in the working environment.

Besides the intercultural global community I have experienced, the interreligious atmosphere was fantastic. Some of the students in my class were Muslim, and they were very much welcomed. I made my class a home for my students, where they could feel a warm atmosphere of acceptance regardless of who they were. In the academic year of

2016/2017, when I was a class shepherd for the "Esther" class, I had a Muslim student who was very ill. His name was Bagus. My students and I did fundraising for Bagus. We met his mother, and she was very thankful for the gift. Unfortunately the student ultimately passed away. I still keep in touch with the mother, and we are still like family.

Current teaching and the global learners' community

Terang Bangsa School coloured my days and has a special place in my heart. However, after four years serving Terang Bangsa students, I needed a new challenge to focus more on the global learners' community and on digitization to make learning fun. I think four years is sufficient to do ministry outside the church, and I've been happy to refocus my ministry again on my own church: the GKJTU Papanthan Kadirejo. In July 2018, I began regularly serving as a preacher for Sunday worship at my church. Thus, I shifted my ministry focus from school to the church. That's why I agreed when the YSKI Global School invited me to join their team. I ended my service at Terang Bangsa School in June 2019 and moved to the YSKI Global School in July 2019.

A year before I left my position at Terang Bangsa school, the Furniture and Wood Processing Industry Polytechnic in Kendal invited me to teach there as a part-time lecturer in English. It was really an honour for me to be invited to teach at the newly established Polytechnic, which was founded by the Indonesian Ministry of Industrial Works. I have enjoyed teaching English there, as I have encountered an interfaith and intercultural community in which the students are mostly Muslim and come from various ethnic groups such as the Javanese and Sundanese. I respect them and regard our differences as something that enriches our lives. That's how I promote mutual respect and unity in dealing with my students.

Teaching at the Polytechnic, a school that encourages students to be a part of a global learners' community, is a very exciting task. Right now, education requires that both educators and schools meet the current demands of Industry 4.0. As a result, schools that provide global learning, known as global schools, have been on the rise in Indonesia recently. According to Think Global (2018), global learning means that students learn about the wider world. Schools use a range of terms to describe activities intended to support global learning, including development education, global citizenship, global education, intercultural education, the "global dimension", and "education for sustainable development". All of these subjects will help students to be involved in thinking globally wherever they are.

At my school, the YSKI Global School, the global learning includes teaching students to think and act based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which are explained at the United Nations website (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>). These include eradicating poverty and hunger; providing good health and well-being; ensuring quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, and industry innovation and infrastructure; reducing inequalities; building sustainable cities and communities; encouraging responsible production and consumption; taking action on the climate; and supporting life below water, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions; and fostering partnership for these goals.

Think Global (2018) has emphasized that in a fast-changing, globalized world, education needs to help people understand the wider world around them and make the global connections between issues such as poverty or climate change and their own lives. It should prepare them to live and work in a global community and engage them to make the world a better place. This is what my school does. The students are taught to understand global issues and to contribute to making this world a better place. For example, the students did a campaign to eliminate plastic waste. They persuaded their community to stop using plastic. This was a good way to build a better relationship with the social community.

The YSKI Global School has given me the opportunity as a teacher to interact with people from different nationalities. I work with colleagues from Egypt and America. The Egyptians are Muslims, and one of them wears hijab, but they receive a warm welcome in the Christian YSKI Global School. I think preparing students to live and work in an interfaith and intercultural global community is a noble goal of education right now that meets the current market demand. Students should be equipped with the understanding that they live in a world where their differences enrich each other. Differences in religion are good, as they show us a different perspective on the way people have faith. Similarly, differences in culture are great because each culture comes with its own uniqueness. Another opportunity teachers have is to build good relationships with churches and the community. This is one reason teachers take turns volunteering at the surrounding churches. I volunteered to teach Sunday school at the GKI Karangaru church on behalf of the YSKI Global School.

The challenge of teaching at a Global School is that the teacher must be able to adapt to digitization and be up-to-date on the latest developments, such as using current teaching applications to meet the demands of Industry 4.0. This is why I have taught myself to use teaching applications like Kahoot, EdPuzzle, Formative, and others. I have also joined teacher trainings to learn how to use teaching applications in creative and varied ways. Moreover, I have started to think about how to go paperless by giving the students a chance to do testing online. More creativity in teaching is also required, so I have learnt to use Google Maps, Google Lens, YouTube, and other media in my lessons.

Conclusion

I thank UEM for the scholarship and its impact on my life, including my teaching journey and my active involvement as a newsletter translator in my church. Being a lecturer in a state polytechnic is a job that I never dreamt of before. It's really a surprise from God. Furthermore, it is so exciting for me to use digitization in learning. I thank God that in spite of the busy schedule at my place of work, I still have enough time to build good relationships with my sending church, the GKJTU, by faithfully translating the email-based monthly newsletter. Nowadays, I always have time to attend the monthly newsletter meeting together with Rev. Daniel Heri Iswanto and Rev. Yosias Diandra. We work together in unity even though we are from different generations. We respect each other despite the generation gap.

I also thank God for equipping me to work well with people from different faiths, nationalities, ethnic groups, and generations based on mutual respect, togetherness, and unity. For me, mutual respect is the most important thing to have. It should come before togetherness and unity because without mutual respect, there can be no togetherness. And without mutual respect, there will be no unity. It also brings me great happiness to have the opportunity at my place of work to build good relationships with churches and the social communities, where mutual respect is the key factor.

As a UEM scholarship alumna, I am committed and look forward to collaborating within a network of UEM alumni. I think having fellow UEM alumni in an online network is like having a family who will always be there to help each other and to support each other in prayer. It is good to have this family not only in certain regions, but across continents as well. For example, UEM alumni from Asia should have access to exchange thoughts, ideas, and information not only with fellow alumni in Asia but also with alumni in Africa. Likewise, the UEM alumni from Africa should have access to exchange thoughts, ideas, and information with UEM alumni in Asia. My expectations towards the UEM as part of the UEM family is that the UEM can facilitate a network for its member churches to share information, ideas, and thoughts, where they can feel a sense of togetherness as a family under the wings of the UEM and support each other in prayers.

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Photo: private

“Study...do...teach!” (Ezra 7:10)

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship Dennis Solon

Introduction

It is a rare privilege and pleasure for me to participate in this gathering of former UEM scholars for the first time since the conclusion of my academic studies through the UEM scholarship programme some years ago.

As a brief background, I would like to recall my initial encounter with the name “UEM” during the early years of my basic theological education at Silliman University Divinity School in Dumaguete, Philippines (1996–2001). Bishop Erme Camba, the academic dean during the late nineties, mentioned the UEM quite often in his lectures and sometimes in public gatherings. Occasionally he had to announce an upcoming trip to the UEM in Wuppertal for meetings, which was normally warmly welcomed by students as it meant a break from his class, although he left us with assignments in lieu of the lectures. The presence of UEM scholars from Asia and Africa at the Divinity School during that period gave me a sense of UEM’s internationality and attention to developing future scholars and leaders through scholarships. Indeed, by God’s mysterious providence and incomprehensible grace, I am privileged to be in the company of the UEM’s alumni scholars. In what follows, I shall share some of the salient aspects of my various experiences as a UEM scholarship alumnus.

Fields of work after the study programme

The UEM supported my doctoral studies programme at Heidelberg University from 2009–2014 with a concentration in the area of the New Testament. For this period I was on a leave of absence from the Religious Studies Programme of Silliman University’s College of Arts and Sciences. I returned to Silliman in June 2014, right after finishing the doctorate, and was then back to active teaching on Biblical Studies courses in what is now the Religion and Peace Studies Department of the Divinity School. I also took over the New Testament courses in the seminary. In that same year my position in the faculty was officially transferred from the Religious Studies Department to the Department of Theology.

The bulk of my work from June 2014 to November 2017 was in teaching Biblical Studies subjects, especially introductory courses and seminars in the New Testament, at both the undergraduate (B.Th.) and graduate levels (M.Div.; M.Theol.; D.Theol.). I was invited to extend my role in the university (which I accepted) as a representative to the University Library committee and as the coordinator of the International Center for

Mission Studies in Asia (ICMSA). Being on the library committee was a favourable occasion to represent the Divinity School's interest in improving or updating its library collections, especially for the graduate programmes, in order to maintain the academic quality of the school's degree programmes. My task as coordinator of the Mission Center allowed me to continue to be closely in touch with the UEM, which since I came to the Divinity School as a student has continued to have scholars from Asia and Africa who were enrolled in the Master of Theology, Major in Mission Studies degree programme. Worth mentioning is the Divinity School's hosting of the first International Mission Conference under the auspices of the UEM, in which the Mission Center took part in the planning and implementation. During the given period of active teaching work at Silliman, I was appointed a member of the editorial board of a peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal, the Silliman Journal. It has been an extraordinary privilege to contribute and review submitted articles in such capacity.

During the celebrations of the semestral University Christian Life Emphasis Month (UCLEM) at Silliman, I received several opportunities to take part as convocation preacher and to prepare Bible study materials for students, faculty, and staff.

Related to my academic tasks in the Divinity School, I had the chance to supervise theses projects at the graduate level, particularly in the M.Theol. and D.Theol. degree programmes. This was an occasion for me to develop my own method of carrying out advising tasks as well as to keep track of recent works in my field of discipline.

Thesis projects that I have guided or supervised so far have been socially engaged interpretations of biblical texts. There was one M.Theol. thesis of a candidate from Myanmar who revisited the problem of a Pauline text which commands women to be "silent in the church" (NRSV; cf. 1 Cor 14:33–34).¹ Her thesis was in line with the calls for women's empowerment in Myanmar. Another was a dissertation project by a doctoral student from Thailand who sought an interpretation of the Lord's Prayer as recorded in Matthew 6 in the context of religious diversity.² The work interprets the text in dialogue with the Buddhist ethic of community life and interreligious understanding.

Since December 2017 I have been a visiting professor at the Institute for Diaconic Science and Diaconic Management (IDM) of the Protestant University Wuppertal/Bethel. My main responsibilities are to teach in the international MA in Diaconic Management and to accompany the students during each of the academic sections in Asia, Africa, and Germany. This particular work widens in many ways the horizons of my discipline in Biblical Studies, which now comes into closer dialogue with other disciplines represented in the programme, such as economics, management, practical theology, and ethics. My own hermeneutical process of reading biblical texts is also in some respects fine-tuned by paying attention to variegated concepts and practices of Christian diaconia (at least based on how the term is generally understood in Germany).

¹ Lal Ram Pari, "A Re-reading of Paul's View of Women's Role in the Church Based on First Corinthians 14:34–35 with Application to the Context of the Mizo Christian Women" (M.Theol., Silliman University, 2015).

² Duangsuda Sribuaai, "An Exegetical Examination of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9–13 and its Relevance to the Inter-religious Context in Thailand" (D.Theol., Silliman University, 2018).

Opportunities and challenges experienced

My formal transfer to the Theology Department of the Divinity School opened the door for me to practice my training in Biblical Studies in a seminary setting. Although this could still have been a possibility even if I were to have remained in the Religion and Peace Studies Department (formally Religious Studies Program), being in the seminary full-time required regular and active participation in the academic and spiritual formation of the students, including participation in the various academic committees and programmes of the Divinity School.

In the seminary, I was able to teach introductory and advanced courses in biblical (especially New Testament) studies. Supervising the thesis projects of graduate students also intensified my interest in keeping myself updated on New Testament scholarship. I learned from personal experience the complexity but also the benefits of supervising and examining theses and dissertations. Sitting on the panel of thesis evaluators has also been a window into dialogue with other disciplines in theology. Along this line of interdisciplinary engagement, my role as coordinator of the Divinity School's Mission Center also exposed me to missiological themes and issues.

One of the initial challenges I experienced right after my doctoral programme was advising an M.Theol. student. To be honest, I was still somewhat finding my way as an academic adviser to graduate students, especially in the supervision of a thesis project. Although I was able to cope with the task, I learned that supervising a thesis can also include doing one's own research on the topic at hand to keep abreast with the recent academic findings related to that subject.

Another challenging situation was to be asked to deliver a Bible Study during a UCCP Church Workers Convocation in 2014, which is usually attended by about five hundred pastors and lay leaders of the UCCP. At that time, I thought that it could partly be a case of what former UEM General Secretary, Fidon Mwombeki, said as a heads-up during a doctoral graduation celebration in February 2014, somewhat to this effect: "After your doctoral studies, sometimes the people at your home institution may test you to see if you are really a doctor." But the invitation for me to speak at such an important and prominent theological gathering turned out to be an opportunity for me to share and apply part of my many learnings during my doctoral studies in Germany, which I was eager to do. Such invitations I was more than ready to accept.

To a certain extent, my agreement to speak was to demonstrate or rather justify my decision to go to Germany for my doctoral studies in the New Testament.³ The background of this was my awareness of potential difficulties in pursuing a doctorate in Germany, especially as far as language requirements are concerned, let alone the compelling idea to find a host institution where I could follow the current of postcolonial (or to some extent reader-response-oriented) biblical scholarship. On the other hand, I was convinced that any noble method of biblical interpretation, if brought into meaningful dialogue with other available tools (sacred or profane) and interpretive strategies (historical-critical or reader-oriented), especially if applied critically and conscientiously, could (also) lead to relevant contributions to making sense of biblical texts in

³ As a side note, I am reminded of what Paul wrote in Gal 2, that God's justification of humankind through Jesus Christ renders unnecessary if not completely futile any attempt to justify oneself.

the service of appropriating them in present-day realities.⁴ This is especially true in my own experience, having been trained in sociological (critical) reading of New Testament texts under the supervision of the groundbreaking (at the least in the German context) Prof. Dr Gerd Theißen.⁵ So, I prepared a study on Mark 12:28–34 and presented it with the title “Christian Education and the Double Commandment of Love” in August 2014.⁶ The thesis I represented in this study concerns the environmental aspect of the double commandment of love. There I proposed that Christians and the church should move from mainly attending to the anthropological hermeneutical insights that stem from Jesus’s command to love thy neighbour to also embracing the environmental ecosystem as one’s neighbour. In 2016 I pressed on, pursuing an ecological reading of biblical texts during a research period in Hong Kong at the Divinity School of Chung Chi College. I investigated the text of Romans 8:20, especially in relation to the existing popular translations. My contention about this verse was that environmental degradation cannot be mainly attributed to God’s will. The theme was conceived when I attended a conference on Climate Justice and Food Security in Volos, Greece under the auspices of the UEM.

After some years of teaching in the seminary, I now perceive the seeming gap between biblical scholarship (or theological scholarship for that matter) and church ministry in many respects in a domestic context. I consider it my constant challenge to lessen that gap, for I am of the opinion that both spheres can inform each other, gearing the church towards responsible and holistic service in these changing times. I attempted to contribute to this cause by creating introductory lessons on writings from the New Testament, with the primary understanding that the New Testament remains relevant to today’s contexts, especially the Philippine context. These lessons are documented in two volumes entitled *The New Testament: A Study Guide for (Filipino) Students*. Interestingly, the first volume (covering the Gospels) was finished before I left Silliman to start my doctoral degree at Heidelberg; the second volume (covering the books from Acts through Revelation) was finished just before I left again to assume the guest professorship at IDM of the Protestant University Wuppertal/Bethel.

My placement at the Institute for Diaconic Management (IDM) of the Protestant University Wuppertal/Bethel also came with the task of maintaining my German language proficiency. I was faced with a considerable challenge when I was scheduled to deliver an inaugural lecture as a visiting professor. It became, however, a chance to polish my already somewhat rusty academic German. Developing learning materials for the interdisciplinary programme was also a challenge, but it came with the benefit of learning and the possibility of exploring other academic territories that were previously foreign to me, such as the fields of economics and management.

⁴ See, for instance, John G. Gager, “Shall We Marry Our Enemies”, *Interpretation* 36 (1982): 256–265.

⁵ The groundbreaking articles Theißen published, especially in the early 70s, are compiled in Gerd Theissen, *Studien zur Soziologie des Urchristentums* (3rd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1989) (first edition in 1979). English counterpart: Gerd Theißen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (trans. John H. Schütz; Fortress Press, 1982).

⁶ Dennis Solon, “Christian Education and the Double Commandment of Love”, in *UCCP Church Workers Convocation 53 Proceedings* (Dumaguete: Silliman University Divinity School, 2014), 12–17.

Interaction with the church and social communities in professional work

My interaction with the church (UCCP) became active again in 2014 after rather passive contact with churches at home during my doctoral studies. As far as I could, I attended the annual sessions of the Cebu Conference of the UCCP, of which I am a member as an ordained minister. On several occasions I delivered lectures or Bible studies during continuing theological education programmes or in sessions at various conferences, e.g., in the provinces of Cebu, Leyte, Samar, and Agusan. I also responded affirmatively whenever possible to invitations to preach at local worship services.

In Germany, my interaction with churches and social communities has so far been rather limited, although there have been several occasions when I have been involved in activities. These have included my participation in international worship services in Bad Oeynhausen, which is under the care of the pastor couple Dr Christian Hohmann and Rev. Joy de la Cruz. When on business travel or taking academic trips in the IMADM course, I strive to connect with wider church bodies as well as with UEM member churches. For instance, I had the chance to visit the National Council of Churches in Indonesia, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, and the Regional Office of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA), and to interact with some of their respective officers. I have learned that churches in various locations and nationalities share relatively similar social concerns, such as social injustice, poverty, corruption, and the marginalization of LGBTQ communities.

In Cape Town, I had the privilege to preach the Word during a Sunday service. These are some little ways through which I have been able to serve the wider church.

Contact with the sending church

I generally maintain an open line of communication with my sending church. On the one hand, I was deeply encouraged when my sending church made my return home from my studies known to all church constituents, especially at the national and conference levels. In 2017, I contributed to the church’s nationwide educational campaign on human rights by preparing a Bible study on the theme “The Mission of Advancing Peace Based on Justice by Upholding Human and People’s Rights in These Critical Times” based on Romans 5:1.

