

Economic Factors Hindering Evangelism in the Western District of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania - Iringa Diocese

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to find out the factors hindering evangelism in the Western District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania-Iringa Diocese. Specifically, the study aimed to examine the economic factors hindering evangelism in the study area. The study was done at Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga Congregations. The study adopted a case study research design in which a qualitative research approach was used. Interviews were used to collect qualitative data from 90 key informants. The data from the field was prepared, organized, transcribed and reviewed. The results achieved from the study are evangelism is hindered by economic factors such as insufficient funds dedicated for evangelism programmes and activities, absence of reliable transport for evangelism work, inadequate and poor church buildings, meagre salaries for ministers and other church workers, unwillingness of the pastors to work at the study area, poor giving of Christians, lack of musical instruments for evangelism work, absence of houses for evangelists, and lack of enough trained ministers caused by insufficient funds. The study recommends that, despite the evangelism which is done in the study area, the Church needs to engage in building better Church buildings, increase payment for church ministers, buy musical instruments and to provide transport facilities to the church ministers to improve worship conditions in the study area. The study also recommends that the Church need to increase the financial capacity by teaching Christians the education of giving tithe to the Church to increase the economy of the Church. Not only that, but the Church needs to engage in projects like tree planting and other productive projects to increase the economy of the Church.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This article deals with the identification of the economic factors hindering evangelism in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania Western District - Iringa Diocese. This part aims at explaining in detail the meaning of evangelism as the key issue of this article.

1.1 Background of the Study

Evangelism means to announce news or to preach the gospel [1]. Evangelism may be defined as the dimension and activity of the Church mission; those dimensions include deliverance from slavery to the world and its power, embracing Christ as Savior and Lord, becoming a living member of his community [2]. Evangelism as part of God's mission, involves the salvatory plan for all humanity, it is also an act of mediating the Good News in Christ, which transforms life and sets us free" (ibid, 1992, p. 412). Evangelism is essential and the core of the mission, of which the Church has been called to participate. Such participation implies being an instrument of God's mission in bringing Good News to all people [3].

Evangelism is very important work in the Church, it must be done with high effort, evangelism is not only done in Tanzania it is done worldwide. Regarding the followers of Jesus and their expansion Sunquist [4] states the following:

The followers of Jesus had a sense of mission and identity with Jesus, they were a marginal group of Jewish outsiders speaking only Aramaic or Greek. Slowly the heartbeat of Jesus's mission for all nations and languages pulsed in the body of Christ, crossing cultural and imperial barriers in Africa, Asia, and Europe, China to Spain and from Scotland to Ethiopia.

In East Africa, evangelism was done by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) of the Anglican Church. This organization was evangelical in its foundation. The Christian church in Uganda and Rwanda established in the 19th Century, were the result of the Church Missionary Society of the Anglican Church. The first party of eight missionaries sent by the CMS

in 1877 to Uganda included Alexander Mackay converted in 1860 during the English Revival. The Rwanda General and Medical Mission working as an arm of the CMS in Rwanda, received main support from Keswick Anglicans. Thus, the roots of the Anglican denominations in Uganda and Rwanda where the East African Revival burst forth and among whom it had the greatest impact were found in the evangelical movement in Great Britain [5].

Christianity in Tanzania was introduced in 1890's through various Missionary Societies which came from different countries. Mission societies from German namely, Leipzig, Bethel and the Berlin Mission Society. These societies worked in different parts of the country while Bethel mission worked in the North Western part of Tanzania, Leipzig and Berlin mission societies worked in the Northern and Southern parts of the country respectively [6]. These mission societies did a huge work of evangelism in several areas of Tanzania. However, their evangelism work was hindered by Islam in the coastal areas and diseases such as malaria [6].

