

**WOMEN, POVERTY AND HIV/AIDS: A CHALLENGE TO
WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY: A CASE STUDY OF
MPERERWE TOWNSHIP, KAMPALA-UGANDA**

BY

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PIETERMARITZBURG 2006

DEDICATION

To my mother, Margaret Jane Kwoba

Widowed at the age of 39, but worked hard to care, feed, dress and educate me to a Masters degree level.

DECLARATION

I, **Rev. Jescar Naome Oundo**, do hereby declare that this Academic document is my original work. It has never been submitted for any degree or examination at any University for any award whatsoever.

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DATE: _____

This Academic Document was done under my supervision and approval as the Student's Original work.

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DATE: 14th August 2006

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ABSTRACT

This study is designed to assess the causes and the effects of poverty and HIV/AIDS on women's spirituality. A case study of Mpererwe Township in Kampala, Uganda was chosen because this researcher has been staying in this township now for 7 years; and has seen most women experiencing difficulties in their daily lives. Poverty and HIV/AIDS among women of Mpererwe Township is a much-needed area of study because the majority of women's lives and their contribution to development have been hampered by economic, religious, political, social and cultural structures. However, all in all, the purpose of this social analysis was first, to identify the factors that render Mpererwe women to be vulnerable to ill situations that pave the way to poverty and HIV/AIDS conditions. Then thereafter, to suggest strategies that may transform the physical, political, religious, economic and social life of women in Mpererwe Township.

Therefore, this study has attempted to investigate how poverty and HIV/AIDS have challenged women's spirituality in Mpererwe Township. The analysis has indicated a close link of HIV/AIDS, social injustice, culture and gender inequality with causes of poverty among the women. The vulnerability of women in relation to HIV/AIDS has been highlighted. The challenges to Mpererwe Township women's spirituality were identified and discussed.

Oral interviews in two languages (English and Luganda) were undertaken. Some 4 community leaders and 50 Christian women of 18-60 years old, in Mpererwe Township were interviewed in the areas of their experiences and observations in relation to poverty and HIV/AIDS as a challenge to women's spirituality. The study, which is the first of its kind in this Township, has identified and recorded the women's original and personal data on poverty, HIV/AIDS and spirituality. The community leaders confirmed that women in Mpererwe Township are poorer compared to men. In a conclusion, a gender sensitive strategy for the township community to work effectively with women on issues of poverty and HIV/AIDS in search for a better change was developed.

Proposals were made on how the Mpererwe Township women can effectively use the recommended information about HIV/AIDS and their available resources within the township to change the present situation for the better.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Mpererwe Township

Mpererwe is a township, seven kilometres away on the Eastern suburbs of Kampala City in Uganda. It is situated in Kampala District, Kawempe Division. In this township, 80% of the population speak Luganda, 60% speak both Luganda and English and 10% speak other languages. The people of this township come from different religious backgrounds, for example, Christianity, Islam, Bahai and Indigenous religion. Mpererwe has an accessible well co-ordinated road network system to ease road transport. This is helpful when women implement an income-generating project. The township has a growing population, which according to the Uganda Bureau of statistics,¹ is about 20,000 people covering about 30 hectares of land. There are 8,400 men and 11,600 women. The fact that there are more women compared to men in this community is of special significance to this study.

Table 1 Kampala District population as of the night of 12th - 13th September 2002

Population 2002	Male Population	Female Population	Total Population	% Of Population
Uganda	12,056,269	12,490,105	24,546,374	100%
Kampala Dist.	593,802	625,749	1,219,551	5.0
Mpererwe T/S	8,400	11,600	20,000	1.6

Source: Uganda Bureau of Statistics Act No. 12, 2002.

This study only deals with the impact of poverty and HIV/AIDS on Christian women's spirituality in Mpererwe Township.

1.1.1 Understanding of terms Poverty, HIV/AIDS and Spirituality

1.1.2 Poverty

Poverty is a deprivation in terms of lacking access to sources or in terms of living in a demolished environment or the inability to meet basic needs.² An elaborated definition of poverty is found in Chapter four of this dissertation.

¹ Uganda Bureau of Statistics Act No. 12, 2002.

² Amartya, Sen. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books 1999, 3.

1.1.3 HIV/AIDS

HIV refers to Human Immuno-deficiency Virus and AIDS refers to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.³ HIV/AIDS is mainly a sexually transmitted disease that strikes anyone, but the high-risk group are prime-age adults who are very sexually active and tempted to have more than one sexual partner.⁴ More HIV/AIDS issues have been articulated in chapter three of this study.

1.1.4 Spirituality

Rakoczy cites Conn who defines 'spirituality' as referring to "a general human capacity for self-transcendence, for movement beyond mere self-maintenance or self-interest."⁵ To this, Komanchak provides a Christian focus for the noun 'spirituality' to mean, "One's entire life as understood, felt, imagined and decided upon in relationship to God in Christ Jesus empowered by the Spirit."⁶

Furthermore, Rakoczy views spirituality as:

...weaving together a woman's conviction of her dignity as a human person loved by God, her images and approach to God, including prayer, her approach to Scripture as a liberating Word, her belonging in the church community, the principles of ethical reflection which guide her life, and her approach to the praxis of justice, peace and the integrity of creation.⁷

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Report indicates that Mpererwe Township is one of the townships in Uganda, with a poverty population of 82.2% living below one United States dollar per day. The biggest percentage of this population is estimated to be women and children.⁸ Buckley confirms this by saying, "...women and

³ Alan Whiteside and Clem Sunter. *AIDS. The Challenge for South Africa*. Cape Town, Human & Rousseau/Tafelberg, 2000, 1.

⁴ World Bank Report, *The effects of HIV/AIDS on population*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 25.

⁵ Conn 1993 quoted in Suzan Rakoczy, *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004, 375.

⁶ J. C. Komanchak, 'Spirituality' in M. Downey, (ed.) *The New Dictionary of Theology*. Riverside: Gill & Macmillan. 1987, 972.

⁷ S. Rakoczy. 2004, 375.

⁸ United Nations Development Programs Report on *Poverty in Kampala, Uganda*. 2003.

children are even poor.”⁹ These two reports, and others that will be referred to in this study, are of great importance for this study because their prescriptions of poverty of women fit very well with women in Mpererwe Township.

Mpererwe Township is situated in Uganda where HIV/AIDS hit hard in the 1990s and it has also been reported again that Uganda is one of the African countries at the forefront in the fight against the disease with a current prevalence of 6% from 30% two decades ago.¹⁰ Although there are reports that there is a great change as far as HIV/AIDS is concerned in Uganda, statistics still indicate a large number of HIV/AIDS infections in men, women and youths. According to the United Nations Report, the estimated 2 million people who are HIV positive in Uganda, three quarters are women out of which 14.1% (510,000) are between age group of 15-49 years.¹¹ Concerning health, “women are more vulnerable to be infected by HIV/AIDS than men.”¹² In fact, this study suggests a number of reasons which include: women’s anatomy, domination by the patriarchal system, family violence and their openness and willingness to focus on the guests and/or strangers, which is part of their spirituality. It is these issues that this study engages with by concentrating on the effect of poverty and HIV/AIDS on women’s spirituality in this township.

HIV/AIDS has caused blame, stigma, rejection and violence experiences for women in Mpererwe Township. The same UNAIDS report has indicated that most women are infected by the single partner they have. Unfortunately, most women with HIV/AIDS in Uganda find themselves in a position where they are burdened by caring for their partners/spouses, HIV positive babies, having to provide care and support to the old members of the family and the orphans. This implies that the conditions force women to ignore their own health needs. This also portrays the imbalance of power between men and women, which is well known as patriarchy.

⁹ Mary I. Buckley. ‘Women, Poverty and Economic Justice’ (3-10) in Janet Kalven and Mary I Buckley (eds.) *Women’s Spirit Bonding*. New York: The Pilgrim Press.1984, 3.

¹⁰ A Report from the 4th National AIDS Conference from 21-22 March 2005 at the Speke Resort Hotel Munyonyo Kampala, Uganda.

¹¹ United Nations Report ‘AIDS’. Kampala, Uganda, 2002.

“Patriarchy is the rule of men in the overall shaping of human life, from the public realm to the most personal domain.”¹³ It has profound implications for women’s personal and religious experiences. It is this patriarchal ideology that is believed to be fuelling the above-mentioned challenges faced by women in Mpererwe Township. Therefore, there is a need to utilise the opportunities, knowledge and diversity of experiences to support both men and women in taking up their responsibilities to acquire power to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS infection and to think creatively in order to pull themselves out of poverty. This is a necessity.

1.2 Motivation for the Research

The interest in this study developed over the years when the researcher started living among the women in this township for now 7 years. As a woman, the researcher has observed that women in Mpererwe Township experience hardships due to lack of support in issues pertaining to basic facilities such as education, shelter and adequate healthcare. However, despite various disadvantages, these women are people with unique abilities and have a drive for work. They contribute to the nation-building daily in numerous ways. These include managing households such as providing care for their partners, producing food; working in offices, remitting money and goods through domestic and other work within and outside the country; they look for cooking and washing water, nurture and care for children plus extended families; build peace and maintain harmony in the homes and communities. This is supported by the World Bank Report profile of women in Uganda that: “women are responsible for producing 80% of the food and provide 70% of the total agriculture labour; they carry out all these tasks without benefit of technology.”¹⁴ Korten adds, “the contribution of women to development has now become increasingly recognised, resulting in progress in many countries toward releasing restrictions on women’s participation in political and economic activities.”¹⁵ This shows that though women’s contributions are underplayed by socio-cultural economic bias and

¹² Philippe Denis. ‘Aids and Sexuality in South Africa’ (63-78). *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, March 2003, 66.

¹³ M. I. Buckley. 1984, 6.

¹⁴ World Bank Report. 1993, 23-27.

¹⁵ David. C. Korton. *Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda*. West Hartford: Kumarian Press. 1990, 27.

prejudices based on gender, there is a growing confirmation that women, if empowered or given freedom to participate in development spheres alongside with men, can bring a free and much needed ethical perspective to bear in solving societal problems.

1.3 Research Problem

Poverty, which is characterised by the lack of or limitation of resources, such as job opportunities, educational and literacy skills, housing and infrastructures, adequate food supplies, is a threat to women's spirituality in Mpererwe Township. This is seen in the way women in this township are forced to do activities harmful to their health such as prostitution, in a search for survival. Other women risk their lives by going to war zone to sell food items. Still others walk late in the night to locate markets for their items. All these are done in order to support their families and indeed these have exposed women to HIV/AIDS infection partly unknowingly and also knowingly. Robert Chambers is also of the opinion that "there is no doubt that poverty can be graded to be a major cause of deprivation"¹⁶ in all spheres of people's lives especially women.

Therefore, the research problem is "How does poverty and HIV/AIDS challenge women's spirituality in Mpererwe Township?" This was tested with the research findings that were designed to identify and to define the constraints that poverty and HIV/AIDS have put on women in this township. The findings from this research provided a framework on how to deal with these challenges in order to restore and sustain women's spirituality.

1.4 The Aim of the Study

In Mpererwe Township, women's contribution to economic and national development has been hampered by cultural, social, political and macroeconomic policies that have led women to a vulnerable position, especially in the context of poverty and HIV/AIDS. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the extent to which poverty and HIV/AIDS have challenged women's spirituality and how women can effectively use the recommended information about HIV/AIDS and their available resources within

¹⁶ Robert Chambers. *Managing Rural Development: Ideas and Experiences from East Africa*. Uppsala: SAPSE, 1983, 139.

Mpererwe Township to change the present situation for the better. To achieve this aim, the following specific objectives have been determined.

- To identify and record women's personal data on poverty, HIV/AIDS and spirituality.
- To assess how poverty and HIV/AIDS have affected women's spirituality.
- To develop a gender sensitive strategy for the township community to work effectively with women on issues of poverty and HIV/AIDS in search for transformation.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

A gendered analysis as proposed by African women's theologies and other feminists is the theoretical framework of this study. Gender analysis seeks to identify injustices and suggests societal correction towards women in their relationship with men. Musimbi Kanyoro explains that, "we seek to search and understand how our societies are organised, and how power is used by different groups of people..."¹⁷ so that these similar strategies can be implemented for Mpererwe Township for social transformation. More discussion on a gender analysis is found in chapter two of this study.

1.6 Research design and methodology

Any academic study that does not engage in social analysis misses one of the vital aspects of human experiences. Therefore, this study has investigated and analysed the concrete life situation of women's spirituality in Mpererwe Township as challenged by poverty and HIV/AIDS.

Four appropriate research methodologies were decided for this study. These were the literature reviews, oral interviews, observations and experiences. The literature review with relevant theoretical framework to complement this study was carefully selected. This helped in the construction and completion of this study. For instance, literature review was done with special focus on a gendered analysis of women and HIV/AIDS,

¹⁷ Musimbi Kanyoro. 'Engendered Communal Theology: African Women's Contribution to Theology in the 21st Century' (158-180) in J. Njoroge and W. Musa Dube (eds.) *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*. Pietermeritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001, 163.

women and poverty; and women and spirituality. The major library contacted was *Cecil Renaud*, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Both published and unpublished documents like magazines, theses, newspapers, articles in journals and various papers that were relevant to the field of this study presented in different conferences and workshops were consulted.

1.7 Research procedure

By means of oral interviews in two languages (English and Luganda), 4 community leaders and 50 Christian women in Mpererwe Township were interviewed in the areas of their experiences and observations in relation to poverty and HIV/AIDS as a challenge to women's spirituality. Most of the respondents were co-operative and they provided, to the best of their ability, the information needed for the construction of this study. For instance, the study, which is the first of its kind in this Township has identified and recorded the women's original and personal data on poverty, HIV/AIDS and spirituality. This researcher has been staying within Mpererwe Township for now 7 years as a Church leader and a social counsellor and has observed and experienced the joy and the sorrows that these women go through. Thus the researcher has been involved with most of the women's activities especially in women's social meetings and in women's Christian fellowships. This provided a clear background that helped the researcher to approach the women of Mpererwe Township from an inside perspective. It also gave room for free expression, encouraging the respondent to be honest in giving accurate information about his/her attitude, and opinions about poverty and HIV/AIDS among women in this Township. Since there is a lot of stigma around HIV/AIDS, some women did not want to share their opinions, but there was a chance for the interviewer to adjust questions or change the format of the question to suit the respondent as the research was taking place. This paved the way for a variety of information needed for the study. The kind of material that the researcher was looking for was data concerning the physical, spiritual, economic and social health of women in Mpererwe Township, how much they are affected and infected by poverty and HIV/AIDS.

1.8 Limitations of the study

- There were two main limitations: These were: restriction of only 25,000 words for the whole dissertation in such a sensitive area of research and the short time frame for the research exercise. However, to overcome these limitations the researcher had to prolong the time frame of the research from 1 year to 2 years in order to obtain the concrete information required. In addition, the researcher also took time to summarise the dissertation to the required measure of 25,000 words without distorting the information required.
- In addition, the other limitation was the unavailability of the interviewees because most of the women leave their homes early for survival and/or income generating activities, and come back late and tired. This hindered the progress of the interviews because some women were exhausted by the routine activities, hence not in the mood to be interviewed. This therefore made the researcher to make several visits at the despondence's homes and at their place of work at different times in order to obtain appropriate data for the study.
- The researcher's status as a prominent Church leader hindered the openness of the interviewees especially in areas of HIV/AIDS and the spirituality of individuals. In HIV/AIDS cases, interviewees were sensitive probably because they thought that they were being judged since the researcher knew about their health status, especially those who had lost their spouses. About poverty, some people did not want to be identified as poor when that was the reality. No force was applied if the respondents demonstrated that they were not willing to go on with the interviews. Instead other persons were identified to replace the non willing ones.
- Since the general assumption among the people is that researchers conduct research projects to earn money out of the findings, some people refused to cooperate even if the researcher took time to explain in-depth the purpose of the study, and particularly in Mpererwe Township. So the researcher used the community leaders to help in explaining to the community the purpose of the

research, which was to investigate the extent to which poverty and HIV/AIDS have challenged women's spirituality and how women in this township can effectively use the recommended information about HIV/AIDS and their available resources with Mpererwe Township to change the present situation for the better.

- There was also lack of funds to organise and run workshops on the prevention, care and treatment of HIV/AIDS, Project Planning and Sustainability strategies, Capacity Inventory, Nutrition and Primary health care as the initial stage to eradicate poverty in the area. However, the alternative strategy was that the researcher who is also the church ordained pastor incorporated the desired topics for workshops into Sunday sermons and Bible study groups. This helped to pass on information in the community.
- The limitation to interview only Christian women in the community, which is a mixture of religions such as Hindu, Bahai, Buddhism, Indigenous religion and Christianity.
- The limitation to interview only 50 respondents out of the 11,600 women in Mpererwe Township indicates that only a small portion of the Township was covered leaving the largest area where probably a lot of information would have been obtained. Relatively, the researcher used both group and individual counselling sessions to obtain the required information for the study.

