



Civil Society in Africa: The Role of a Catholic Parish in a Kenyan Slum

Christine Bodewes

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This book examines the efforts of one particular civil society organization, the human rights ministry of a Catholic parish located in the Kibera slum in Nairobi, to determine the extent to which it was able to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It concludes from an analysis of the social, economic and political environment of Kibera as well as church structures, that parishioners demonstrated an observable improvement in their democratic values and behavior at a localized level, but they did not increase their involvement in advocacy and lobbying efforts. Parishioners were inhibited from holding government officials to account for their abuse of power primarily due to fears of retaliation; other factors such as apathy, ethnic divisions, limited resources and restrictive church protocols further curtailed their actions. The findings of this book are important for scholars and students active in the fields of political science, African Christianity, development studies, international law and human rights. This book is also an important resource for practitioners who are addressing the social, legal, political challenges facing the urban poor in Africa.

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