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An Assessment of Climate Change Mitigation Efforts Undertaken by the Catholic Church in Ngong Deanery, Kajiado County, Kenya

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***Abstract*: Climate change is a major global and local challenge, particularly in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), where it has intensified drought, food insecurity, water scarcity, and environmental degradation. While governments and development agencies lead climate responses, faith-based organizations have increasingly become key actors in environmental governance. The Catholic Church, through its grassroots presence and social structures, has implemented various climate change mitigation initiatives aimed at promoting ecological sustainability and community resilience. This study examined the Catholic Church's climate mitigation efforts in Ngong Deanery, Kajiado County, Kenya. Guided by Ecological Systems Theory, Integral Ecology Theory, and Liberation Theology, a descriptive survey design using mixed methods was employed. Data were collected from clergy, religious leaders, Caritas officials, parish leaders, youth and women groups, community members, and Maasai elders. Findings show that the Church engages in climate mitigation through four main areas: awareness creation, ecological activities, policy advocacy, and support for vulnerable groups. Key interventions include tree planting, environmental education, water conservation, waste management, and resilience-building programs. These initiatives have enhanced environmental awareness, community participation, and ecological restoration. However, challenges such as limited resources, low participation, inadequate training, and weak coordination hinder effectiveness. The study concludes that the Catholic Church is an important local actor in climate action and recommends strengthening institutions, improving environmental education, integrating indigenous knowledge, and expanding partnerships for sustainability.**

***Keywords*: Climate change mitigation, Catholic Church, ecological stewardship, environmental conservation, climate resilience, Ngong Deanery, Kenya.**

1. Introduction

Climate change has become one of the most urgent global concerns of the twenty-first century. Rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, floods, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation continue to threaten ecosystems and human livelihoods worldwide. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2023), climate change increasingly affects vulnerable communities, particularly in developing countries where adaptive capacities remain limited.

In Kenya, climate-related challenges have become more pronounced over recent decades. Arid and semi-arid regions experience recurrent droughts, declining water resources, pasture degradation, and food insecurity. Kajiado County, characterized by pastoral livelihoods and fragile ecosystems, remains particularly vulnerable to these environmental changes.

The complexity of climate change requires collective action involving governments, private sector actors, civil society organizations, local communities, and faith-based institutions. Increasingly, scholars recognize that religious organizations possess unique capacities to influence environmental attitudes, mobilize communities, and promote sustainable behaviors.

The Catholic Church has emerged as one of the most influential faith-based institutions engaging in environmental conservation and climate action. Through Catholic Social Teaching (CST), the Church emphasizes stewardship of creation, ecological responsibility, and environmental justice. Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* (2015) further strengthened the Church's commitment to ecological sustainability by calling for integral ecological conversion and collective action against environmental degradation.

Within Ngong Deanery, the Catholic Church has implemented numerous initiatives aimed at mitigating climate change and enhancing environmental sustainability. These interventions include awareness creation, practical ecological activities, policy advocacy, and support for climate-affected populations. However, empirical assessment of these efforts remains limited. This study therefore examined the nature, effectiveness, achievements, and challenges of climate change mitigation efforts undertaken by the Catholic Church in Ngong Deanery.

2. Background of the Study

Climate change is increasingly recognized not only as an environmental issue but also as a social, economic, ethical, and spiritual challenge. Scholars argue that sustainable responses require integration of scientific knowledge, policy interventions, and community participation.

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Historically, the Catholic Church has maintained a long-standing concern for environmental stewardship through biblical teachings and Catholic Social Teaching. Contemporary Church environmental engagement is particularly informed by papal documents such as *Laudato Si'* (2015), *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), and *Laudate Deum* (2023), which encourage ecological responsibility and climate action. The dissertation established that these teachings significantly influence the Church's awareness creation, practical ecological activities, policy advocacy, and support for climate-affected populations.

Ngong Deanery presents a unique context comprising urban, peri-urban, and rural communities within Kajiado County. The area experiences recurrent climate challenges including drought, water shortages, land degradation, and declining biodiversity. These environmental challenges affect livelihoods, particularly among pastoralist communities.