1.9 The structure of the dissertation

This study is presented in seven chapters. Chapter one is the introduction, which contains the background, the aim and objectives of the study as well as the methodologies that have been used in this study. The limitations encountered during research procedures and how they were over come are also indicated in this chapter.

Chapter two is the theoretical framework of this study. It has identified and articulated issues that portray the contribution of patriarchal ideologies to women's poverty and their health in relation to HIV/AIDS. Therefore, a gender analysis was done.

In the third chapter, the meaning of HIV/AIDS and the issues concerning the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic to women's spirituality has been identified and discussed.

Chapter four provides and articulates the challenges facing women in Mpererwe Township that has resulted in poverty.

Chapter five describes women's spirituality and provides a detailed prescription on how women's spirituality is being challenged and therefore paving the way to women's vulnerability to poverty and HIV/AIDS.

In chapter six, the findings of the study are reported, analysed in the form of interactions between literature reviews and research findings. Some results are displayed in the form of pie charts and others are statistically recorded.

Chapter seven consists of two parts: The conclusion provides the summary of the study whereas the recommendation comprises possible strategies for transforming the women's status in Mpererwe Township. These strategies can be applied in other areas where applicable since the study has indicated that the problems of women in Mpererwe Township are to a large extent similar to most women in some parts of African countries and/or worldwide.

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN AND PATRIARCHY: A GENDER ANALYSIS

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an introduction that describes the background of this study. It declared that the African women's theologies are the theoretical framework of this study. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to explore the ideologies of this framework in a search to rescue women from threatening conditions in the area of the study. By the use of this framework and other feminist theories, the study has identified and analysed societal injustices as having fuelled women's vulnerability to poverty and HIV/AIDS. Patriarchal ideologies are one of the major factors that have been identified to be fuelling women's vulnerability to poverty and HIV/AIDS. This has helped to suggest constructive corrections especially in the areas of the misuse of patriarchal powers in societies. Focusing on the working title of this dissertation, "Women, Poverty and HIV/AIDS: A challenge to Women's Spirituality in Mpererwe Township..." the study realised that the problem of relations between men and women, the differences that characterise their respective social roles based on their biological distinctiveness commonly known as gender issues is greater and is neither a recent nor simple issue in Mpererwe Township. For this also seems to be a worldwide problem that has been there for now along time and is still troubling the human race and therefore being discussed by many scholars in various domains of human knowledge as indicated in this chapter. Therefore, this chapter has articulated the limitations that patriarchy puts on women's participation in decision making as far as religious, cultural, social, economic and political issues are concerned. In doing so, the meaning of key words in this chapter have been brought out to ease the understanding of the chapter. The key words are gender, patriarchy and anthropology. At the end of the chapter, the researcher has suggested a working relationship between men and women for the good of our societies especially that of Mpererwe Township.

Using Ogundipe's words, "In most African societies, whether patrilineal or matrilineal, gender hierarchy, male supremacy or sex asymmetry was known and taken for

granted.”¹⁸ Ogundipe narrates that even in matrilineal societies, women are still subordinated to men and are considered as second in place to men.¹⁹ This find support in Phiri where the research on the Chewa traditional woman was done and the discoveries are that: “though the Chewa matrilineal society gave woman a high status and certain amount of freedom, she was heavily dependent upon, as well as controlled by her uncle and brother who had total power over her.”²⁰ Although, Mpererwe Township community is patrilineal men are still dominant in private and public life over women in this community. In fact, this ideology that men are naturally superior to women in essence and in all areas, affects the modern day organisation of social structures in Mpererwe Township. It is this ideology that has created the patriarchal attitude of discrimination against women in the sense that men tend to take lightly the labour of their female counterparts in business and educational professions, considering women’s jobs as hobbies and wondering what women do which makes them so tired at the end of the day.²¹

2.2 Understanding of terms: Gender and Patriarchy

2.2.1 Gender

Gender describes the socially constructed identities, roles and expectations assigned to women and men.²² This description relates to some of the African traditional societies where the division of labour is based on sex with an attendant contempt for women’s work. Similarly, Haddad describes gender to refer to the socially constructed and culturally defined difference between men and women.²³ Haddad advances these descriptions to explain that,

¹⁸ Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie. *Recreating Ourselves: African Women and Critical transformations*. Trennmon, JN: Africa World Press, 1994, 34.

¹⁹ M.Ogundipe-Leislle, 1994, 34.

²⁰ Isabel Apawo Phiri. *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of Chewa Woman in Central Malawi*. Blantyre: CLAIM, 2000, 35.

²¹ M. Ogundipe-Leislle, 1994, 34.

²² World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches. 2003, 18.

²³ Beverley G. Haddad. *African Women’s Theologies of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminisms and Development* PhD: University of Natal, 2000, 97.

As a social construct, gender importantly identifies the relationship between the sexes in terms of power relations. Gender influences the differences in poverty levels between the sexes because social institutions such as the family, religion, culture and education discriminate against women.²⁴

In fact, Haddad relates this kind of discrimination to many other parts of the world where similarly men discriminate against women by implementing laws and traditions, which are biased in favour of partial power structures.

2.2.2 Patriarchy

According to Denise Ackermann, “Patriarchy is the Rule of the father and denotes the legal, economic and social system, which validates and enforces the sovereignty of the male head of the family over its other members”. In reality, continues Ackermann, “this meant that women, children, workers and property are subordinate to the male heads of families, tribes and societies. Patriarchy therefore has a profound implication for women’s personal, societal and religious experience”.²⁵ Furthermore, explains Ackermann,

Patriarchy is found in all cultures even in theology where God’s voice is ‘the voice of man.’ Admittedly, in theological circles, God as a father is perceived as the ‘great patriarch in heaven’, who rules over human beings on earth and indeed this demands total obedience from His subjects.²⁶

Therefore, since to talk about woman and patriarchy is to talk about woman and man’s anthropology, this chapter looks at how different groups of people perceived and/or still perceive humanity. For-example, this study revisited five different anthropologies in order to bring out a brief and clear understanding of different views of how men and women are perceived to be. These are Patriarchal anthropology before and during the Reformation, Egalitarian anthropology, African Women’s anthropology and Biological anthropology. The word anthropology has been defined below to bring out a clear

²⁴ B. G. Haddad, 2000, 97-98.

²⁵ Denise Ackermann. “Being Woman, Being Human” (93-105), in D. Ackermann, J. A. Draper and E. Mashinini (eds.) *Women Hold Half the Sky: Women in the Church in Southern Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1991, 95.

²⁶ D. Ackermann, 1991, 96.

background to its meaning. Furthermore, underlying issues that are related to anthropology such as sin, liberation, positions in education, health and leadership in patriarchal society, marriages, childlessness, polygamy, widowhood, inheritance and domestic violence have been identified and discussed. This has been based on African Women's theologies, which is the theoretical framework of this study in relation to the contemporary situation of women in Mpererwe Township.

2.3 Anthropology

According to Paul Procter, the word anthropology is derived from the two Greek words 'anthro' and 'logos'. 'Anthro' means human while 'logos/logy' means word or study of the word.²⁷ In fact, the scope of anthropology is too wide in that it covers the entire life of human beings; hence this study will not exhaust the whole of it. For anthropology can also be defined as the study of the human race, its culture and society, and its physical development.²⁸

2.4 Patriarchal view of anthropology

Rosemary Ruether traces the background of patriarchal Christianity that came to dominate the Christian Church in classical orthodoxy. Ruether explains that a patriarchal system completely denies women's participation in the image of God because women are considered to be bearers of sin and therefore less spiritual.²⁹ Interestingly, patriarchal theology regarded women to be more apt to sin; hence not spiritual enough to represent the image of God compared to men. Concerning woman's image that points to her spirituality, this study has dealt with it in chapter five.

Ruether goes further to say that, in classical orthodoxy man was to regard a woman as representing part of himself (man) that must be "repressed and kept under control in order to prevent sin and disorder."³⁰ Ruether explains that, this way of thinking means that the fall of humanity in Genesis 3 that was attributed to woman led to the wrong conclusion

²⁷ Paul Procter (ed.) *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*. United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2002, 49.

²⁸ P. Procter. 2002, 49.

²⁹ Rosemary R. Ruether. *Sexism and God-Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology*. London: SCM, 1983, 94.

³⁰ R. R. Ruether 1983, 94 -95.

that woman has an inferior nature that is easily prone to sinning against God and therefore all women should continue under punishment for that 'original sin' that was committed by one of them - Eve. It appears then that the coming of Christ, His death and resurrection did not undo the swamp that women found itself in. But, theologically, is it true that Jesus' coming left this undone? For whom did Jesus come for? Is it not that Jesus came to deal with all sins so that all may have life and have it to the full as stated in John 10:10? We are yet to explore this.

Ruether points to Augustine as the classical source of patriarchal anthropology. According to Ruether, Augustine of Hippo held that "even though a woman can attain salvation, she still remains inferior, she is sin-prone, and she is only secondarily in the image of God while the male normatively possesses the image of God."³¹ In the same way, Aquinas continue with the Augustinian tradition by justifying the inferiority of women using pseudo-biological argument whereby he refers to women's reproductive role as the 'subversion by female matter' to produce a 'defective human species' – female. For him, a woman is inferior in every way. This includes a weak body, less capable of reasoning, and being morally inferior. This inferiority, he contended, is compounded by sin.³²

2.5 Patriarchal anthropology during the Reformation

Ruether reflects on the 16th century when the Reformed school of thought strengthened the views of the classical orthodox with regard to women in the church and society in general. Giving the example of Luther, Ruether mentions that Luther held that in the original creation, Eve was equal to Adam but after the fall in Genesis 3, things changed. She is now subject to man as her superior, as a punishment for her sin, 'an expression of divine justice.'³³ Also Ruether observes that though Calvin seems to be saying that men and women were and are equal in the image of God, at the end of it all he changes the

³¹ R. R. Ruether 1983, 96.

³² R. R. Ruether 1983, 96.

³³ R. R. Ruether 1983, 97.

direction by concluding that "...but they are subordinated because of divine purpose. For God has ordained the rule of some and the subjugation of others."³⁴

Ruether went further and pointed to Karl Barth's view of the "created order of male over female"³⁵ which reflects the bond of creation in the sense that men and women should thus accept their own place in the order, for man is not noble nor is woman immoral.³⁶ The order of things for him is proper unless misused. This view may sound true though after examining it one finds that it has a patriarchal connotation in it just like the views of Luther and Calvin.

2.6 Egalitarian anthropology

In general, egalitarian anthropologies assert that woman was originally equal with man in the image of God and that Christ came to restore that relationship. This sounds closer to what St. Paul says in Galatians 3: 28, which says "in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither woman nor man, for the ground is now levelled for us all." Most of these theologies of egalitarianism, for example, eschatological, liberal feminism and romantic feminism,³⁷ for years, have been associated with the so-called heretical groups who were condemned for teaching and/or preaching heterodox theology by the patriarchal Roman Catholic Church. However, something constructive has sprung out of egalitarianism, which confirms that God can use even the condemned or the hated people to communicate a message of salvation as God used a donkey in the Old Testament.³⁸ It also shows that the voice of reason is not to be expected from the so-called 'majority,' but from God's choice.

2.7 African Women theologians' anthropology

African women's anthropology highlights the patriarchal nature of women's suffering in Africa. In particular, it highlights the patriarchal structures that have been created by one gender to institutionalise the alleged inferiority of women compared to men. For

³⁴ R. R. Ruether 1983, 98.

³⁵ R. R. Ruether 1983, 98.

³⁶ R. R. Ruether 1983, 99.

³⁷ R. R. Ruether 1983, 99-109.

example, there are a lot of stereotypical generalisations that have been passed over from one generation to the other. These include, to be born a female child is an inferior status; women are Eve incarnate; a girl is a little piece of property; men are entitled to women; men and women are not equal; God ordained men to be superior to women from the very beginning. Sin in the world is a result of women. Women are fragile; Women cannot make leaders, but followers, nurturers, housewives and cowards.³⁹ The World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches adds to this list by stating:

Women are said to be emotional while men are rational; women are nurturing while men are decision-makers; women are gents (sic) while men are assertive; women are delicate while men are strong; women are fearful while men are brave; women are aggressive while men are competitive; women are old maids while men are bachelors; women are housewives while men are breadwinners; women are hysterical while men are calm.⁴⁰

A critical look at these stereotypes makes one to wonder why the word of God in Genesis 1: 27 is overlooked. This verse clearly states that “So God created humankind in His image, in the image of God He created them, male and female He created them.” This explains that male and female are equal though not similar. Furthermore and to observe with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches, theologically, God’s own image is described as male and female. Because, in God’s sight, women and men are equal or have the same value in the sense that all are God’s Children and they are all created in God’s image and likeness. In fact, the Bible affirms God’s perception of the equality of women and men where it reads “...Let us make man...”⁴¹ (Man meaning humankind). Unfortunately, society and culture created their own understandings of women and men, which resulted in the creation of a wide gap between the role and expectations of women and men.⁴² Therefore, Mercy Oduyoye explains that African Women Theologians’ anthropology incorporates all human understandings that enhance

³⁸ Numbers 22: 21-28.

³⁹ African Women Theologies, Honours and Master’s class group discussions, School of Theology. University of Natal, Pietermeritzburg, 2003.

⁴⁰ World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches, 2003, 5.

⁴¹ Geneses 1:26-27.

⁴² World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches, 2003, 16.

“our humanity, for the efforts that reveal who we really are meant to be.”⁴³ Oduyoye further contends that women theologians are seeking to contribute to the reconceptualising of anthropology that will enable many people, and them in particular, to benefit from the diversity of gender, race, language and nationality.⁴⁴ To make a long story short, the scope of women’s anthropology is so wide that it can hardly be exhausted in this limited study. For many researchers like African Women Theologians and World Alliance of Reformed Churches are being carried out in search of amending human anthropology.

2.8 Biological anthropology

Indeed, it is acknowledged that physically, women and men are different in their make-up for the purpose of reproductive roles. However, it is important to understand the fact that according to biological science, the body is made up of billions of cells where every cell is alike and possesses all the genes and is capable of the same functions. For instance, in humans, 99.9% of the genes are the same in everyone.⁴⁵ According to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches, this implies that there is a great degree of similarity among people of all ethnic groups, races, gender, class and caste.⁴⁶ Therefore, the similarity of 99.9% between women and men means that we are genetically similar; and this similarity needs to be celebrated because it tells humans that we belong to one human family and also it explains that biologically women and men are more similar than they are different.⁴⁷

2.9 Controversial issues in women’s anthropology

2.9.1 Male bias

Feminists have contested against the male bias in anthropological studies. This is because these studies speak from male experience, and emphasises a dichotomy between the two

⁴³ Mercy Amba Oduyoye. *Introducing African Women’s Theology*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. 2001, 74.

⁴⁴ M. A. Oduyoye 2001, 77.

⁴⁵ World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches, 2003, 16.

⁴⁶ World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches, 2003, 16.

⁴⁷ World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches, 2003, 16-17.

genders.⁴⁸ These studies tend to continue to categorise sexes. For example, seeing female as inactive and sympathetic while on the other side seeing male as active and/or practical in their daily activities. As portrayed earlier on page 17 of this study, such stereotypes are carried on into all spheres of women's life even in Mpererwe Township. However, African women theologies express the need to review such andocentric anthropology that is prevalent in Africa today by encouraging women to be self-esteem for the good of the creation order so that all may have life and have it to the full.

2.9.2 The handicap of the female child

Being born a girl has been seen as an inferior status in Africa. For example, among the Ibo of Nigeria, a girl was little more than a piece of property.⁴⁹ This stereotype has been institutionalized in Africa for years. It is no wonder that there has been a fatalistic resignation of women to their status in society. In fact, some women wish they were born men instead of women. Anne Nasimiyu describes a research that was conducted in Nigeria of young and old, male and female, 40 percent of the girls wanted to be born as boys whereas only 6 percent of boys wanted to be born as girls.⁵⁰ She concludes by saying that this research shows that 40 percent females are not happy being what they are and this is because of patriarchal anthropology that defines women to be half-human. Acolatse confirms this by quoting Ackerman who reported about an incident where a primary school teacher took the boys to task for letting a girl take the first position in class tests,⁵¹ because women are labeled to be inferior.

In addition, Acolatse also captures the Ackermann's question at the birth of an infant, where it is asked: "Did you have a human being or a girl?"⁵² Admittedly, this kind of discrimination for a girl child has been extended through education profile. Agnes Abuom confirms further by stating that, "In many Sub-Saharan Africa countries, there

⁴⁸ Esther E. Acolatse. 'Rethinking Sin and Grace: An African Evangelical Feminist Response to Niebhuur' (121-139) in (eds.) N. Njoroge, and W. Musa Dube. *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001, 122.

⁴⁹ M. A. Oduyoye 2001, 68.

⁵⁰ Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike 'Polygamy: A feminist Critique' (101-118) in M. A. Oduyoye and M. R. Kanyoro (eds.) *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and The Church in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992, 112.

