

Stakeholders' Training Initiatives by Neo-Pentecostal Churches can Alleviate Domestic Water Scarcity in Tigania West Constituency

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Abstract

Church teachings and doctrines are expected to be all-inclusive. Therefore, Neo-Pentecostal Churches (NPCs) in Tigania West should incorporate water stakeholder training into their spiritual and community responsibilities. By partnering with NGOs, Bible schools, and technical institutions, NPCs can equip leaders with skills in sustainable water management to address domestic water scarcity, improve access, reduce diseases, and enhance livelihoods. This study explored the training initiatives for water stakeholders by Neo-Pentecostal churches on alleviation of domestic water scarcity in Tigania West constituency, where 97% of the population faces severe water challenges. Despite biblical mandates in Matthew 28:20 and Ezekiel 34:17-19, which call for addressing both spiritual and practical needs, NPCs however perceive water stakeholder training as outside their biblical mandate. This narrow focus on spiritual matters highlights a gap in their involvement in addressing water scarcity menace. Using the Theological Reflection Theory, the study adopted a qualitative approach and phenomenological research design. It targeted 22 registered NPCs in Tigania West, with a sample of 59 participants who were sampled using cluster sampling technique. Respondents were pastors and church members. Data was collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, with pre-testing ensuring validity and reliability. Thematic analysis technique was applied to analyze the collected data. Findings revealed that NPCs lacked formal water management training programs, although some churches expressed interest in vocational initiatives like rainwater harvesting and infrastructure development. The study concluded that NPCs' limited engagement with water scarcity represents a missed opportunity to align spiritual teachings with community development. The study recommends collaboration of NPCs, Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), NGOs, and Bible schools, with technical institutions in organizing workshops, seminars, and other capacity-building initiatives regarding water management and access. These initiatives would provide practical knowledge on water catchment protection, rainwater harvesting, and infrastructure development, thus enhancing NPCs' role in bridging faith and social responsibility.

Keywords: Neo-Pentecostals churches, domestic water scarcity, stakeholder training, ecclesiastical praxis, sustainable water management, Tigania West

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1. Introduction

Efforts to alleviate domestic water scarcity have evolved significantly, and are influenced by historical, cultural, and religious factors. The period from the 1950s to the 1980s marked a turning point, as global movements like the World Council of Churches (WCC) and leaders such as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. championed water-related advocacy, integrating religious perspectives into tangible interventions (Bellin, 2008; Beukes & Huffel, 2016). This era gave rise to postmodernist views that emphasized equitable resource distribution, particularly among marginalized communities (Ruden, 2020). Religious traditions have always imbued water with both spiritual and practical significance. For instance, Christianity and Judaism portray water as a symbol of creation and salvation, while Islam and ancient Greek philosophy highlight its elemental role in life's genesis (Hewett, 2019; Dukes, 2017). These perspectives underscore the enduring global recognition of water as a vital resource.

Water scarcity, as a historical and contemporary issue, has profound implications for human life. Biblical accounts, such as the droughts in Genesis and Exodus, depict water shortages as sources of conflict and divine intervention (Marie, 2018; DidamAudu & Ojewole, 2013). Similarly, the existing scientific findings reveal that water shortages extend back billions of years, from glaciations to recent human-induced crises (Pariona, 2018). Modern instances, like the Dust Bowl in Oklahoma and droughts in Syria, have caused widespread human suffering and deaths (Gill et al., 2007). Globally, over 4.5 billion people experience water scarcity annually, with devastating consequences such as waterborne diseases and economic stagnation (WHO, 2019). These statistics reveal the critical importance of targeted interventions to alleviate water scarcity.

Neo-Pentecostal Churches (NPCs) have emerged as significant players in addressing domestic water scarcity, albeit with diverse approaches. Globally, NPCs have implemented projects, such as advocacy campaigns in El Salvador and contributions to water provision in Zambia and Malawi (Vida, 2018; Kaunda & Kaunda, 2018). While some NPCs adopt pragmatic strategies like training and infrastructure development, others emphasize spiritual dimensions, often invoking prosperity gospel teachings and spiritual warfare as responses to water challenges (Manglos & Weinreb, 2013; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2020). Despite varying methods, NPCs' influence on water-related initiatives continues to shape perceptions and practices around resource management.