The Catholic Church in Ngong Deanery operates through parish structures, Caritas programs, the Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (CJPIC), youth groups, women associations, schools, and community outreach programs. Through these structures, the Church implements climate mitigation interventions designed to address environmental degradation and build resilience among vulnerable populations.

3. Statement of the Problem

Despite increasing climate-related challenges affecting Kajiado County, limited empirical studies have assessed the actual climate change mitigation efforts undertaken by faith-based institutions at the grassroots level. While the Catholic Church is actively engaged in environmental conservation activities, insufficient evidence exists regarding the nature, effectiveness, achievements, and challenges of these interventions.

Consequently, there remains a knowledge gap concerning how Church-based climate mitigation initiatives contribute to environmental sustainability and community resilience in Ngong Deanery. This study sought to address this gap by assessing climate change mitigation efforts undertaken by the Catholic Church in the region.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess climate change mitigation efforts undertaken by the Catholic Church in Ngong Deanery, Kajiado County, Kenya.

5. Research Question

What climate change mitigation efforts has the Catholic Church undertaken in Ngong Deanery, Kajiado County, Kenya?

6. Literature Review

The relationship between climate change and faith-based organizations has increasingly attracted scholarly attention, particularly in the context of global environmental governance and community-based adaptation. Faith-based organizations are now widely recognized as key non-state actors in climate action due to their deep social roots, moral authority, and extensive grassroots presence. Through their established networks, these institutions contribute to environmental education, advocacy, conservation initiatives, and humanitarian support aimed at strengthening community resilience.

Existing literature shows that religious institutions play a significant role in shaping environmental attitudes and behaviors by framing ecological responsibility as a moral and spiritual duty. This moral framing is particularly influential at the community level, where faith-based messages often carry greater trust and cultural legitimacy than technical or policy-driven approaches. As a result, churches and other religious bodies have become strategic partners in promoting sustainable development, environmental awareness, and climate change adaptation efforts across diverse contexts.

Catholic Social Teaching provides a strong theological foundation for ecological stewardship within the Church's engagement in environmental issues. Core principles such as stewardship of creation, human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and the common good guide the Church's response to ecological challenges. These principles emphasize the interconnectedness of human and environmental wellbeing and call for an integrated approach to development that protects both people and the planet.

Pope Francis (2015), in *Laudato Si'*, strongly reinforces this perspective by highlighting that environmental degradation disproportionately affects the poor and vulnerable. He argues that ecological crises cannot be separated from social injustice and therefore require holistic responses that integrate environmental protection with poverty reduction, social equity, and sustainable development. This integrated ecological vision has significantly influenced the Catholic Church's global and local environmental engagement.

Studies on climate mitigation strategies within religious institutions identify a range of practical interventions commonly implemented at community level. These include environmental education and awareness creation aimed at fostering behavioral change and ecological consciousness among believers. Tree planting and ecosystem restoration projects are widely adopted as visible expressions of environmental stewardship and practical conservation.

Water conservation initiatives are also frequently implemented, particularly in regions facing water scarcity and climate variability. Waste management programs, including cleanliness campaigns and sustainable disposal practices, further contribute to environmental protection at the local level. In addition, religious institutions increasingly participate in climate policy advocacy, using their moral influence to call for environmental justice and stronger policy responses to climate change.

Furthermore, humanitarian support and resilience-building initiatives form an important dimension of faith-based climate action. These interventions address the immediate needs of communities affected by climate-related disasters while also strengthening long-term adaptive capacity. Collectively, these strategies demonstrate the multifaceted role of religious institutions in promoting environmental sustainability while

enhancing community resilience in the face of climate change.

7. Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, guided by a mixed-methods approach that combined both quantitative and qualitative techniques. This design was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to capture both measurable trends and in-depth experiences regarding climate change responses and ecological practices. The integration of the two approaches enhanced the depth, validity, and reliability of the findings by enabling triangulation of data from different sources.

The research was conducted in Ngong Deanery, one of the deaneries within the Catholic Diocese of Ngong. The area was purposively selected due to its ecological and socio-economic diversity, which includes urban, peri-urban, and rural settings. This diversity makes the deanery particularly suitable for examining different lived experiences of climate change, as well as varying responses by Church institutions and local communities. The region also experiences recurring environmental challenges such as drought, land degradation, and unpredictable rainfall patterns, which further justified its selection as a study area.