⁵¹ D. Ackermann, as quoted in E. Acolatse 2001, 121.

still continues to be substantial discrimination favoring boys' education over girls' education."⁵³ Indeed within Mpererwe Township, the number of boys who go to school is higher compared to the one for girls; and some reasons for this are that girls are easier to control and also that they become more responsible in matters concerning home making when they are at home than when they attend school. "We encourage parents to send their girl children to school but some say there is a lot of work at home so they let the girls stay at home to help with house work."⁵⁴ But these reasons are not genuine because they ruin the future of the girl child. This situation renders a girl child to be vulnerable to all sorts of abuses and exploitation within the community.

More seriously, Abuom stresses that in many African countries, Uganda included, dropout rates at the primary level are higher for girls than for boys. In fact, as Abuom puts it, a girl education is recognised as one of the critical pathways for promoting social and economic development. She adds, the education level attained by girls has a significant influence on the health and nutrition of children born to them later. By the help of the linking diagram below, Abuom explains that a study conducted in 45 African developing countries found that the average mortality rate for children under five was 144 per 1,000 live birth when the mothers had no education, 106 per 1,000 when the mothers had primary education only and 68 per 1,000 when the mothers had some secondary education.⁵⁵ To drive the point home, Abuom cites Herz and others who have provided a linking diagram that displays the generational impact of educating a girl child. The diagram below explains clearly how important it is to educate a girl child.

⁵² E. Acolatse, 2001, 121-122.

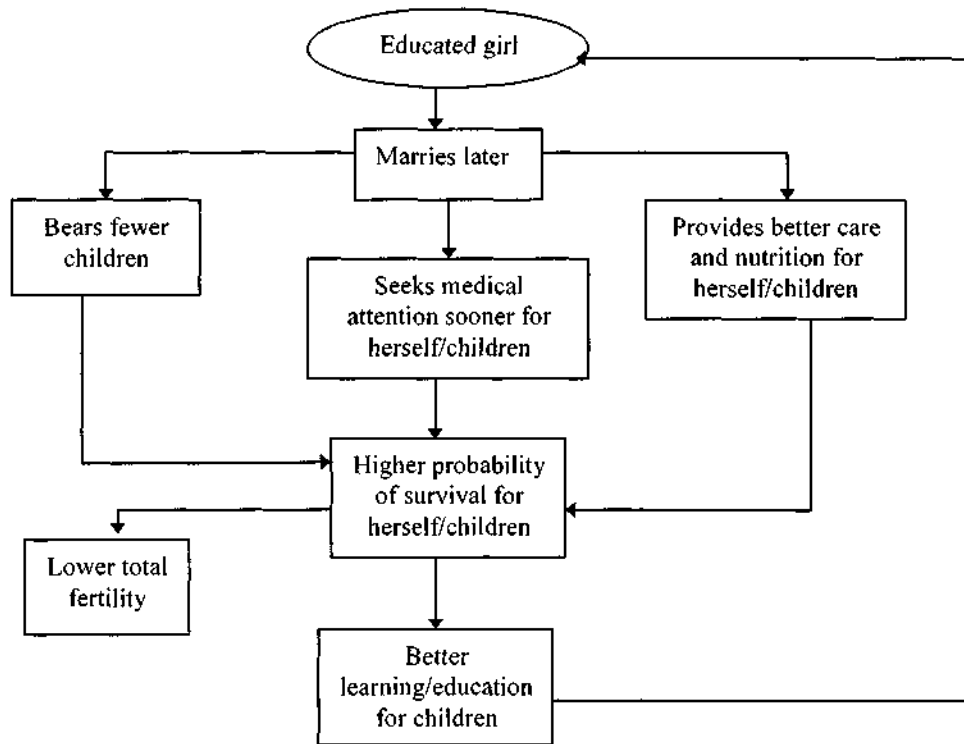
⁵³ Agnes Abuom, 'Women's Issues in Health and Education' (111-130) in D. Belshaw, R. Caderisi and C. Sugden (eds.) *Faith in Development: Partnership Between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa*. Oxford: Regnum, 2001, 116.

⁵⁴ World Bank Report, (2000), in Abuom 2001, 116.

⁵⁵ A headmistress explaining the number of boys is bigger than that of girls in Mpererwe Church of Uganda primary school on the 14th of December 2006.

⁵⁵ A. Abuam 2001, 116.

Figure 1 Generational Impact of educating a girl



Source: Based on Herz and others 1991.

From the diagram above, the generational impact of educating a girl child is displayed to portray clearly what it means to educate a girl child. Accordingly, educating a girl child paves the way for better care and nutrition, sooner seeking of medical attention, higher probability of survival, lower total fertility and above all, better learning for the children. This therefore points to the fact that education for a girl child is a necessity and an imperative to Mpererwe Township because it is a way through to a social and/or community development.

2.9.3 Polygamy

In a world defined by men, polygamy is an African man’s ideal to “recapture and expand his immortality.”⁵⁶ In that regard, many wives and many children mean a stronger defence, both security-wise and food-wise for that family. Unfortunately, most women in Mpererwe Township are valued only in relation to men. For example, a single woman

⁵⁶ A. Nasimiyu-Wasike 1992, 102.

stood in to contest as a District Member of Parliament in Mpererwe North parish but she was discouraged and threatened that she will not be voted because she is not married.⁵⁷ Probably this is one of the reasons that have held women in Mpererwe Township out of the parliament services. This indicate that women can not do anything good on their own so only married one can be recognised so that whatever they do is for strengthening the husbands through giving them prestigious status in society. Using Nasimiyu-Wasike's words, a woman is just "a fertile field in which a man plants his seeds."⁵⁸ And since, a woman's big role is procreation according to African societies, then the plight of the disadvantaged woman in Mpererwe Township for instance, the barren woman, hangs in the balance. "...I left my home after the death of my husband without anything because I did not get a child to inherit his father's properties."⁵⁹ In fact, they are considered useless as they were equated to an unfertile field that would always exploit the owner (man). The God given talents of barren women that Paul talks about in 1Corinthians 12, are not considered or felt. Similarly, a woman who bears many girls is a disgrace. The husband is encouraged to go for another wife under the pretext-of the need for a boy child.⁶⁰ Such retrogressive ideas that undervalue the *Imago Dei* of every human being have indirectly sneaked into the modern African Church, therefore strengthening the downplaying of women's willingness to receive guests as part of their spiritual ministry.⁶¹ More of women's spirituality is explored in chapter five of this study.

2.9.4 Domestic violence

In Mpererwe Township, both married and unmarried women suffer sorts of gender based domestic violence in their homes and very few of them reveal the incidences of violence. One said, "One of the punishments my husband used to give me were the pulling of my plaited hair."⁶² As Phiri notes, this form of gender-based violence is common even in the so-called 'Christian homes':

⁵⁷ This was said by male contesters to the female one in Mpererwe Township North (where this researcher resides) during the last Parliamentary Campaigns in February 2006.

⁵⁸ A. Nasimiyu-Wasike 1992, 102.

⁵⁹ A barren woman lamenting during interviews in Mpererwe Township on the 6th of January 2005

⁶⁰ One of the researcher's counselees husband went out in search for a boy child and he got HIVirus. He is still living but surprisingly enough the wife is HIV negative.

⁶¹ A. Nasimiyu-Wasike 1992, 102.

⁶² One of the divorcees narrating her stories duding the interviews in Mpererwe Township on the 9th of January 2005

It occurs in various forms like battery, sexual abuse of female children and workers, female circumcision, dowry-related violence, marital rape, emotional, verbal, psychological, economic and spiritual abuse. Women, regardless of status, are affected by it.⁶³

One example is the psychological torture those successful women with careers are subjected to when the society frowns on them because it is a world dominated by men. They are seen as intruders interfering with the order of things such as societal harmony. However, Acolatse assert that women, “they need to give everything to their careers because their marketability depends on it... Apart from the high level of stress associated with this dual role society often frowns on her...”⁶⁴ This is a serious form of violence which is mostly ignored as if it does not exist. Bernadette Mbuy Beya found out that domestic violence is one cause of prostitution with the danger of being infected with sexually transmitted diseases that include HIV/AIDS. For, an abused, battered wife, is “compelled to flee from her husband, often has no other recourse if she hopes to support herself.”⁶⁵

2.9.5 Widowhood

Another issue that attracts the attention of African women theologians is widowhood. Widowhood is another hell on earth; that belittles women along-side domestic violence. For example among the Samia Bagwa of Eastern Uganda when a man dies, his wife mourns for him for three months, which is itself a torture or a punishment that befits a murderer. In addition, she is not allowed to look after herself hygienically because she lost a husband. Nor is she allowed to change the clothes that she was wearing at the time of her husband’s death even if lice invade her! She must keep in-doors for three months and she must sleep uncomfortably on mats.⁶⁶ This situation is further compounded by other issues especially inheritance, whereby, a widow is inherited by the heir of the deceased husband as part of his estate. Like any other property, she is not expected to

⁶³ Isabel Apawo Phiri 2000. ‘Domestic Violence in Christian homes. A Durban Case Study’ (85-110) in *Journal of Constructive Theology* December Vol.6, No. 2, 85.

⁶⁴ E. Acolatse 2001, 130-131.

⁶⁵ Bernadette Mbuy Beya. ‘Human Sexuality, Marriage and Prostitution’ (155-179), in M.A.Oduyoye, and M. R. A. Kanyoro (eds.) *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and The Church in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 1992, 167.

⁶⁶ M. A. Oduyoye 1995, 150.

decide; rather ‘concerned’ men should make the decision on her behalf. In Mpererwe Township, cases have been witnessed where a widow is denied a chance to inherit any property that her husband left even though they worked for it together. Some because they are barren others because they did not know of some of their husband’s properties.

2.10 The need to revise oppressive concepts

2.10.1 Sin

Acolatse defines sin ‘as the refusal of the self to be the self it was meant to be.’⁶⁷ For instance, the refusal to accept the *Imago Dei* in everyone is a case in point. This points to some of African societies who for years have discriminated and exploited women, and also the Church’s refusal to ordain women as a sign to release their spiritual gifts is a clear point of sin. Another example is seen in Mpererwe Township women’s withdrawal to avoid problems when patriarchy asserts itself. In fact, cases have been seen where women surrender to patriarchy whenever a small threat is issued just because they are women. “...my brother forced me to go back to my husband after we had separated for almost a year...”⁶⁸ The failure of the society to rise up to the occasion and address harmful issues such as HIV/AIDS, polygamy, prostitution, widowhood, domestic violence, stereotypes that have underpinned women among other issues, is tantamount to the self’s refusal to be the self it was meant to be. This indicates that women have been dormant due to patriarchal oppression not to change their attitudes away from oppressive situations by being assertive to state clearly what their rights are.

Therefore, it is important to note what Acolatse says, “if sin constitutes missing the mark of our true humanity, and we are serious about corrective measures to bring us to full humanity, then we are better for naming it and finding healing for it.”⁶⁹ This is the call for entire Mpererwe Township; a challenge to break the silence on gender disparities. We must tackle the sin of inability to appropriate our God-given freedom to name and transform our world, which is characterised by sinful actions.

⁶⁷ E. Acolatse 2001, 125.

⁶⁸ A respondent lamenting during the interviews in Mpererwe Township on the 27th of November 2004.

⁶⁹ E. Acolatse, 2001, 138.

2.10.2 African concept of sin

The African concept of sin is all embracing in the sense that sin of an individual affects the whole community. This means that sin to one gender should also affect both genders as a rebellion against God. Indeed, the effects of sin in Mpererwe Township extend to the whole cosmic order as it is with the case of HIV/AIDS. For example, UN research has shown that in Africa many women who are HIV/AIDS positive have had one sexual partner (husband). This affects an individual, a family, a community, a nation and the world as a whole. Similarly, in the Hebrew Bible, all trespasses are pointed against God, oneself and the rest of the community. In other words, an individual's sin in the form of patriarchal oppression affects the whole Mpererwe Township.

It is vital, therefore to appreciate that African Christianity takes cognisance of the fact that when there is sin against oppression of women, be it through violence or denial of basic rights or whenever life is patriarchalised to the disadvantage of women, it is not only women who get hurt but also the perpetrators. In support of this, Paul says,

The body is not made up of one but of many parts.” If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body...” “If the whole body were an eye where would the sense of hearing be?” “If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?” But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as God wanted them to be...⁷⁰

What Paul is trying to portray in his theology is that men and women in Mpererwe Township need to work hand in hand, and in harmony because the whole humanity is created in God's image.

2.10.3 Liberation for all, including women

Liberation for all in this study will mean the freeing of people despite the race, gender and/or colour from something that restricts their enjoyment. Referring to the time when

⁷⁰ 1Cor.12: 12-26.

Jesus Christ the reformer in Judaism to Christian faith and the Head of the Church, the Church as One Body of believers, as was progressing His movement on earth, He made it clear to the public:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.⁷¹

This explains that Jesus came for all because His message of liberation includes every one and in all spheres of life. Phiri simplifies and summarises Jesus' message of liberation and mission to indicate that, "His aim was to engage people in their own liberation from sin, ignorance, poverty, social injustice and any other form of oppression..."⁷² Jesus was concerned with men, women, young, old, the lame, widows, sick and as well as the dead because He went to the dead to preach to them.⁷³ Salvation for all is seen in the gospel narratives where Christ broke the barriers of culture by saying and doing the opposite. For instance, He reached the outcasts.⁷⁴ He taught theology to Martha⁷⁵ and Mary.⁷⁶ He held a theological discussion with a Samaritan woman.⁷⁷ Jesus was anointed by a woman⁷⁸ and He cleansed a woman who had bled for twelve years and was therefore considered socially unclean.⁷⁹ Jesus liberated a woman who was caught in the act of adultery and being accused alone without the man,⁸⁰ to mention but a few. Therefore, this is a call to Mpererwe Township that any form of oppression placed on any person whom Jesus came to liberate so as to achieve life to the full must be dismantled because liberation and/or salvation by Jesus Christ is for all. Paul clarifies for us; "There is neither a Jew nor a Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are one

⁷¹ ⁶⁶ Luke 4 18-19.

⁷² I. A. Phiri 1998 'Christianity: Liberative or Oppressive to African Women?' (198-217) in Kenneth R. Ross (ed.) *Faith at the Fountains of Knowledge*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 1998, 201; Luke 4 18-19.

⁷³ 1 Peter 3:18-20.

⁷⁴ Mark 1: 40-42.

⁷⁵ John 11:21-26.

⁷⁶ Luke: 10:38-39.

⁷⁷ John 4: 1-26.

⁷⁸ Matthew 26: 6-13.

⁷⁹ Mark 5:25-34.

⁸⁰ John 8:2-11.

in Christ Jesus.”⁸¹ This implies that women’s liberation in Mpererwe Township is connected to the liberation of men as well.

2.10.4 Towards an improved society.

As Oduyoye stresses, there is need to search for an empowering anthropology by beginning with a probe into African myths of origins, asking fresh questions in order to ‘untangle the thread which ties women to iniquity.’⁸² These oppressive myths are not only found in the African traditional society but also in Biblical narratives. In the case of the Bible, it is prudent to do proper exegesis considering that myths in Africa are believed to be true and tend to answer questions that are prehistoric, for example, the origin of humanity.

Similarly, in Mpererwe Township, men still believe in oppressive culture and traditions, that women are inferior and therefore have to be submissive to men, even without their will. They still want to use women as objects or as their properties, for instance, excluding them in issues concerning decision-making. Also waking them up in the middle of the night to cook for them and give extra services just because it is believed that women are obedient to men in all circumstances.⁸³ This is one of the cases that cause some women to flee away from their husbands to join slums, situations that have exposed them to various kinds of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS that have exacerbated poverty among women. Therefore, to obtain a transformed society, men in Mpererwe Township have to play a credible role of confessing and repenting for their sin of either consciously or innocently benefiting from gender oppression. It is only after confession and repentance that a new beginning can spring out and then a change of mind and attitude can start to manifest itself.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Galatians 3: 28.

⁸² M. A. Oduyoye 2001, 68.

⁸³ The researcher's observation in most of the drunkards' homes fighting starts at night immediately men arrive from their drinking places.

⁸⁴ Thulani Ndulazi. ‘Men in Church Institutions and Religious Organizations: The Role of Christian Men in Transforming Gender Reactions and Ensuring Gender Equality’ (62-65), in *Gender. Empowering Women for Gender Equity*. NO.61 2004, 63.

