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The Contribution of Religious Institutions to the Development of Rural Communities: A Case Study of the Congregation of the Brothers of Immaculate Heart of Mary in Drajini Sub-County, Yumbe District

This study on the contribution of the religious institutions to the development of the rural communities was carried out in Drajini sub-county, Yumbe district with a total of 78 respondents. The study covers the period from 2001 to date. The main objectives of the study are to; investigate the contribution of the Brothers of Immaculate Heart of Mary (BIHM) to the socio-economic development of the rural communities, to assess their contribution to the human resource development, to establish the factors affecting the sustainability of their projects and recommend practical solutions. The researcher employed a case study as a research design. The methods used to obtain data in the study included interviews, self-administered questionnaires, observation, group discussions and secondary data. The significance of the study is that the research report may act as an eye opener to the Brothers of Immaculate Heart of Mary, as a whole and policy makers in the Diocese in particular to refocus the Diocesan development programmes for rural communities and a tool for lobbying for support from other development partners. It came out very clearly from the interaction with the different categories of respondents that the activities of the Brothers of Immaculate Heart of Mary are beneficial to the rural communities of Drajini sub-county. The respondents acknowledged that the following activities/projects had made an invaluable contribution to the socio-economic development of the rural communities of Drajini. These were categorised into those that helped to increase household incomes and those that lifted their social status such as crop production and animal rearing. Agriculture turned out to be the most popular of all the projects with ten (10) of the 18 beneficiaries acknowledging it as an activity/project that helped them to increase their household incomes. Whereas the BIHM founded a number of projects, there are a number of factors inhibiting the sustainability of the projects among which are: poverty, financial constraints, lack of skilled labour lack of commitment of the members of the community groups, lack of drugs for animals, negative attitude of the beneficiaries towards the projects, corruption, lack of genuinely pro people leadership in the community groups and poor loan recovery mechanisms. The study, thus, recommended that in order to sustain the projects, the Brothers of Immaculate Heart of Mary should conduct regular participatory monitoring of the projects together with the beneficiaries and other stakeholders to be able to generate remedial measures before a project collapses totally.

Key Words: Religious, Community, Rural, Congregation, Contribution