

## **Pastors Mirror the Churches' Governance!!**

From 2015 up to end of 2016, the Protestant University of Rwanda [PIASS] conducted a study on the governance in protestant churches. 10 teams of academic staff and students conducted a survey and focus group discussions countrywide within 20 parishes of the protestant churches, founding members of PIASS [Presbyterian, Baptist Union; Methodist, Anglican, Pentecostals, Baptist Association] and others major churches [ Zion Temple; Restoration Church] and Christian organizations [ The protestant Council: CPR; the Federation of Born Again Churches and organizations: FOBACOR; and the Alliance of Evangelical churches [AER]. The survey aimed among other things: a. to investigating whether the principles of good governance are known and if yes, if they are applied within the protestant churches; b. to elaborate a barometer or scorecard that shows year by year whether there has been improvement in the governance of protestant churches. Principles of good governance include: Rule of laws and careful application and observation of the laws and regulations; Participation of Christians in all activities and decision making; follow-up and evaluation of the activities; transparency and accountability in the resources and human management; gender balance; youth and women participation; fighting corruption; elaborating and implementing good plans and vision for church grown; care for the poor and needy; increased care for Sunday school. The findings of the study were published in March 2017 PIASS publication Series no 8 under the title: *Good Governance: Participation, Transparency, Accountability and other Virtues. Where do Rwandan Churches Stand? This volume was translated in Kinyarwanda for the Sharing Knowledge Seminars. Below the participants frame the volume and appropriate the content.*

1. ***Gender balance in decision making***- Good governance is only possible with gender balance. In Rwanda, women are the majority of the congregants in the churches and yet, male outnumber females in decision making bodies.

2. ***Training and Leadership capacity building*** – from missionary period, many among those who initiated the churches did not have theological education; thus never dare to urge locals to train in theology and other disciplines before taking over. In the missionary time, the majority of the people were not educated; today the contexts are different; there is a need for sustained formation of the clergy. Participants commend the suggestion from the study that leaders of churches have a university degree in theological education.
3. **Shortfalls in applying the Rule of law-** Participants were astonished by the study findings that some churches though have laws and regulations only because since 2002, it is one of the major requirement in the organic law on faith based organizations implemented by the Rwanda Governance Board, the public body that give legal status to faith based organizations and others. The loopholes in the law on faith based organizations led to the proliferation of religious organization; some wondered whether diversity in protestant families is an enrichment enabling learning process or an impoverishment.
4. **Can protestants emulate Catholic institutions in providing good services?**-The study showed that the Roman catholic church and its related institutions provide good services than protestants. It was ridiculously discovered that corruption exists in church services in diverse forms, including nepotism in job recruitment and promotion; favoritism; even bribing for good positions in some churches also was reported. Some church leaders use whistleblowers to report dissent voices among the pastoral and other staff.
5. **Urgent: Churches need vision-** Poor service delivery is illustrated by absence of open and democratic dialogue; prevalence of unopposed voice of the bishop and hierarchy and delegates afraid of giving their opinion in the decision making organs. Some churches that have no vision for good governance do not tackle inequality and imbalance; in addition, the absence of continence among some leaders lead to use expansive facilities [cars, travel and accommodation arrangements] whilst the congregants who donated money and resources remain poor.

6. **Corruption exist in Churches!!**-The study reported some signs of good services including systematic application of laws and regulations in some churches, giving reports and accounting for activities to Christians, promoting gender balance, and in some cases, teaching against ill practices like corruption and gambling. Some financial and resources management reports though do present income but never report any professional audits that can account for transparent use of the money and the resources.
7. **Can Prophetic be part of Church Mission!**- The study showed that in Israel prophets criticized and challenged public authorities and corrupt systems, with well-known examples of Kings David and Ahab challenged by the prophets. Unlike these Bible teachings, in Rwanda today, the government authorities are the one who fight against poor governance, corruption, gender imbalance, other injustices and even helping to resolve many conflicts within many different churches. The study keenly showed that during the recent tormented history of Rwanda, the churches missed to raise a prophetic voice against the evil, particularly during the genocide against the Tutsi.

### ***Pastors Resolved ...***

1. To humble themselves in providing services to communities as Christ did. They resolved to imitate Moses, a humble leader who listened to advices from God and people. They decided to share with those who did not attend the conference the principles of good governance.
2. During the seminar, participants came to the conclusion that they ought to increase solidarity and care for the poor and the needy for the number of those cared for is still low .
3. To promote gender balance, particularly to increase the number of women in the decision making bodies and to increase the efforts in sensitizing women to have confidence in their ability and capability to stand for various positions. Participants commit to advocate for the increase of women within the decision making bodies.

4. To give much room of participation to Christians in the planning of activities, and to increase transparency and accountability in what they do for them. They would set up resource management committees to assist the pastor in good service delivery.
5. Pastors decided to work hard to gather enough information, to be well informed on the laws and regulations and vowed to develop action plan for the dissemination among the Christian of the laws and regulations governing the church.
6. With regard the Sunday School ministry, they said: “We resolve to train Sunday schools monitors in all our parishes for young people to love and be committed to the church of God today and tomorrow”. They added: “ We resolve to carefully produce the statistics of church members for good governance plans to apply. We will regularly elaborate strategic plans and visions for the parish organs to adopt and to deliver good services”.
7. The participants resolved to encourage Christians to belong to saving and credit cooperatives for their own progress. At the same time, we resolve to assist and care for the poor and the needy.