Though in Mpererwe Township women are encouraged to support men in their ministries, they are not expected to make full decisions on their own or even lead in the Church unless a man is in the front. This is observed that women are less represented and excluded in any kind of leadership and participation even if they have the right credentials. It also shows the extent of damage that patriarchal mythologies have done to the global society for quite a long time. Ruether also asserts, “Older males tell the boys the fearful tales of how women once controlled the instruments of culture but were defeated.”⁸⁵ There is therefore an urgent need to revise some oppressive myths in Mpererwe Township. It is no wonder that even the biblical mythologies need some constructive revision. Admittedly, the Church, as a healing community is expected to participate actively against these oppressive social structures and organisations that cause dehumanisation, humiliation and degradation to women so that all may have life and have it to the full.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter, which is the theoretical framework of this study, has shown that patriarchal ideologies fuel women’s vulnerability in all spheres of life such as physical, spiritual, emotional, political and social. This was traced by examining different views of anthropologies such as patriarchal before and during the Reformation, egalitarian, African women theologians and biological anthropologies among others. Controversial issues that affect women’s humanity were identified and discussed at length. These were the male biased, handicap of the female child, polygamy, domestic violence and widowhood, just to mention but a few.

This has pointed to the fact that there is an urgent need for Mpererwe Township community to revise oppressive concepts such as those mentioned above in order to move towards an improved society, the “chosen race” and a “holy nation” to the glory of God.⁸⁶ The revising of oppressive structures will mean that in Mpererwe Township, men and women are awarded equal opportunity to work together as partners. This will give

⁸⁵ R. R. Ruether 1983, 74.

⁸⁶ 1 Peter 2: 9.

both men and women a chance to exercise their God-given spiritual gifts hence encouraging women to rise up. In fact, it is women in Mpererwe Township who must free themselves by raising their voices in accordance with oppressive and exploitative issues that are directed to them in communities and in homes. These issues may include sexual harassment and denial of economic progress like education and inheritance of pieces of land, among others. In agreement with Paulo Freire, "It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors."⁸⁷ However, the questions that are being raised are, How and to what extent is gender inequality-fuelling HIV/AIDS among women, especially in Mpererwe Township? But, what is HIV/AIDS? What then should be done in order to control and/or eliminate gender inequalities that fuel women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, which is one of the factors challenging Mpererwe Township women's spirituality?

⁸⁷ Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin Books, 1970, 32.

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN AND HIV/AIDS

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the role of some patriarchal systems in hindering women's progress. This chapter focuses on women's health with particular reference to women in Mpererwe Township. It highlights how gender inequality endangers women's health through the present epidemic of HIV/AIDS. It also highlights how poverty and HIV/AIDS challenge women's spirituality. In the process, this chapter brings out the understanding of HIV/AIDS, its infections and the impacts of HIV/AIDS on women's economic, spiritual, social well being and also on their life expectancy. Furthermore, the chapter explores the factors that expose women to be vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. This is based on the affirmation of Philippe Denis' statement that, "HIV/AIDS is ultimately a gender issue."⁸⁸ First a discussion of what is HIV and AIDS is necessary.

3.2 Understanding HIV and AIDS

As mentioned in chapter one, HIV is an acronym for 'Human Immunodeficiency Virus.'⁸⁹ AIDS is an abbreviation of "Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. 'Acquired' means that the virus is not spread through casual or inadvertent contact as with flu or chickenpox. In order to be infected, a person has to do something or have something done to him/her, like sex intercourse or blood transmission, which exposes one to the virus. Immunodeficiency implies that the virus attacks a person's immune system and makes it less capable of fighting infections. Therefore, the immune system becomes deficient giving room to opportunistic presentations that come about as the immune system fails. Syndrome explains that AIDS is not only one disease,⁹⁰ but also it presents itself with a number of diseases such as flu, colds, diarrhoea, vomiting, Tuberculosis, skin rash, fever and loss of weight. AIDS is the end stage of HIV infection.⁹¹ Other physical effects of HIV/AIDS include serious diseases such as cancers and form of meningitis. Many

⁸⁸ Philippe Denis. 'Sexuality and AIDS in South Africa' (63-78) in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 115 (March) 2003, 75.

⁸⁹ World Bank Report, 1999: xxii.

⁹⁰ A. Whiteside and C. Sunter. *AIDS: The Challenge for South Africa*. Cape Town, Human and Rousseau/Tafelberg, 2000, 1.

researches have indicated that the virus can be present in a person for a long period before they discover that they are infected. More seriously, it is also said that at any time the infected person can infect others only through body fluids.⁹²

HIV/AIDS is a deadly, Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD). After an initial week or two of flulike symptoms, the disease may have no visible effects on the infected person. This asymptomatic period, can be as short as 2 or as long as 20 years. Although the average time without symptoms is about 10 years in industrial countries, limited data suggests that it might be as short as five years among the poorest people in the poorest countries.⁹³

3.3 The infections of HIV/AIDS

According to Denis, in Africa more than 90% of HIV infections among adults are a result of sexual transmission between men and women.⁹⁴ There are however, cases of HIV transmission through the re-use of contaminated syringes by injecting drug users, infection via birth or nursing from mother to child, re-use of needles in medical settings, and transfusion of contaminated blood or blood products, oral sex; however, there are no confirmed cases of transmission via saliva alone. This implies that HIV can be isolated from the saliva of an infected person. In addition, a sneeze, a handshake, or other casual contact cannot transmit HIV. More than three-quarters of HIV transmissions worldwide emphasises Mann, is through sex. Of these sexual transmissions, about three-quarters involve heterosexual intercourse and one-quarter involves men having sex with men. In developing countries, sex accounts for an even greater proportion of cases.⁹⁵ This therefore explains that like other Sexual Transmitted Diseases, HIV is difficult to transmit except by sex or other direct contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person.

Another mode of transmission is mother-to-child transmission, which varies widely across countries. The major mode of infection among infants can occur through contact with the mother's blood at birth or later through breastfeeding. By one estimate, 15 to 20

⁹¹ World Bank Report, 1999, 19.

⁹² World Bank Report 1999, 18.

⁹³ Mulder 1996 quoted in World Bank Report 1999, 17.

⁹⁴ P. Denis 2002, 65.

⁹⁵ Mann et al 1992 quoted in World Bank Report, 1999, 18.

percent of all HIV infections in Africa occur in infants infected by their mothers. Worldwide mother-to-child transmission accounts for about 5 to 10 percent of infections.⁹⁶ Another mode of transmission is through blood transfusions, once a cause for concern in many countries and has been nearly eliminated in many high and middle-income countries by routine screening of blood for transfusions. In Mpererwe Township, transmission through the blood supply has yet to be eliminated because some young children are given transfusions of blood for treatments of malaria-related anaemia; and also some women are given transfusion of blood during childbearing, putting them at risk of acquiring HIV. Although reports indicate that transmission through transfusion of blood has never accounted for more than about 10 percent of total HIV infections even in developing countries,⁹⁷ it is important for the Mpererwe Township community to note that any measure of infection is dangerous to people. Therefore, the community should keep a safe distance from any act that can expose them to HIV infections.

3.4 The Impact of AIDS

3.4.1 On life expectancy in Uganda

The impact of HIV/AIDS is so strong that it accounted for about 1 percent of all deaths worldwide in 1990; and this proportion is likely to rise to 2 percent of all deaths in 2020.⁹⁸ This implies that the most obvious impact of AIDS is on Life Expectancy. Life Expectancy is a basic measure of human welfare and of the impact of AIDS.⁹⁹ HIV/AIDS being a sexual disease, it is noticed in Mpererwe Township because it usually strikes prime-age adults, often people who are raising children and are at or near the peak of their income potential. In the absence of AIDS, prime-age adults in Mpererwe Township tend to be less vulnerable to sickness and death than children, adolescents or the elderly. Accordingly, AIDS casts an even larger shadow on the health of prime-age adults and the welfare of their dependants. In this township, a respondent said, “Me who is supposed to be cared for by my children, I am now caring for their children because AIDS have killed

⁹⁶Quinn, Ruff, and Halsey 1994 in World Bank 1999, 18.

⁹⁷World Bank Report, 1999, 21.

⁹⁸Murray and Lopez 1996 quoted in World Bank Report, 1999, 22.

⁹⁹World Bank Report, 1999, 22.

them before they cater for their children.”¹⁰⁰ Therefore, HIV/AIDS is most likely to become the largest single infectious killer of prime-age adults in the developing world in 2020, hence being responsible for all deaths from infectious diseases among this important group.¹⁰¹ However, the good news for Uganda where the research for this study was undertaken, is that the rate of HIV/AIDS infections has dropped¹⁰² from 18% by 1995 to 6% as per now.¹⁰³

3.4.2 On Uganda's population

In Uganda it has been observed that almost every community is feeling the effects of HIV/AIDS. In Mpererwe Township the effects of HIV/AIDS are felt from an individual, family, community, nation and then worldwide. A respondent said,

I am looking after 5 children of my late bother and sister and both of them died of HIV/AIDS. When I take them to the national hospital for treatment, we find so many children brought for treatment. In fact, this shows that the government is spending a lot of money on these free drugs for children. Since there are white doctors in this hospital, then it is possible that some outside nations are helping this country with drugs.¹⁰⁴

Since HIV/AIDS is spreading so rapidly and particularly in children, then the implication is that it will significantly reduce both population and economic growth. In support of this, the United States Bureau of Census 1997 indicated that in two countries, Botswana and Zimbabwe, which have very severe AIDS epidemics, the projections suggest that by 2010 the population will cease to grow in these countries.¹⁰⁵ Some have suggested that the population in badly hit countries will decline in absolute terms and that there will be an associated collapse in economic output.¹⁰⁶ This explains that the net impact on gross domestic production (GDP) growth per capita will generally be small.¹⁰⁷ For example, for

¹⁰⁰ A respondent lamenting during the interviews on the 10th of January 2004.

¹⁰¹ World Bank Report, 1999, 24.

¹⁰² Frank Ham. Aids in Africa: How did it ever happen? Zomba: Kachere Series, 2004, 7.

¹⁰³ The 4th National AIDS Conference Report that took place between 21-22 March 2005 at Speak Resort Hotel Munyonyo, Kampala-Uganda.

¹⁰⁴ A respondent in Mpererwe Township commenting on the big number of orphans who get free treatment at Mulago National Hospital during the interview on the 19th of December 2003.

¹⁰⁵ United States Bureau of Census 1997, quoted in World Bank Report 1999, 33.

¹⁰⁶ Anderson et al (1991), Rowley, Anderson, and Ng (1990), quoted in World Bank Report, 1999, 32.

¹⁰⁷ World Bank Report, 1999, 33.

Uganda the total GDP is estimated to be \$ 6.930 million out of the total population of 24.0 million.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the comfort is that the available evidence suggests that the impact of HIV/AIDS on these variables though varying across countries will generally be small even in Mpererwe Township related to other factors.¹⁰⁹ But, however small this is, the fact is that it is most likely to affect Mpererwe Township, a community which already has serious effects of HIV/AIDS and poverty.

3.4.3 Orphans in Uganda

An orphan is defined as a child under the age of 18 who has had at least one parent die. A child whose mother has died is known as a maternal orphan; a child whose father has died is a paternal orphan. A child who has lost both parents is a double orphan.¹¹⁰

One important way, in which HIV/AIDS in Mpererwe Township is likely to exacerbate poverty and inequality and indeed one of the most tragic effects of the epidemic, is the increase in the number of children who lose one or both parents. The report on Uganda by the end of 2001 indicates 880,000 orphans, which is a big number.¹¹¹ Although AIDS is not the only reason why there are many orphans in Mpererwe Township as there are cases of 21 years on going civil war in Uganda, the AIDS mortality shows a growing number of orphaned children. This relates to the respondent's statement, "...the number of orphans at Mpererwe Church of Uganda Primary School is bigger than those with parents."¹¹² This finds support in Konde-Lule and others when they indicated that the impact of a severe AIDS epidemic on maternal orphan rate could be seen in census data over the past 20 years.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ F. Ham. 2004,225.

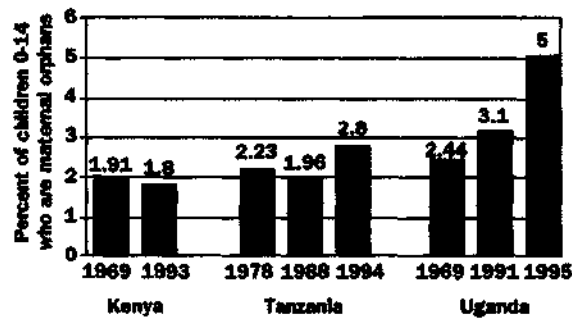
¹⁰⁹ World Bank Report, 1999, 34.

¹¹⁰ Source: http://www.unaids.org/bangkok2004/GAR2004_pdf/Focus_orphans_en.pdf).

¹¹¹ H. Frank 2004, 223.

¹¹² A teacher of Mpererwe Church of Uganda Primary School during an interview on 19th of December 2003.

Figure 2 Trends in maternal orphan rates in three hard-hit East African Countries, In Various Years



Note: Maternal orphan rates in this figure include children who are two-parent orphans.

Sources: Kenya (1969), Tanzania (1988), and Uganda (1969) are based on census data as reported in Ainsworth and Over (1994a,b). Kenya (1993), Tanzania (1994), and Uganda (1995) are from DHS data. Tanzania (1978) and Uganda (1991) are from census data as reported by Hunter and Williamson (forthcoming).

This explains that in the absence of AIDS, gradual improvement in maternal health over the past two decades would have reduced maternal orphan rates. Instead, a critical look at the above graph indicates that the maternal orphan rate in Uganda shows steady increases since 1996 to date, a trend that can probably be attributed to a combination of AIDS and civil war. Because, AIDS tends to be geographically clustered, maternal orphan rates are even higher in areas hard hit by the epidemic. For example, across fifteen villages in the Rakai District of Uganda, the maternal orphan rate in 1990 was 6.6 percent; double that for the rest of the country.¹¹⁴ Relatively, in Mpererwe Township, most of the families have orphans of either single or both parents who have passed away because of HIV/AIDS related issues. A respondent said,

So far I have lost 4 children of whom 3 were for my brother who passed away with his wife because of HIV/AIDS and one was for my young sister who died while still studying at Kyambongo

¹¹³ Konde-Lule and others, *AIDS in Uganda*, quoted in World Bank Report, 1999, 37.

¹¹⁴ Konde-Lule and others (1997), quoted in World Bank Report, 1999, 37.

University in 2001. I am praying that these two may live, but I do not know what will happen in the near future. I am worried.¹¹⁵

Losing a parent can have profound consequences for any child, and these are likely to be worse in poor households. Because very young orphans whose mothers are infected or die of AIDS have higher mortality rates than other orphans since it is most likely that one-third of them are themselves infected with HIV at or around the time of birth. It is also obvious that AIDS orphans suffer social stigma from having lost their parents through a sexually transmitted disease. "...this girl has refused to continue school because her fellow student have maliciously spread news that her parent died of HIV/AIDS and that she is all infected with the disease."¹¹⁶ In fact, to agree with World Bank, the impact of an adult's death on surviving children is great. For instance, the immeasurable grief, psychological pain and more seriously, the immeasurable declines in nutritional status and reductions in schooling, causes profound and lasting damage to a child. In summary, these effects on the HIV/AIDS orphans can and are reducing individuals' ability to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to escape poverty.¹¹⁷

3.4.4 On Uganda's public health spending

One economic rationale for governments' involvement in HIV prevention is very straightforward because prevention is much cheaper than treatment. More important, prevention avoids the sickness and death that are the final outcome of the disease. As it is seen, this argument is particularly important in the many low-income countries like Uganda where governments remain committed to publicly financed curative health care. Because, in such countries, Uganda included, the high cost of AIDS treatment starkly reveals the scarcity of resources. In Mpererwe Township, a widow lamented,

HIV/AIDS is a sad story. The father of my children passed away and I am always sick with my children, but whenever we go to Mulago National Hospital, the nurse give drugs to the children but they tell me that there is no treatment for adults. Now if there is no drugs for

¹¹⁵ One of the respondents narrating her story during the interview on the 4th of January 2004.

¹¹⁶ A respondent in Mpererwe Township pointing to a 12 years old girl whom she takes care of.

¹¹⁷ World Bank Report, 1999, 37.

the adults and we are the ones to look for food for the children if we die where will these children go?¹¹⁸

This provides the evidence that the number of AIDS cases and treatment costs amount becomes painfully evident that AIDS treatment is consuming public resources that could have been used for other human needs like education, but still it is not yet enough for every patient. Because, the World Bank Report has indicated that spending on AIDS treatment increases with GNP; on average, treating an AIDS patient for one year costs about the same as educating ten primary school pupils for one year,¹¹⁹ particularly in developing countries like Uganda. This seems to put the governments in a difficult situation of restricting financial support for AIDS treatment and at the same time reassessing their commitment to publicly financed health care. This is also viewed in the World Bank Report that in many countries there are political pressures to subsidise AIDS treatment at a higher level than other health care service.¹²⁰ This, however, portrays that these pressures are likely to grow in Uganda as the number of people with HIV/AIDS increases. Since the researches indicate that in Uganda women are more vulnerable to the HIV/AIDS infections with 45% ¹²¹ of 12,490,105 million total women population of Uganda;¹²² and out of 50 women who were interviewed in Mpererwe township, 13 women were widows of cases related to HIV/AIDS. Then it is obvious that women are the ones who are more affected by this system. In relation to this, The World Bank Report advises that the governments that wish to continue suggesting health care should initiate aggressive prevention efforts as early in the epidemic as possible. Also, the governments that are attempting to reduce subsidies for curative care would do well to invest in HIV prevention, since political pressures for subsidised care may be difficult to resist.¹²³

¹¹⁸ A widow in Mpererwe Township lamenting during the interviews on the 11th of December 2003.