In Kenya, water scarcity affects over 41% of the population, with serious health and developmental repercussions (Ministry of Water and Irrigation, 2012). While government interventions have been marred by inefficiencies and corruption, religious organizations, including some NPCs, have taken active roles in alleviation efforts. For instance, the Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa (PEFA) established boreholes in Mumias Constituency, serving hundreds of residents (The Water Project, 2018). Similarly, Action by Churches Together (ACT) and African Divine Church conducted training programs and developed infrastructure to enhance access to clean water (Sam Water, 2020). These efforts illustrate the potential of faith-based organizations to complement government actions in addressing domestic water challenges.

Domestic water scarcity is a pervasive issue requiring a collaborative approach from all societal actors, including churches. Biblical texts such as Exodus 17:1–7, Isaiah 41:17–20, and John 4:5–15 emphasize the role of communities in addressing human needs, including access to clean water (Ruden, 2020; Smuts, 2019). Many churches have embraced this call, undertaking

significant water-related interventions. For instance, the PEFA church and Saint Patrick Catholic Church have implemented borehole projects serving hundreds of people in Mumias and Eldoret North constituencies, respectively (TWP, 2017; TWP, 2018). In Meru County, actors such as DOMWASS, IMETHAWASCO, and MEWASS have provided water access to 8 percent of the population with services meeting WHO standards (MCG, 2019). However, in Tigania West Constituency, where domestic water scarcity affects 97 percent of the population, access remains a significant challenge raising the question of the knowledge that the aforementioned actors have regarding alleviation of water scarcity.

While other actors such as Self-Help groups, NG-CDF, and the Roman Catholic Church have played active roles in addressing water access in Tigania West, Neo-Pentecostal Churches (NPCs) have largely neglected their potential contributions to alleviating domestic water scarcity, despite their growing presence in the region. The limited involvement of NPCs, particularly in the areas of stakeholder training on water-related initiatives, raises concerns about their commitment to broader community responsibilities outlined in biblical teachings, which call for the church's active participation in addressing pertinent issues like water scarcity.

Scholars such as Ballard (2015), Martin (2017), and Vida (2018) underscore the importance of various strategies in addressing this menace chief which is stakeholder training initiatives, to alleviate water scarcity. However, there is a noticeable gap in the research regarding the role of NPCs in stakeholder training initiatives related to water scarcity in Tigania West. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how NPCs in Tigania West engage with stakeholder training initiatives and explore their potential in addressing water scarcity through the lens of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The research question guiding this study was: 'What are the training initiatives for water stakeholders by Neo-Pentecostal churches on alleviation of domestic water scarcity in Tigania West constituency?'

2. Literature Review

The Theological Reflection Theory informed the study of "Water Stakeholders' Training Initiatives by Neo-Pentecostal Churches on Alleviation of Domestic Water Scarcity in Tigania West Constituency" due to its emphasis on engaging theology with contemporary societal challenges. This theory encourages critical examination of individual and collective epistemologies in addressing pressing issues, making it applicable for exploring how NPCs integrate faith-based principles into stakeholder training initiatives for water management. By emphasizing the "hermeneutics of situation," the theory supports a contextual approach, enabling NPCs to reinterpret scriptural paradigms in light of current domestic water scarcity. Its focus on bridging theology and practical action aligns with the study's goal of assessing how theological insights can drive effective training to alleviate water scarcity in Tigania West.

Furthermore, the theory's capacity to connect theological principles with real-world applications ensures its relevance in guiding NPCs to address domestic water scarcity effectively. It provides a framework for evaluating NPCs' engagement in community training, advocacy, and project implementation while encouraging faith communities to integrate spiritual insights with social sciences. However, while the theory promotes the relevance of faith in societal issues, its limitations, such as balancing charity with liturgy and navigating complex hermeneutical questions, highlight the need for complementary perspectives. Despite these challenges, the theory remains a valuable tool for understanding how NPCs can contribute

to sustainable water solutions, emphasizing the integration of theology with practical, and context-driven interventions.