The Christian Church has been and continue to be a missionary church and its foundational work has been to preach the gospel to the world. The entire church is the outcome of the labour of the missionaries from various countries in the world including Tanzania. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), Iringa Diocese (IRD) in response to the Missio Dei (Mission of God) expressed in its Ten Years Strategic Plan 1918 – 2028, forecasted to increase 15,800 converts per year which would amount to 158,000 converts at the end of the year 2028. Practically effective evangelism has been hindered by several factors such as lack of funds, lack of committed ministers for evangelism and lack of instruments like music instruments. One wonders how the current church, the ELCT, Iringa Diocese in particular, would be able to evangelize and make 158,000 converts [7]. Christianity however in 2020 Iringa diocese expected to get 158,000 converts it got 19,120, in 2021 it was expected to get another 158,000 converts but it got 60,000 (Evangelism department report 2021).

The explanation above shows how evangelism was taken as an important aspect to be done by Jesus followers worldwide. Evangelism has been done in all the world where Africa and Tanzania are part of the world. In the African context,

effective evangelism requires among other things economic stability of the organ that administer it. That means the essence of economic strategies, income generating projects/activities, human resources to man such activities, and finances. Finances are tools by which we make many contacts, activities and relationships every day. As we move around this world we buy and sell, our businesses and financial transactions touch many lives. Every person uses finances in one way or another [8]. This does not exclude the church and its ministries.

1.2 Literature Review

The work of evangelism, according to Oh (2009) is hindered by financial constraints on the part of the churches which are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to the world. Lack or inadequate funds has been a detrimental factor for the Mission of God. It has caused in many areas evangelism to be slightly done. Heisey [8] contents that for evangelism to be effectively done needs to be financed. There is no evangelism work which can be conducted with zero cost. In line with Heisey [8], Ma [9] describes the major obstacle for effective and yielding evangelism is lack of economic resources. For the church to be successful in making evangelism in any context, financial resources are critically important. Adequate funds for the church could help develop programmes that are evangelism driven, train sufficient human resources for evangelism work, purchase facilities and resources that would be used for evangelism and empower the ministers of God to do the work unrestrained [10].

In his analyses of the issue of disparity in funding mission practices between the African church and its mother church, the Western Church, particularly the Eastern Congolese church, Kighoma [11] asserts that accepting that the church in the West continues to support the African church based on the principle of the imbalance of wealth distribution between Africa and the West is distorting the transmission and enculturation of the Gospel. He further contents that the financial support to help in evangelism does not encourage a church planting movement to be a reality by planting self-supportive, self-governing, self-propagating and self-theologising churches. He concludes that it is important that dependency should be avoided in mission work. In view of this the church should rethink of fundraising for the mission and funding for mission strategies.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

Study area is an area where the research is going to be conducted while methodology is a method that will be used in doing the study.

2.1 Description of the Study Area

Iringa Region is found in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania. This region borders the dry belt of central Tanzania, it is bordered by Njombe Region to the north and south, Dodoma and Singida regions to the north, Mbeya Region to the west, and Morogoro Region to the east. The word *Iringa* is derived from Kihehe language of the dominant local tribe, the Wahehe. The word *Lilinga*, means 'fortress'. Iringa, as it is seen today, was built around 1890 by the German Army as a fortress town to use as a base to put down the Hehe uprising led by Chief Mkwawa. Iringa Region is in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania. This region borders the dry belt of central Tanzania in the north. Iringa Region rolls out between latitudes $7^{\circ} 05' 32''$ and 12° south and longitude $33^{\circ} 47' 32''$ to 36° east of Meridian [7].

The study was carried out in Western District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania Iringa Diocese which has twenty-one congregations. The study was conducted only in three congregations namely Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga. These congregations are highly earmarked by the Western District as areas of Evangelism. The area has 15,200 population but it has only 2,113 Christians, and 13,087 are not Christians. The area has also many backsliders; therefore, evangelism is highly needed in these Congregations [12].

2.2 Study Methodology

This study used case study design; the study also employed both primary and secondary data sources to collect data. Ninety People were interviewed, those people included: church elders, evangelists, pastors, and Christians. The secondary data were collected from documentary reviews; this was obtained from journals, books, research reports and meeting proceedings. In this study, the researcher used interviews. Interviews were used for the purpose of asking more clarification and emphasis by asking the respondents more questions. This research also used secondary data which were collected from

both published and unpublished materials such as dissertations, books, articles, etc.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data presented will address the objective which is to identify the economic factors hindering evangelism.