¹¹⁹ World Bank Report, 2001, 39.

¹²⁰ World Bank Report, 2001, 39.

¹²¹ F. Ham 2004, 223.

¹²² Uganda Bureau of Statistics Act No. 12, 2002, quoted in J. N. Oundo, 2003, 1.

¹²³ World Bank Report, 2001, 39.

3.5 Women, HIV/AIDS and Development

The World Bank reports “poverty and inequality of income across households and low status for women all contribute to the spread of HIV.”¹²⁴ Although the health impacts of the disease alone are ample cause for concern, there are additional reasons why the development community in general and policymakers in particular should be concerned about the HIV/AIDS epidemic. First, the widespread of poverty and unequal distribution of income that typify underdevelopment, appear to stimulate the spread of HIV. Second, the accelerated labour migration, rapid urbanisation, and cultural modernisation that often accompany growth also facilitate the spread of HIV. Third, at the household level AIDS deaths exacerbate the poverty and social inequality that are conducive to a larger epidemic, thus creating a vicious circle.¹²⁵

This chapter indicates that women are responsible for food and agriculture. Unfortunately, the virus has affected the agricultural fields in the sense that if the farmer (who is most likely to be a woman) is infected and is ill, the family members spend more time caring for him/her. This of course affects the routine methods of farming because the family gets worried about losing the member of the family any time anyway, hence pay less attention to the farming. This relates to Mpererwe Township situations because women who are involved in survival activities fall sick, their families run short of food staffs. It is this effect that has serious implications on food insecurity. No wonder, the more HIV/AIDS spreads the more hunger the affected families experience. In Mpererwe Township, a widow lamented, “I am a widow without a regular income and with a responsibility of looking after my six children. Now I am sick and I do not have food for children and myself.”¹²⁶ According to the World Bank Reports (1999), if the country acts to close the literacy and urban employment gaps between men and women, HIV would have even more difficulty spreading since the researches indicate that HIV/AIDS increase the impact of poverty. Unfortunately, some of the very processes that might achieve these goals can also stimulate the spread of AIDS. Furthermore, other policies that sometimes

¹²⁴ World Bank Report, 1999, 3.

¹²⁵ World Bank Report, 1999, 27.

¹²⁶ A widow lamenting during an interview on the 7th of January 2004.

accompany growth, without necessarily contributing to it, can likewise worsen the epidemic.¹²⁷

For example, though an open economy is recognised as a key requirement for rapid growth, openness primarily refers to the ease with which entrepreneurs can move goods and capital across national borders. Yet a higher degree of openness to trade and financial flows is typically also accompanied by a greater degree of openness to movements of people, including immigration. Moreover, some studies have suggested that immigration itself contributes to economic growth in terms of internal and external trade, but on the other hand, the cross-country regression analysis suggests that countries with larger immigrant populations tend to have larger AIDS epidemics. The World Bank Report clarifies this point by stating that, a country in which 5% of the population is foreign-born can expect to have an infection rate of about 2% higher than a country with no foreigners¹²⁸ However, the question that surfaces is, does this mean that governments should reduce immigration to avoid an AIDS epidemic? The answer is debatable, because if immigration is beneficial to economic growth, reducing immigration may slow it. Also looking at immigration in terms of the military, reducing it will then mean partly the weakening of the nation's protection system. Relatively, the increasing number of people living with HIV/AIDS could affect the economic growth since the ill people will not work due to their bad health and also national health systems spend more on medicine importation.

Relating immigration to the Mpererwe Township situation, the condition is that the government of Uganda cannot control immigration because people immigrate due to labour force and more seriously because of the on going political wars that are presently surrounding the country. Others migrate because of family violence in one way or the other. People flee from the danger zones to urban areas for safety. While the national soldiers are transferred from one place to another in order to ensure the protection of the country. During these movements, slum settlements and camps are formed, hence an

¹²⁷ World Bank Report, 1999, p. 30.

¹²⁸ World Bank Report, 1999, p. 30.

HIV/AIDS epidemic. In the case of military, soldiers do not go out for fighting with their families. As they leave their wives behind there are some sexual practices on both sides that take place between the periods these people are separated from their partners. This is a risky situation that the government cannot fully control. What may be said here, are the emphasis of faithfulness and abstinence and also the correct use of the condoms.

In addition, military forces are often based near urban centres and consist predominantly of young, unmarried men and women who are likely to have sexual relationships with one another. In Mpererwe Township, there are single or separated male and female soldiers within the township. The implication is that sexual relationships are being formed. Therefore, there is no doubt that there are new HIV/AIDS infections and even re-infections (being infected with a different strand of HIV). This then confirms what the World Bank Report says above that the area with more soldiers will have a higher infection rate than the area with fewer soldiers. Since Mpererwe Township is one of the Kampala City suburbs where displaced people run to, then this situation definitely applies to it.

3.6 Why are women most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS?

Vulnerability refers to a lack of power, opportunity and ability (skills) to make and implement decisions that impact on one's life...¹²⁹ For example, traditionally an African woman has little say over the kind of sexual practices she engages in.¹³⁰ This "little say" creates vulnerability because women are disempowered from participating in making a decision about the activity in which they are the main actresses.

...I had separated from my husband for two years because of his infidelity and I went to stay with my elder brother. But, my husband convinced my brother to send me back to him and indeed he forced me to go back to my husband. After a period of one year, my husband fell sick and died. He refused to go to hospital. Probably he died of HIV/AIDS.¹³¹

¹²⁹ V. Tallis. *AIDS is a Crisis for Women*. Agenda, 1998, 9.

¹³⁰ M. A. Oduyoye and M. A. Kanyoro Circle...Conference Paper in Addis Ababa August 3-9, 2002.

¹³¹ A respondent telling her story during an interview on the 3rd of December 2003.

In fact, it is this “little say” that has paved the way to Mpererwe Township women’s vulnerability to risky activities that have exposed them to HIV/AIDS. Indeed this study identifies the traditional element as one of the factors that are believed to have increased Mpererwe Township women’s vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Below more factors are expressed.

3.6.1 Biological make up

According to Haddad, women’s vulnerability is a result of both social and biological factors.¹³² Focusing on the biological factors, Haddad cites Abdool asserting, “Several biological factors enhance the transmission of HIV/AIDS in women.”¹³³ Biologically, explains Abdool, women are more susceptible to the disease because the vagina and labia present larger surface areas than that of the penis. In addition, semen stays longer in the vagina, therefore increasing the period in which the virus has contact with the women’s mucus membrane.¹³⁴ Furthermore, women’s genital tissues are easily damaged during sexual intercourse, which results in cuts, and bruises that provide entry points for the disease.¹³⁵ These are some of the reasons that reveal that Mpererwe Township women are at a higher risk than men for being infected with the HIV through unprotected sex. Therefore, this points to girls and young women especially those in Mpererwe Township whose vagina linings are still in the processes of developing and can be torn; causing bleeding that may increase the risk of getting the HIV-virus. It has also been realised that women are more likely than men to get sexually transmitted diseases that take longer time, than for men to present or manifest. And even if it does, women in Mpererwe Township, due to their roles as nurturers are more interested in the well-being of the family members, hence they take longer to seek medical services or even not at all. Women as they are, feel embarrassed to present a sexual transmitted problem since there is a lot of stigma around it. Therefore, the long duration of untreated Sexual Transmitted Diseases in the vagina increases a woman’s chances of being infected with the virus.¹³⁶

¹³² B. G. Haddad, ‘*Choosing to Remain Silent: Links Between Gender Violence, HIV/AIDS and the South African Church*’ (149-167) in Phiri, et al. 2003, 151.

¹³³ K. Abdool, 1998 quoted by Haddad in Phiri et al. 2003, 151.

¹³⁴ K. Abdool, 1998 quoted by Haddad in Phiri et al. 2003, 151.

¹³⁵ K. Abdool, 1998 quoted by Haddad in Phiri et al. 2003, 151.

¹³⁶ I. A. Phiri, 2003, 9.

3.6.2 Gender inequality

As indicated earlier on page 12 of this study, our African societies have different sexual roles and rules for men and women. In Mpererwe Township, these sexual rules lower the status of women and in the process affect the sexual relationship within this township. Phiri advances this observation by explaining that the traditional upbringing of boys and girls runs on gender lines in the sense that from their mothers, girls learn that they were created to serve their brothers. Whereas, boys grow up in a patriarchal system believing that they are born to be served by girls and women...¹³⁷ These mentalities are very much emphasised through most African traditional initiation ceremonies. For instance, in Mpererwe Township girls are given sexual and nurturing education to satisfy the sexual and family needs of their household.

In addition, it is also acknowledged that in some African traditional societies like Samia Bagwe, marriage is the centre of the African community and patriarchy as well, which puts an African woman into the subordinate position.¹³⁸ According to van Woudenberg this subordinate position seems to have contributed a lot to this era of HIV/AIDS where research indicates that there are more infections of HIV among married women than any other group.¹³⁹ To emphasise this point, Phiri et al cite Pieterse, G quoting the World Health Organisation, stressing that the major reason for the above mentioned infections is because of 'the sexual and economic subordination of women.'¹⁴⁰ Admittedly, this seems to be the reason that inspired the United Nations AIDS (UNAIDS) and United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) Reports to assert, "Gender inequalities are a major force behind the AIDS epidemic."¹⁴¹

As explained previously, females in Mpererwe Township grow up knowing that they are owned by either their father, brother, husband or an uncle because females are seen not to

¹³⁷ I.A. Phiri. 'The Initiation of Chewa Women of Malawi': A Presbyterian Women's Perspective, in J.Cox, (ed.) *Rites of Passages in Contemporary Africa*. Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998, 143.

¹³⁸ I. A. Phiri 2003, 10.

¹³⁹ Van Woudenberg, G 1998, quoted by Phiri et al. 2003, 10.

¹⁴⁰ G. Pieterse, 1996 as quoted by Phiri et al. 2003, 10.

¹⁴¹ UNAIDS & UNDP 2001, 21.

be independent, but dependent on males.¹⁴² The implication here is that females are powerless to resist what males impose on them because they are their dependants. This is portrayed in a research done in Kenya, Zimbabwe and Zambia, which show that between the age ranges of 15 to 19, there are more girls who are infected with HIV than boys of the same age.¹⁴³ This is because of gender inequality and also biological makeup, and lack of adequate know-how of reproduction health and sexual involvement in cross-generational relationships. Therefore, this is a clear warning that something must be done to change the status of young girls and married women in Mpererwe Township otherwise the HIV/AIDS pandemic will go on wiping out communities because women are powerless to negotiate for safer sex due to social norms and gender inequality.

3.6.3 Poor health

People's health depends on effective poverty alleviation, clean water, adequate and balanced nutrition, decent housing, good sanitation and sound basic education, especially for girls. Unfortunately, the majority population, especially that of Mpererwe Township, and particularly women population, is currently not reached by health services. "...whenever we go to hospital, nurses say that there are no drugs for adults except for children, therefore adults have to buy drugs for themselves, but where is money for drugs when there is even no enough money for food?"¹⁴⁴ Indeed such situations put Mpererwe Township women's lives in danger. For instance, health profiles indicate that in 1990 there was one doctor for every 18,488 people in Sub-Saharan Africa. This compares with one doctor for every 344 people in the industrial nations, one for every 5,767 people in all developing countries, and one for 4,968 worldwide. In the same year, one nurse served 6,504 people in Sub-Saharan Africa compared with 4,715 people in all developing countries.¹⁴⁵ This is an indication that the scarcity of medical service especially, in Mpererwe Township, points to women who in most cases receive medical services too late if at all. For they can not afford the high costs of drugs and other medical services, which are under cost sharing or privatisation thus making it impossible to access

¹⁴² The researcher's observation during research findings in Mpererwe Township by December 2005.

¹⁴³ Kenya DHS, Kenya National AIDS and STD Control Programme 2000 Report; Glynn et al 2001; Mac Phail et al 2001; Sibersmidt et al 2001 and Gregson et al 2003, Cited by Phiri et al 2003, 10.

¹⁴⁴ A respondent lamenting during an interview in Mpererwe Township on the 4th of January 2004.

medical treatment. This must also be one reason why Sub-Saharan Africa's average life expectancy is 45 years, which is about 25 years and 13 years lower than the industrial nations and the world average respectively.¹⁴⁶ The World Bank supports this point by stating "the maternal mortality rate in Sub-Saharan Africa was 971 per 100,000 live births compared with 471 in all developing countries and only 31 in the industrial countries."¹⁴⁷ In relation to this, Abuom also points out "African women, particularly rural women are often the most vulnerable population in terms of ill health and malnutrition."¹⁴⁸ Therefore, poor health of women in Mpererwe Township is one of the factors that render women in this township to be vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infections.

In fact, women's health in Mpererwe Township worsens when it comes to the fertility, this study will argue. This is seen in the way women's health in this township is affected by frequent pregnancies and by traditional dietary customs, which often forbid women to eat foods that are rich in protein because these foods are meant for men only. This puts women in this township at the double risk of being under fed. Under fed is a situation that influence these women to be vulnerable to other infections especially HIV/AIDS as they practice contrary activities like prostitution in search for food to maintain their health.¹⁴⁹ As M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden put it, this is seen in "the enormous gender differential in the region's sexual and reproductive burden of diseases as measured by deaths and disability."¹⁵⁰ In this regard, fertility in Mpererwe Township must be analysed because these traditional customs seem to have been carried on from the past notions of the physical control of women's body and its products. This finds support in Ogundipe's statement, "Under this issue comes pardah, genital mutilation, the lack of control over her body's biology or its products such as children who are viewed to belong to the man's family."¹⁵¹ Moreover, this puts women's health in jeopardy due to their critical roles in

¹⁴⁵ UNDP 1996; World Bank 1994; quoted in A. Abuom 2001, 122-123.

¹⁴⁶ UNECA 1999, quoted in A. Abuom 2001, 123.

¹⁴⁷ UNDP, 1997, quoted in A. Abuom 2001, 123.

¹⁴⁸ A. Abuom 2001, 123.

¹⁴⁹ The researcher's observation as a member of the community and a counselor as well.

¹⁵⁰ M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden. 'Gender and Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa' in D. Belshaw, R. Calderisi and C. Sugden (eds.) *Faith in Development: Partnership Between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa*. (Oxford: Regnum, 2001, 95.

¹⁵¹ M. Ogundipe, 1994, 35.

production, childbearing and child rearing and household management.¹⁵² In connection with this, Shimwaayi and Blackden, reveal that Africa's total fertility rate in 1997 was 60%. Women in Africa generally report an ideal family size of five or six children and they have more children than women anywhere else in the world. Africa accounts for 20 percent of the world's births but 40 percent of the world's maternal deaths.¹⁵³ This is because, most likely women in Africa, Mpererwe Township women included, the median age at first marriage ranges from 17.0 to 19.2 years. Below, the World Bank provided the table to confirm her findings.

Table 2 Total fertility Rate, 1970-97 (Births per woman)

Region	1970	1980	1992	1997
Sub-Saharan Africa	6.5	6.6	6.1	5.5
Middle East and North Africa	6.8	6.2	4.1	3.7
Latin America and Caribbean	5.2	4.1	3.0	2.7
Europe and Central Asia	2.5	2.5	2.2	1.7
East Asia and Pacific	5.7	3.0	2.3	2.1
South Asia	6.0	5.3	4.0	3.5

Sources: World Bank, 1982, 1994, and 2000

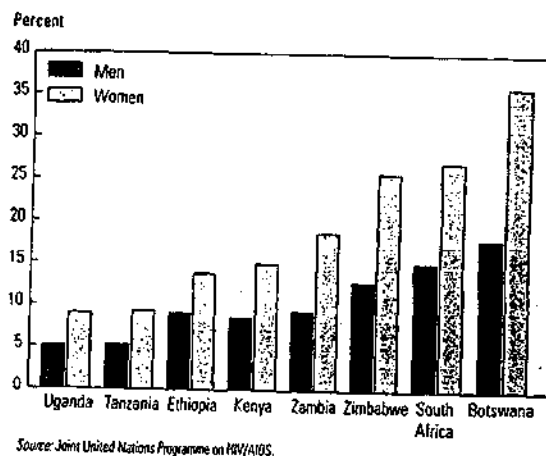
The importance of the above table is to indicate that from most of Sub-Saharan African countries (especially Uganda), the survey reveals that at least 50 percent of women had their first birth before the age of 20, which is the highest percentage of any global region.¹⁵⁴ This seems to give impetus to the HIV/AIDS infections in women, particularly women in Mpererwe Township. To emphasize this point, Shimwaayi and Blackden use recent research by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS that has pointed to the complex interlinking between poverty, sexual behaviour, inequality (particularly gender inequality), and the AIDS epidemic. Women under 25 years of age represent the

¹⁵² A. Abuom, 2001, 115.