The study involved a wide range of participants drawn from both Church structures and community-based institutions. These included parish priests, religious leaders, Caritas officials, and representatives from the Commission for Justice and Peace and Integral Human Development (CJPIC). Other participants included members of the Catholic Men Association, Catholic Women Association, youth representatives, indigenous Maasai elders, as well as government officers and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners working in environmental and development sectors. This broad inclusion ensured that the study captured diverse perspectives, experiences, and levels of engagement in climate change mitigation and environmental stewardship.

Data were collected using multiple methods to enhance depth and accuracy. These included structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, direct observation, and document analysis. Questionnaires provided quantitative data on awareness levels and participation trends, while interviews and focus groups offered deeper insights into perceptions, attitudes, and lived experiences. Observation allowed the researcher to verify environmental practices within parishes and communities, and document analysis helped in reviewing Church reports, pastoral letters, and policy documents related to ecological stewardship. The use of multiple methods strengthened data triangulation and improved the credibility of the findings.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequencies, percentages, and means, which helped to summarize patterns in responses. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, involving coding and categorization of responses to identify recurring patterns, meanings, and key themes related to climate change awareness, Church engagement, and ecological practices. This combined analytical approach allowed for a comprehensive interpretation of both numerical trends and contextual insights.

8. Findings and Discussion

The study involved 44 respondents drawn from key stakeholders engaged in climate change mitigation initiatives within Ngong Deanery. These included parish priests, representatives from Caritas and the Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (CJPIC), members of the Catholic Men Association, Catholic Women Association, Catholic Youth Association, Small Christian Communities (SCCs), development partners, and Maasai elders. The diversity of respondents ensured representation from Church leadership, grassroots members, indigenous knowledge holders, and external development actors, thereby enriching the depth, credibility, and comprehensiveness of the findings.

The distribution of respondents was as follows: parish priests (4), CJPIC representatives (4), Caritas representative (1), Catholic Men Association (4), Catholic Women Association (4), Catholic Youth Association (4), Small Christian Communities (12), development partners (7), and Maasai elders (4), making a total of 44 participants. This composition provided a balanced mix of institutional and community perspectives on climate change mitigation efforts.

Overall, the inclusion of diverse stakeholder groups enabled the study to generate a holistic understanding of environmental initiatives within the deanery, capturing both leadership perspectives and lived community experiences.

The study established that the Catholic Church in Ngong Deanery engages in climate change mitigation through four key intervention pillars: environmental awareness creation, practical ecological initiatives, policy advocacy and stakeholder engagement, and support for climate-vulnerable populations. These pillars illustrate a shift from purely theological reflection to more structured and action-oriented environmental engagement.

Environmental awareness creation was identified as the most widespread and foundational climate mitigation strategy within the Church. Environmental messages are regularly communicated through sermons, parish meetings, youth gatherings, catechetical sessions, schools, and community outreach programs. Respondents reported that these initiatives have significantly improved understanding of climate change and environmental stewardship among parishioners. The Church has played a key role in translating complex environmental issues into faith-based messages that are culturally and spiritually accessible. As a result, environmental care is increasingly perceived not only as a scientific responsibility but also as a Christian moral obligation.

These findings align with *Laudato Si'* (Francis, 2015), which emphasizes ecological education as the starting point for environmental conversion. They also support Jenkins et al. (2018), who argue that religious institutions are uniquely positioned to shape environmental attitudes due to their moral and spiritual influence.

The study found that practical ecological interventions form the core of the Church's climate mitigation efforts. These include tree planting campaigns, water conservation projects,

waste management initiatives, environmental clean-up exercises, and sustainable resource management activities. Among these, tree planting emerged as the most visible and widely implemented initiative across parishes. Respondents indicated that these activities have contributed to environmental restoration, increased vegetation cover, soil conservation, improved environmental awareness, and enhanced community participation in ecological action.