However, there have been occasions on which I had to refuse invitations to speak at church-related gatherings, mainly due to scheduling conflicts or distance issues, given that travelling to other Philippine islands normally requires considerable time and energy. Teaching at a premier theological seminary of the church has in some ways made me more visible as a prospective resource person for the church’s educational programmes and related gatherings. It comes, however, with the challenge of doing justice to the church’s expectations. Even if church people may think that I am a trained theological scholar, I must be honest to say that I am no expert and will need to devote more time to learn and hone my skills further in teaching and in imparting information.

Perhaps one thing I may consider as something to work on is to collaborate less frequently with my sending church or with other church-related academic institutions. I thought I could participate more in the church's wider ministries by producing study materials for the educational ministries of the church. I guess these concerns need more participative and proactive approaches on my part in the years ahead.

Working together with people from different faiths, nationalities, ethnic groups, and generations

To date, I do not have much experience working with people from other faiths, other than having students from other religious persuasions in my classes. Most of them have been Muslims, along with a handful of free thinkers or atheists. It has been, nevertheless, an important learning experience for me about introducing Christian beliefs and teachings to non-Christian students. In the process, I had to bear in mind that my task of teaching religion as a subject was not necessarily to convert non-Christians and bring them into the Christian fold. The task was rather to make Christianity as a religious persuasion understandable to them. I was also able to invite Christian students to process their faith in a way that they live responsibly in a religiously diverse society and find or make space for dialogue with people of other religious convictions.

Specific to the goals above, I explored a paradigm of teaching the Bible that pays attention to biblical ethical themes that have a bearing on the present social realities. For example, in teaching the Gospels I identified particular theological-ethical themes from each of the gospel writings: nonviolence and non-retaliation in Matthew; radical discipleship in Mark; hospitality in Luke; and Jesus in the context of many religions in John.

The presence of colleagues and students from other countries at my workplace in my home country has made me aware of the institution's diversity and commitment to promoting respect for one's uniqueness and special enrichment to the organisation. This understanding has been reinforced in my placement as a visiting professor in a foreign land, privileged to interact with colleagues and students from various countries and cultures.

Hope and commitment to collaborate within a network of UEM alumni

My hope for the network of UEM alumni is that there would be strong collaborations and interactions among members. I would be more than willing to be a part of programmes of this sort. I believe we have so much to learn from each other, based on our respective social and religious contexts. The sharing of experiences, insights, and related resources would be a significant prospect, especially in view of the fact that many schools and institutions have rather meagre academic resources because of financial constraints.

The international network could be a platform for mutual encouragement and support and even interdisciplinary endeavours. In the long run, it could increase efficiency

in the local setting, but it could also improve the global relevance of what we do locally, whether in church, academe, or society. I believe that an actively engaged international network of UEM alumni could have a significant impact on home institutions and in wider spheres.

Expectations towards the UEM

As part of the UEM family, I hope that the UEM continues to maintain and embody its very strategic position as an enabler and facilitator of cooperations and collaborations among its member churches and church-related institutions. By now, the UEM is close to celebrating 25 years of existence as an international communion of churches; it has soared high and has reached a wider horizon. Connected to this, the aspect of collaboration among its scholarship alumni could be further explored and intensified. I can see various avenues where UEM alumni could play an important role in inspiring and encouraging its members to actively support the UEM's programmes. In view of the UEM's educational arm, the alumni could explore collaborative activities among themselves at an international level. This could take the form of a book or a conference project (physical or virtual) on particular themes. Perhaps an online platform could also be developed for such purposes.

Interdisciplinary engagements and collaborations could also be looked into. Programmes that have effectively worked before, such as study trips or continuing study programmes, could be strengthened and expanded to include a South-to-South UEM alumni exchange of a week or so in duration. These are some of my thoughts about how we as alumni might move forward along with UEM's vital programmes for the churches' present and future social witness.

I wish to end this sharing by referring back to the text in Ezra 7 that I quote above, which I thought could be an encouraging biblical impulse for all of us as former UEM scholars.⁷ The text describes Ezra's constant commitment to study the law of the Lord, and to do its imperatives, and to teach its relevant insights to the people. It is a striking example of juxtaposition between theory and practice: study, do, and teach – in that order.

⁷ For a hermeneutical appropriation of Ezra in Indonesia, see the doctoral dissertation I partly guided: Pahala Jannen Simanjuntak, *Rebuilding the Temple: An Exegetical-Hermeneutical Examination of Ezra 1:1–11 and its Implications to the Rebuilding of the Churches in Indonesia* (D.Th, Silliman University, 2018).



Rev. Dr Dyah Ayu Krismawati,

Indonesia. She is pastor of the Christian Church in East Java (GKJW – Greja Kristen Jawi Wetan). From 2011–2017, Krismawati was a scholarship holder of the UEM for a doctoral degree at the Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal / Bethel, Germany. Topic of her dissertation: "Reform thinking of Indonesian Muslims in the era Reformasi. Religious change and religious freedom in the thinking of scholars of the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama." Since 2019, Dyah Ayu Krismawati has been head of the Asia Region at the United Evangelical Mission and a member of the UEM board.

Photo: Arendra Wiemardo / UEM

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship

Dyah Ayu Krismawati

Fields of work after the study programme

I was a UEM scholarship holder from 2011-2017. I did my doctorate at the Kirchliche Hochschule (KiHO) Wuppertal/Bethel, Germany and wrote a dissertation entitled: *Reformdenken indonesischer Muslime in der era Reformasi: Religionswechsel und Religionsfreiheit im Denken von Gelehrten der Nahdlatul Ulama und der Muhammadiyah*. (Reform Thought of Indonesian Muslim Scholars in the Reformation Era: Conversion and Freedom of Religion in the Thought of Scholars of the Nahdlatul Ulama and the Muhammadiyah).

After finishing my doctoral study, I went back to my church, the East Java Christian Church (Greja Kristen Jawi Wetan-GKJW), and worked as secretary of the Theology Department and lecturer at the Balewiyata Theological Institute in Malang.

In the Theology Department, I and my team prepared theological guidance and theological dialogue about many themes in theology discussed by church members, lay people, and pastors. These included the contextualization, the offering, the holy communion, baptism, etc. We prepared books for the annual lectionary and engaged in sermon planning, daily reflection, liturgy, etc.

In the Balewiyata Theological Institute, I trained pastors, deacons, elders, women, young adults, youth, and children. The themes of the training in this theological institute varied. Some of them were interfaith dialogue, peacebuilding, pastoral counselling, church music, etc.

I have been the UEM Executive Secretary for Asia since March 2019. My task is to ensure the implementation of the aims of the United Evangelical Mission through strategic and operational management.

Opportunities and challenges

I enjoyed working in the Theology Department and Theological Institute after I finished my course of study. These two working fields were suitable for me. I developed many new insights and ideas based on my expertise and learned a lot directly from the church members and people of other faiths. I also had enough authority from the church leader to implement my ideas and thoughts.

One of the challenges I had was to be interdisciplinary. There were many themes in the training, workshops, and seminars that differed from my expertise, and I had to learn these in order to fulfil the needs of the congregation. However, I also saw this as an opportunity, which drove me to be more creative and sensitive to the needs of the cong-

regation and church members. To be interdisciplinary is useful because in this era we cannot confine ourselves to learn only one subject or field.

In my new working environment in the UEM, I am trying to adjust to the new work system and new work climate in the international office. It is quite challenging since the differences between my previous office in Indonesia and the new office in Germany are very great in many aspects, for example the language, working conditions, etc.

I enjoy working in the UEM because in the UEM I am working more interculturally and internationally. In the UEM office and in the area of UEM services I have many colleagues and fellow stakeholders of different cultures and faiths. This is a great opportunity for me to learn more about networking, intercultural communication, and developing projects and programmes. Through my work in the UEM I have also had a chance to enrich my experience in many fields like theology, management, team-building, etc.

Interaction with the church and social communities in professional work

In my work in Indonesia, I have pursued interactions with congregation/church members and social communities. Intercultural ability and the ability to build a network have been very important. I have visited many congregations within the East Java Christian Church for trainings, workshops, and seminars. I have also preached regularly in the different congregations and have maintained contact with church members. When I taught at Balewiyata, I worked a lot with people from other faiths as well because one of the core subjects at Balewiyata is interfaith dialogue. Balewiyata also works together with civil society through stakeholders like other religious institutions, social workers, local artists, entrepreneurs, etc. We have been trying to work with and in networks.

Working as the UEM Executive Secretary for Asia has presented me with a similar task regarding interaction and relationships. My duties as Executive Secretary for Asia demand good interaction and cooperation with member churches and social communities. I regularly visit UEM member churches, support their programmes and projects, and work together with many social communities in our joint programmes.

Contact with the sending church

I communicate quite intensively with my sending church through a variety of media. When I did my study in Germany, I sent them annual information about the development of my study. It helped them to stay in contact with me and to plan my future assignments for after I finished my study.

I continue to maintain good contact not only with my sending church but also with all member churches of the UEM as one of my tasks as UEM Executive Secretary for Asia.

Working together with people from different faiths, nationalities, ethnic groups, and generations

I have done a lot of work with people from different faiths, nationalities, ethnic groups, and generations. There were and are many programmes and projects I have carried out with peoples from different faiths, nationalities, ethnic groups, and generations. For example, when I worked at Balewiyata we held an interfaith exchange with participants from Tanzania, Germany, the Philippines, etc. This programme involved mostly Muslims, Madurese, Batak, etc. We have also run an interfaith youth programme in the same format.

At the UEM, we also have many ongoing projects and programmes in the five fields of the UEM (Evangelism, Diaconia, Partnership, Advocacy, Development) involving people from different faiths, nationalities, ethnic groups, and generations.

Hope and commitment to collaborate within a network of UEM alumni

I would like to be more active in the network of alumni. I think this alumni network will be very important. We can enrich each other and work together on many programmes and projects. This alumni network can also support the needs of the UEM in many ways since the UEM has supported our study. It is time to pay back this generosity.

The network of alumni could engage in many activities to help the UEM encourage member churches and people who have been supported by the UEM to return that support as donors. Examples could include supporting united action, introducing UEM to the grassroots, and providing information and resources to UEM projects and programmes.

Expectations towards the UEM

My expectations towards the UEM are that the sense of belonging among all member churches and individuals who have received support from the UEM develop over time as the main manifestation of the internationalization of the UEM. I also hope that all UEM colleagues and staff are able to ensure the implementation of the aims of the United Evangelical Mission through good strategic and operational management and services. In this way the UEM may be a blessing in doing God's mission every day and everywhere.



Rev. Dr. Abednego Keshomshahara,

from Bukoba, Tanzania. In 1997, he obtained his Bachelor's degree and, in 2000, his Master's degree in theology from the Makumira University. In 2002, he started his doctoral studies in theology at the Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal / Bethel, which he successfully completed in 2008. Topic of his dissertation: "Theology of poverty reduction in Tanzania: Striving for a Christian socio-economic and political vision". From 2000 to 2002, he was first a lecturer and later director of the Theological Academy in Ruhija. Since 2015, the former UEM scholarship holder Keshomshahara has been Bishop of the North-Western Diocese (NWD) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

Photo: Ramona Hedtmann / UEM

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship

Abednego Keshomshahara

Fields of work after the study programme

After completion of my studies in Germany in 2008, I was given the task of preparing the establishment of the University College called Josiah Kibira University College (JoKUCo) under Tumaini University Makumira (TUMA). It was one of the preconditions that the one who was dealing with establishment of such an institution was supposed to be a PhD holder. I dealt with this task in collaboration with the task force that was formed to assist me. It was a challenging task that required the preparation of governance documents and the organisation of infrastructure, lecturers, and support staff, as well as advertising the new institution, etc. Since it was formed out of the existing teachers college, the infrastructure needed some improvements and the addition of some new buildings. My task started in 2008, and the university college was registered in 2012, when I became Deputy Provost for Administration until 2015, when I became Bishop of the North-Western Diocese (NWD).

The university started with a good number of students sent by the government. However, in 2014, 2015, and 2016 the number of students sent to us decreased, leading to financial constraints. We later established science courses that attracted more students in 2015/16, but in 2017 the university was told not to enrol more than forty students unless more big laboratories were put in place and nine more lecturers employed. Fulfilment of these recommendations was not possible without students to boost the university's revenue. This led to more financial constraints. As a result of these financial constraints, we asked the government to suspend the university so that we might pay the debts first and later evaluate for ourselves whether we could continue offering a university education. It should be noted that there are many universities in the country, both public and private. The number of students who graduate from six cannot feed all the universities available in the nation, and hence the competition to enrol students is very high. Since not all students are able to get loans for further studies, the tendency is for many students to join the public universities, which have relatively lower university fees.

It was painful to see that I, a person who prepared documents for the establishment of JoKUCo, was the same person who asked the government to suspend it when I was chairperson of the governing Board or Bishop of the North-Western Diocese (NWD). The government decided to suspend JoKUCo on the basis of the December 2016 inspection which had required JoKUCo to add more laboratories and nine more PhD lecturers,

among other recommendations, while prohibiting JoKUCo from enrolling more students.

On the other hand, more than a thousand students graduated from this university within its six years of existence, a great contribution. The university stimulated development near its vicinity as people built hotels, hostels, shops, etc. Others received employment or gained a market for their agricultural businesses.

A similar challenge has been found in running the church health services. The government has distributed health dispensaries and health centres in the rural areas whereby each village has a dispensary, each ward has a health centre, and each district has a hospital. Since such public health centres treat people free of charge or with subsidized costs, it becomes difficult for the private health facilities to get customers. As a result, debts are created, leading to a failure to pay the salaries of workers and meet the statutory deductions. There is therefore a need to evaluate each health facility to see whether it can operate independently. This can lead to decisions to downsize a facility or suspend it, or even to close it down to avoid the piling up of debts. As such, we are in the process of downsizing, suspending, or closing the social facilities, while the government is fulfilling its responsibility of offering social services to its citizens.

While I was preparing the university college, I was given an assignment to teach some courses in the teachers college and work as an assistant principal, the position for which I was paid at that time. I taught communication skills and took care of students spiritually as chaplain. I learned a lot with regard to the administration of learning institutions and their challenges.

After being elected as Bishop of the North-Western Diocese (2015), I have dealt with many tasks. These have included pastoral visits to various congregations, conducting seminars in the congregations with a team, and spiritual seminars against the challenges of Pentecostalism and charismatic gifts. There has been a mushrooming of charismatic churches, some of which mislead people to depend on miracles without working or learning, or to pray without going to hospitals. Such misleading theologies cause deaths and poverty. We found it urgent to run seminars about prayers, miracles, and works of the Holy Spirit so as to offer guidance and precaution. This goes hand in hand with seminars for counteracting poverty (part of my dissertation) with a focus on Christian stewardship and an emphasis on microfinance credit societies. Other tasks have included chairing meetings, attending national and international meetings, attending the UEM council as a council member and Vice Moderator of the UEM, attending government occasions, etc.

Interaction with the church and social communities

This is partly indicated above, especially through my leadership of institutions that touch the lives of all people, such as educational facilities and health centres, and economic projects that support women and young people through microcredit societies.

Contact with the sending church

Through my interactions as Bishop and formerly as a lecturer at the university I have met several people with whom I interact. Through my diocese and the UEM I normally deal with peace conferences among religions. Our diocese has a project of interfaith dialogue that facilitates discussions on peaceful coexistence among religions. I am also active with the UEM in its interreligious peace conferences. I also visited Indonesia in 2019 as part of the WCC and UEM project against radicalism and the oppression of Papuan human rights. I have written articles and books that advocate for women and the poor, and for peaceful living among people of different religions and backgrounds. My positive experience with regard to interactions with people has been the sense of solidarity and support in the context of challenges and hardships. However, the negative experience has been in meeting challenges that are beyond my ability to solve or may take a long time to be solved, like that of the Papuan people in Indonesia or the poverty of some of the families in my home diocese.

Hope and commitment to collaborate within a network of UEM alumni

My expectation of the alumni network is to have contacts via email, Whatsapp, Instagram, etc. with whom to share about life experiences and advise one another on ways of addressing challenges, learning from one another, and so on. The UEM can help to coordinate us in this regard.

Conclusion

I am thankful to the UEM for supporting my studies from 2003 to 2008. This support did not only benefit me, but my church and my nation overall. It is good that we acknowledge God's grace by supporting others who need our services and commitments. I thank the UEM for organising this important meeting in which we have had the opportunity to share and learn from one another and to learn together globally as global citizens.



Rev. Agustinus Pengarapen Purba,

Indonesia. Purba holds a Bachelor in Theology (1991) and a Master of Diaconic Management (2013). The former UEM scholarship holder received the Humanitarian Affairs Award for his outstanding contribution in the field of humanitarian work in disaster management. Since 2015, Agustinus Purba has been President of the GBKP (Karo Batak Protestant Church).

Agustinus Purba died unexpectedly on 19 November 2020 as a result of a corona infection shortly before the publication of this book.

Photo: Martina Pauly / UEM

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship

Agustinus P. Purba

I was one of the first alumni of the Diaconic Management course. I was very grateful to our Lord Jesus Christ for the opportunity to be able to attend the MADM programme implemented by the IDM and the UEM. With my involvement, Diaconia GBKP has developed charity, reformatory and transformative diaconia, and other programmes by developing the congregations' fellowship to provide grief support, orphanages, services for the sick and for people with different abilities, community income-generating projects through Credit Union and Rural Bank BPR, and supplies of public goods like fresh and clean drinking water and micro hydropower for electricity in remote areas, as well as developing community literacy in politics, gender issues, and awareness of HIV/AIDS. Institutionally, I continue to develop cooperation with member churches of the UEM and CCI/PGI, along with several Muslim institutions.