¹⁵³ M. Shimwaayi and Blackden 2001, 95.

fastest-growing group with AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa, and account for nearly 30 percent of all female AIDS cases in the region. Data for eight African countries indicate that HIV prevalence is twice as high among women aged 15-25 as among men of the same age. In summary and to observe with Abuom, the highest fertility rate in Sub-Saharan Africa and particularly in Mpererwe Township, has contributed to the ill health of both women and children, and has posed a health risk to mothers who contract HIV/AIDS and endanger their health.¹⁵⁵ The figure below shows the HIV prevalence among men and women.

Figure 3 HIV Prevalence among Men and Women in selected African Countries (%)



Since Mpererwe Township is situated in Uganda, then women of this township are not exempted. For many researches indicate that many women's problems in most of Sub-Saharan African countries are similar.

3.6.4 Some cultural practices as contributors to HIV/AIDS infections in Mpererwe Township

Within Mpererwe Township there are mixtures of cultural practices. Therefore, this study will argue that there are some cultural practices that are responsible for increasing women's risk to HIV/AIDS infections. The most predominant practice among women in

¹⁵⁴ M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden 2001, 96.

¹⁵⁵ M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden 2001, 96

Mpererwe Township is the stretching of the labia from its natural size. This is believed to keep the vagina warm and more useful, the stretched labia works as a means of retaining the penis into the vagina during sexual intercourse, because it holds the penis firmly in the vagina until the man reaches orgasm. So some women in Mpererwe Township seek traditional herbs to soften the labia in order to stretch it more easily. Unfortunately, some women get involved in the stretching but with little information about it. In the process, the labia are over stretched and in other cases, due to differences in the body, some are allergic to the herbs and they develop permanent swellings.¹⁵⁶

This has proved to be dangerous in the sense that some labia develop abnormal swellings around the vagina that has led to cancer of female genitals hence putting them at a risk especially during delivery time because the swollen labia tends to block the way for the baby to come out easily. In some cases, the same swellings bring problems to some women because they walk with their legs parted due to the friction of the permanent swollen labia. Partly, the frictions are responsible for increasing risks for women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS in Mpererwe Township.

Another dangerous practice in this township is that of female circumcision or sewing of women's sexual organs, which also increases women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. There is a myth that women are required to have sex with their sexual partners before total healing because men's semen is a neutraliser and/or medicine that quickens the healing of the genitals. Also the sharing of the instruments during circumcision or sewing may cause infections if one of the circumcised is already infected. In addition to this, some researches have indicated that in most societies in Africa, it is believed that men enjoy more dry sex.¹⁵⁷ Also Denis mentions that 'dry sex' is one of the high-risk sexual practices because during the action, it causes lesions and irritations of the vaginal wall and therefore giving room for easy sexual infections.¹⁵⁸ In the struggle to please men, women go out of their way to use herbs that cause the vagina to be dry, tight and

¹⁵⁶ Information got by the researcher during one of the counseling sessions in Mpererwe Township by December, 2003.

¹⁵⁷ I. A. Phiri et al 2003, 10.

¹⁵⁸ P. Denis 2003, 70.

warm,¹⁵⁹ because they are brought up to know that they have to do everything possible to please men sexually. The dryness of the vagina, explains Phiri, also removes the natural protection of the vaginal wall giving a large area for the virus to enter the woman's blood stream.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, these traditional treatments in Mpererwe Township are dangerous because they have a further side effect on women's lives like cancer of the cervix, which put most African women on risk of being infected, especially those in Mpererwe Township and particularly the young ones.

The position of an African woman is worsened with cultural practices such as a widow's inheritance after the death of a husband and this has resulted in a series of HIV/AIDS' deaths of those who inherited the widow plus the widow herself. Polygamy, this study will argue, is another practice that has been discovered to be among the practises in Africa that exposes an African woman to HIV/AIDS infections. Though Denis argues that "...polygamy is not dangerous, from AIDS point of view if the man limits his sexual contacts to his wives and wives have no sexual activity outside the marriage..."¹⁶¹ the reality is that in Mpererwe Township some men continue to have sex with other partners outside marriage circles and this is dangerous for the family. This therefore, as Phiri observes, shows that heterosexual marriages, be it monogamous or polygamous, contribute to the African women's risks of the HIV/AIDS infection. Worse, even if women know that their husbands have multiple sex partners, they are powerless to get out of the marriage or even to negotiate safer sex, but have to satisfy their partners' current sexual needs.¹⁶²

In Uganda, one of the cultures allows a brother to have sex with the sister-in-law and even the father-in-law may do so at any time they feel like. What is done is the male (brother or father-in-law) comes with a spear, which he pierces up right at the entrance of the house to alert the owner of the house that there is a male having sex with his wife, in his house. (This can happen during the daytime or at night. Thereafter, the owner of the wife would also want to have sex with his wife and indeed they do have sex. This

¹⁵⁹ I. A. Phiri et al 2003, 10.

¹⁶⁰ I. A. Phiri et al 2003, 10-11.

¹⁶¹ P. Denis 2003, 67.

practice is even extended to urban areas like Mpererwe Township where a visiting brother in-law would like to have sex with the wife or maid in his brother's house because it is the culture for that particular ethnic group! One can imagine the mess in this situation where HIV is the serious problem); No HIV testing done during these exchanges of sexual partners! In fact, the testing element in this situation would find favour in what Zungu says during an interview with Phiri. Due to migrant labour, explains Zungu:

When a husband returned home from the mines; he was not allowed to go home straight, because he had to be inspected for sexually transmitted diseases by the elders of the community. In cases where he was found having the disease, he was given treatment until when he was well then go to the wife when declared healed.¹⁶³

According to the above explanation, Zungu raises an important issue that these kinds of cultures should be applied today so that in case of separation between the partners, men and women should be tested for HIV before they resume sexual relationships.

3.6.5 Economic needs

It has been acknowledged worldwide that the practice of prostitution for financial survival has also increased most women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. This finds support in Dorcas Akintunde that, African women prostitutes do not have the power to negotiate for safe sex with their clients. They are treated like objects because the services they offer to their clients are paid for. Being in the immediate need for money to cater for basic needs for themselves and their children, the situation makes them surrender to unprotected sex.¹⁶⁴ In view of the working title of this study, where poverty is one the challenges facing Mpererwe Township women then, there is no doubt that what Akintunde says about the economic needs of women applies to Mpererwe township women who are also in immediate needs to cater for themselves and their children.

¹⁶² I. A. Phiri, 2003, 12.

¹⁶³ Zungu, quoted in I. A. Phiri et al 2003, 13.

¹⁶⁴ Dorcas Akintunde 'The Attitude of Jesus to the 'Anointing Prostitute: A Model for Contemporary Church in the Face of HIV/AIDS in Africa' (94-110), in I. A. Phiri et al 2003, 108.

3.6.6 Some Religious beliefs

Phiri reports that some Evangelical Christian women say, “A good Christian woman does not deny her husband’s sexual advances except for prayer.”¹⁶⁵ These kinds of beliefs are common even in Uganda, which is also an evangelical Christian country. Indeed as Phiri puts it, such beliefs disempower Christian married women in challenging their husband’s infidelity.¹⁶⁶ This therefore leads to the conclusion that some religious norms should be revised because if they are not presented well, can mislead the public to view religious marriages as a major risk factor in societies especially for religious women in Mpererwe Township to contract HIV/AIDS. This kind of teachings find support in some African patriarchy discourses, which have proved to be particularly detrimental to women. Landman gives another example of such discourses as follows: “a woman’s body belongs to her husband...God wants women to provide sex to men but not to enjoy it.”¹⁶⁷

3.6.7 Violence against women

Sexual violence against women damages women’s genital organs, hence making them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infections.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, researches have revealed how a lot of women live with violence or have experienced some form of violence from their male counterparts. For example, fathers, stepfathers, domestic workers, siblings, guardians, neighbours and male relatives are raping babies and older girls in homes.

In support of the examples, in December 1995, a researcher¹⁶⁹ was asked to be a counsellor in a youth camp in Kazzi camping cite, in Kampala suburbs. The camp hosted about 600 young boys and girls who were holidaymakers and it lasted for one full week. In her interactions with the camping girls, small papers were passed on to each girl to omit her name, but write her age and the first sexual experience if any and also mention the place and with whom; whether or not the intercourse was by persuasion or free will. To the surprise of the researcher, the biggest number had their first sexual experiences at the age of 11-14 years old at home and in the house with either house male domestic

¹⁶⁵ I. A. Phiri et al 2003, 13.

¹⁶⁶ I. A. Phiri et al 2003, 13.

¹⁶⁷ Christina Landman & Viljoen, Jo. 9 May 2002. “Wit, ryk en ek het vigs” (White, rich, but I have AIDS) Beeld.

¹⁶⁸ P. Denis 2003, 70-71.

worker or male relatives who came to stay in the house. Many responses indicated that it was sex by persuasion, which is rape.

As explained in the first chapter of this study, the researcher¹⁷⁰ is a social counsellor and she had a session with a young woman of 23 years old who was raped by her father. Therefore, this shows that girls are ever at the risk of sexual violence outside the home by their peers, teachers, relatives, neighbours, family friends, church leaders, strangers, and by their biological fathers. This finds support in Phiri that "... mothers reluctantly allow their daughters to be raped by their fathers so that they can escape both sexual and physical violence..."¹⁷¹ Furthermore, with married women, their spouses and the strangers, whom they receive in their homes, also rape them.¹⁷² In addition, a respondent said, "...regularly he comes back drunk and forces me to sex intercourse which I no longer enjoy, but to fulfil the role of being his wife."¹⁷³

It is also acknowledged that rape against women and other forms of sexual torture are now regularly used as strategies of war in order to disgrace and demoralise individuals...¹⁷⁴ As mentioned earlier, because of civil wars, in Uganda some families have lost their homes and family structures and now live around Kampala suburbs like Mpererwe Township or slums or in camps. This has proved to increase women's vulnerability to rapes and unprotected sex and has increased HIV/AIDS infection because no woman enjoys sex, which is not private. So what happens is that their husbands go out for prostitutes where they put themselves at a risk of HIV/AIDS, and then as times goes by, these men tend to force their wives into unprotected sexual acts, which are also rapes.

¹⁶⁹ Myself during my activities as a youth counselor, December 1995.

¹⁷⁰ Myself during usual counseling sessions.

¹⁷¹ I. A. Phiri et al 2003, 14.

¹⁷² I. A. Phiri et al 2003, 14.

¹⁷³ A married women whose husband denied her to be involved in any income generating activities during the interview on the 2nd of December, 2003.

¹⁷⁴ Much-Shim Quiling Arquiza, *Responding to Questions of War and Peace from Perspective of Gender, Ethnicity and Religious Identity in MOSAIC: World Conference of Religion and Peace Women's Programs*, 2002, 4.

3.6.8 Women as nurturing argents

The research being a social work and a counsellor has observed that Mpererwe Township women are care providers for every member of their families. More seriously, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has increased Mpererwe Township women's home responsibilities since the HIV/AIDS patient requires home-based care for quite a long period. This worsens the condition because the majority of women in this Township do not have financial support to carry out their care duties effectively. Neither do they have enough knowledge on how to protect themselves from being infected by the virus, in some cases these women get infected in the process of care giving for AIDS patients. As it is acknowledged worldwide that Uganda was the most hard-hit country as far as HIV/AIDS is concerned, this has left not only women, but also many children in want. Some children run to urban areas such as Mpererwe Township in search of survival in the form of employment. Others, especially girls when they drop out of school to nurture their sick parents or siblings and in the process they do contract HIV/AIDS and also lose opportunities to improve themselves through education, which is the initial stage for all kinds of development. It is also known that as these children seek survival, the girl orphans become vulnerable to sexual abuses and in the long run, some of them are impregnated, infected and raped. Some are married away to generate income for the siblings and other family problems. In other cases when these young girls mature, they are not able to stand patriarchal domination and this has caused a number of divorces and/or separation in marriages in Mpererwe Township. In the process, again as these divorcees search for survival strategies, these young women are infected knowingly or unknowingly because of conditions that they cannot control.

3.7 The impact of HIV/AIDS on Mpererwe Township women's progress

3.7.1 Socially

HIV/AIDS has broken the social rubric of societal set up in the sense that Mpererwe Township women's reception based on African social tradition can no longer be sustained partly because HIV/AIDS has added more responsibility to women in this township. This is to say that women are now taken up by the responsibilities of looking after the sick especially those effected by HIV/AIDS and the orphans of HIV/AIDS

related cases in their homes. Volunteer work in this community, which is mainly connected to women, has been badly affected because most women are ill and others are caring for the ill. In addition, already women's level of education in Mpererwe Township has been destroyed by HIV/AIDS because the few newly professional skilled women are dramatically dying of HIV/AIDS in this township. This is causing a lot of concern in Mpererwe Township, especially when sickness adds responsibility to the living people who are mostly women. So far more information has been given on how HIV/AIDS has affected the girl child. It is also important to note how the boy child has been affected. When parents die, some boys do not get assistance to continue with their education due to lack of care and/or funds. As this affects a girl child, even a boy child falls into the same problem. For boys run on the streets in urban areas where they become more exposed to various sorts of crimes such as drug abuse, rape, murder, stealing, to mention but a few.

3.7.2 Culturally

HIV/AIDS has affected the cultural routines where now women in Mpererwe Township no longer continue with their ethnic group traditions of art, music, literature, to mention but a few. These traditional activities used to help women to meet and discuss their problems that resulted unto counselling session to each other. Unfortunately, this gathering has stopped and has hindered the new generation from knowing their African cultures and traditions. Parents no longer allow their children, especially girls, to participate in cultural and traditional occasions in Mpererwe Township because of being afraid that their children may be either raped in the process or are convinced to play unsafe sex that might lead to HIV/AIDS infection.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with women and HIV/AIDS, particularly, women in Mpererwe Township. It concludes that the determinants of an individual's sexual activity are subtle and complex. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that social conditions would influence the frequency of risky sexual behaviours and hence the size of the epidemic. The chapter has argued that the large number of victims of HIV/AIDS is women and children. It has also identified the fact that poverty and gender inequality in this township make a society

more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. The reality is that a woman, who is poor, will find it harder to insist that her sex partner abstain from sex with other partners or use a condom or take other steps to protect herself from becoming infected with HIV/AIDS. For she needs to fulfil her immediate basic needs. Therefore, factors that expose women in Mpererwe Township to HIV/AIDS infections were identified and discussed. These were: women's biological make up, gender inequality that render women powerless, poor health of women due to poor nutrition and high fertility, some cultural practices, economic needs, some religious beliefs, violence against women and sexual abuses. The study also discussed the impact of HIV/AIDS on women and children in Mpererwe Township. For women it was included that HIV/AIDS has physical, spiritual, emotional, social and economic impacts. While for children it was included that HIV/AIDS has health, malnutrition, growth, education, discrimination, rejection and emotional impacts.

Therefore, this chapter suggested that in Mpererwe Township, men and women ought to work hand in hand to eliminate HIV/AIDS because they are all affected in all spheres of our lives. African traditions and cultures that dehumanise women to the extent of exposing them to HIV/AIDS must be stopped. Church oppressive doctrines and teachings on the humanity of women must be reframed to affirm women as also created in the image and likeness of God, because we all share the same image and Holy Spirit of God.

For the infected, the use of condoms should be encouraged to protect lives of their spouses. The HIV/AIDS' Therapies that prolong the life of the infected and are affordable are also a good idea. Above all, love for one another should be emphasised in the sense that if one is infected he or she should be open with the partner so that counselling, prevention and treatments may be taken into consideration early enough. In fact, the task is on people themselves to work against HIV/AIDS and factors that dehumanise humanity, for as Carol Bellamy observes, "By any measure, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is the most terrible undeclared war in the whole world ..."¹⁷⁵ especially in Mpererwe Township. Then it is reasonable to conclude that HIV/AIDS has contributed to

¹⁷⁵ Carol Bellamy. *The Hunger Project. AIDS in Africa: A crisis of Leadership. The Time to Move From Rhetoric to Action. Briefing on the Strategy to Stop the Spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa*, October 13th 2001, 4.

Mpererwe Township women's vulnerability to poverty. But, what is poverty? What are factors that render these women to poverty? What then should be done to eradicate and/or eliminate poverty among the women in Mpererwe Township?

CHAPTER FOUR WOMEN AND POVERTY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter expressed social conditions that are believed to be influencing Mpererwe Township women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Focussing on the working title of this study, this chapter intends to provide a broad understanding of poverty amongst women, especially women in Mpererwe Township. Therefore, the chapter aims at first bringing out the real meaning of poverty and then secondly, identifying and discussing issues that render women's vulnerability to poverty. This will help to suggest strategies that may transform women's situation in this township.