The role of stakeholder training in addressing domestic water scarcity has been widely acknowledged, with religious organizations such as Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), Mainline Churches, and other cohorts demonstrating notable success in this area. These initiatives are rooted in leveraging religious principles to address water access, quality, and management challenges. While globally and regionally, many churches have embraced such training programs, Neo-Pentecostal Churches (NPCs) have shown limited involvement, focusing predominantly on spiritual and prosperity-related teachings. However, emerging evidence suggests a gradual shift toward vocational training, presenting opportunities for broader engagement. In Kenya, various churches and NGOs have conducted training to improve water conservation and management, yet gaps persist, particularly in NPCs' contributions to domestic water scarcity alleviation. The following empirical review examines these gaps and underscores the importance of stakeholder training initiatives, particularly in underrepresented areas such as Tigania West Constituency, where NPCs' involvement remains largely unexplored.

Empirical studies reveal that stakeholder training initiatives by religious organizations, including Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and Mainline Churches, play a critical role in addressing domestic water scarcity. These initiatives focus on areas such as rainwater harvesting, water catchment protection, maintaining water quality, and infrastructure development (Mugambi & Kebeab, n.d.; International Aid Services (IAS), 2007). For instance, training programs by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency and the Church of Sweden emphasize water project initiation, quality maintenance, and achieving water-related Sustainable Development Goals (Cleveringa et al., 2016; ADRA, 2014). These activities demonstrate the importance of leveraging religious principles and community engagement in alleviating water scarcity challenges.

Globally, Neo-Pentecostal Churches (NPCs) have shown limited engagement in water stakeholder training initiatives. Research by Ortiz (2007) and Solomon (2006) highlights NPCs' focus on spiritual training and prosperity gospel teachings, with minimal emphasis on addressing societal issues like water scarcity. However, Solomon notes a slow shift toward vocational training initiatives, including water-related topics, indicating potential for broader engagement. Anderson (2012) attributes this limited focus to NPCs' operational autonomy, which often lacks centralized accountability, delaying their responsiveness to societal needs.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, various church organizations have actively engaged in water stakeholder training. For example, the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) collaborates with churches in Ghana and Kenya to train over 10,000 congregations on water conservation and management (Hilliard & Weldon, 2012). Similarly, organizations such as Living Water International and the United Methodist Church have conducted house-to-house and group-based training programs, linking water conservation efforts to biblical teachings (Root, 2020; Kumuterera & Nkhoma, 2020). These initiatives have improved water access and hygiene practices in rural and underserved communities.

In Kenya, stakeholder training on water management has been spearheaded by churches and NGOs. Action by Churches Together (ACT) and the Lutheran World Federation have implemented water conservation training programs in arid regions, while the Methodist Church of Kenya (MCK) conducts annual farmer training programs on rainwater harvesting in Meru

County. Despite these efforts, gaps remain in training programs specifically targeting domestic water scarcity. Published reports indicate limited government involvement in structured training programs, further exacerbating water-related challenges (Makathimo, 2016; Vision 2030, 2018).

In Tigania West Constituency, empirical studies on water stakeholder training are scarce, particularly regarding NPCs' involvement. While neighbouring constituencies have reported initiatives by Anglican Development Services and Roman Catholic Church programs, no specific evidence exists of NPCs conducting similar training (Jacob & Gichuki, 2017; Kimanthi, 2016). This knowledge gap underscores the need for further investigation into NPCs' role in stakeholder training for domestic water scarcity alleviation, forming the basis for this study.

Despite the extensive contributions of religious organizations and NGOs globally and in Kenya toward alleviating domestic water scarcity through stakeholder training, significant gaps remain, particularly regarding Neo-Pentecostal Churches (NPCs). While NPCs have demonstrated potential in addressing societal issues, their initiatives in water stakeholder training remain minimal and largely undocumented, focusing instead on spiritual and prosperity-driven agendas. In Tigania West Constituency, efforts by other religious organizations and stakeholders to address water scarcity have been noted, yet there is little to no evidence of NPCs' active involvement in stakeholder training for water management and conservation. Furthermore, existing studies primarily highlight general stakeholder desires for training without delving into the specific epistemological and practical contributions of NPCs in the region. This scholarly gap, and practical understanding underscores the need for research to explore and document the role of NPCs in water stakeholder training, particularly as it relates to alleviating domestic water scarcity in Tigania West.