My biggest and most challenging experience in diaconia was during the seemingly never-ending eruption of Mount Sinabung from 2010 until late 2018. It led me to be nominated for the award given to inspirational figures for humanity, Reksa Utama Anindha. The award was presented to four people, one of whom was me, who had made great and sincere contributions to helping the refugees of Sinabung without making any distinctions based on religion. At the time, I had just earned the title of Master of Arts in Diaconic Management from Institute of Diaconic Science and Diaconic Management (IDM) of the Protestant University Wuppertal/Bethel and was still in my position as Head of Diaconia in the GBKP, engaging in the social duties of the church to develop community participation in dealing with the disaster.

Competencies needed in this management position included applying and developing disaster management. We tried to manage the disaster by implementing a participatory approach. As the coordinators of this disaster management, together with the church leaders in the communities near the volcano, we mapped the potentials to anticipate should the disaster occur, then recruited the volunteers and conducted the training. The strategic process during the evacuation was that we had to prepare church buildings to be used as shelters. The logistics procurement was coordinated with the government and the congregations from other locations. The cooperation built was interreligious, interethnic, and interchurch.

Our concern became how the students would be able to continue their education when their parents were unable to provide their school fees. With our participatory approach, we wanted the community to be positioned not just as victims, but as people who were still able to carry on with their lives (survival). Empowering them allowed them to help themselves and others to develop their future. We also assisted the refugees in claiming their rights as victims to receive assistance with basic needs such as residence, living costs, health, and children's education, and to receive attention for women, children, and the elderly.

Through this experience the GBKP ultimately became one of the stakeholders of the Indonesian government contributing to humanitarian services. The church made an effort to develop transformative, interreligious, intercultural, and interethnic diaconia and helped create togetherness.

Now that Mount Sinabung has been quiet for almost two years, our task and duty in disaster management is certainly not over. We still conduct a Disaster Management Training for church youth in collaboration with the UEM. Most of the UEM member churches in Indonesia and Asia are within the “rings of fire” vulnerable to natural disasters. Through the programme of the Disaster Management Commission of the GBKP, the Disaster Management Training was implemented last 9-12 October 2019 at the Retreat Centre GBKP Sukamakmur. The training was attended by three synods of UEM member churches, each of whom sent their own respective delegations. There were six volunteers from the GBKP, ten volunteers from the GKPA, and ten volunteers from the GKPPD. This training was designed to anticipate natural disasters.

In addition to its work on natural disasters, the GBKP is also trying to anticipate social and economic disasters by creating a training centre for recovering drug addicts. In this training centre, the former addicts receive vocational training in sectors such as chicken farming and cell phone repair. Many drug abusers are people who have dropped out of school and lost their jobs. They become unemployed and have no income at all. This condition causes them to lose confidence. Training in chicken farming is one alternative that can let them start a new life with activities that can provide income. Having something to do and a way to earn an income can help them stay off drugs.

Currently, the GBKP is trying to give other churches an opportunity to collaborate on developing an economic community in Indonesia, as one of our concerns is to anticipate and counter the rapid movement of intolerance fomented by those who would cause religious strife in this country. At an internal level, we are expanding diaconia services with a missionary perspective by opening our integrated mission institute and training 150 young pastors (three generations) every year in a holistic approach to mission. They will become pastors who understand social analysis, agriculture, animal husbandry, and fishery to develop congregations in remote areas.

In April 2015, I was elected as the General Chairperson (Moderator) of our synod, the GBKP, and my responsibility became larger. As Head of Diaconia, I was working more in assisting and mentoring at the grassroots level. Now, as the General Chairperson (Moderator), my tasks are mostly related to policy- and decision-making (leadership tasks). I also attend meetings of the central committees of the Indonesian cabinets and Parliament, including closed-door meetings in disaster management because of the GBKP’s experiences during the disaster of the Mount Sinabung eruption.

With all the experiences we faced regarding the Mount Sinabung disaster, I have realized that it is very important to build a large network. After finishing my MADM study I made contact with colleagues from my M.A. course to build up a network. We also invited an M.A. alum to be the resource person in our diaconia workshop. Networking is really essential because in diaconic works, especially in disasters, we never know when we will work and what we will need. For instance, in late 2019 there was a disease attacking pigs that we called “hog cholera”. Several regions in North Sumatra have been affected by this contagious disease affecting pigs, also known as classical swine fever, and thousands of community pigs have died. This condition is very disruptive to the community’s economy, especially the GBKP congregation members. The current condi-

tion affects not only farmers but also restaurant entrepreneurs, and livestock that are still alive are likewise difficult to sell at the market. As a result, the congregation members are very burdened by this situation. Many congregants depend on their livestock for living expenses, such as the tuition fees for schoolchildren who are about to enter a new semester. As a church, of course, we could not ignore this situation.

After attending two years of study at the IDM, I was getting to know more about diaconia from a global perspective, for instance understanding the interrelationship of local community struggles with the development of transnational corporations and the economic challenges these bring. As for the social aspects, I was inspired by our intensive study in Africa and the Philippines of how the churches must engage not only in the charity tasks of diaconia but in transformative diaconia as well, including advocacy activities through inter-church and international dialogue.

Studying at the IDM has motivated me to develop diaconia more comprehensively in the GBKP and to build international relationships and networks. This basis finally gave me a chance to try approaching other churches and countries, including advocating for Sinabung refugees by approaching and dialoguing with other churches and countries as well as meeting with the President of Indonesia. In developing the international networks of diaconia, I was invited by the member churches of the UEM in Africa and the CRC (Chinese Rhenish Church Hong Kong Synod) to share my experiences in diaconia. I gained lots of knowledge through the IDM to apply to diaconia work in our church, as well as leadership skills. Now that I am trusted to be the leader of my church, I can apply the thesis I wrote in completing my study, to be a servant leader.

My time attending the course in International Diaconic Management was very hard for me, and I almost gave up. I felt that I wouldn’t be able to finish my study because it was so difficult for me. But Professor Martin Buescher, Angelika Veddeler, Deonal Sinaga, and all my friends always supported me and encouraged me, so by that and with great effort I could finally complete my study. The support given to me was one of the most truly spiritual experiences I have ever experienced in my life. I feel that the community of the ICDM is an academic community, and not only that, I also feel that this community is a fellowship of God’s servants who have love and passion.

This programme meets a very relevant need in the context of the churches in Europe, Africa, and Asia, especially in Indonesia. Churches are dealing with social changes such as addressing the growing issues of global refugees in Europe, poverty and inequality in Asia and Africa, and many other problems, including disasters, religious radicalism, and religious intolerance.

As a church leader who has attended the MADM programme of the IDM, together with other pastors in the GBKP, I am now joining with others in carrying out a holistic transformation in our ministry, guided by the message, “The Church becomes a blessing to others and to the world”.

From the first alumni meeting, I have seen the importance of communication among alumni, starting from the nearest regions where alumni are living. The communication intended here is not to establish a new structure or organisation of alumni, but together to manifest the empowerment of the church, based on the needs or contexts alumni face and the experiences and skills they have obtained.

I have great expectations that the IDM will continue to develop and educate the good workers of the church and in diaconia from all over the world. God bless.



Rev. Berthe Nyiransabimana,

from Rwanda. She is a pastor of the Cyangugu Diocese of the Anglican Church in Rwanda (EAR). A scholarship from the UEM enabled her to study for a Bachelor's degree (2016 to 2018) at the Bishop Barham College in Kabale, Uganda. Afterwards, she studied at the theological college in Kigali to obtain her Diploma in Theology. In 2014, Berthe Nyiransabimana was ordained as the first female pastor of the Cyangugu Diocese. Since 2012, she has been responsible for the "Mothers' Union" of her diocese.

Photo: private

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship

Berthe Nyiransabimana

My diocese, Cyangugu, borders the countries of DRC and Burundi. My parish area covers over five thousand people, but most of these do not often attend church. Their daily life depends on farming and small business across the two borders. Many leave school early because of the poverty that this kind of life entails. Many early school leavers are female, and many girls are illiterate because they are expected to support their mothers with work inside the home.

The twentieth century was highly marked by huge investment in the development of human capital. Education was seen as the foundational mechanism to give people the knowledge, skills, and attitude necessary for rapid economic growth and social development. Educated people are believed to be efficient and effective at solving the problems of everyday life. Education is therefore a key tool to promote religious tolerance by training people to celebrate their differences; it plays a huge role in equipping people with the skills and attitude to work in multicultural environments. Such multicultural environments include diversity in manners, thinking, strengths, and weaknesses. The aforementioned purposes of education rationalize the relevance of advanced education for interreligious and intercultural global community. Education promotes a spirit of tolerance and acceptance. Through education, people learn how to live together and serve a purpose in their community.

By contrast, a lack of access to advanced education creates various disadvantages. These include:

- Conflicts due to a mindset that is not accommodating of others' ideas
- Resource mismanagement caused by financial and asset illiteracy
- Misinterpretation of scripture, especially when it comes to the role of women in the church and the family
- Failure to match the culture of the Bible with the context in which the gospel is preached
- Failure to celebrate differences in culture and/or religion
- Inadequate information management systems, particularly in the collection, processing, and interpretation of data
- Misuse of information, a key resource in the development process

Advanced education is therefore an intervention that responds to the above challenges. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes imparted by education give individuals and institutions the tools to analyse complicated situations, solve existing problems, and balance internal and external needs. Educated people are in a good position not only to anticipate religious intolerance and radicalization/extremism, but also to understand the cultural, social, and economic dynamics that affect both institutional operations and people's daily lives.

This is the story of my education.

Thanks to a UEM scholarship, I pursued a bachelor's degree in Theology Divinity from the Bishop Barham Christian University of Uganda (BBUC). In addition to the knowledge I have acquired since I joined the programme, my social status has changed. People take what I have to say more seriously than they did before, and my confidence as a woman in ministry has increased. My education has brought me much more credibility, which has opened the doors to influence a thousand minds by providing training, preaching, and counselling to groups or individuals for their daily lives. The high importance attached to people with advanced degrees is an opportunity for me to engage people in the process of reflecting, and to appreciate and discern their environment for the common good. So far, pursuing a Bachelor of Theology in Divinity has helped me to contribute to the following:

1. Church-planting ministry: I was sent to Kabahire to start a church and help build the church out of sustainable materials with community members. We started with a small number of congregants, 85 Christians, and now the church is showing signs of growth. There are 250 people in the parish, and we now have the church building, which has been accepted by the government in a time when churches are closing. Our parish was not closed, whereas our neighbours' were closed because they did not meet government requirements. This success is the result of the education I received through sponsorship from the UEM.
2. Building relationships with friends: these friends then support our local community. By providing a salary for a teacher, they help vulnerable families to improve the early education of their children.
3. Working in women's ministry: as a social worker, I coordinate women's activities. We provide diaconal services by helping those who are in the most need, such as single mothers, who face many life challenges. We also train island women in the structure of a healthy diet and provide them with chickens to lay eggs to feed children under five years old.
4. Discipleship: I mentor my parishioners. We now have four choirs in our parish where we train in Bible study, church leadership, etc.
5. Travel: I have travelled to several other countries and have managed to see and experience some other cultures. This helps me to break barriers in Christian faith. I try to understand the meaning of contextualization and gain opportunities to learn from others. Learning language is the key that opens the door.
6. Conflict management: Before I started theological school I would not have been able to lead people who have many different capacities. Poor people, people from rural areas, people with conflicts at home, people in church groups...all of them have different ways of understanding. Now, I praise God that I can know how to handle each one according to her or his characteristics. I can challenge them and bring transformation to them through evangelism, teaching, visits, and love, as the great commission asks of us in Matthew 28:19.
7. Parish development: I collaborate through teamwork to train people in savings, microbusiness, life-work balance, cleanliness and hygiene, family planning, and other topics to provide for the well-being of my parishioners. Half of my parishioners have experienced an improvement in their lives.

It would not be possible to have carried out the aforementioned activities if the UEM had not supported my studies. And as a prayer request, I now wish to do a course in gender and development.

In sum, advanced education helps open people's minds to not only improve their critical thinking but also help them accommodate to people's differences from a multitude of perspectives, including religion, culture, gender, economic status, region, and party affiliation.

**Let us celebrate the Lord for the UEM!
May God bless the work of the UEM!**



Rev. Dr Hoyce Jacob Lyimo-Mbowe,

from Moshi, Tanzania. Following her ordination as a pastor in 1999, she worked for the Eastern and Costal Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania in different capacities. Since January 2020, she has been the Executive Director of Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Kitwe, Zambia. She obtained a Bachelor of Divinity from the Makumira University College in Tanzania and a Master of Philosophy in Theology from the Stavanger School of Mission and Theology, Norway. Lyimo-Mbowe holds a Doctorate of Theology from the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelm University in Bonn, Germany. For three years, the former UEM scholarship holder was a postdoctoral fellow and worked on the Maasai and the Bible project at the VID Specialized University – Faculty of Theology and Diakonia in Norway.

Photo: Bettina von Clausewitz / UEM

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship

Hoyce Lyimo-Mbowe

Introduction

Advanced education can be defined as one of the key drivers of improved performance and competitiveness. It facilitates the possibilities of addressing major global and social challenges. In this way, the quality of life of the global community improves.

After the successful completion of my PhD programme, I have had three working assignments. This paper presents my three working fields. In these working fields, I have worked with Muslims, Christians, and those who believe in African Traditional Religions. I have also been able to interact with people from various cultural backgrounds. My educational background has equipped and built my capability to make my work in these different contexts successful.

This presentation follows the UEM standards for writing papers. Therefore, the contents explained in this presentation describe the responsibilities and challenges I have encountered in my working fields, how I have interacted with the church and social communities, how I have maintained contact with my sending church, and how I have worked together with people from other faiths, nationalities, and ethnic groups. Moreover, I will share my hope and commitment to collaborate within a network of alumni. Finally, I will disclose my expectations towards the UEM as part of the UEM family.

Working fields

After completion of my studies in 2014, I came back to Tanzania and continued to work with the church in the three working fields that follow:

In working with the above institutions, I managed to learn by doing and gained a lot of experience, detailed below:

Pastor in charge at Magomeni Lutheran Parish

From June 2014 to December 2014 I worked with the ELCT-ECD as a pastor in charge at Magomeni Parish. During my time at Magomeni Parish I had the opportunity to minister to more than two thousand parishioners over the course of six months. As a parish pastor, my duties and responsibilities included the following:

- Plan and conduct Sunday services
- Preach in various services
- Provide general administrative service
- Conduct marriage services and officiate marriages
- Conduct funerals and memorial services

- Teach confirmation classes and confirm young people as full members of the Lutheran Church
- Coordinate all groups in the parish (youth group, women's group, widows group, six choir groups, etc.)
- Engage in welfare and community service activities
- Visit the sick and elderly. Provide personal support to people experiencing crises such as illness, bereavement, and family breakdown by praying for them and by encouraging, counselling, and comforting them and their families.
- Preside over sacraments of the church, such as the Lord's Supper, and the baptism of adults and children.
- Provide leadership to the congregation. I did this in cooperation with other parish leaders such as evangelists, parish workers, and church elders
- Supervise prayer sessions and seminars
- Provide pastoral care and counselling to congregants

Challenges encountered in this working field

- Conducive working environment and space
- The environment was not very healthy because of continuous construction, and there was very little I could do as a pastor to speed up the work
- Financial resources.

There was an ongoing project of constructing the church building. The project required more money than could be generated within the parish. Solution: Though I stayed at this parish for only a short time (six months), together with my colleagues and church elders I was able to conduct a fundraising event and collected more than one hundred million Tanzanian shillings in cash and donation pledges.

Postdoctoral Fellow at VID Specialized University – Stavanger

- From January 2015 to December 2017, I had an opportunity to become a postdoctoral fellow at VID Specialized University. I worked in the Faculty of Theology and Diaconia – Stavanger, on a "Maasai and the Bible" project.
- The Norwegian Research Council Grant funded this project.

In this postdoctoral project, I did research on the Maasai People in Tanzania and wrote a book entitled *Maasai Women and the Old Testament: Towards an Emancipatory Reading*. This book is anticipated to be released in November 2019.

My project focuses on emancipatory interpretations of the Bible. In Maasai society, as in many other societies in Africa and even beyond, women are oppressed and marginalised. As is well known, religion can facilitate liberation and development but sometimes can also be used to reinforce oppression and marginalisation. When Christianity and the Bible came to Africa, they were sometimes used to enhance the oppressive structures in the societies. This was also the case in Maasai society. Certain biblical texts are used and interpreted in such a way as to strengthen the patriarchal system and traditional African cultures, both of which contain elements of marginalisation and oppression with regard to gender. As a result, the oppression of women is maintained. The

ambition of my project was to see that the Maasai readings of the Bible also facilitate emancipatory perspectives.

In my study, I addressed the problem of sustaining the traditional African concept of female inferiority through inculturation of biblical hermeneutics. It was the objective of my work to examine the way popular readers of the Hebrew Bible in Maasai territory interpreted passages from the Hebrew Bible in their patriarchal context. I investigated how such a reading addresses the issue of female inferiority in the contemporary churches and contributes to the academic emancipatory reading of the Bible.

It is my presupposition that some of the interpretive traditions of the Bible – both popular and scholarly – that demonstrate close parallels between Maasai and biblical ideas of female inferiority have actually contributed to the marginalisation of women in Maasai society. With that grounding, my work has two aims: first, to sensitize the reader to the marginalisation of women through popular interpretations of the Bible. Second, to demonstrate the contribution of popular Maasai biblical interpretation to academic work for the emancipation of women. The marginalisation of women deprives them of their rights. To show how this marginalisation of women functions in the process of biblical interpretation, my research allows ordinary Maasai readers of the Bible to interpret selected biblical texts and discuss pertinent matters such as the traditional meanings and practices that keep women subjugated. These include child marriage (which leads to child mothers), polygyny, widowhood, and exclusion from inheritance of property, among others.