4.2 Poverty

Abuom has stated that poverty includes not only the shortage of disposable income but also "deprivation in other economic and social areas such as in education, in life expectancy and in a whole spectrum of factors that affect a person's standard of living and quality of life."¹⁷⁶ "Poverty is a disease that leads one to death; because, when one is poor, she/he is inferior in most circumstances. One is ever lonely and no progress in her plans. Always in lack."¹⁷⁷ Indeed, a quick glance at the succinct summary of the devastating economic position of women in Mpererwe Township is most likely to lead one to conclude that women are less privileged in this community. For instance, out of the 50 women interviewed in this township, 31 women indicated that they are poor. "I am poor because I do not enjoy life for I eat when I have food and some times I sleep hungry when I do not have."¹⁷⁸ In general, also Kyesimire reports that, "...in Uganda poor people constitute 61% of the population where 30% constitute the absolute poor of which women are the poorest of the poor."¹⁷⁹ Internationally, this corresponds with what Buckley asserts, "If men are poor, women and children are even poorer."¹⁸⁰ Giving an

¹⁷⁶ A. Abuom. 2001, 111.

¹⁷⁷ A respondent commenting during an interview on the 15th of December 2003.

¹⁷⁸ A respondent lamenting during an interview on 16th of December 2003.

¹⁷⁹ Edward Kyesimire, 'Food Security in Uganda.' Paper presented at a workshop on the "*Gender Dimensions of Agricultural Policy in Uganda*," Centre for Basic Research and UNRISD, Kampala, 1996.

¹⁸⁰ M. I. Buckley, 1984, 3.

example from America, Buckley reports that by the standard of the federal definition of poverty, two-thirds of poor adults are women. The same source also identifies causes of poverty among women, which are: patriarchy, capitalism and racism among others. Accordingly, these systems of injustice have kept women in reliance, scarcity and helplessness.¹⁸¹ Relatively, Korten also states that, “the limited social capital of women particularly their level of education and health reduce their productive potential as well as their ability to participate in the market as labourers and consumers.”¹⁸²

In addition, Abuom also reports that in Africa, many estimates show that two-fifths of the population live in poverty and the number and proportion of poor people are increasing, of which “the majority are most likely to be women.”¹⁸³ According to Abuom, poverty among women is growing.¹⁸⁴ This confirms what The World Bank Economist for Africa said, “the poor are often women, and that they take the brunt of adjustment.”¹⁸⁵ Just like other women, Mpererwe Township women do experience such situations and most of them are single mothers and elderly. In fact, the worst situation is that women in this township are in most cases the heads of the families and most of them are not employed. For instance in Mpererwe Township, out of 50 women who were interviewed 33 women head families. Out of the 33 women 5 are employed and 28 women just apply survival strategies like selling fruits or vegetable on small-scale rates. Similar to this, 31% women in America head more than 45 % of black families.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, to use Snyder and Tadesse’s words, it is this increased family and household dependence on women’s earning that leads women to move rapidly into the market-oriented activities, especially in the informal sector of their economies.¹⁸⁷ This raises the concern: What then makes women vulnerable to such conditions?

¹⁸¹ M. I. Buckley, 1984, 4.

¹⁸² D. Korten, 1990, 44.

¹⁸³ A. Abuom 2001, 111.

¹⁸⁴ A. Abuom 2001, 115.

¹⁸⁵ Economist, London, 1 May 1993, in M. Snyder and M. Tadesse, 1995, 180.

¹⁸⁶ M. I. Buckley, 1984, 9.

¹⁸⁷ M. Snyder and M. Tadesse, 1995, 181.

4.3 Mpererwe Township Women's vulnerability to poverty

The causes of poverty among women in Mpererwe Township are multiple. What follows are some of the identified and articulated factors that influence women's vulnerability to poverty in this township.

4.3.1 Patriarchy

According to Buckley's explanations, "Patriarchy has an almost universal presence and is yet historically flexible, adapting itself to different times and economies."¹⁸⁸ Another objective of patriarchy is the control of women's sexuality by men. For instance, women in Mpererwe Township are by nature the bearers of children; but on the other hand, they are often the exclusive nurturers of children, men and extended families. Therefore, although women are nurturers, they do not have full power over the people they nurture, but instead men own the power over them. While motherhood has a biological base, it should not be taken for granted that women are designed as the nurturers in society. For nurturing needs combined and equal efforts from the father and mother. This is one of the reasons that God created opposite sexes to complement each other in issues concerning parenthood. According to Buckley this societal mentality that women alone are the nurturers seems to be a cultural manipulation of women's biological make up that keeps them in this fixed situation, so that men can control all other options.¹⁸⁹ Ogundipe advances this observation by asserting that man is steeped in his centuries-old attitudes of domination, which is advantageous to him.¹⁹⁰ To stress the point, Ogundipe emphasises, "Not even the most politically progressive men are completely free from patriarchal attitudes and feelings of male superiority."¹⁹¹ To this, Zillah Eisenstein writes:

The reproduction of gender role supplies society with the most basic form of hierarchical social organization. The women as mothers reveal women's role in the reproduction of the species most easily. Derived from this are the subtlest forms of patriarchal organization—the sexual division of labour in the labour force, the division between public and private life, and the divorce of political and

¹⁸⁸ M. I. Buckley, 1984, 6.

¹⁸⁹ M. I. Buckley, 1984, 6.

¹⁹⁰ M. Ogundipe-Leislle. 1994, 36.

¹⁹¹ M. Ogundipe-Leislle 1994, 36.

family life... Women defined as mothers structures the either/or mentality.¹⁹²

Because, women in Mpererwe Township are the primary agents for child rearing and child nurturing, they are seen as caring, emotional and dependent beings. This cuts them off from the public domain. Unfortunately, this is not seen as work for a woman to deserve any payment, but only as part of her responsibility in a home. Sanders agrees with this observation by asserting that men are seen as being responsible for the productive activities outside the home, while women are expected to be responsible for reproductive and productive activities within the home. This tends to result in women being disempowered, submissive and excluded from labour forces and decision-making.¹⁹³ It is this situation that has put in place the condition where men have access to higher paid jobs, while women are in most cases engaged in work that is an extension of their domestic roles, unappreciated and under-paid.¹⁹⁴ This finds support in, World Alliance of Reformed Churches Research findings, which say “most public institutions (political, economic and social) tend to support men in leadership and decision-making roles, while women in public institutions tend to fill positions more related to their nurturing and caring roles.”¹⁹⁵ Indeed this agrees with what Buckley says, “...women do the great majority of jobs open to them which are extensions of this nurturing task...”¹⁹⁶ It is possible then that also women in Mpererwe Township have always been involved in the services rather than the employment or leadership level and this is a major factor that has condemned them to poverty both in formal settings and in local community.

In relation to women's deprivation, a critical look at the economic set up in Mpererwe Township, women's and men's access to economic benefits are not equal. This observation is supported by World Alliance of Reformed Churches Research findings that “while men are more likely to access, own and control financial and other resources, such as land, credit and loans, women face a difficult battle to gain similar economic

¹⁹² Zillah Eisenstein. *The Radical Future for Liberal Feminists*. New York: London, Inc., 1981, 14-15.

¹⁹³ F. Sanders, Gender is not Synonymous with Sex. *AIDS Bulletin*, September 2000, 9 (3), 15.

¹⁹⁴ F. Sanders 2000, 15.

¹⁹⁵ World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches. 2003, 18.

¹⁹⁶ M. I. Buckley 1984, 7.

access.”¹⁹⁷ In the same line, when it comes to cultural aspects, women and men face different cultural opportunities and challenges, explains World Alliance of Reformed Churches research findings. In Mpererwe Township, it is the norm for women to require the permission of male relatives to enjoy freedom of movement. Also gender-based abuses and violence prevent women in Mpererwe Township from enjoying personal liberties and full inhabitant. This confirms the domination of a patriarchal system that has condemned women in Mpererwe Township to poverty. It is this same situation that has fuelled the growing impoverishment of women in this township. Because, according to the societal set up of Mpererwe Township, women are dependent on men and therefore have no full powers to decide on their own without their seniors, men. One said “...I have filled forms to get a loan to boost my small scale business, but my husband refused to endorse the form so I cannot get it anyway.”¹⁹⁸

4.3.2 Capitalism

Buckley indicates that capitalism is the second framework that fosters oppression of women. Capitalism, explains Buckley, is an economic system based on the competitive market, and therefore aims at an ever-expanding technology and the maximisation of production. In the process, this system enriches the owners of industries while it makes the worker dependent and vulnerable.¹⁹⁹ In brief, with capitalism the market serves the strong. When Buckley says that the market serves the strong, the implication is that the working people, constitute the great majority, are highly stratified in terms of income and are also divided in their loyalties. Some are much better off than others are, but even the working class remains the wage earners without ownership of productive property. It creates classes and its corporations are organised on strictly hierarchical lines. In fact, from the characteristics of capitalism and patriarchy, the realisation is that they are interrelated and for this reason, “patriarchy suits capitalism well.”²⁰⁰ Therefore, relating this situation to women in Mpererwe Township, it points to the fact that the subjugation of these women has been influenced by capitalistic systems in various ways that have tied

¹⁹⁷ World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches 2003, 19.

¹⁹⁸ A respondent lamenting during an interview in Mpererwe Township on the 15th of December 2003.

¹⁹⁹ M. I. Buckley 1984, 7.

²⁰⁰ M. I. Buckley 1984, 7.

them to low levels. At this low level, women in Mpererwe Township find themselves dependent on men and therefore being oppressed in all spheres of life. Nevertheless, women in Mpererwe Township constitute a reserve army of workers willing to work even under extremely exploitative conditions in order to earn a living. For instance, 37 out of the 50 women interviewed are involved in both small-scale business and employment.

But, though patriarchy and capitalism are intertwined, these systems can change for the good of Mpererwe Township community. What should be done are the entry of democracy as part of solution to women relief and the dismantling of male dominating hierarchy in the economic system. As people are now collectively responsible for their political life, argues Buckley they have to become collectively responsible for their economic life as well, for example, the equal production and distribution of goods and services among male and female in the societies²⁰¹ must be emphasised. This may pave the way for more than enough work for men and women in Mpererwe Township because people will then work toward a sustainable future in the use of combined (men and women) energy and natural resources.

4.3.3 Tribalism

Tribalism in this study will mean the state of remaining faithful and supportive to a certain ethnic group in behaviour and attitudes. Tribalism is good and necessary because it gives its members a sense of identity, belonging and security. However, in Mpererwe Township tribalism is a problem in itself because it is responsible for the endless conflicts and continuance of poverty among women in this township. As mentioned previously on page one of this study, Mpererwe Township is a mixture of tribes and therefore different cultures. The predominant tribe is Ganda who are prejudiced against other ethnic groups' customs, food, language, dressing, physical appearance and way of life. There is also a sense of favouritism, especially when it comes to employment, property owning, business operations, location of community facilities like water, community leadership positions and/or prestige, to mention but a few. This has caused inferiority complexes where some of the small tribes are afraid to team up with the predominant ethnic group when it comes

²⁰¹ M. I. Buckley 1984, 8.

to income generating activities. For instance, out of the 50 women interviewed in Mpererwe Township, 7 none Ganda women were the ones willing to team up, but the rest were not willing to team up, but to employ other women of less privileged status of whom the majority are not Ganda. This is because as George Kinoti puts it, “tribal arrogance on the part of the larger ethnic communities is oppressive to the smaller communities.”²⁰² The result is that it has affected the economics development, education, social and political interaction in Mpererwe Township, especially for women. In fact, tribalism has done more harms than good in this Township.

4.3.4 Gender inequalities

In this study, gender inequality will mean the unfair differences between male and female in the society where one gender is favoured by the society in terms of wealth, status and opportunities. It should be noted that from the beginning, this study had presented gender inequality in all spheres of Mpererwe Township women’s issues that pose as a challenge to their spirituality. The reason is that it has been acknowledged that females face numerous challenges throughout their lives just because of their biological gender that they cannot change. For example, The World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches record:

...the cultural preferences for sons rather than daughters has resulted in a decline of birth rates for girl babies...there have been reports of baby girls being neglected, malnourished or even killed at birth.²⁰³

This portrays that societies define a girl child as of less importance in the society. In fact, turning to African cultures of which Mpererwe Township is inclusive, the social characteristics and roles assigned to women and men differ significantly. These are viewed in areas of productive, reproductive, religious and community management tasks. For instance, the production of goods for the household consumption or income through work in and outside the home, especially in operating small business, in the case of Mpererwe Township, falls on women and/or girl child. Haddad cites Boserup also

²⁰² George Kinoti. ‘Vision for a Bright Africa’ (1-41), in G. Kinoti (ed.), *Vision for a Bright Africa: Facing the Challenges of Development*. Kampala: IFES & AISRED, 1997, 24.

²⁰³ World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches 2003, 13.

focussing on the productive functions of women as the major food producers.²⁰⁴ Because, women's work revolves around the home, such as subsistence farming and the informal sector, and for years it was not taken into account by the professionals in their development planning policies and activities, as they tended to only consider the economy, which is identified to be a man's role.²⁰⁵ Furthermore, as Boserup argues, with economic development requiring the specialisation of labour practices, women increasingly had to bear more work in societies during the processes of modernisation.²⁰⁶

Despite the fact that women are hard working agents, the evidence is that, gender disparities in access to and control of the critical assets are major factors for poverty among women. Shimwaayi and Blackden stress, "In all cases, women's more limited access to and control of these assets hampers their efforts to reduce poverty and diminishes the effectiveness of poverty reduction more generally."²⁰⁷ In addition, Abuom emphasises that it is also because women in Africa have less education that they earn less, own less, control less and are less well presented in most economic and political spheres than women elsewhere.²⁰⁸ Indeed this Relates to women and poverty in Mpererwe Township and this chapter intends to only select and deal with a few of these key assets as related to the said township and these are Land, Capital and Financial Services, Labour, Education, Time and Participation.

4.3.4.1 Land

Access to land and other land-based resources are crucial factors in determining how a community ensures its basic livelihood. The majority of the people in Mpererwe Township rely on land and land-based resources for their livelihoods. Unfortunately, with increasing scarcity of land and water resources the access for individuals especially women and households to these resources are being eroded.²⁰⁹ Therefore, Shimwaayi and Blackden compare women's rights to arable land to be weaker than those of men. Women's right to land observes Shimwaayi and Blackden, vary in the sense that the

²⁰⁴ B.G. Haddad 2000, 113.

²⁰⁵ E. Boserup (1970) as quoted by Haddad 2000, 113.

²⁰⁶ E. Boserup (1970) as quoted by Haddad 2000, 113.

²⁰⁷ M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden 2001, 91.

²⁰⁸ A. Abuom 2001, 115.

nature of the land involves the functions it fulfils and the legal systems applicable at the local level. These situations affect women because, the most women can enjoy are the rights of use to land owned by husbands or sons.²¹⁰ Indeed this was realised in this study were 13 women out of the 50 who were interviewed indicated that they would prefer settling in their husbands' firms but these firms were distributed to their sons and/or inheritor therefore no widows access to land. This implies that women's access to land, and particularly women in Mpererwe Township, cease on the death of the male owner, thus leaving women with no land asset, hence less land-based resources to ensure their children's basic livelihood, hence always living in needs that ties them in absolute poverty.

4.3.4.2 Capital and financial services

Shimwaayi and Blackden cite Sally Baden explaining that available estimates suggest that the poor in general have little access to finance and that women in particular have less access than men.²¹¹ Baden asserts that Women's World Banking, a global network providing financial services for women entrepreneurs have estimated that less than 2% of low-income entrepreneurs have access to financial services.²¹² In Africa, the same source stresses, "Women receive less than 10% of the credit to small farmers and 1% of total credit to agriculture."²¹³ Giving an example from Uganda, Baden reports that only 9% of all credit goes to women.²¹⁴ This means that 91% of credit is directed to men! Therefore, based on the current population of Mpererwe Township in relation to the whole population of women in Uganda, then only approximately 0.1% of all credit goes to women in Mpererwe Township and the rest goes to men. Accordingly, then it is even most likely that the said 0.1% of all credit goes to the few rich women but not to the majority women who are poor within this township. In addition, Shimwaayi and Blackden confirm Baden's findings by stressing that women face gender-specific barriers in accessing financial services, including lack of collateral, low levels of literacy, innumeracy, education and lack of time and cash to undertake the journey to a credit

²⁰⁹ M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden 2001, 92.

²¹⁰ M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden 2001, 92.

²¹¹ Sally Baden (1996) as quoted in M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden 2001, 92.

²¹² S. Baden (1996) as quoted in M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden 2001, 92.