3.1 The Economic Factors Hindering Evangelism

The objective asked the respondents regarding the economic factors that affect evangelism to be conducted at Kinyika, Pawaga and Kanani congregations of Western Church District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania-Iringa Diocese. The questions were extremely important for it was thought that the ministry of the church cannot effectively be administered if the church is economically unstable. This is particularly so for mission and evangelism activities that require to make decisive programmes and resources for visitations to focus areas of evangelism. All respondents were asked to describe the factors hindering evangelism in these three congregations. The qualitative response to the question is coded and tabulated in Table 1 below.

The results of the study show that anonymously, ninety respondents believed that inadequate and poor church building detract people from not only coming to church for worship services but also for positive response to evangelism. It must be understood that evangelism activities are not only done through house to house or personal evangelism, radio programmes, or TV broadcast, or open-air meetings, but also through worship services. A church built in bad shape is unlikely to attract people to join the church. The kind of

the building tells a lot who the adherents are. But again, absence of churches in some missionary areas affects missionary work of evangelism. Figs. 1 and 2 below were taken from the study area are good evidences.

It is from this background of the church buildings of bad shape that one respondent contents that:

Having church buildings that are not inviting for Christians or worn out buildings, is a very big problem in our area. This causes new converts to backslide. The situation is even worse in areas where we have no church buildings dedicated for church ministries. This problem of lacking Church buildings causes some converts to neglect coming for worship services because they feel shy to worship under the shade of the tree as though they are traditionalists. The situation becomes intolerable during the rainy season. Some of the churches which are grass-roofed make water leak during rainfall and this is so even for worship services conducted under trees. In such a scenario, no serious person can respond positively to evangelism knowing that at the end he/she will be worshipping in such churches as though God is poor.

It was also reported by one of the pastors that some of the Christians at Pawaga, Kanani and Kinyika are public servants, such as teachers, nurses, drivers, and other governmental and non-governmental institutions leaders. These people feel uncomfortable to attend worship services or any other church organized activity in the Church building with leaking roofs, brick seats, dusty ground, and so on when their offices and houses are better off. The following photograph is worth showing here.

Table 1. The economic factors hindering evangelism

Factors described	Count
Inadequate and poor church buildings	90
Meagre salaries for ministers and other church workers	87
Unwillingness of the pastors to work at the study area	51
Poor giving of Christian	64
Absence of reliable transport for evangelism work	87
Lack of musical instruments for evangelism work	45
Absence of houses for evangelists	80
Insufficient funds dedicated for evangelism programmes and activities	57

Multiple response; Source: Field data (2021)



Fig. 1. Church building used for Sunday services and other church ministries



Fig. 2. Wood and grass-built church for worship and other church activities

What can be deduced from the findings is that the Evangelical Lutheran Church has not done much in rural areas as far as evangelism is concerned. Planting churches through evangelism requires strategic plans of housing converts in church buildings that are accommodating Christians of all types. Absence of dedicated churches and poorly built churches

signals to converts that the church is not serious with its ministries or rather that their condition is equated with the type of the church built or chosen tree to conduct services.

The results further demonstrate that eighty seven out of ninety respondents were of the view that meager salaries for church ministers and other

workers working at Kinyika, Pawaga and Kanani and the corresponding parishes deter evangelism to be effectively conducted. Among fifteen evangelists, twelve of them responded that meager salaries for church ministers and other church workers is among the factors hindering evangelism. One of the respondents from the category of the evangelists pointed out that:

Pastors, evangelists, and other leaders of the church in these congregations have the social, economic and educational needs as do other people. We need food, clothing, housing, and education for our relatives. We send students to schools like other people do. We go to the same markets as other people do. Depriving us from reasonable salaries is discouraging us from provision of quality services to the congregants.