During my fieldwork in Arusha Region, I participated in discussions on gender issues and particularly the matter of polygamy and the status of women among the Maasai. We read together and interpreted biblical texts concerning creation, polygamy, and the rights of women in polygynous relationships. I interviewed men and women and described them in my work.

My project seeks to increase sensitivity among Maasai biblical readers about popular interpretations of the biblical texts that consciously and more often unconsciously function as a legitimizing force to authorize or reinforce socio-cultural structures that oppress women. I demonstrate the impact of popular biblical interpretations and challenge them. I also aim to read the Bible with Maasai informants using lenses that facilitate emancipatory perspectives. Furthermore, my research work intends to facilitate and motivate the informants to change words into action, thus constructing its own kind of action research and borrowing some aspects from the social field.

To achieve these project goals, my work investigates parallels between traditional Maasai and biblical concepts of female inferiority. It analyses the problems of these parallels as they are conceptualized in popular Maasai biblical interpretation and how these affect the social transformation of contemporary Maasai women. My project then intersects academic readings with the new insights attained from the Maasai informants, with the intention of promoting emancipatory perspectives in African biblical hermeneutics as well as sensitizing the biblical interpreters to the problems caused by certain popular biblical interpretations.

I selected the following biblical texts and read them with my Maasai informants:

- Genesis 1:27, Creation of male and female
- 1 Samuel 1, Polygyny matters: Elkanah and his two wives, Hannah and Peninnah
- Deuteronomy 21:15-17, Rights of the children of the unloved wife in a polygynous family
- Exodus 21:10, Rights of women in polygynous relationships

These texts were selected for two reasons. First, the texts are part of the patriarchal context; therefore, they will be understood easily in a patriarchal society like that of the Maasai. Second, they all portray women “positively” to some extent. I am, however, aware that the “positive” image of women in these texts is not clear enough. To grasp a convincing “positive” image of women in these texts, one needs to read the text in a way that I will later define as “otherwise”. From this basis, I think the texts have a potential for an emancipation of women that can be discussed by ordinary readers as well as biblical scholars.

In order to achieve the aim of this work, much time was allowed for dialogue. To guide the discussion, I prepared some questions for each text. I always encouraged the participants to share their experiences and tell related stories, for storytelling is one of the means of sharing information in the African context. Many stories were narrated. Some of the stories that seemed relevant to this work are presented and analysed in my monograph.

Four aspects determined the individual and group interview sessions. These were: reading, questions, discussions (storytelling and events), and rereading. The aspects went in a circle, repeating one after another. Most of the questions were from me as a facilitator, but participants also asked some of the questions. Some of their questions were beyond the readers’ context and related to the context of the text. I answered some of the questions, but the participants also answered questions, especially the ones related to their culture. Through storytelling and discussion, I explored many of the root causes of the paradoxes, dilemmas, and tensions that have led to inequalities and oppression within Maasai society. Many issues were identified and directly challenged by the participants during the interpretation of the biblical texts. Together, we formulated strategies for the transformation of the society. The participants challenged one another to each let the change start within their own homes.

After the individual and group interviews, I transcribed the audio recordings of the discussions and conversations. I set up a data coding and categorizing scheme. The sorting of the collected materials narrowed the data. Here attention was given to qualitative analysis and to the extraction of a few case studies to demonstrate the problem. Material that addressed the research question was prioritized in the sorting.

Challenges encountered in the field

I encountered some ethical research challenges in the field. These included gender-based barriers, an educational gap, and language challenges.

a) Gender-related ethics

The first challenge was gender-related. The nature of my work required women and men to come together for discussions and readings of the selected biblical texts, but

according to Maasai traditions, women are not allowed to argue before men. This affected the contributions of women in the discussion, especially in the rural areas.

It was clear that when men were present in the group discussion, women’s voices were fewer; women spoke less, and when asked questions, they gave short answers. In addition, it was obvious that women spoke with caution in the presence of men. This was a critical ethical issue because to some extent it acted as a barrier to getting information and perspectives from women.

The situation forced me to encourage women to talk and contribute during the sessions. Although this process made the debate sessions to take more time than planned, after some time a few women dared to argue on the matter under discussion. Moreover, to get more information from women, I interviewed some women separately. The female informants interviewed in this context became more open and could freely share their views, experiences, and stories.

b) Institutional and educational challenges

The second challenge was the institutional and educational gap between the researcher and the informants. Some of the informants were illiterate. However, pastors are respected in African communities. Ordained pastors are expected to interpret the Bible while ordinary readers are to listen and accept the pastor’s interpretation. Thus, as a theologian and ordained pastor, I was expected to provide guidance and teach them rather than listen and learn from them. Clear clarification was needed as to what I meant by my approach of “reading with” as applied in my work. I explained and insisted that we were reading the texts together and interpreting them together. To facilitate the process, I posed some questions. Fortunately, it did not take much time for my informants to understand their responsibility, and they acted accordingly.

Most of them found the “reading with” methodology interesting and valuable, for it opened the door for their voices to be heard. For example, Ole Mollel asserted, “This discussion is very interesting ... I wish our pastors would also do the same.... We should not wait for you who are working abroad to come and discuss these issues with us. We should also discuss them with our pastors.”¹ This highlights the value and need of the “reading with” approach in the African context.

c) Linguistic challenge

Another challenge was language. Unfortunately, I do not speak *Maa*, which is the language of the Maasai people. In the rural area, some of my informants could not speak *Kiswahili*, the national language of Tanzania. Therefore, I utilized translators, and I had good translators. However, with a translator, some information might *unintentionally* have been lost or misinterpreted. I have to assume that to some extent, language was a limitation in collecting data in the rural areas. This was not the case in urban areas; still, the language used in the conversations was *Kiswahili*, which I have translated into English, as I am fluent in both languages, and this process consumed my energy and time.

¹ Lenyoroto Ole Mollel, interview by Hoyce Lyimo-Mbowe, November 2015, Arusha.

DoS, Ag. Chaplain and Lecturer at TUDARCo

From March 2018 to date, I have been working with TUDARCo as Dean of Students, Acting Chaplain, and Lecturer. When I started working with TUDARCo, I found the workplace itself relatively diverse compared to what I am used to – in my work at the parish, all my colleagues and parishioners were Christian and Lutherans. At TUDARCo, I have had to work and collaborate with people of other denominations, religions, and cultures. Fortunately, it did not take me much time to adapt to the new working environment.

As a Dean of Students, I am committed to supporting the academic scheduling, academic achievement, academic integrity, and well-being of all students. I am also committed to supporting the teaching efforts of faculty deans. My responsibilities in this office include the following:

- Support the efforts of the College's faculty deans, who provide students guidance in developing their educational strategies and in making thoughtful and informed decisions about their life goals.
- Work closely with the Registrar and support staff who implement the College's policies and procedures.
- Work closely with a committed team that supports students from poor families in discovering their own capabilities and provides scholarships to support their studies financially.
- Work with faculty, administrative, and staff colleagues to facilitate effective means for maintaining College academic standards and procedures that are fair to the student body at large and that permit individual exceptions in the face of convincing reasons.
- Care for the health and social welfare of the students.
- In the case of a student death, work with the students to go to the residence of the bereaved and comfort them.
- Be available to students, faculty, and staff members in person, by e-mail, and by telephone.
- Update the college prospectuses and attend meetings.

These are among the many duties for which the Office of the Dean of Students is responsible. As mentioned above, I have been acting in the position of chaplain since last year. My responsibilities are not far from those of the parish pastors; I take care of the spiritual concerns of both the employees and students at TUDARCo. Pastoral care and counselling is one of the main duties of my daily activities as chaplain. Apart from all these duties, I am devoted to lecturing. I teach the Foundation of Faith course.

Challenges are as follows:

- Needy students
We have many needy students from very poor backgrounds who are not able to pay their tuition fees.
- Health issues
 - So far, the college does not have health facilities or an ambulance. Therefore, in case of emergency, we face the challenge of how to transport the person in need

of care to treatment facilities. What we usually do is to use the university car and transport the sick person to the nearest health facility.

- There is a first aid kit in the dean's office that contains a few medications. However, the medication demands of our students are more than what we can provide from our first aid kit. For a long time now we have intended to begin dispensary services at the TUDARCo campus. The College has set aside a room for a dispensary, but it seems this will take long time to materialize, due to financial constraints and the stringent conditions for establishing and running a health facility.
- Sports facilities at the College
 - Plans are afoot to build two movable playing fields, one for basketball and netball at a cost of fifteen million Tanzanian shillings, and the other for volleyball at a cost of twelve million. Because of the financial constraints at our college, the plans will take a long time to materialize.
 - The College has set aside an indoor sport room (Dar Live) that can be used by students and even staff, but it does not have adequate facilities for sport.
- Accommodation
The college does not have hostels, so most of our students live in rented houses and rooms close to the College. The Office of the Dean of Students does connect new students to the hostels available. Some of the locations where these houses are located are not conducive to students. The challenge I encounter in this office is mostly a paucity of financing to support the needy students.

Interaction with the church and social communities in professional work

- I preach and/or lead Sunday services almost every Sunday when I am in Tanzania.
- I am invited to conduct and teach in various seminars within the church.
- I am invited by the government and by non-governmental organizations to attend various seminars and discuss various topics like environmental issues, interfaith relationships, etc.

Contact with the sending church

- All of the above-mentioned assignments keep me very close to the church and my community.
- I always contact the leaders of my sending church in implementing my responsibilities.
- My sending church makes use of my knowledge by asking me to prepare various programmes in our church and to teach refresher courses to church leaders such as pastors, evangelists, parish workers, and Sunday school teachers.

Working together with people from different faiths, nationalities, ethnic groups, and generations

In this section, I would like to explain how I work together with people from different faiths, nationalities, ethnic groups, and generations.

I get to interact with people of different backgrounds by deciding to work with them. For several years now I have been working with people from different faiths (e.g., Muslims, ATR, etc.), nationalities (e.g., Norwegians, Americans), ethnic groups (e.g., the Maasai people), and generations (e.g., youth). Moreover, reading extensively about the culture and histories of those people I planned to work with helped me to familiarize myself with their culture before meeting them. For example, when I decided to apply for a postdoctoral position, I was aware that I would be working with Norwegians, Americans, and Tanzanians (mainly Maasai people and traditionalists). Therefore, I read some articles and books about all these groups.

I interact with people of different backgrounds by going out, meeting them, and establishing friendships with them, by discussing life issues with them and asking many questions about their culture, faith, etc. During my research in Maasailand I met many people of different cultures, faiths, and generations.

Prioritizing listening over talking has helped me to get to know more about youth and their challenges. As Dean of Students and Chaplain, I work with students from different faiths, nationalities, ethnic groups, and generations. Working with students makes every day a learning day for me.

I create collaboration by encouraging people to tell their stories and by respecting and valuing others and our differences. For instance, at the College I teach my Foundation of Faith course to both Muslims and Christians. I allow discussion and make sure to listen to both Muslims and Christians (from different denominations). I am always trying to build strong and caring relationships based on trust, understanding, and shared goals.

I value creating trust. For example, when I was doing my research with the Maasai people, I encountered traditionalist Maasai. After I explained the aim of my research and worked to create friendship and trust, they were ready to work with me, and together we discussed biblical texts.

Hope and commitment to collaborate within a network of UEM alumni

I hope that through this network of alumni the following can be achieved:

- We will learn from each other
- We will socialize and grow together
- We will share our experiences and expertise, and improve our working competency
- We will get to know how others are getting on and hear about their achievements, personal or professional
- We will be able to maintain strong ties with fellow UEM beneficiaries.
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Expectations towards the UEM

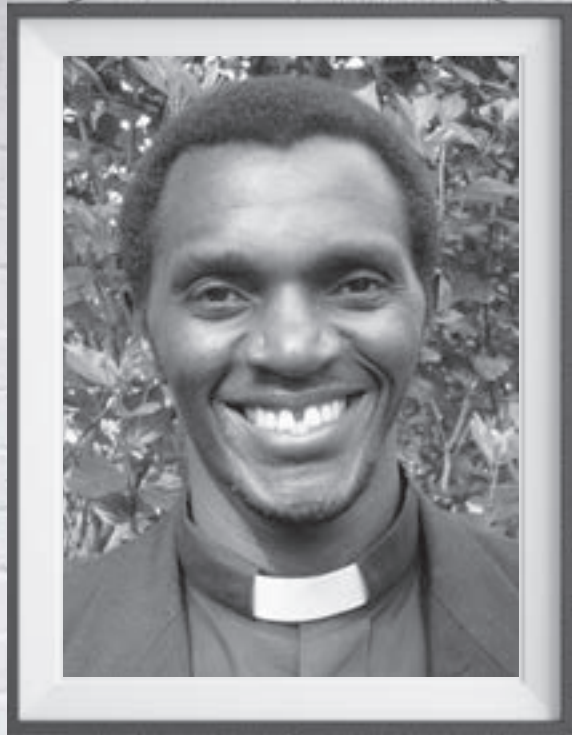
- I hope this network will help us to exchange expertise
- I hope we can strengthen our relationship as part of the UEM family

- I hope to learn more about the UEM and its member churches and to support UEM programmes

Concluding remarks

As presented above, I have had various working assignments after the successful completion of my PhD programme. As one can note, the above assignments are not in one field. Some are more pastoral assignments, others are administrative, and others are more academic. A high level of education is one of the things which enabled me to manage all these offices. Advanced education is one of the important aspects in the development of any community.

Advanced education is significant for the intercultural and interreligious global community. This is evidenced through what I have been able to accomplish after the completion of my PhD studies. Through advanced education one is bound to broaden their intellectual thinking. One can become more analytical, more aware of how to deal with various issues and critically analyse situations. Advanced education also enables us to make correct interpretations, to compare and contrast issues and make informed decisions. Higher education is also a source of exposure, a knowledge bank that one can transfer from the community to the global context. Advanced education creates an environment that is very conducive to intercultural and interreligious management because of the level of understanding and confidence it brings.



Rev. Dr Brighton Juel Katabaro,

from Karagwe, Tanzania. In 1992, Katabaro began studying theology at the Makumira University College of the Tumaini University in Arusha. After his first degree (Bachelor of Divinity), he was ordained and worked as a parish pastor, followed by postgraduate studies at the Makumira University College, where he obtained a Master's degree of Theology, and at the University of Hamburg, where he gained his doctorate. Title of the dissertation: "Justification and Success. Pentecostal Charismatic Teaching and Practices as Challenges for the Lutheran Doctrine of Justification in Tanzania". Since 2009, he has been working as a coordinator for the expansion of the Karagwe University College (KARUCO) in Tanzania. Since 2018, the former UEM scholarship holder has been the first rector of KARUCO.

Photo: private

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship

Brighton Juel Katabaro

Fields of work after the study programme

It is now almost ten years since I completed my PhD studies in Theology at the University of Hamburg. After my graduation in 2009, I was called home by the leadership of my Diocese (the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT), Karagwe Diocese) to take up the special task of coordinating the diocesan initiatives of establishing the Karagwe University College (KARUCO), the work that I continue to do today.

The work of establishing KARUCO started from scratch. Apart from the 372 hectares of land available, there were no structures on the site, nor did the diocese have the money to put up even a single building. We are very grateful to the people of Karagwe and to various partners and donors from within and outside the country, who have given incredible support to the construction of the buildings and other infrastructure at KARUCO. Specifically, I would like to thank the UEM for being a committed and reliable friend and partner of the ELCT-Karagwe Diocese, the founder of KARUCO. In collaboration with its partner churches in Germany, the UEM has given significant and invaluable support to the establishment of KARUCO.

The construction of the first building at KARUCO started in October 2012. By the grace of God, many of KARUCO's basic buildings and facilities were inaugurated and dedicated on 29 October 2017, on the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation. "This far, by faith and grace" was the catchword for the inauguration ceremony. As I have mentioned above, when the diocese made the decision to embark on the huge project of establishing KARUCO, it had no money and not even a single building. The only thing we (the people of Karagwe) had was the faith, will, and determination to build a university college in Karagwe. The most important thing needed to implement a big project like KARUCO is the determination of the people. Nevertheless, it has not been an easy task for me to coordinate such a huge project without money. There were times when I felt worried.

In such times of worry and despair, I recalled the words I read on the wall of an elevator in Hamburg. During my studies, there was a time when I was desperate and I felt I had no more strength to continue learning the Latin language. I decided to go to my Latin teacher to tell him about my decision to stop taking Latin. As soon as I entered the elevator heading to the Latin teacher's office, I suddenly read: "Nicht Aufgeben!" (Don't give up!). What a message! Those words made me rethink my plan to withdraw from continuing with the Latin course, something that would probably have led to the discontinuation of my PhD studies. All thanks to the unknown person who wrote those two words in the elevator!

In our lives, especially when we feel desperate and helpless, we need such revitalizing and encouraging words. Ten years of working on the Karagwe University College project has taught me to be much more tolerant and to always have focused and consistent goals.

Last year (2018), KARUCO was registered with the National Council for Technical Education (NACTE) and started to admit students in diploma and certificate programmes in General Agriculture and in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In this respect, besides being the project coordinator of the establishment of KARUCO as a university college, I am since last year serving as the first principal of the newly registered tertiary college, called KARUCO College, which will in the future be upgraded to a university college.

KARUCO is focused on agriculture and related fields. The diocese chose to focus on agriculture because the Tanzanian economy is largely dependent on the agricultural sector, which accounts for more than one quarter of the country's GDP. In addition, the agricultural sector employs about 65 per cent of the workforce and provides about 85 per cent of the country's exports.