3. Methods

The study employed an interpretivism philosophy to investigate water stakeholders' training initiatives by Neo-Pentecostal Churches (NPCs) in addressing domestic water scarcity in Tigania West Constituency. This qualitative approach, rooted in phenomenological design, enables an in-depth exploration of how NPCs empower stakeholders through training programs, advocacy efforts, and community interventions. By focusing on lived experiences and social contexts, the study sought to uncover the epistemological perspectives of respondents on NPC-led efforts to mitigate water scarcity (Pulla & Carter, 2018; Sutton & Austin, 2015).

The research targeted all 22 registered NPCs in the constituency, where data was provided by their pastors and a representative sample of 59 church members drawn through a cluster sampling technique across five administrative wards (AECK, 2020). Data collection methods involved in-depth interviews with pastors, focus group discussions (FGDs) with members, and documentary analysis of church records, emphasizing open-ended questions to capture diverse perspectives. This multi-method approach provided a comprehensive understanding of NPCs' stakeholder training initiatives, focusing on their theological foundations and practical applications. To ensure validity and reliability, instruments were pre-tested, iteratively refined, and standardized accordingly.

Data analysis followed a reflective and iterative process consistent with the phenomenological approach, where the researcher engaged deeply with the narratives of the participants to uncover the meanings behind their experiences. The qualitative data collected through

interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary analysis were analyzed using thematic analysis method. This involved identifying and coding key themes that emerged from the data, particularly focusing on NPCs' training programs and their practical impact on alleviating water scarcity. The researcher engaged in continuous reflection and memoing throughout the process to ensure that the analysis remained grounded on the participants' perspectives and aligned with the research goal. The results were then contextualized to understand the role of NPCs in addressing water scarcity through theological frameworks, providing a comprehensive view of how these initiatives contribute to sustainable water management in the region.

4. Results and Discussion

The study involved 22 pastors and 59 church members, achieving a 100% response rate. This success was attributed to effective communication with accurate details, regular reminders, and satisfactory facilitation. The findings reveal a notable gap in the NPCs' role in addressing practical water conservation and related initiatives within their communities. While there has been some engagement in spiritual teaching, the churches have largely overlooked their potential to influence environmental practices, particularly water-related training. The findings from interviews, focused group discussions, and document analysis revealed that the focus of NPCs remains predominantly on spiritual matters, with minimal integration of environmental concerns, such as water scarcity, into their educational or community outreach programs. These findings are consistent with observations made about religious organizations where majority have been blamed for being slow in adopting environmental stewardship practices in their faith-based initiatives (Vida, 2018; Kaunda & Kaunda, 2018). The findings indicated several neglected training areas some of which are discussed below.

4.1 Training on Water Catchment Protection

The study found that NPCs in Tigania West did not utilize key biblical passages like Ezekiel 34:17-19, which speaks about the responsibility of shepherds to protect resources, as a basis for promoting environmental stewardship, including water conservation efforts. While the thematic passage developed from the collected data could be interpreted as emphasizing the importance of protecting vital resources, NPCs did not translate it into practical actions like water catchment protection. One pastor's comment, "*If I were to train on Ezekiel 34:17-19, then it would be on a spiritual issue because the Bible is a spiritual book,*" highlights the disconnection between spiritual teachings and practical environmental needs. This reluctance to engage with environmental issues is consistent with the findings of studies that suggest a narrow interpretation of biblical mandates among many faith-based communities, where spiritual needs often overshadow pressing practical concerns like resource conservation (Ruden, 2020; Smuts, 2019). However, integrating water protection into religious teachings could serve as a powerful tool for raising awareness about environmental issues and fostering sustainable practices.

4.2 Training on Rainwater Harvesting

The II Chronicles 32:30, which describes historical practices related to water management, seemed less impactful by the majority of respondents in relation to contemporary water conservation practices. The overwhelming majority of pastors and church members viewed water-related training as outside the scope of their spiritual mandate. One pastor succinctly stated, "*We are mostly concerned with spiritual issues,*" reflecting a prevalent belief that the church's focus should remain on salvation and not on practical matters like water management. This limited engagement with water conservation aligns with the general reluctance of many

NPCs to expand their activities beyond spiritual concerns (Manglos & Weinreb, 2013). However, rainwater harvesting, which has been a vital method of water conservation globally (Cleveringa et al., 2016), offers a clear opportunity for NPCs to integrate sustainable practices into their teachings. By incorporating teachings like II Chronicles 32:30, which emphasizes strategic water use in the face of challenges. Therefore, NPCs could contribute to alleviating water scarcity while staying true to their spiritual calling.