However, field observations revealed sustainability challenges in some projects, including damaged infrastructure, empty water tanks, and dying trees, which pointed to weaknesses in maintenance and long-term project management. This suggests that while initial implementation is strong, sustainability mechanisms remain insufficient and require strengthening to ensure lasting impact.

Water conservation emerged as a critical component of Church-led climate mitigation efforts, particularly due to recurring droughts in Kajiado County. The study found that only two of the sampled parishes had fully functional rainwater harvesting systems, while the majority faced infrastructural limitations and inadequate maintenance capacity. These gaps were especially pronounced in rural parishes, where climate impacts are more severe and water scarcity more acute. The findings highlight a disconnect between environmental intentions and practical implementation capacity, emphasizing the need for strengthened infrastructure and resource support to enhance climate resilience in arid and semi-arid contexts.

The study established that the Church actively participates in environmental advocacy through engagement with government agencies, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, and community development partners. Church leaders leverage their moral authority to advocate for environmental justice, sustainable development, and the protection of vulnerable populations. Respondents noted that such advocacy has contributed to increased awareness of environmental rights and responsibilities within communities. These efforts reflect the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, particularly solidarity, justice, and the promotion of the common good.

The findings revealed that Church climate interventions extend beyond environmental conservation to include direct support for communities affected by climate-related challenges. These interventions include drought relief, food assistance, community resilience programs, livelihood support initiatives, and capacity-building activities. Such efforts are particularly significant for pastoralist communities in Kajiado County, who are highly vulnerable to prolonged droughts and environmental degradation. This demonstrates the Church's commitment to integral ecology, which links environmental sustainability with human dignity and social wellbeing.

Several challenges were identified as affecting the effectiveness of climate mitigation initiatives. Financial limitations were consistently highlighted as a major constraint, with many environmental programs relying heavily on donor funding, raising concerns about sustainability once external support ends. Significant disparities were also observed between urban and rural parishes in terms of access to resources, infrastructure, and technical support, with rural parishes often being more disadvantaged despite facing more severe climate impacts.

The study further found that environmental initiatives are not always accompanied by sufficient theological and ecological education, weakening the link between Church teaching and practical environmental action. In addition, delays in the widespread adoption and localization of *Laudato Si'* teachings at grassroots level within Ngong Deanery indicate the need for stronger dissemination and institutional integration.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Catholic Church has emerged as an important actor in local climate governance within Ngong Deanery. Through awareness creation, ecological action, advocacy, and support for vulnerable populations, the Church contributes meaningfully to environmental sustainability and climate resilience. These interventions strongly reflect the principles of stewardship, social justice, solidarity, and care for creation as articulated in Catholic Social Teaching and *Laudato Si'*. However, their effectiveness is constrained by financial limitations, infrastructural weaknesses, limited monitoring systems, and inadequate integration of indigenous ecological knowledge.

9. Conclusion

The Catholic Church in Ngong Deanery has emerged as a significant grassroots actor in climate change mitigation through environmental awareness creation, practical ecological initiatives, policy advocacy, and support for climate-vulnerable populations. These interventions have contributed meaningfully to environmental conservation, increased ecological awareness, and strengthened community resilience across both rural and urban contexts.

The study further shows that the Church's climate actions are strongly anchored in Catholic Social Teaching and *Laudato Si'*, particularly the principles of stewardship of creation, social justice, solidarity, and care for the common good. Through these principles, environmental responsibility is increasingly understood as both a moral and spiritual obligation within parish communities.

Despite these achievements, the effectiveness and sustainability of Church-led climate initiatives are constrained by several challenges, including limited financial resources, disparities between urban and rural parishes, inadequate environmental formation, weak maintenance systems, and delays in fully integrating *Laudato Si'* at the grassroots level. These gaps affect the consistency and long-term impact of environmental programs.

The study concludes that strengthening institutional coordination, enhancing ecological education, improving resource mobilization, and integrating indigenous ecological knowledge will significantly improve the sustainability and effectiveness of Church climate action.

Overall, the findings affirm that faith-based organizations have a transformative role in climate governance by linking moral responsibility, community mobilization, and practical environmental engagement in ways that contribute to sustainable ecological and social development.

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