Despite the importance of agriculture for the economy and the livelihood of the people, the sector is still facing a number of challenges such as a lack of expertise, proper tools, and markets. People who engage in agriculture are mostly small-scale farmers whose farming is mainly for subsistence. This kind of farming makes people who live in villages remain poor. The only way to combat poverty in Tanzania and especially in rural areas is to educate young people to engage in productive agriculture.

KARUCO will be the second university in Tanzania that is focused on agriculture. Its main objective is to engage in training, research, community outreach, and environmental conservation programmes to produce competent, skilled, entrepreneurial, and ethical graduates, who will in turn participate in building a prosperous, just, and sustainable society.

Since its inception in 1979, the Karagwe Diocese has been engaging in a holistic mission. It preaches the Gospel that touches the human soul, mind, and body. In other words, it endeavours to improve the livelihood of all people regardless of their sex, ethnic group, or religious or political affiliation.

Over the last ten years, the KARUCO coordination task has gone hand in hand with the fulfilment of my primary calling as a pastor. Because of the shortage of pastors, I was sometimes temporarily assigned the task of a parish pastor. I feel happy to conduct worship services and to facilitate pastorally or theologically related teachings wherever I am invited to do so.

Opportunities and challenges

The task of coordinating the project of establishing KARUCO has been possible and successful because of the concerted efforts of many people, groups, and organisations. Only a few will be mentioned here:

First and foremost has been the willingness and readiness of the people of Karagwe to contribute money and other resources for the establishment of the university college. The people's understanding and acceptance of the idea of building a university

college in Karagwe has been the biggest positive factor in achieving this goal. The diocese formed a task force whose first task – in collaboration with the diocesan management team and other stakeholders – was to articulate the importance of establishing the Karagwe University College. Most of the people were excited. Hence, they contributed their resources in order to make the diocesan dream become true.

Second, pastors, evangelists, church elders, and other church leaders have been very cooperative since the beginning of the project and continue to be so. Besides offering their financial contributions for the implementation of the KARUCO project, they have been instrumental in spreading the information about KARUCO and in fundraising among their congregational members. Each parishioner has been contributing an average of one thousand Tanzanian shillings per month. This is an indicator of the people's ownership of KARUCO.

Third, as I have mentioned above, various overseas partners and donors mainly from Germany, Sweden, and the United States have made a significant contribution to the establishment of the Karagwe University College. Without their support, my coordination work would have been so difficult. The understanding and trust shown by the UEM and other national and international stakeholders have been a huge contribution to the accomplishment of my coordination work.

Fourth, the support that has been provided by the Tanzanian government at different levels is invaluable. A big project like KARUCO cannot be successful without the government's support.

Despite these successes, there have been several challenges in implementing this project. Just to mention a few:

The biggest challenge has been the lack of money. When we started implementing the project, our plan was to inaugurate the college and begin to receive the first students in 2014. Unfortunately, this was not possible. We postponed the opening until 2016. Ultimately this was not possible either because of insufficient funds and hence the lack of some buildings and other basic infrastructure needed to establish a university college. Unlike KARUCO, many universities and university colleges started in previously existing buildings. To start completely from scratch has been a big challenge.

Every time we postponed the opening of KARUCO, the challenging question for me as the coordinator of the project was how I should communicate the postponement to the stakeholders, especially the overseas partners. Some were very disappointed to receive the message of postponing the opening of the college. Some even regarded me as a stumbling block to the opening of KARUCO. I did not give up, however, because I liked this project and I understood its importance for the development of our country.

Having registered KARUCO with NACTE and having started to operate as a tertiary college, the biggest challenge we are facing now is where to get money to run the college. There are almost no donors who are ready to provide financial support for paying the staff and meeting other operational needs of the college. It will take at least five years for the college to be able to operate without relying largely on external funding.

Last year, KARUCO received a very small number of students, as expected. Our plan was to receive at least one hundred students. We received only eighteen students, something that has greatly affected the college's operating budget.

Despite these operational challenges at this, the very beginning, I have great confidence that tomorrow will be better than today. I believe that the college's emphasis on

learning by doing and its focus on developing job creators rather than job seekers will bring more students to KARUCO in the years to come.

Working together with people from different faiths, nationalities, ethnic groups, and generations

Working as a pastor, and as the coordinator and now the principal of KARUCO, has given me good opportunity to interact with people of different denominations and religions, especially Catholics and Muslims. Just briefly, the task force for the establishment of KARUCO has had a mixture of delegates from different denominations, including a Catholic priest. Likewise, the newly formed board of KARUCO College Board is composed of members from different denominations.

In addition, we have received contributions for the building of KARUCO from people (adults, youth, children, men and women) of different faiths and denominations. The people have done so because they know and believe KARUCO will be beneficial to everyone. This has continued to promote relationships and cooperation between the Lutheran Church and other denominations.

Tanzania is a multireligious country. The promotion of coexistence in love, peace, and harmony is a constant item on our agenda. Our teaching and non-teaching staff at KARUCO is composed of people from different denominations and ethnic groups. Our employment policy is inclusive. There is no discrimination on the basis of gender, tribe, political affiliation, denomination, or religion. The only prerequisite for employment is a candidate's competence and ability to carry out the duties of the job. We also have been working since 2017 with a colleague from Germany who was sent by the UEM.

In addition, we have been in partnership with people from other nations. Partners and donors of KARUCO and the Diocese of Karagwe as a whole come from different countries, especially from Europe, North America, and Africa. Partners and donors have different policies and conditions for donating to and supporting international projects. I, in conjunction with the diocesan leadership, have always tried not to interact or communicate with our overseas partners and donors.

We have succeeded in integrating various stakeholders and partners in order to create a strong partnership that can enable us to achieve the goals and objectives of KARUCO. For example, at KARUCO there are some buildings that have been jointly funded by the German and American partners, something that is unusual in many cases. We have also managed to form a group of partners from various countries. We organize and conduct teleconferences to cement the relations and cooperation between ourselves and our international partners.

Hope and Commitment to collaborate within the UEM alumni

The UEM Alumni Conference is an important forum for us to exchange ideas and experiences. The sharing of ideas and experiences will definitely increase the effectiveness of our work. It is my sincere hope and expectation that this network of UEM alumni will give me an opportunity to learn from my fellow graduates. It is a great opportunity be-

cause this conference is bringing together people from different countries, contexts, and backgrounds. Moreover, they all have different experiences, which will be beneficial for me, my work, my diocese, my church, and my country as a whole.

Expectations towards the UEM

I thank God that the ELCT-Karagwe Diocese, to which I belong, is a member church of the UEM. This communion of churches on three continents embodies the triune God, who is the essence of true unity. It is the unity that our Lord Jesus prayed for and continues to pray for. We come from different continents, different countries, different ethnic groups, and even different denominations. But we are one, united in Christ to engage in God's mission together. I pray and hope we all remain united in preaching, in provision of social services, in diakonia, in advocacy, and in various environmental conservation and developmental initiatives. This sisterhood of churches ought to be strengthened and maintained through prayers, contributions, communication, and exchange of visits.



Rev. Mannes Purba

from Sigodang, Indonesia. In 1994, Purba obtained a Bachelor of Theology and in 2009 a Master of Arts in Pastoral Care and Counselling. From 2013-2016, he pursued his Master's degree of Theology in Liturgy and Music at the Asian Institute for Liturgy and Music in Manila, Philippines. Purba was the director of the Center for Music and Liturgy Development at the GKPS (2016-2019). Since 2020, he has been working as a pastor at GKPS, Resort Depok in West Java.

Photo: private

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship

Mannes Purba

It was such a great moment for me when I found out I would be able to study at the Asian Institute of Liturgy and Music (AILM) in Manila, Philippines, on full scholarship from the UEM. I experienced very good support from the UEM during my scholarship. The UEM really understands my struggle and has become my family and caring parents to me.

After I graduated, I spoke with my superior at GKPS, the Ephorus, regarding my dream for the GKPS that I love. I shared about my focus on liturgy, design, and symbols as well as church architecture. I talked about how to share the experiences and knowledge I now have with the congregation. When I studied, I took care to document the songs that I composed during my study in Manila. I thought about sharing my songs with the GKPS congregation. I also discussed my ideas with my family and asked them to support me financially to make a recording. I ended up making a Christian album in the Simalungun dialect, the dialect of Simalungun Protestant Christian Church.

In 2016 I was selected as the coordinator of PPLMG

After my graduation from AILM, as I mentioned above, I thought about GKPS and what I should do in GKPS to follow the existing programme. I considered how to relate with PPLMG (A Centre of Music and Liturgy Development) and how to make the list programme for the coming year. At this point I should explain that the developing congregations of GKPS are very pleased with new things or new models of liturgy, so my presence in PPLMG is meant to act as a filter and control on the rapid growth of new things in GKPS in terms of liturgy, design, symbols, and music, as well as the architecture.

As preacher, I always give guidance before service

In any services to the village, as preacher I always take time with the whole congregation to hold a training before worship. I guide them in how to sing in accordance with the rhythms. Many GKPS congregations sing slowly, because of the Simalungun dialect.

The guidance that I give is related to liturgy and how to sing a short song in liturgy, such as Hallelujah in Introitus. This song is commonly sung slowly, so I guide them to sing it right, in accordance with the book. I support using fresh flowers in the church and not using plastic flowers. As it says in Psalm 150, let all that breathes blessed the Lord, and let of the altar the symbol of life and not farce, pretty but not living. And from the altar radiated life. I also encourage keeping up the cleanliness of church and its restrooms, as well as creating a beautiful garden and planting trees in the church environment. The church that has trees in its surroundings is a form of consideration for the environment.

I launched an album in 2016

Right after I completed my degree from AILM, I thought about how to document the songs that I had composed there that had been checked by my lecturer at AILM. The album process took three months, and it finally launched in December 2016. There were ten thousand hard copies made. The purpose of this album is to add to the collection of worship songs for congregations and to serve through music, so that this album can be heard in every house. My song “Shalom” is now commonly sung in lots of places of worship.

Coordinator of National Choir Competition (2017)

In 2017, I was assigned by GKPS leadership to coordinate the National Choir Competition for the Women’s Section. I worked with the national- and international-level grand jury in a thrilling and remarkable competition to find the best of the best from each district; competition participants had already ranked first, second, or third in district competition. Seeing this situation, I had ideas to create relaxation for all involved, to give pastoral and psychological guidance to every team in the ten minutes before their performance. This was a new process and fully appreciated by the participants. As coordinator, I was directly involved backstage to give guidance to participants. Whole teams came from various provinces in Indonesia as representatives of districts. They were probably thinking about getting gold or silver, or even of losing. I had to defend them in front of the audience and grand jury and I needed to prepare them to be fresh and relaxed, to eradicate all forms of fear so that they could sing cheerfully and brightly.

Choir guidance in 2017

In the aforementioned choir competition, I was involved in giving training in four districts as a coach. This was a very good opportunity for me to teach them the right way of singing, based on the theory of music that I had learned. All teams I trained placed in the top three in each of their respective districts. None of them had previously qualified for a district championship.

Jury on Group Vocal Competition 2016–2019

I have often been chosen as a member of the grand jury for the competition among resorts at the district level. I and my friends on other juries have always suggested that we take the time to meet each team; we call it a “Meet and Greet of Jury and Participants”. The purpose is to give an evaluation for coaches and conductors to see the strength and weakness of the team. Such a meet and greet had not been carried out before, with the idea that the jury are there not only to judge, but also to aid in quality improvement. Based on what we experienced, the teams were very glad to be able to get ideas to improve and advance their performance.

I was given authority as coordinator and liturgy section head for some big events in GKPS

- **Synode Bolon GKPS ke-43 (General Synod)**
- **Peresmian Distrik di GKPS (Inauguration of GKPS district)**
- **Ibadah raya Sekolah Minggu se GKPS (Sunday school worship for all GKPS)**
- **Ibadah se Distrik (Worship at district level)**
- **Natal Nasional Indonesia (National Christmas celebration)**
- **Ibadah Jubileum Resort (Jubilee worship at resort)**
- **Jubileum 115 Tahun Injil di Simalungun 2018 (115th anniversary of gospel in Simalungun)**

The 115th anniversary of the gospel in Simalungun was one of the greatest GKPS events ever. I was the person in charge of the liturgy service, the music, the choir, and the dancers’ team at this historical event. This celebration was really spectacular because it was attended by twenty thousand people from the three districts. We designed inculturative liturgy for the celebration by involving three hundred people in the liturgy.

- **Liturgy Coordinator of UEM General Assembly at Niagara Hotel, Parapat**
Being assigned by GKPS leadership to coordinate the liturgy for the UEM General Assembly was one of the most exciting jobs I have had. I organised the music team, the choir, and the dancers involved in this event to include the concept of inculturation.
- **Coach for Children’s Choir in 2018**
Besides my responsibility as coordinator, I trained a vocal group team from a rural area, the Sirpang Sigodang resorts. They came in first out of 65 teams in a dancing and singing competition. I chose to train children from a rural instead of urban setting because I wanted to see the singing ability of children from rural areas. I saw that they have the potential to be good but that they don’t have capable teachers. Coaches in cities are compensated well, in contrast with the village, where I received only the gift of love. I continue to have a good partnership with the church.

Liturgy guidance for all districts in 2017–2019

I and my team have already implemented guidance on liturgy, design, music, and symbols of liturgy in 4 districts, 58 resorts, and 260 congregations. The colours and symbols of the liturgy vary according to the calendar. Whatever the colour of the liturgy, however, the symbol that can generally be seen as an altar cover at GKPS is just the cross. For example, the purple or violet liturgy is for Advent. In another case, on Pentecost, the liturgy colour is red and the symbols are a pigeon and tongues of flame. The symbol of Trinity, when the green colour is used, is usually three circles. Inside these circles are the crown, the cross, and pigeons, but at GKPS it is only the cross: this is the symbol of understanding at GKPS. This is why I always touch on the design of liturgy and symbols in all of my liturgy guidance. To make the use of these similar throughout GKPS, I will present this topic to the Pastor Assembly Council in 2020.

GKPS architecture guidance

Congregation members are really enthusiastic about building new churches. They will deposit money and donate funds, and will hold a special celebration to collect funds in accordance with budgetary need. But when the building is done, they often realize that the architecture is not very good because there was no consultation with a building consultant beforehand. It is sometimes so sad to see when an architect is not really qualified academically: they will build a church or other building without an exact plan or picture. With this in mind, I encourage congregations that are planning to build a new church to hire a consultant that has knowledge of religious architecture. PPLMG is available for consultations on drawing up new designs for church buildings.

Sound engineer guidance

There are so many GKPS buildings where the acoustics were not considered in construction. They have the spirit to build, but the materials used in building produce echoes and distort the sound because of the use of expensive ceramic materials. There are so many GKPS churches that are very big in size but have problems with their acoustics so that the voices inside bounce and blur; often the building components used will reflect sound rather than absorbing it. In other cases, the purchasing of a sound system will not be based on recommendations from acoustic experts. Congregations will buy something fancy although the building doesn't need anything fancy; the sound system must be appropriate and suitable for the church. We provided guidance on this subject to the downtown area of North Sumatera province, Medan city, as a centre of district 4. All of the leadership of the congregation were invited, as well as the sound engineer, and all of them participated in our guidance.

Sunday worship in Bahasa Indonesia language

In many GKPS churches, especially those churches located in cities, Sunday worship is held twice or even three times during the day: morning worship/first worship is held in Bahasa Indonesia, and then worship in Simalungun follows at 10.00 a.m. The third worship service, in the afternoon, is also held in Bahasa Indonesia.

Bahasa Indonesia worship is mostly influenced by the Charismatic model. But Simalungun worship applies the liturgy of GKPS in full. For this reason, in giving guidance to congregations I always remind them that GKPS must be consistent with its use of liturgy that is suitable.

Pastoral letter from GKPS leadership to congregation changed to video message

Previously, GKPS leadership would send pastoral letters to all GKPS churches in the form of an actual letter. These letters are sent on many special days, including the Sunday school day, the youth day, Father's Day, Women's Day, Christmas, and New Year's Eve. After I joined PPLMG, I contributed making a video form of the pastoral letter that

could be turned on or shown in churches. By seeing the video, the congregations are able to see and listen to how the Ephorus or General Secretary delivers their pastoral message.

Compiling Sunday school book songs in 2018 and songs for GKPS liturgy

We have been composing Sunday School book songs that will be used in Sunday School liturgy and we have added about two hundred songs to the GKPS hymnal.

Preparing special liturgy

According to the susukkara/Almanak/GKPS schedule, GKPS has some special days dedicated to Sunday school, youth, fathers, women, orphans, and the elderly. Other days include a worldwide prayer day, environment day, students' Sunday, and national final exam liturgy. PPLMG creates special liturgy for these celebrations. We try to make different shades of liturgy that are reflective, and to compose new short compositions that are easy for the congregations to learn. It is our hope that this special liturgy will touch the congregations and give synergy to their daily lives.

Lecturing in liturgika at STT ABDI SABDA Medan (Theological School)

I was invited to teach at STT Abdi Sabda Medan as a lecturer of liturgika. I taught four classes to students in grade four in the theory and practice of liturgika. In teaching and practice, of course, any performance of students about the liturgy cannot be separated from their way of writing liturgy in accordance with the elements of liturgy, and its design and symbols depending on the ecclesiastical calendar. I also suggested that the students have a deeper understanding of how to set up a sound system. I saw the seriousness of the students' intent to practise the liturgy, and I was impressed with how they put the elements of culture into liturgy, for example adding cloth design, Ulos (Batak cloth), dance, song, and music into worship.

Programmes that are in progress

One of the programmes that is still in progress is the founding of a recording studio for multimedia services on the Internet.

The difficulty we face is the lack of expert staff at PPLMG who are qualified in professional video and photography.