The implication of the findings is that pastors and evangelists, even though called by God to be diligent and readily available for ministerial duties, their work is compromised by meager salaries they get. Most of them may engage their full time in agricultural or other businesses that would guarantee generation of sure income to sustain their families. If this continues to happen, evangelism certainly suffers. At Kinyika, Pawaga and Kanani, this situation occurs because the congregations' income is very low. According to the Congregations' report of May 2021, the total offering for Kanani was TZS 408,200/=, Kinyika was 175,750/= and Pawaga was 303,550/=. According to Iringa Diocesan regulation 48% of the total collection from the congregation must be sent to the Diocesan Head Office and 2% of the total collection has to be sent to the ELCT headquarters. This means 50% of the total congregation collection must be sent to the head office of Iringa Diocese and the ELCT headquarters. Forty-eight percent (48%) which is taken by the Diocese head office is used to pay pastors' salaries and other expenses, 10% is taken by the District Church Office. This means the congregation remains with only 40% of which according to Iringa Diocese regulation, 20% must be used for paying the evangelists and other congregation workers. The remaining 20% must be used for another congregation office sundry expenses.

The finding revealed that as of May, 2021 the salaries disbursed for evangelists were as follows: Kinyika 3,000/=, Pawaga 25,000/= and Kanani 16,500/=. The payments reflected the monthly offering for each congregation. This

implies that salaries are in accordance to the percentage remaining after the head office, district, congregation sundry expenses, and the ELCT got their portion.

It is obvious from the data about salaries that there is no fair salary disbursement. Salaries are terribly low in that they cannot help even sustaining a single person for a day. In this unmotivated environment, certainly for evangelists to actively engage in evangelism work is questionable.

The results of the study further indicate that fifty-one respondents out of ninety were of the view that one of the factors hindering evangelism is unwillingness of pastors to work at the study area due to economic status of the congregations. Among thirty Christians, twenty-five Christians were of this opinion. Furthermore, among five diocesan officials, all believed the unwillingness of pastors to work at the study area due to economic status of the congregation is a barrier to evangelism. Though this reason does seem a social cultural factor, but the respondents view the attitude of such pastors as resulting from the economic status of the congregations which affects their monthly income. Pastor residing in urban areas will certainly be reluctant to be allocated to congregations such as Kinyika, Kanani and Pawaga which are in a typical rural environment where good health facilities for their families, state of the art schools to send their children, and other social facilities pertinent to their lives are lacking. To such pastors sending them to rural areas would mean punishing them. Regarding this, one of the respondent states:

Ministers who have been working in Pawaga, Kinyika and Kanani are not residents of these congregations. They are coming far from their working places. Ministers after being posted by the Iringa Diocese to work in Pawaga, Kinyika and Kanani, they feel like being punished. This is because they have been allocated to at a remote area. Christianity in such areas is not well practiced due to traditional religion. Additionally, these congregations have low income which makes ministers not well paid to sustain their lives. This difficult situation makes ministers working in these congregations feel uncomfortable to work effectively. The result of the attitude and feelings of some pastors contributes to poor performance in terms of evangelization and hence making evangelism work to be less fruitful.

The findings disclose that evangelism work needs committed workers, industrious spiritual people, and capable of working in any context, be it rural, semi-urban or urban areas. After all, the Great Command of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 does not specify a location for evangelism but rather to the whole world that is, any context where people live. The command has a promise of the presence of the Lord in the evangelism work that will not only lead the ministers but also provide them with whatever they need.

The data indicate that poor financial support of Christians in the study area affects church evangelism. Among ninety respondents, sixty-four reported that Christians in the three congregations support the churches poorly. Among ten pastors, nine of them reported that poor support is among the factors hindering evangelism. One of the respondents stated:

The economic status of some Christians at Pawaga, Kanani and Kinyika is good. They are rice farmers. From their production, they may get more than 200 bags of rice per year which could generate income sure income. These Christians give only about two kilograms of rice to the church. Some are pastoralists who have more than 80 cows and 60 goats. However, during Sunday service they give only TZS 200 to TZS 500 each Sunday. Such giving cannot help the church to implement missionary activities through evangelism programs.

There is no church that does its ministry without money. Money is required for salaries, sacraments, evangelism, office facilities and construction purposes. Poor support on the part of Christians means making the church fail to meet its midterm and long-term plans that require funds for human and physical resources. In such contexts where funds are limited due to poor Christian support, this situation has the implication that the good news of Jesus Christ is unlikely to be propagated and thus it leads to difficulty in getting people to be converted to Christianity.