4.3 Training on Construction of Domestic Water Infrastructure

The study further revealed that NPCs in Tigania West had not incorporated water infrastructure training into their community development activities. This was particularly a great concern given that access to clean and sufficient water is a critical issue in the region, where nearly 97% of the population faces water scarcity. Pastors admitted that they had no specialized training programs related to water infrastructure, and the absence of water management departments in churches further underscores the gap between church teachings and the practical needs of the community. One pastor remarked, “*We do not have a water training department in our church.*” This indicates that NPCs had not recognized the importance of building capacity for practical water management solutions. This neglect is consistent with the findings of Anderson (2012) who noted that NPCs often focus on spiritual matters, sometimes at the expense of addressing broader social issues like water access. However, the lack of engagement with practical water infrastructure represents a missed opportunity for NPCs to bridge their spiritual mandate with tangible community development.

4.4 Emerging Engagement in Water Conservation

Despite the general trend of limited involvement in water-related training, the study uncovered some positive examples. For instance, NPC-R 6’s participation in the Meru County Climate Change Forum, where contributed to discussions on water catchment preservation. This marks a significant shift toward integrating environmental stewardship into church activities. However, this remains an exception rather than the rule, and most NPCs have yet to adopt such initiatives. This finding resonates with the gradual shift toward vocational training in some NPCs, as noted by Solomon (2006), who identified a slow but steady movement toward addressing societal issues like water scarcity within the broader scope of faith-based initiatives.

4.5 Theological Implications of the Findings

The results suggest that there is a significant gap in the way NPCs in Tigania West engage with water conservation and related training. The reluctance to incorporate environmental stewardship into faith-based teachings limits their potential to address water scarcity in the region. This finding aligns with the broader theological reflections of scholars like Vida (2018) and Ruden (2020), who argue that churches can and should play a more active role in community development, particularly in addressing environmental concerns. Scriptures like Jeremiah 12:4, Revelation 11:18, and Exodus 15:25 offer theological support for the church’s involvement in environmental matters, and NPCs could draw upon these texts to shape their training initiatives on water conservation. By expanding their mandate to include practical environmental issues, NPCs could enhance their contribution to alleviating water scarcity while deepening their engagement with broader societal challenges.

The results reveal an emerging opportunity for NPCs to widen their focus and integrate environmental stewardship into their spiritual teachings. The integration of water conservation and infrastructure development into NPC training programs would not only address the pressing issue of domestic water scarcity in Tigania West but also position the church as a vital

player in community development. This aligns with the growing recognition that faith-based organizations can and should contribute to practical solutions for environmental challenges (Gill et al., 2007; WHO, 2019).

5. Conclusion

Neo-Pentecostal churches in Tigania West viewed water stakeholder training as outside their mandate, focusing primarily on spiritual matters rather than practical issues like domestic water scarcity. This perspective contrasts with the broader Christian responsibility outlined in Matthew 28:20, where the church is commanded to teach all aspects of God's will, including the alleviation of water scarcity, as supported by scriptures like Ezekiel 34:17-19.

6. Recommendations

FBOs, NGOs, Bible schools, and technical institutions should organize training programs for neo-Pentecostal churches through conferences, seminars, and workshops. Such initiatives would equip the churches with knowledge on alleviating water scarcity, enabling them to educate their congregations and communities on water catchment protection, rainwater harvesting, and constructing water infrastructure.

The study highlights a significant gap regarding the involvement of neo-Pentecostal churches in addressing domestic water scarcity, emphasizing their limited focus on spiritual matters while neglecting practical community challenges. This disconnect implies missed opportunities for these churches to play a transformative role in societal development, as envisioned in biblical teachings such as Matthew 28:20 and Ezekiel 34:17-19. By embracing water stakeholder training initiatives, these churches could align their spiritual mandate with tangible contributions to improve public welfare. Equipping them with knowledge and skills through targeted training programs by FBOs, NGOs, and educational institutions fosters their active participation in water catchment protection, rainwater harvesting, and infrastructure development, ultimately bridging the gap between faith and social responsibility.

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