Other programmes that have yet to be completed include training in liturgy design and symbols in seven more GKPS districts. This training has been conducted in four districts, but the budget has since run out. We are currently proposing budget revisions on this project to GKPS leadership.

The next programme in progress is the design of symbols of liturgy that we are going to present to the Pastor Council in January 2020. If the symbols we present are accepted, the liturgy symbols used in all of GKPS will change simultaneously. PPLMG is also in the process of designing the symbols of stola, altar covers and altar layouts at present.

Conclusion

These are the programmes that I have engaged in since my graduation from the Asian Institute of Liturgy and Music. I am grateful to the UEM for giving me a chance to learn. I also still need to develop and broaden my knowledge to have more to share with the church, especially in the GKPS context. I would like to express my gratitude as well to the Ephorus and General Secretary, and the head of the Koinonia Department, who really respond to and support any programmes. There are three of us at PPLMG at this time, and we still need two more.



The UEM Alumni Conference is an important forum for the alumni to exchange ideas and experiences.

Photo: Martina Pauly / UEM



Dr Loli Simanjuntak, Indonesia.

Since completing her professional medical education in 1991, Simanjuntak has gained various work experience as a medical doctor in the rural area of North Sumatra as well as in the city of Jakarta. With support by a scholarship from the UEM, she was able to pursue a specialization in internal medicine at the University of Indonesia, which enabled her to work as an internist in various hospitals in Indonesia. Being concerned about the impacts of the HIV virus spread in her region, she established an AIDS-care team within the HKBP in 2003, which later evolved into the HKBP AIDS Ministry.

Photo: private

Serving from the Heart

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship Loli Simanjuntak

Involvement in public health ministry among the villagers

Shortly after completing my medical education in 1991, I got my first assignment as a medical doctor at the Community Health Centre (CHC) in Parsingkaman, a small village in the North Tapanuli region, about 60 kilometres from the city of Tarutung in Indonesia. This village is located on the border of North Tapanuli Regency and Central Tapanuli Regency. I got to the CHC each day by public bus on the hilly road from Tarutung to Parsingkaman, which took me one to two hours.

The CHC is a small and quiet station. With a salary of 64 thousand rupiah (the equivalent of 50 US dollars) per month, I began my ministry there as head of the CHC. At that time, it was still very rare for female doctors to be placed in villages. At the CHC itself, I was the first doctor assigned by the government. The facilities and atmosphere were very limited, but I really enjoyed it.

I visited the people door to door. Sometimes I had to travel to other villages on foot, which took me seven to eight hours, especially the very remote areas.

For this reason, I had to stay overnight at people's houses sometimes, such as in Torhonas village. From these visits, I became acquainted with many families who were completely underdeveloped, untouched by health care. There is no health station in this remote area, not even a school. There is only a church, without a priest. The villagers live in poverty. All the families have many children, malnourished and far from cleanliness.

The second year of my ministry, I was transferred to the Community Health Centre in Balige. Although it was located in the centre of the city, things there were more or less the same. The people who came to the CHC were only from Balige and the surrounding area. I also found children and adults who were malnourished and did not have knowledge of healthy food. Consumption of fish, vegetables, and fruit was scant. In addition, I found many tuberculosis cases, and these cases, if treated, had difficulty complying with prescriptions to take their medicine.

While working at this CHC, I also helped serve at the Mission Hospital of HKBP in Balige. The hospital was near my CHC. The hospital is very beautiful, with sturdy buildings of German missionary heritage. Facilities and medical personnel are adequate, but the number of doctors is very limited, especially specialists. The hospital must bring specialist doctors in from Jakarta, with the support of PGI Hospital. The patients in this hospital come from various subdistricts around Tapanuli or even farther away. Some take a bus for hours and some have to cross Lake Toba by boat.

But I also found the same thing here: public health awareness was far from perfect, and limited access to health services remained.

All of this made access to health services difficult to attain. Physicians were in very limited supply, especially competent specialist doctors.

We need to improve this health ministry. I believe that in addition to improving health facilities and infrastructure, there must also be an increase in competent medical personnel through an increase in the number of specialist doctors.

The shortages motivated me to continue my studies further by applying to the University of Indonesia to become a specialist doctor.

I deliberately chose the specialization of internal medicine based on my experience in Parsingkaman and Balige. I realized that internal medicine was most needed, especially since its application would not really require sophisticated equipment or technology. By becoming a specialist in internal medicine, I would be able to serve many people even with the limitations of medical technology and I would be able to go from village to village.

My specialist doctor education at the University of Indonesia with support from UEM Scholarships

My intention to continue my education and specialize in internal medicine was not easy. The competition is very fierce because of the limited opportunities available. Numerous doctors are eager to join this course of study, and I had to go through a very rigorous selection process. Praise God, I passed the selection in 1995 after taking a series of examinations at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Indonesia. This is the oldest and most prestigious university in Indonesia, and also the biggest and best.

After I was accepted, I still had to face complicated problems. The cost of this education was very expensive, almost unaffordable for me. Working in the village CHC and serving in a mission hospital for four years had made it impossible for me to save. I almost gave up, especially since my husband, who was a pastor of HKBP, was experiencing a financial crisis as well at that time due to the crisis at HKBP. This was during the time that HKBP was going through a long and severe conflict because of its struggle against the state militaristic hegemony that had intervened in the leadership of the HKBP.

In the midst of such difficulties I am very grateful for God's grace, which brought me to meet with Mr Peter Demberger. He encouraged me to apply for a scholarship from the UEM. And with the help of Ms Angelika Veddele, I finally received a scholarship to make it possible for me to begin the specialist medical education programme.

It was not easy for me to attend this specialist doctor's programme because I had to move to Jakarta, even as my husband lived in Sumatra because of his job as a priest with HKBP. For a variety of reasons, I brought my daughter with me to Jakarta. While attending this specialist education, I also occasionally joined in helping to serve at PGI Cikini Hospital.

After going through five years of hard struggle, in 2001 I was finally able to complete my specialist doctor education and graduated as an internist.

Paying debts at Mission Hospital

Immediately after graduating as an internist I returned to North Sumatra and worked full time at HKBP's Mission Hospital in Balige. Actually, after I became an internist, many offers came to me from major hospitals in Jakarta. But I always thought, "I am a debtor", as Paul said in Romans 8:12, so I intended to pay my debt and return to serving in the village for the second time. I started my service as a specialist in HKBP Mission Hospital as the only internist in the hospital. There was also a request from a government hospital close to Balige where I could have shared time in their hospital, but I refused it because I wanted to focus on improving the mission hospital's ministry.

I loved working in the mission hospital. The atmosphere was homelike, unlike the hospitals in the big cities, which are very complex. On certain days, the side dishes provided for employees were sang-sang (typical pork dish). Most important of all, I could be reunited with my family.

During this period of ministry, I felt the benefits of my studies in serving poor and disadvantaged people through this hospital. Every day I faced the variety of diseases due to unhealthy lifestyles and eating patterns compounded by endemic poverty. The limited facilities and infrastructure of the hospital were not an obstacle to me in carrying out my duties.

In fact, the mission hospital had a very strategic role as a witness of the church in the midst of the community. Unfortunately, the management of the hospital was run haphazardly by less professional directors. If the hospital had had better management, the hospital could have grown rapidly. The many institutions and professionals who love HKBP, domestic and foreign, were not optimized enough to support this hospital.

Established an HKBP AIDS committee

In 2003, I was devastated when I found a case of AIDS in my work as an internist and the patient died. From then on, I began to pay attention and look out for this disease. I worried that this would not be the only case. At that time, those who were exposed to HIV and AIDS were always marginalised, so no one was open about this disease. The public knowledge about this matter was also very minimal. Many myths developed around it.

My concern was that the virus had spread to the community around Balige. I immediately thought of how important it was to pay attention and make an effort to combat HIV and AIDS. With a total of around 3.5 million people and spread over 26 districts divided into 3,139 local congregations, HKBP had great potential to be a pioneer in this area. I saw that the communities still tended towards stigma and discrimination against HIV and AIDS. If HKBP, which reaches all over the country, could take a role in the prevention of HIV and AIDS, it could be a source of strength for the nation. It would constitute a great contribution from HKBP for the people and nation.

The first step I took was to invite the HKBP leadership to learn about this problem. Together with my husband, Rev. Gomar Gultom, we encouraged the HKBP Ephorus, Rev. Dr JR Hutauruk, to adopt a special policy to form the AIDS Care Team. In collaboration with HKBP Mission Hospital, the HKBP Formation Bureau led by Rev. Gomar

Gultom, and the HKBP Oikoumene Bureau led by Rev. Plaston Simanjuntak, we quickly organised a one-day seminar on AIDS Prevention. By organising this seminar, I hoped that this caring movement could reach the community sooner. We invited the Regional AIDS Committee Organisation, the government agency that handles AIDS prevention, the Secretary General of HKBP, the Rector of the HKBP Theological Seminary, the HKBP Praeses, the priests and the students to take part in the seminar. I was very motivated by the enthusiasm of the various parties who were involved in the seminar. It made me even more excited to hold a series of workshops with church leaders at Wisma Tornauli, Parapat, to break the chain of silence and myths. The team and I tried hard to overcome the inadequacies in community care around the HIV epidemic, especially the tendency of people who are reluctant to discuss reproductive health issues openly because of taboos in the Batak culture that surrounds the church. Our most intense efforts went towards overcoming the myths surrounding HIV and AIDS and ending the stigma and discrimination against people with HIV and AIDS.

HKBP ultimately decided to take an active part in addressing HIV and AIDS. We needed an integrated and comprehensive response from religious groups, governments, communities, and NGOs. In that spirit, HKBP finally officially instituted an AIDS committee within the church environment. The HKBP Ephorus entrusted me to lead this AIDS committee. Later on, I would try to form a similar committee in an HKBP district. We organised various forms of socialization in schools, churches, prisons, and various other communities. We also carried out various forms of HIV testing after providing integrated counselling before and after the test.

We also organised treatment and care for those with HIV and AIDS. We even formed a community of fellow PLWHA, or persons living with HIV and AIDS. Over time, the AIDS committee that I lead has evolved into a unit that requires considerable attention and must be equipped with various facilities and several full-time staff.

In my first year on the committee, the membership consisted of only myself and deaconess Mathilda. Rev. Gomar Gultom and Rev. Marudut Manalu then assisted me in making a five-year strategic plan from a meeting with church leaders, which became the basis for the HKBP AIDS committee's work. During our first year (2003), after much hard work, we found ten cases of HIV and AIDS: six male, and the rest female, including three children under five years old. Most cases were transmitted through the use of syringes infected with the HIV virus, but there were others that had been transmitted through unsafe sexual intercourse. The affected patients were residents from various places, such as Tobasa, Tapanuli Utara, Sidikalang and Jakarta.

This committee now has the support of various HKBP partners and other institutions that care about AIDS, including ELCA, FHI-ASA (Family Health International-Stop AIDS Action), UEM, PGI and others. The institution became increasingly independent and grew: we established a sexually transmitted infection clinic, a voluntary counselling test (VCT) clinic, and a voluntary HIV test. The IMS and VCT clinic services were very supportive of the HKBP AIDS committee's service programme, where the action was really happening. In June 2007, based on the Indonesian Minister of Health's Decree, HKBP Mission Hospital in Balige became the Indonesian AIDS Control Referral Hospital.

Sixteen years later the HKBP AIDS committee changed its name to become the HKBP AIDS ministry. We hope that our concern for AIDS will help people with AIDS

and their families to be accepted in society. We also seek to enable communities to protect themselves from contracting HIV and for PLWHA to not transmit to others.

In 2006, after I had spent five years working at HKBP's Mission Hospital in Balige, the Tobasa Regency government appointed me to be the director of the Porsea Regional Hospital. I carried out this assignment while still serving at the Balige HKBP Hospital.

Moved to Jakarta and started work at Fatmawati Hospital

Only six months after I began my work at Porsea Regional Hospital, my husband's transfer to Jakarta caused me to leave HKBP's Mission Hospital and Porsea Regional Hospital and move to Jakarta. In Jakarta, I received a new placement as a government doctor in Fatmawati Hospital, Jakarta, where I am still working now. This public hospital belongs to the central government.

I work in the Internal Medicine Department. This hospital is very different from the mission hospital. Fatmawati Hospital is a grade-A hospital, with a compound on area of 14 hectares and 780 beds. It is located in South Jakarta. Working in an environment with 2,500 employees is very different. It feels good because of the diversity of ethnicities, religions, politics, and culture, and people respect one another. I have enjoyed the differences as something enriching. For me, the key is mutual respect to create a comfortable atmosphere, which in turn can motivate all of us to work. The same has been true for my experiences with patients: as a doctor who does not use religious attributes, it seems I have never been rejected by a patient or the patient's family.

Besides serving as an internist at Fatmawati Hospital, my days in Jakarta have been filled with activities in HKBP's Jakarta District. I asked the leaders of HKBP's Jakarta District to form an AIDS committee. The Praeses finally appointed me to lead the committee. It's a pity that the AIDS committee in this district is not going well because there are no full-time staff who can continue working in the committee's office, as in the HKBP AIDS committee. The response from the leadership has not been optimal either, even though the committee members have a strong commitment and are very solid. This is where the important role of the leadership is very necessary for the running of a service for social ills.

Besides my role as chair of the HKBP Jakarta District AIDS committee, I am also involved as a member of the PGI AIDS committee and a member of an international institution at (CCM) Country Coordinating Mechanism: The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) Indonesia.

Building a learning centre in the countryside

Even though my family and I live in the city of Jakarta, I continue to give my full attention to serving the village community. Seeing the backwardness that occurred in the village, I worked together with Gultom's family to establish a learning centre in the village in my husband's hometown. We established the learning centre in an effort to pay debts to our ancestors in this village, namely in the village of Rahutbosi, Pangaribuan, North Tapanuli.

We have provided a library, computer centre, English-language course, tutoring and various other activities to help the children, teenagers, and youth in this village. This learning centre combines playing and learning, education and games. It is open every day from morning to evening, free of charge.

The aim is to bring education facilities that are normally difficult to reach into the midst of the community in this remote area. We provide professional teachers to facilitate the learning. I became the chair of the foundation that manages this learning centre, and we assigned a professional, Nova Manulang, to be the programme director.

The people learn much here, such as playing, reading, writing, singing, language learning, mathematics, gardening, tutoring, and doing homework. In addition, we also develop traditional music such as Tagading and Batak gondang through this education centre. Once a month, the children organise creative worship. According to the testimony of the people, student achievement is increasing fast because of the learning centre.

Some people have asked us how we obtained funding to finance the operation of the learning centre. It's only through the grace of the Lord. We collected money only from our families, from our children's offerings. And, praise the Lord, the learning centre is already eight years old, and still improving.

Activity at the learning centre can be followed on Facebook ("Rumah Pintar Mual Hapistaran") and Instagram ("nova_she_manullang" and "rumpin_mualhapistaran"). For more information, you can watch this video on Youtube: <https://youtu.be/cdkn1c1Zw6E>.

My recent ministry

I was appointed to be the head of the inpatient installation in 2008, which made me interested in studying hospital management. In 2011-2012, I attended a postgraduate education course at the Public Health Faculty at the University of Indonesia, and in 2012 I graduated as a Hospital Management Master (MARS).

In 2014 I tried applying to become a medical director at Fatmawati Hospital but failed in the selection. In 2017, however, I passed the selection successfully. Through the rigorous examination and a transparent and accountable selection, I succeeded in reaching echelon two, the second-highest position in the hierarchy of government officials in our country. This means that I did not face discrimination even though I belong to the minority religion in the country. My relations with my fellow directors are also very good. I have since entered my second year as a director at the refreshingly heterogeneous Fatmawati Hospital.

It has been an amazing experience for me to pursue a career from the most basic level up to the top, and all as a result of studies supported by UEM scholarships. My scholarship has been very helpful for the development of my current career.



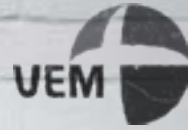
Oinike Harefa (left) and Reihan Aresmouk in the Assalam Mosque Wuppertal

Photo: Martina Pauly / UEM



From left: Abednego Keshomshahara, Brighton Katabaro, El Pacific Binagha

Photo: Martina Pauly / UEM



Dr Vicky Masika Sasapu from Lubero, Province North Kivu, Democratic Republic Congo (DRC). In 2018, the former UEM scholarship holder graduated as an ENT specialist from the Abomey Calavi University (UAC), Cotonou town/ Benin. Vicky Sasapu is a generalist physician doctor in CBCA hospitals from 2003 in Est-DRC and leading the ORL-department at Virunga-Hospital of CBCA in East-DRC.

Photo: private

Virunga Hospital ORL Service

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship Vicky Sasapu

Introduction

Virunga Hospital is geographically located in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), North Kivu province, in Goma. It was started in 1974 as a small nursing centre by the women of the Community of Baptist Churches in Central Africa (CBCA) in order to find solutions for delivery issues. Canada was one of the first partners to provide medical equipment to supplement the personal efforts of the population and the CBCA.

On 17 January 2002, the Mount Nyiragongo volcano consumed 75 per cent of Virunga Hospital's buildings and equipment when the hospital had achieved a capacity of 180 beds. More than fifteen years after the volcano, the hospital (managed by the CBCA and the DRC state) has yet to be restored despite efforts.

Virunga Hospital currently serves as the reference hospital in Karisimbi Health Zone, with a capacity of 139 beds, 10 doctors (2 of them specialists), 48 nurses, and 51 other staff, which means 109 staff members in all. The occupancy rate is low, 40 per cent. Two main differences between Virunga Hospital and other hospitals in Goma are:

- 1) Virunga Hospital is urban-rural, one reason for the hospital's financial difficulties
- 2) Virunga Hospital is well known as a religious hospital, another reason for the hospital's financial difficulties

Note: My field, Otorhinolaryngology (ORL), is the newest service at Virunga Hospital (established one year ago)

Action Fields

I act in two main fields: medical and teaching. My medical field is otorhinolaryngology (ORL), or the study of diseases of the ear, nose, and throat.