Of ninety respondents who gave their opinions regarding the factors that hinder evangelism at Kinyika, Kanani and Pawaga, eighty seven were of the view that absence of reliable transport for evangelism workers impedes evangelism in the area. Among fifteen evangelists, fourteen of them reported this problem. In addition, all five Diocesan Head Office respondents reported that

the issue of transport is among the factors hindering evangelism. A respondent from Iringa Diocese Head Office had this to say:

Transport is very important to facilitate the evangelism work in Pawaga, Kinyika and Kanani. For a longtime pastor working in Pawaga, Kinyika and Kanani had no transport. In the year 2020 Iringa Diocese made a great effort to get of getting the motorcycle for these congregations and they succeeded. Iringa Diocese got the motorcycle for pastors leading these congregations from Begakwa Bega (friends of Iringa Diocese from America). This means since 1990's, they were walking on foot for more than 20 kilometers from the main station of the congregation to its church streets. However, the evangelists are still not having transport for evangelism facilitation. In this way, it is difficult to expect evangelism to be more practical.

In principle, evangelists are the ones who do a major work of evangelism in their respective areas. But due to the lack of transport, their work cannot yield good results. One of the respondents described that:

Evangelists need transport which will help them to reach to their working places. For example, from the main station of Kanani congregation to Mgega Church Street it is 9 kilometers. Mgega parish lacks the evangelist house, therefore, the evangelist stays at Kanani main station and goes 9 kilometers on foot to Mgega Parish to lead the worship and other activities of the church street. This situation of walking for 9 kilometers makes the evangelist to reach at Mgega tired and it is difficult for the evangelism to be effective.

The findings confirms that evangelism in such a situation will certainly be ineffective. The church requires among other things, congregations and respective parishes, have in place the morning devotion, counseling services, resolving Christians conflicts, house to house visitation, Sunday services, confirmation classes, Sunday school instructions, meetings and other activities. Effectiveness of the work of an evangelist who walks nine kilometers from home to the station is disputable. It is postulated that due to long distance walking, the evangelist may just go to his work station just once or twice a week. It follows that all activities vested onto him/her will

not be accomplished for just two days per week. But again, other activities like morning devotion can be divorced. The implication will certainly be that the work of evangelism which is a core function of the church will either be divorced or be done slightly.

The results of the study also depicted that those forty-five respondents out of ninety respondents were of the view that evangelism is hampered by lack of musical instruments at these congregations. Twenty-five among thirty Christians reported this problem. Musical instruments are tools that when used insight and motivate people to come for worship or public gospel proclamation (open air gospel meetings). Music, when well played, attracts both Christians and non-Christians in a similar way. In this case, music is an effective tool to call people to participate in the evangelism events organized by the church.

This result infers that not all respondents consider music as important in the evangelization process. However, its presence adds value to the evangelism work. Music is also critical in worship services. Music makes worship live and inviting. Both youth and adults African culture music has a crucial role in making them active participants in any organized event. Church music also calls Christians to worship and make them love worship services that are active. One respondent commented that:

The congregations lack musical instruments because they lack money to buy those instruments. Some converted people backslide because they find the worship is too boring compared to the worships of other denominations which are active because of having music played using musical instruments. The Anglicans and Roman Catholics dominant Christian denominations at Pawaga, Kinyika and Kanani, have and use musical instruments which motivates Christians to be interested with their worship.

Despite the importance of such musical tools for evangelism and church worship, Kinyika, Kanani and Pawaga congregations cannot afford to buy such essential facilities for enhancement of evangelism. The problem is exacerbated by lack of funds that could help procure the instruments.