With regard to medical consultation, otological (ear-related) pathologies and people over twenty years of age were dominant. The mean number of new cases was 127 patients per month versus 200 elderly patients. Internal patients are not included in table I.

Table I:
Distribution of new external patients by age and pathologies
[Goma, November 2018–April 2019]

Pathologies	Age/years ≤10	10–20	≥20	Tot	%
Rhinosin	80	60	82	222	29.1
Pharyngeal oral	100	70	65	235	30.8
Laryngeal	0	5	15	20	2.6
Otological	92	50	120	262	34.3
Others	0	0	24	24	3.2
Total	272	185	306	763	100

Discussion

Specialized ORL medical care is new in Goma in general (2017 in Charité maternelle hospital, 2018 in the provincial hospital) and in Virunga Hospital specifically (est. June 2018). This is why there is poor knowledge of ORL statistical data at Virunga Hospital, as well as in the eastern DRC in general, the DRC, and other countries [1]. If our communities were educated about ORL diseases (knowledge, beliefs, and practice), many health problems could be eliminated, including unnecessary financial expenses and deaths due to ignorance. In fact, many ORL diseases are confused with witchcraft or poisoning in local cultures. Practices related to those beliefs (e.g., kafura = scrape the throat with a spoon to tear the tonsils) sometimes lead to health complications or death.

Virunga Hospital only offers medical consultation, medicated care, and minor surgery. I have performed the following major surgeries there:

- Tonsillectomy
- Peritonsillar incision and abscess drainage
- Object extraction from the throat
- Object extraction from the ears
- Object extraction from the nose and ears
- Temporomandibular dislocation (luxation) and reduction
- Closure of ear laceration wound
- Closure of facial laceration wound
- Nose bones fracture reduction

I decided to stop doing major surgeries at Virunga Hospital because the equipment was poor and would have endangered the life of my patients.

WHO declared more than 360 million incidents of hearing loss (5% of the global population) worldwide, preventable or treatable in most of the cases, especially in developing countries and sub-Saharan Africa, aggravating the existing problems of education and underdevelopment.¹ If knowledge, perceptions, and beliefs can be re-oriented, ORL will resolve many health problems in eastern DRC.

I also taught at ISETEM medical school on behalf of my church, the CBCA. My course covers ORL pathologies and care.

Opportunities

The presence of ORL pathology cases is an opportunity to develop our ORL activities. But it requires a holistic approach that includes prevention, curative, and supportive care, with a complete technical platform. There is an opportunity to seek training when necessary from the modern ORL service of the fiftieth hospital in Kinshasa.

Another opportunity is present at the ORL Congress and the ORL Associations of France, Benin, and other countries, where we can exchange knowledge and experiences. Finally, the availability of community health experts represents an opportunity to promote the prevention of ORL diseases instead of privileging only curative care.

Challenges

We are in an unsafe working environment: there are more than three hundred armed groups in North Kivu and East DRC, in addition to the volcano threat and the methane gas in Kivu Lake. In addition, there is no ORL department building at Virunga Hospital. I work in one room of 3 square metres without ventilation. Neither is there ORL equipment for functional explorations and surgery. Fortunately, the Africa commission of the UEM has funded an ORL promotion project with around five thousand euros, enough for minimal equipment but not enough for quality ORL care.

A lack of specific knowledge and equipment means no medical surgery, no care for deafness, no ORL endoscopic care, and no cancer treatment. Virunga Hospital is financially incapable of paying for equipment, drugs, or workers' salaries (including specialist doctors) because of the poverty of the inhabitants, the hospital's rural-urban status, and the fact that the hospital has never been completely rehabilitated from the damage from the Mount Nyiragongo eruption in 2002, which engulfed 75 per cent of hospital buildings and equipment. On the other hand, most of the poor people in Goma and its surroundings prefer to come to Virunga Hospital because it is known to be a church hospital, where sick people will not be turned away or discriminated against for their lack of money, unlike other hospitals. Unfortunately, subsidies are rare or non-existent; meanwhile, ORL major surgery is quite expensive.

Additional challenges include the poverty of the inhabitants of Goma and its surroundings (their economic insecurity makes them unable to pay their care costs), as well as a lack of interest by the government and its partners in the prevention of ORL diseases.

Interaction with the church and social communities

I have signed an employment contract with the church and am an active member of Virunga CBCA parish. I can easily call the president or the church or visit the president's office or the medical department office (not far from my hospital) if necessary. Pastors also feel free to consult the ORL service when they need it.

ORL care does not discriminate on the basis of religion, ethnicity, race, or other factors, in accordance with the Hippocratic oath. The ORL service in Virunga Hospital was a solution for patients who until 2017 were being transferred to Rwanda, Kampala, or Burundi. Patient transfers result in exorbitant costs and were only possible for the few rich patients. There are now three ORL doctors in Goma, including myself, to serve all of North Kivu province (59,483 km², 6,655,000 inhabitants in 2015; 60-80% rural).²

Hope and commitment to collaborate within a network of UEM alumni

I shall collaborate and wish to remain a member of the alumni network, provided that:

- The alumni network maintains its noble goals and Christian values
- We can continue to find financial means to attend the conferences
- Our church will accept such activities in our work

I expect that this international network will support professional integration to help promote specific knowledge or activity areas as needed by our populations. Such areas include ORL surgery, deafness, and a prevention approach in eastern DRC through my church hospital. I also anticipate an exchange of experience around the world, especially in the countries belonging to members of the alumni network. This should help us to mobilize partners for our projects.

Expectations towards the UEM

I expect the UEM to perpetuate the activities of the alumni network and to organise periodically (annually) an alumni conference for experience exchange. I also expect the UEM to mobilize funds to finance relevant projects in different fields, particularly in Africa and Asia, and finally to facilitate the mobility of specialists or experts to improve our population's initiatives.

Conclusion

Together the alumni network and the UEM family will continue to improve the actions of our churches in different areas so that life and salvation may be complete and abundant. As the ORL medical service is new in my area, which had previously assimilated to witchcraft, these main actions are required to satisfy unmet needs:

- *Community education and prevention* in ORL health actions, especially for exposed targets such as people living near airports and HIV-infected people, would prevent several ORL diseases³
- *Equipment and construction* of ORL service in CBCA hospitals in eastern DRC, beginning with Virunga Hospital (in common accord with the CBCA medical department)
- *Training activities for general practitioners* (doctors) should be organised in all the hospitals of my church (CBCA) for quality ORL medical care
- *Formative mobile medical consultations* and ORL care should be organised in all the hospitals of my church (CBCA) (in common accord with the CBCA medical department, or in chosen training pools if equipment would be an obstacle).

¹ WHO. *Evaluation multi pays des capacités de prise en charge des troubles de l'audition*. Geneva, 2014. ISBN 9789242506570

² *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO)*. North Kivu. MONUSCO; January 1015. Available at monusco.unmissions.org and www.monusco.org

³ Ondzotto G., Ibara J.R., Mowondobeka P., Galiba J. "Les manifestations ORL et cervico-faciales de l'infection par le VIH en zone tropicale à propos de 253 cas congolais". *Bull soc Pathol Exot*. 2004; 97: 59-63 (Pubmed).



From left: Agustinus Purba, Loli Simanjuntak, Oinike Harefa

Photo: Claudia Schletter



From left: Pascal Bataringaya, Brighton Katabaro, El Pacific Binagha (UEM South North volunteer)

Photo: Claudia Schletter



Rev. Dr Pascal Bataringaya

from Mukarange-Gicumbi, Rwanda. In 1997, he began his theological studies at the FTPB in Butare (Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Butare – Protestant Theological Faculty). This was followed by doctoral studies at the Ruhr University of Bochum. The title of his dissertation, published in German, is “Impulse der Friedensethik Dietrich Bonhoeffers”. Since 2005, the former UEM scholarship holder has been Vice-President of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda (EPR). Bataringaya is one of the leading theologians of the EPR who are working for a reconciliation of the ethnic groups after the genocide in 1994.

Photo: Ramona Hedtmann / UEM

Churches as Agents for Reconciliation

Personal Reflections after a UEM Scholarship Pascal Bataringaya

Introduction

We live in a world whose people cry out for peace almost every day. Through the media we learn that ever more countries have no peace because of various conflicts. Indeed, the central message of all religions is peace among the people. But the conflicts and wars in the world continue to challenge Christians to view peace as their central task. Because the Gospel is peace and Christ himself is peace, Christians are also called to be peacemakers. Jesus came to bring about peace between humans and God, and this kind of peace extends to peace among humans, as well as between humans and nature. As far as peace is concerned, then, the task of Christians has both vertical and horizontal dimensions.

But peace is not possible without reconciliation. In the case of Rwanda, where we bear the sad history of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, we are currently undergoing the process of reconciliation. We will see how seriously Christians take reconciliation and peace as their message and mission. This is why the churches in Rwanda must play a central role in the process of reconciliation, and why this reconciliation also calls for justice.

But this same church was accused of complicity in the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda!

Rwanda has endured a history of political violence, which culminated in 1994 in the genocide against the Tutsi. It is estimated that more than one million people were killed in a period of only one hundred days. Besides the loss of human life, the genocide caused considerable damages to socio-economic structures, properties, and family and community cohesion. Social relations were destroyed, no sense of community was taken into consideration, and any cultural orientation lost its meaning as the genocide was committed.

Healing is therefore a necessary process to deal with the historical trauma and memory of this situation. It can help us to address the injuries that remain after oppression, violence, wars, and genocide, as well as to overcome their consequences. Justice is also a priority in the Rwandan case.

In 1994, most observers considered Rwanda to be the most Christian country of all the African nations. Some 90 per cent of the population self-identified as Christian based on 1991 census data, and of this number 65 per cent self-identified as Roman Catholic.

More Rwandan citizens were killed in churches and parishes than anywhere else, however. I have pictures from the known cases of Nyamata, Nyange, Kibuye, and Nyundo, where people were killed in the church buildings. The genocide revealed the saint and sinner in everyone involved, including Christians in general and clergy specifically.

The Christian church lost any credibility it had before the genocide because of its complicity in that atrocity. As a group of Christians who met in London noted in 1996, "The church has failed in her mission, and lost her credibility, particularly since the genocide. She needs to repent before God and Rwandan society, and seek healing from God" (Tom Ndahiro, "Genocide in Rwanda", p. 237).

In 2005, the South African Council of Churches led an interfaith delegation to visit the country of Rwanda at the invitation of religious leaders to discuss "The role of faith communities in facilitating national justice and reconciliation". The visit coincided with the Day of Reconciliation in Kigali organized by the South African embassy. The delegation met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, gacaca court officials, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, and church leaders from the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches.

The delegation reported that their "meetings with Rwanda's faith communities were the least satisfying and hopeful aspect of the experience. The delegation reached the conclusion that the churches in Rwanda had "lost their credibility". ("SA Interfaith Delegation Explores Reconciliation in Rwanda"). There was a great need for justice and reconciliation.

So the question of the complicity of the church must be set in the context of a divided church. The church was far from neutral in its sympathies. Another complicity was also the failure of many church leaders to disassociate themselves from the regime's human rights violations (there was close collaboration between churches and the government).

Why the need for reconciliation?

While there are numerous consequences of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the major consequence is that the genocide fractured families, business partnerships, government coalitions, neighborhoods, civic organizations, churches, friendships, social relations, and even marriages. This is what makes justice and reconciliation so very necessary. It is a mission of the church and the basis of life in this country, where some two hundred thousand people have been imprisoned on suspicion of participating in the genocide.

The Christian origins of reconciliation

The concept of reconciliation has its origins in Bible and in Christian theology. It is found in Old and New Testament theology in particular (it is the central message of the Bible and the Gospel) and especially the theology of the Apostle Paul. Karl Barth defined the Christian doctrine of reconciliation as "the restitution, the resumption of a fellowship which once existed but was then threatened by dissolution." (Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005).

The theology of reconciliation

The Christian concept of reconciliation refers to humanity's reconciliation to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul understood reconciliation as both a restoration of a broken relationship between God and humanity and a "ministry of reconciliation" that attempted to bring human enemies together and create a state of sustainable peace. Paul understood the vertical reconciliation offered through Christ that brings the possibility, power, and hope of a social reconciliation between estranged and divided groups. It shows us the effectiveness of reconciliation across divisions of nations, cultures, religions, and classes.

Actualizing social reconciliation

While there are government and church reconciliation efforts underway in Rwanda, including the creation of the gacaca courts and the Unity and Reconciliation Commission, there is a role for the church in Rwanda to bring about reconciliation on its own as well. The church's role in Rwandan reconciliation may need to begin with a humble admission of moral failure and complicity in the genocide, where appropriate. Arthur Molenaar has noted that "Rwandan authorities are encouraging gacaca, which emerged as a response to an immediate crisis in the judiciary, as the ultimate method to achieve reconciliation".¹

Reconciliation in the context of Rwanda

For more than 24 years, Rwanda has been embarking on a path of reconciliation after the many decades of division that culminated in the genocide against the Tutsi. Even though the genocide tragedy has passed, Rwandans have to heal this historical trauma. They have to do more to rebuild the necessary social cohesion.

The reconciliation process in Rwanda focuses on reconstructing the Rwandan identity, as well as balancing justice, truth, peace, and security. The Rwanda Constitution now states that all Rwandans share equal rights. Laws have been passed to fight discrimination and genocide ideology. The church is also very involved and very committed to the justice and reconciliation work. This includes the teaching of the Bible and extends to all churches in Rwanda, including my church, the Presbyterian Church.

The role of Rwandan tradition and culture in the process of justice and reconciliation

Primary responsibility for reconciliation efforts in Rwanda rests with the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, established in 1999, which makes use of the aforementioned gacaca courts. It was decided during the national consultations following the genocide that it would be necessary to conceive an alternative approach that would provide justice for the people during their natural lifetime.

¹ Molenaar, "Gacaca: Grassroots Justice After Genocide. The Key to Reconciliation in Rwanda?" *African Studies Centre Research Report 77/2005*, p. 161, 162.

This alternative process was the Rwandan gacaca process, to be complemented by the necessary laws in order for its proceedings to be conducted as binding judgments.

The process resulted in the passing of an organic law rehabilitating, structuring, and giving mandate to the gacaca tribunals. Gacaca became a combination of the traditional and modern legal system. A voluntary process was set up in all villages across the country for a limited period of time.

Most of the work was done at the local level where the genocide had been committed. Nine judges were elected by the population from among “people of integrity” (*Inyangamugayo*). They were trained to know the cases of three of the four categories of the perpetrators of the genocide and to pronounce judgment.

One day per week was set apart to allow the villagers to attend the gacaca. The law contained a provision to assign community service to those who confessed and requested forgiveness.

- Many suspects began testifying to the genocide and to where they put the bodies of the victims. Thousands of prisoners have now been released from prisons and have reintegrated into their communities after repentance, punishment, and re-education. The goal of the gacaca courts was not only to punish suspects, but also to reconcile people for peace and for the future of the country.

The gacaca courts officially closed in 2012, after dealing with thousands of cases that would have taken two hundred years to proceed through the regular court system.

For making and keeping peace, there is also a programme of peace education called “Ingando”. It aims to clarify Rwandan history and the origins of divisions among the population, promote patriotism, and fight against genocide ideology.

Another important programme we have is called “Itorero”. Established in 2007, the Itorero programme is a leadership academy to promote Rwandan values and cultivate leaders who will help in the development of the community, including in the process of justice and reconciliation.

Grassroots trainings for political and ecclesiastical leaders, political party leaders, and seminars for youth and women in different areas like in trauma counselling and conflict mitigation and resolution have been planned. National summits have been organized on topics related to justice, peace, reconciliation, good governance, human rights, national security, and national history.

As you can see, all of the churches in Rwanda are fully committed to the process of justice and reconciliation. The churches have been involved in teaching the word of God on justice, confession, repentance, and forgiveness as a way to promote reconciliation and peace.

A number of different churches have worked hard to bring about confession, repentance, and forgiveness.

- The church has a place in the reconstruction of a reconciled Rwandan society. The first step was to reconstruct the basic structures and to provide the basic necessities, justice and reconciliation among them. Churches were intent on finding methods of reconciliation through active participation in the life of society.
- Church initiatives have included tools in justice and peacebuilding, as well as the promotion of constructive dialogues at all levels among parties involved in violent conflicts in the country. The church in Rwanda is better equipped than any other single actor to consolidate the current peace gains through a reconciliation process.

- Churches have played the role of a capacity builder and institutional moralizer. Today’s churches have increased their knowledge and awareness of the role they can decisively play in justice and peacebuilding. Using their extensive educational institutions (60 per cent of schools in Rwanda belong to the churches) and training centres, churches are increasingly well-equipped to analyse and understand the causes of conflicts and their dynamics.
- Educating young people is the key to the future of a country where the population is being renewed rapidly. This is why it is the duty of the church to educate children and young people in the values of the Gospel, which will provide them with a compass to show them the way. It is necessary for them to learn to be active members of the church and society in promoting justice, reconciliation, and peace, as the future is in their hands.
- Churches are building the capacity of their members and the society at large to prevent violent conflicts and to sustain peaceful interactions among their believers and all Rwandans.

Challenges and recommendations

- The first challenge is to set up adapted post-genocide pastoral work for peacebuilding that is rooted in basic moral values, the purification of memory, and reconciliation with our past.
- Research in Christian theology would be also useful to develop the means to make baptismal bonds between Rwandans stronger than ethnic relations.
- All churches must have programmes of genocide commemoration in their liturgy so as to enable their full and active involvement in both preparation and implementation of such commemoration as a way of trauma healing.

In addition, we recommend that church members participate actively in commemoration actions, especially with young people, who will help to support our commitment formulated and expressed in the statement, “Never again”.

The Presbyterian Church Commission of Unity and Reconciliation

In order to face the challenges of the consequences of the genocide against the Tutsi, the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda established a commission to combat genocidal ideology and aid in the implementation of its activities in the domain of unity and reconciliation.

The general objective of this commission was to analyse the causes and the consequences of genocide and to consider the contribution of the church to justice, unity, and reconciliation in commemorating the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.

The specific objectives were:

- To promote justice, unity, and reconciliation among the people who were traumatized by the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994
- To identify the causes of genocide to try to find solutions to them and to the challenges of the aftermath

- To identify the various understandings of how to commemorate the genocide and to explore its significance in the Rwandan society of today
- To establish the impact of the church on social relationships in the post-genocide country through its communication of the message of justice, unity, and reconciliation

In short, the commission sought to clarify Rwandan history and the origins of divisions among the population, to promote justice, unity, reconciliation, and peaceful cohabitation, but also to challenge genocide ideology.

Its responsibility included modelling the link between justice and reconciliation, as well as generating suggestions and recommendations for the reconstruction of the Rwandan family and society.

The commission's task to commemorate the genocide encompassed the idea that when we commemorate, we remember, and remembering allows us to learn from the past in order to prepare for our future. This was the global objective of commemoration, because reconciliation constitutes a restoration of friendly relations, as well as conciliation or rapprochement.

In this way, remembering is speech: to talk about the situation and to facilitate normal life. Similarly, forgetting means silence and death.

Through the activities of its commission, the church has started to organize memorial sites at the locations where the found bodies from the genocide are buried.

The church has been involved in developing the teaching of the word of God on justice, confession, repentance, and forgiveness as a possible means to reconciliation and peace.

Twenty-four years after the tragic events, the absolute priority of the churches in Rwanda remains justice, reconciliation, and the healing of memories. Repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation might seem impossible from a human point of view after so much suffering. But these are akin to gifts we receive from Christ, on the basis of reconciliation with God. Jesus Christ has assigned to the Christians the ministry of reconciliation for God's creatures. Justice and reconciliation include:

- Zero tolerance for impunity
- Listening to the stories of others
- Taking part in suffering
- Sharing emotions with deep respect
- Respecting the personal experiences of others
- Accepting different views of the importance of historical identity.

The work and the role of the National Commission of Unity and Reconciliation has shown that justice and reconciliation in Rwanda are possible. But it is a long way and a long process, especially in the case of genocide.

The work that continues to be organized and carried out by the church is the key function of healing traumatic memories to achieve good and peaceful relations. This is where we as human beings find safety and direction.

Social justice and reconciliation belong together. There can be no forgiveness and no reconciliation if there is no justice. We already know that justice, repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace belong together through our interpretation of the teachings of the Bible. But it is important to understand that reconciliation is a process, because even though it is a long road, it is the centre of life in a country like Rwanda.

The justice and reconciliation process must be supported by many people, and the majority of the population in Rwanda have expressed their willingness to accompany this process through the gacaca courts. This means that political and religious education about social relations play an important role.

In this context, churches in Rwanda have:

- Restored confidence between people
- Played a significant role in the ongoing progress of the gacaca courts on the path to justice
- Accompanied the gacaca courts (in order to tell and to know the truth)
- Inspired the gacaca courts by the light of God's Word
- Organised an annual remembrance service in collaboration with the government and accompanied people in their healing and reconciliation.

The commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda communicates that community is an essential part of the process of justice, unity, and reconciliation. Community relationships in the country are still weak because of people's memories of the atrocities committed during the genocide.

The Kinyarwanda concept of gacaca is a strategy of justice and reconciliation that is very deeply rooted in the community and its culture. Gacaca refers to the grass in villages, where people would gather to listen to different parties involved in the conflict and look to the most trustworthy elders in the community to find solutions.

The gacaca courts process was initiated with the following objectives:

1. Identify the truth about what happened during the genocide
2. Speed up justice for the genocide
3. Combat the culture of impunity
4. Contribute to the national process of unity, reconciliation, and peace
5. Demonstrate the capacity of the Rwandans through their culture and tradition to resolve their own problems and conflicts
6. Realize that once justice had been done, it would facilitate the reconciliation and unity of the Rwandan society that had been shattered by the genocide

Gacaca thus served to promote justice and reconciliation by providing a means for victims to know the truth about the deaths of their family members and relatives. These courts also gave perpetrators the opportunity to confess their crimes, to show remorse and ask for forgiveness in front of their community.

Desmond Tutu has praised the gacaca process:

"As an approach, gacaca shows courage, daring and originality on the part of the Rwandan society. By adopting a strategy that is based on its own historical and cultural values, Rwanda has set a new standard. (...) In this way a new chapter in thinking about conflict resolution is written. (...) Especially for the African continent, gacaca can provide important lessons, because too many African societies share the problems of civil war and its aftermath.

However, these societies also share these informal, accessible and restorative legal traditions that are incorporated in communities and whose main goal is to reconcile conflicting parties. For these reasons, gacaca's relevance goes beyond the borders of this small country. (...)

God wants to show that there is life after conflict and repression – that because of repentance and forgiveness there is a future. (...) To work for reconciliation is to want to realize God's dream for humanity – when we will know that we are indeed members of one family, bound together in a delicate network of interdependence.” (Desmond Tutu, No Future Without Forgiveness, p. 274-282)

Finally, the use of justice, repentance, and forgiveness for the reconciliation and healing of memories means a reconciliation with oneself, with God, and with others. This is how the Commission of Unity and Reconciliation and the churches in Rwanda developed a faith characterized by justice, trust, brotherly love, and peace, and that overcomes fear of the other. Twenty-four years after the genocide, we hope that this faith will continue to help us achieve our goal. It will be possible, as we stand together in communion and in mission, because when we are united we can do it.

Even after the genocide is long past, mission for justice and reconciliation in Rwanda is still necessary and possible. The churches in Rwanda are taking on this mission. They must continue to be united and to combine their efforts in order to accomplish their goal. Considering the challenges the world is facing today from conflicts, violence, and war, this mission is also what God has given to His church in the world, mission to all Christians and to all people who believe in God. May God bless you.

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UEM: Challenges and Opportunities for Internationalization and Equal Partnerships

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Introduction

The UEM was formerly known as the Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft (RMG), among others, a German mission organization that was instrumental in the establishment founding of several large churches in Asia and Africa. The motivation was to make the Word of God accessible to the “heathens” or non-Christians in other countries in Asia, Africa, and America: internationality, in some sense, was important to the RMG. Mission work, or spreading the Gospel to the ends of the earth, was perceived as being in line with the message of Jesus in Mark 16:15.

The internationalization of mission created a dichotomy for the “old churches”, who perceived themselves to be messengers of God or “midwives” of the new, emerging churches in Asia and Africa. This split understanding is still present in the thinking of European churches and churches in Asia and Africa today – consciously and unconsciously. Even after the countries in Asia and Africa became sovereign nations, the ecumenical community maintained the concept of “older” and “younger” siblings. Throughout the course of history, the churches in Germany have considered the churches in the global South as their younger siblings in need of guidance and supervision. On the other hand, even though the economic and political situation has improved for many countries in the global South, many churches in Asia and Africa still consider the churches in Europe to be their older siblings and still count on them for help. We must focus on mutuality and participation as central aspects of partnership relations.

The United Evangelical Mission: A vision of equality

Dr Soritua Nababan, the first moderator of the international UEM, has often criticized this understanding of mission. He has suggested that the UEM should, among other things, change its name, as it is no longer simply a successor to the RMG, but a new kind of communion of churches in three continents. According to Nababan, the name was retained to appease the donors and friends of mission in Germany, many of whom wanted to preserve the old understanding of mission. In the course of time, the enthusiasm of the donors towards the ideology of mission changed; the modern interpretation of “mission” was no longer appealing. More and more voices called for abandoning the ideology of mission and even changing the name of the UEM to ensure that future donors would remain interested in its work. Dr Nababan’s criticism has become even more relevant in Germany’s churches today, but a change in identity is not so easy for those non-European churches that are a product of German mission in the eighteenth and

early nineteenth centuries. German missionaries were and still are highly admired, even idolized, in African and Asian churches, whereas in German churches many missionaries have been forgotten.

The UEM was able to reorganize its structure in 1996 and 2008 into an international communion of churches, a process that was not easy, especially considering the challenges from the member churches in Germany, Asia, and Africa.¹ Since its internationalization, the UEM has developed five pillars or working fields that describe the focus of its work: Evangelization, Development, Advocacy, Diaconia, and Partnership. The staff exchanges between the three regions have intensified. UEM churches in Asia and Africa are becoming more and more independent, financially and structurally. The financial responsibility does not lie on the shoulders of the German churches alone; the churches in Asia and Africa have significantly increased their contributions to the communion. For instance, the churches in the global South have hosted guests and events – contributions that have been highly appreciated but unfortunately have yet to be officially acknowledged. The activities of “United Action” and increased membership fees in Asia and Africa have raised a meaningful amount of funds for the UEM. In 2018, the UEM General Assembly was held in Parapat, Indonesia, and all the local costs were covered by the host churches. This continued when the Asia Regional Assembly in Nias and the Asia Regional Board meeting on in Kalimantan were covered by the respective host churches. In Africa, the Kimara congregation in Dar es Salaam has been able to finance more than one full scholarship for students from Germany. German churches are even applying for funds from the UEM and have received them.

Despite the difficult times due to natural catastrophes, pandemics, and political unrest, the churches in Asia and Africa have been able to become more and more self-reliant. It must be noted that global economic injustice has created a notable difference between the churches in Germany and those in Asia and Africa. The churches in Germany are generally wealthier because of the church taxes and stable economic and political system in the country, but more and more people in Germany are leaving the church. The churches in Asia and Africa face economic and political insecurity. One result is a feeling of dependency on their “older” siblings in Germany, with the German churches still seeing their “younger” siblings as victims who need pity.

Many conflicts arise from this “giver–receiver” mentality. Partners in Germany act as managers and demand to be given access to the decision-making process in their partner churches in the global South. Partnerships are terminated if these demands are not fulfilled, with the German partners citing alleged issues of corruption and a failure to communicate. UEM members in all regions are united as a body of Christ and reject any human arrogance, which only fuels tensions and conflicts further. A true Christian partnership would not fail to move beyond mistaken colonialist feelings of economic superiority on the one hand and dependency syndrome on the other. Internal conflicts in the Asian and African churches are often exacerbated by intervention from the German partners, under the pretext of mediation. In many instances, as described by UEM General Secretary Rev. Volker Martin Dally, the UEM is excluded from bilateral relationships between partner churches because it no longer adheres to the paternalistic system.

¹ Cf. Peter Sandner, *Der Weg zur Internationalisierung der UEM*, (Wuppertal: United Evangelical Mission), 2007.

As stipulated in the UEM Code of Conduct for “Transparency” and “Against Corruption”, all partners are to avoid the trap of abusing public or private authority, which can damage partnership relations.

We acknowledge that the process of internationalization must be continued if it is to be successful. The churches in Germany, Asia, and Africa must be encouraged to change their mindset. The churches in the global South are already able to acquire large amounts of funding for their own activities, but they feel poor and inferior when communicating with partners in Germany. If all members of the UEM can really see themselves as equal parts of a communion, this change in mentality will become a reality. The Tanzanian Bishop Josiah Kibira put it this way back in 1991: “Now we are partners. That means: we are all simultaneously receiving and giving. There is no church that has nothing to give, small as it is. There is no church that needs nothing, as rich and large as it is. We need each other.” We are already seeing good progress in this direction.

As we all struggle with the Covid-19 pandemic, the financial support from partners in the global North is highly appreciated. We should remain aware, however, that this kind of support might encourage ideas of inferiority or superiority. The structural changes in the UEM are here to stay: The churches in Asia and Africa are no longer being perceived as receivers, for instance of full scholarships, but as partners that are expected to share the financial burden of the work of the UEM. The churches in Germany seem to have not fully understood that the money they give should not be seen purely as an act of charity, but as serving the common goal of the churches in the global South becoming more self-reliant. In fact, the goal should be that the churches in the global South are able to give back to the partners in Europe. Our aims of internationalization, partnership, and community cannot be realized if the churches in Germany still see themselves only as givers and cannot imagine taking a receiving role, let alone actively seeking support from their partners in the South. Likewise, if churches in the global South still see themselves only as recipients, then internationalization and true partnerships will remain far out of reach.

We see a paternalistic pattern continuing between ecumenical partners in the North and South. This tendency was also noted by Bachrach and Baratz, who argued that power over others can also be exercised in more subtle ways within a social or political system in a manner that prevents some people or groups from advancing their own self-identified interests.² If the churches in Europe continue to exercise power over their partners in the South through financial assistance, perhaps they are not interested in the desire of those partners to become truly equal.

Quo vadis? Partnership and power relations in the UEM

The definition of partnership itself contains several connotations related to its colonial, feudalistic, and hierarchic background. In its early history, partnership took the form of agreements among business partners in order to strengthen their cooperation for the goal of a financially profitable business. According to its original character, a partnership could be terminated at any time for abuse of agreements, or if one party had been proved to violate the trust between both parties. In Europe, partnerships were first im-

² Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, *Power and Poverty: Theory and Practice*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 1970, p. 7.

plemented during the commercial revolution in the thirteenth century,³ when European countries sought to occupy land in Asia, Africa, and South America to seize trade in commodities that were rare in Europe such as spices, gold, and silk. The partnerships among European traders and nations created new sources of wealth through colonialism. As some churches continue to use the term “partnership”, we are concerned that its colonial definition is being kept alive in the ecumenical imagination, perpetuating the North-South dichotomy.

Europeans are perceived as diligent, hard-working, and wealthy, whereas people from the global South are seen as lazy, poor, and corrupt. Germans may be seen as rational and Africans as emotional. These prejudices still exist, even in the minds of many people in Asia and Africa: several Asian and African students have expressed to us that they feel they must adhere to Eurocentric standards of knowledge. In joint activities within the UEM, a number of German members are often still the most vocal, dominant voice in the conversation – not just because of the language barrier, but because many participants from Asia and Africa still believe the words of the Europeans are better and always right. The authors of this paper have lived in Germany for years, and we do not see that there is any truth to these stereotypes. Meetings in Germany can begin late, people here can be undisciplined and irresponsible (especially during a pandemic), and some Germans will talk confidently of things they know little to nothing about. On one occasion, we were surprised to see an institution in a German member church reject a South-North volunteer from Asia in favour of someone from Africa, “who could play the drums to entertain people” in their church. Several pastors from the global South who have come to Germany on the UEM exchange programme have been met with scepticism because their German is not fluent enough (even though they might be multilingual themselves, and the people they serve in the congregation only monolingual), even as German pastors serving in the South expect to be met with lenience and special treatment.

As integral parts of the UEM, partnerships and any other new forms of relationship call upon all UEM members to remain one body of Christ, growing together and accepting one another in their differences without prejudice. It is our hope that partnership will improve and continue from one generation to the next, like a relay race. Partnership responsibility should be spread over more shoulders. People live in one world and in one Church of Jesus Christ. Taking part in making this known and keeping it alive should be a priority in all partnership activities.

Concluding remarks

After these first twenty-five years of an international UEM, we offer a few critical and hopefully constructive remarks for the journey ahead:

One alternative term we may offer to define an inclusive and equal relationship in the context of the UEM is “companionship”. Taking inspiration from Jesus’s ministries with his disciples, the relationship among the Christian communities could be depicted as companionship on the pilgrimage, bearing the burdens of others, learning and journeying together in joy and sorrow. Companionship is an effort to accompany one another through life in God’s household (ecumenism). The framework of deeper and trust-

worthy companionship is the radical discipleship of Christ, who accompanies the whole of creation in the values of equality, inclusivity, empowerment, and sustainability until the end of the world. In companionship, we have the chance to learn from each other and grow together, as the UEM has discerned in its framework, “Global Learning in Ecumenical Perspective” (GLEP).

The focus of the UEM in both its structure and its areas of work must always challenge the bilateralism, one-sided communication, and paternalistic mentality that is so damaging for our community. Exchanges and encounters among people from all three UEM regions must be intensified: not just North-South, but also South-South. The volunteer programme should be expanded because the presence of young people from a different context is an enrichment opportunity for the churches and an important experience in cultural education for the participants. The International Study Programmes and Summer Schools that help people learn together are important because their participants can serve as multipliers when they return to their home churches and apply what they have learned. It is also important to place decision-makers and staff from different countries and cultures into many structural positions in the three regions of the UEM. The GLEP concept – no longer do we learn only from one another, but all together – must be popularized at a grassroots level in the three regions. The UEM communion cannot be a meaningful communion unless it is based on a participative, inclusive, and equal approach.

Prejudices and stereotypes destroy the humanity of people, and they do so in two directions. They destroy the humanity not only of those who are targeted by prejudice, but also of those who spread or hold on to such beliefs. Those who cling to attitudes of being a giver, a helper, forfeit their own chances of learning and thus hinder their own development. To rebel against such traditional definitions is not a loss, but a gain. This transformation of mentalities should apply not only to the partnership relations among the UEM member churches, but also to the global Christian and development institutions that conduct partnership tasks extensively.

Most urgent is the demand for any ecumenical body to encourage and help all churches to influence their countries to strive for justice and to work for equality. Concretely, this means that those who gather much should not have too much and those who gather little should not have too little. If economically strong churches share their wealth with others, this generosity should be assessed from a theological point of view and should not be seen as a tool to dominate the receiver. This principle must be rooted in justice, balance, equality, and self-reliance.

³ “Vasco da Gama”, *The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition*, (Columbia: Columbia University Press), 2001.

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