The observation shows that eighty out of ninety respondents said that the absence of houses for evangelists to live in contribute to stagnation or

rather slow progression of evangelism in the area. Among fifteen evangelists, all the fifteen evangelists who were among the respondents responded that absence of houses for evangelists to live in hinder evangelism. As it was discussed earlier, leapfrogging evangelism cannot be realized when the evangelists live far away from their working stations. Evidences from the respondents show that normally evangelists go to their work stations once per week to lead worship services and then return to the main station of the congregations where they reside. Failure on the part of the church to build houses for evangelists in the parishes is attributed to lack of funds. In such scenarios it is not possible for evangelism work to be assiduously administered.

The final economic factor hindering evangelism was insufficient funds for evangelism programs and activities. Out of ninety respondents, fifty-seven held that insufficient funds are a barrier for evangelism programs and activities to be carried on at the study area. Among ten pastors who were among the respondents, all of them responded that, insufficient funds are among the problems hindering evangelism. The interview indicates that the Diocese in consonance with the church district and congregations organize visitation programs for evangelism. Specific people are called for evangelism work in all three congregations. In other instances, the congregations do organize the evangelism campaign for their areas. One trip to facilitate evangelism in the area takes three to four days only because of little funds apportioned for the work. One Respondent expresses that:

To reach every area of these focus areas for evangelism, spending two weeks would be appropriate. The two weeks would be dedicated for evangelism campaigns and teaching for new converts to mature in faith. Financial constraints hinder such plans.

Economic stability of the church is critically important for its activities to prosper. The overarching concern here is the absence or dwindling budget for evangelism work in the study area. Poor economic resources for the church means failure to accomplish God's call to evangelism. The findings are in line with the literature reviewed which views church financial downturn as major constraints for effective evangelism (Oh, 2009) [8-10]. This can be illustrated with the saying that goes, *money is everything*. Lack or absence of funds in the

church contributes to poor salaries of ministers which ultimately demoralize them to do their work effectively and efficiently. Lack or absence of money means weak realization of evangelism programs and activities. Without fund, the church cannot procure musical instruments for evangelism work and the houses for evangelists cannot be built. It is a fact that areas where there is no guaranteed income, pastors and evangelists will not be willing to be allocated in those areas by the church. This is so because family life to be sustained requires among other things, funds. In Tanzanian context, some of the areas cannot be easily reached unless you have transport, such as car or motorcycle. The church with nothing swims into its hand is incapable of facilitating purchase of motor vehicles for evangelism purposes to its ministers.

The church should strive to be self-reliant and self-supporting. This would help to successfully implement its short and long-term plans. This would also make the activities and programs of the church sustainable. Dependence on donors such as those that provide motorcycles for pastors is good, but it has the danger of depriving the church of critically using the resources available for income generating activities to support the current foreseeable plans for the growth of the church.

4. CONCLUSION

From the study findings, it can be concluded that lack of church buildings, little payments of ministers, lack of transport, lack of musical instruments, lack of houses for evangelists and lack of enough funds as identified are economic factors hindering evangelism in Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga Congregations of Iringa Diocese.

According to the findings, pastors and evangelists working in Kanani, kinyika and Pawaga Congregations have the idea that evangelism in Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga is not effective because ministers are not cared by being given enough salaries, transport and houses to live in. On the other side, Diocesan officials have the opinion that evangelism is not effective in Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga Congregations because ministers working in these Congregations are not working hard.

Elders and lay Christians of Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga congregations have the idea that evangelism in Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga is not effective because ministers engage much in their

work to get basic needs. Furthermore, lay Christians and Church elders have the opinion that the work of evangelism in Kanani, Kinyika and Pawaga is not effective because there is a lack of indigenous ministers who know the environment well and identify how to get the people to join Christianity.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends that the church has to find the means of raising funds to enable the church to build the church for worship. It is good if people will have a comfortable place to worship God. The Church needs to find a way of making sure buildings are available for people to worship. The researcher also recommends for the need of raising funds for payment of ministers. Ministers need to be cared for by making sure that they live and get their basic needs. This way will make them hard. Ministers need to be given the transport to make easier to reach the parishes for them. The church needs to buy musical instruments as they are important to make the worship to be active. Moreover, the church needs to build houses for evangelists so that evangelists can live in the parishes and lead the Christians easier. Ministers to stay far from the Christians will not bring good results of evangelism.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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