²¹³ S. Baden (1996) as quoted in M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden 2001, 93.

institution.²¹⁵ In fact, this is the case with Mpererwe Township women because this research indicates that the education level of women in this township is low as indicated in this study that 23 women of the 50 women interviewed have no academic papers and this contributes to their situation of being poor. In addition, it is sad that women do form the largest percentage of those reached by micro-finance, but they receive very small loans. This is viewed in this study that the few men reached by micro-finance services receive in aggregate a higher proportion of total loan value than the more numerous women receive.²¹⁶

4.3.4.3 Labour

Shimwaayi and Blackden observe that:

Men and women have different access to employment while family labor, including that of women is often controlled by husbands. Competition from other household task limits women's farming activity and labor remuneration also differs along gender lines, as the total income share received by men is more than twice the share received by women.²¹⁷

More seriously, Buckley adds:

When workers are needed, women are encouraged to take jobs and when fewer workers are needed, cultural trends are created that urge women to return to their homes to care for their families.²¹⁸

It is also noticed that child labour keeps girls out of school and stay home to look after their young siblings and/or to allow resources to be reserved and used for boys to attend school.²¹⁹ The painful reality here is that when these girls are looking after their young siblings at home or elsewhere, their services are not paid for on top of their being denied education for no good reasons. If they are paid at all, their pay is very small because their services are considered to be casual not professionally acquired from the formal systems of modern education. This was realised during the field research done in Mpererwe

²¹⁴ S. Baden (1996) as quoted in M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden 2001, 93.

²¹⁵ M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden 2001, 93.

²¹⁶ M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden 2001, 93.

²¹⁷ M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden 2001, 93.

²¹⁸ M. I. Buckley 1984, 7.

²¹⁹ World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches 2003, 14.

Township where in all households girls and frustrated women are the ones who work as maids with very little pay. In fact, this connects to what Buckley affirms that society is in need of vast numbers of menial services for very low pay and that such tasks are likely to be performed by people of low status, people who cannot make their voices heard, among them especially women.²²⁰ Therefore, from Shimwaayi and Blackden's observations, the conclusion can be made that in most African households, of which Mpererwe Township is included; women can be seen as:

Social institutions for mobilizing labor in which there are strong differences between members in their social command over labor that are directly related to their position in the household hierarchy.²²¹

It is this household difference that has paved the way for women in Mpererwe Township to be vulnerable to poverty and related problems.

4.3.4.4 Education

Education is the process by which a person's mind and character are developed through informal and formal teaching. Therefore, it is very important to note that women of Mpererwe Township need to learn to recognize their humanity and write their history and experiences if development is to be achieved because development starts within an individual then it extends to the society. Unfortunately education, as the backbone of development, has been denied to most of African women, especially those in Mpererwe Township. For instance out of 50 women interviewed in Mpererwe Township, 23 have no informal education. This relates to what World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches states "An estimated 140 million children worldwide still do not attend school, two-thirds of whom are girls."²²² In fact, from the above report, then "it is the lesser education of girls that has resulted in the hindrance of women's development in all aspects of life."²²³ Most of the researches indicate that, "Female education is one of the

²²⁰ M. I. Buckley 1984, 7-8.

²²¹ M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden, 2001, 93-94.

²²² World Alliance of Reformed Churches Researches 2003, 14.

²²³ The New Vision, Uganda's Leading Daily newspaper of 2003,04,03.

pathways for promoting social and economic development.”²²⁴ Unfortunately, the same researches again portray that there is a wide gap between boys and girls enrolment in schools due to gender bias. This is seen in the social and cultural factors, which play a stronger role than income in determining female participation in education.²²⁵ Since most researches again indicate that the majority of agricultural substance producers are women, therefore appropriate education for women must be emphasized to improve agricultural productivity and income as well as women’s opportunities for employment and decision-making in development issues. Since it has been observed from the recent findings that the education of a girl child can make a constructive change in social development, then there is a need for societies, government, private sectors, Churches and/or other religious groups to intervene in promoting girls’ education in Mpererwe Township.

4.3.4.5 Time

Analysis of men’s and women’s time allocation captures the interdependence between the “market” and “household” economies, observe Shimwaayi and Blackden; because “it is documented that women work for longer hours than men...”²²⁶ which clearly demonstrates the time pressures faced by women in all spheres of their lives. Women of Mpererwe Township are known to be the ones waking up earlier and going to bed later due to the traditional responsibilities assigned to them by patriarchal societies (caretaking). Below Shimwaayi and Blackden cite an extract of a figure from Mark Blackden and Chitra Bhanu²²⁷, which portrays the distribution of productive hours between men and women. Unfortunately, and to agree with Shimwaayi and Blackden much of women’s productive work is unrecorded and not even included in the system of national accounts.²²⁸

²²⁴ A. Abuom 2001, 116.

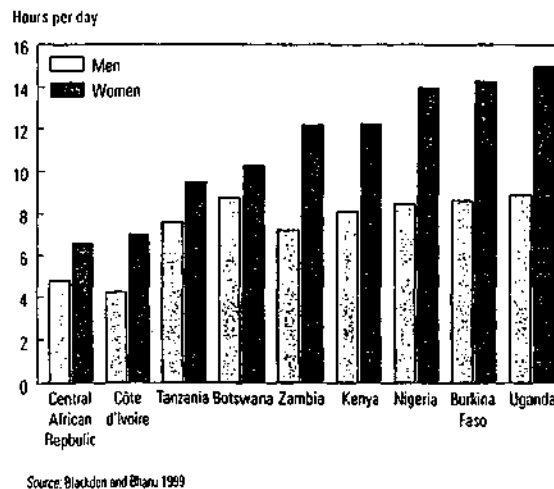
²²⁵ M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden, 2001, 94.

²²⁶ M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden, 2001, 98.

²²⁷ Mark Blackden and Chitra Bhanu in M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden, 2001, 98

²²⁸ M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden, 2001, 98.

Figure 4 Productive Hours per Day by Gender in Selected African Countries (%)



The above figure shows that among the indicated countries, women in Uganda work for longest hours. Indeed relating this to women in Mpererwe Township, women are seen to be the first to wake up as early as 4.00 o'clock in the morning to start baking, fetching water, prepare children to go school, going to search of fresh foods and fruits in fields and carrying them to the market places. In fact, their day continues throughout with their energy and mind focussed on their small-scale businesses. They carry on their business up to midnight trying to make late hour sales. Some stay a long distance away; hence again they have to walk late in the night a distance of three or more kilometres to reach their destinations. This is done not once nor twice, but it is the order of the women's activities in Mpererwe Township throughout the year as indicated in chapter six of this dissertation. As much as these women try to look for survival means to secure food for the members of their families, there are some risky situations for these women especially when they move late and early in dark and dangerous hours of the days. Some of the risks are rapes and robbery because the thugs know that these are businesswomen who wake up very early in the morning to go to buy what they are to sell throughout the day. In the evening, thugs know that these women have been selling; therefore they have some money with. Failure to find money, means the lives of these women are in danger and some are killed in the process of defending themselves by sounding alarms or fighting and running for their lives.

Though there are assumptions that men are breadwinners in families, a distinguishing characteristic of economies is that men and women play substantial economic roles. However, Agnes Quisumbing et al use the data compiled by the International Food Policy Research Institute to show that:

African women perform about 90% of the work of processing food crops and providing household water and fuel wood, 80% of the work of food storage and transport from farm to village, 90% of the work of housing and weeding, and 60% of the work of harvesting and marketing.²²⁹

This then implies that women work harder and for longer hours than their counterparts (men) because good produce is a result of hard work. This finds support in Shimwaayi and Blackden when they assert, “One way to capture the dynamics of the varied contributions of men and women to the productive economy is through the gender intensity of production.”²³⁰ Using Elson and Evers²³¹ findings, Shimwaayi and Blackden display the table below that gives an example of Uganda where men and women are not equally distributed across the productive economy, because it is taken for granted that agriculture is a female-intensive sector while industry and service are male-intensive.²³² Thus since agriculture is the backbone of industry, and women play a bigger role in agriculture than men, then it is obviously confirmed that women and especially those of Mpererwe Township, invest more hours and energy in the economy processes than men in this township.

²²⁹ A. Quisumbing et al 1995, quoted in M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden 2001, 99.

²³⁰ M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden, 2001, 99.

²³¹ Diane Elson and Barbara Evers (1997) in M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden, 2001, 99.

²³² M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden, 2001, 99.

Table 3 Structure of the productive Economy in Uganda (%) Gender intensity of production

Sector	Share of GDP	Share of exports	Female Share of employment	Male Share of employment
Agriculture	94.0	99	75	25
Food Crops	33.0	n.a	80	20
Traditional exports	3.5	75	60	40
Non-traditional agricultural exports	1.0	24	80	20
Industry	14.3	1	15	85
Manufacturing	6.8	n.a	-	-
Services	36.6	n.a	32	68
Total/average	100.0	100.0	50.6	49.4

- Not available

n.a Not applicable

Source: Elson and Evers 1997

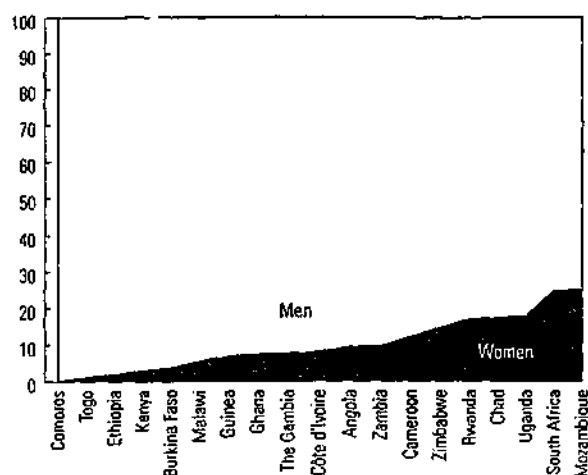
4.3.4.6 Women participation in parliament

Women in Mpererwe Township are consistently undermined in public institutions at the local and national levels. This explains that they have little say in decision-making of societal norms of which they are part. This is because, patriarchy in this township has undermined and limited women's participation to nurturing and caring services which have to rotate around the homes, but not in public institutions such as society, government and Church. These gender barriers limit Mpererwe Township women's political participation and reinforce power gaps. Relatively, Shimwaayi and Blackden identifies that women in Sub-Saharan Africa constitute 6% of national legislature, 10% of bodies at the local level, and 2% of national cabinets.²³³ Looking at these findings, the implication is that to a large extent women are left out in political issues when they constitute a bigger percentage of the world's population. By the help of the graph below,

²³³ M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden 2001, 99.

The International Parliamentary Union explains the gap between male and female participation in Parliament in some countries including Uganda.

Figure 5 Participation of men and women in Parliaments in 14 selected African Countries (%)



Source: International Parliamentary Union 1997.

In fact, participation means to take part or have a share in an activity or an event and it is a key development concern that Mpererwe Township women should take part fully. It is acknowledged that Uganda falls under those countries where African women want a greater participation in the decision-making processes in public institutions such as society, government and Church, because participation is an indicator to a social status and a tool to improve all people's concerns. But, the central point of development is that both women and men be lifted from poverty and that both have to contribute and benefit from development efforts, full participation of women in Mpererwe Township must be emphasised if development is to be achieved. This is suggested because among the 50 women interviewed none of them indicated that she is a member of Uganda Parliament, and this meant that there is no women representative for women in Mpererwe Township although there are women who are members of the Township's community council.²³⁴

²³⁴ The researcher's observation as a member of Mpererwe Township's community.

Reflecting on Mpererwe Township, women comprise more than half of the human resources and are central to the economy as well as the social well-being of the community as indicated earlier. This implies that development goals in Mpererwe Township cannot be fully reached without women's full participation. "Women therefore, must have both the legal right and access to existing means for the improvement of oneself and society."²³⁵ For example in Mpererwe Township women have the right to vote and they do vote. They are mobilised by political parties to vote and indeed women vote in high numbers. But, they are less represented in any other political activities. For, as Abuom puts it, the mere act of voting cannot be regarded as a measure of political consciousness or participation.²³⁶ Though it is acknowledged that a few women in Uganda are now actively involved in formal positions in sectors such as culture, social welfare, and women and youths affairs, the overall situation of Mpererwe Township women with regard to political participation is still unsatisfactory. One of the identified reasons for preventing Mpererwe Township women from fully participating in public spheres is the typical style of electioneering, which is often marred by violence, financial limitations, unethical and derogatory language typically used against women candidates, and also a lack of relevant capability and experiences.²³⁷ Working against such styles by replacing them with encouraging and supportive actions that involve women in Mpererwe Township fully in political participation is an imperative that is expected to result in freedoms that initiate not only women's development, but also development for all in this township.

4.4 Woman herself

Ogundipe identifies women being shackled by their own negative self-image, by centuries of the interiorisation of the ideologies of patriarchy and gender hierarchy.²³⁸ Reflecting on women in Mpererwe Township, indeed they do react to objective problems in a way that portrays self-defeat and self-crippling. For example, women work for money to sustain their families but some husbands demand for these moneys for contrary

²³⁵ M. Snyder and M. Tedesse 1995, 6.

²³⁶ A. Abuom 2001, 118.

²³⁷ A. Abuom 2001, 120.

²³⁸ M. Ogundipe, 1994, 36.

activities like alcohol and cigarettes. One said, "Whether or not, all the money I struggle to get in my small scale business is controlled by my husband. If I refuse to give it to him, he beats me..."²³⁹ These are cases of violence that need to be reported to community leaders for collections and discipline. But, women just keep silence because they fear the consequences more over they suffer psychologically. For they react with fear, dependency complexes and attitudes to please and cajole patriarchal hierarchy where more self-assertive actions are needed. This is because as Oduyoye asserts, "women have been brought up to believe that a woman should always have a suzerain, that she should be 'owned' by a man, whether he is a father, uncle or husband."²⁴⁰ Indeed such exploitative mentalities do affect Mpererwe Township women's progress in all spheres of their lives. In fact, this fear is a false sense of inferiority that stands in the way of Mpererwe Township women not acknowledging their potential so as to assert themselves fully as being created in the image of God and hence having equal rights before God to enjoy life in full.

On the other hand, some privileged women have become oppressors of less privileged fellow women. This is seen in the way some privileged women under pay less privileged when they employ them to work as housemaids and/or other casual labours.²⁴¹ This has led to less privileged women to turn a blind eye and deaf ear to any kind of oppression and violence by either patriarchy or by fellow women because they want to earn a living. Therefore, African women and particularly those of Mpererwe Township must be made to understand that they are partly responsible for their fellow women underdevelopment if they do not change their attitudes from oppressing the less privileged women. This then calls for a change of attitudes from oppressive attitudes to nurturing and encouraging fellow women. The way forward therefore is to initiate programmes that will create awareness in Mpererwe Township women about the true causes of their underdevelopment. This then will uplift encouragement and education of Mpererwe Township women in issues of assertiveness in order to overcome these challenges. In

²³⁹ A respondent lamenting during an interview in Mpererwe Township on the 10th of December 2003.

²⁴⁰ M. A. Oduyoye, 1996, 4.

²⁴¹ The researcher's observation as a member of Mpererwe Township community.

addition to this, some planned workshops for Mpererwe Township community as part of transforming strategies are indicated in chapter seven of this dissertation.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with women and poverty in Mpererwe Township. It has argued that, Mpererwe Township women in general remain the poorest of the poor in this township due to factors pointing to gender inequality. This led the study to conclude that most women in Mpererwe Township and their children are poorer because they live in poverty due to situations marked with discrimination, rejection and subordination. This was realised by identifying and discussing issues that render to Mpererwe Township women vulnerable to poverty. These issues included among others gender inequalities that limit women's access to critical assets such as land, capital and financial services like loans, labour, education, time pressures put on women compared to men, tribalism, capitalism, women's political participation, and women themselves. At the end of it all, this study suggested that to achieve equitable improvement and sustainable development among women in Mpererwe Township and other societies at large, some necessary steps have to be put in consideration. These are to:

Promote greater "voice" for women in decision-making at all levels with focus on governance and conflict prevention. To enhance female education, literacy and skills training. To focus on HIV/AIDS, especially prevention and orphan care. To invest in directly productive asserts for women: financial services, agricultural technology and inputs; and also to address sustainable land and property ownership/use rights for women as part of legal reform.²⁴²

However, the chapter has also acknowledged the fact that women employ survival strategies in their fight against poverty. This acknowledgement supports the World Bank report where it states that:

Women are one of Africa's hidden growth reserves, providing most of the region's labour, but their productivity is hampered by widespread inequality in education and access to resources. Thus

²⁴² M. Shimwaayi and M. Blackden, 2001, 105.

suggesting greater gender equality as a potential force for accelerating poverty reduction.²⁴³

In the context of this study, this means that to reduce gender inequality in access to and control of diverse range of assets among other factors is an imperative. So then, in the light of the working title of this study, what can be done to restore Mpererwe Township women's spirituality, which is characterised by poverty and HIV/AIDS? But, what is spirituality? Is there hope for these women to reverse the challenges to their spirituality so that they may enjoy life to the full?

²⁴³ World Bank Report, 2000, 2.

CHAPTER FIVE

WOMEN AND SPIRITUALITY

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter principally addressed the link between gender-based inequality in misdistribution of economic assets that lead to poverty and HIV/AIDS. Focusing on the working title of this study that expresses that poverty and HIV/AIDS challenge women's spirituality in Mpererwe Township, this chapter aims at exploring how the spirituality of these women is challenged. This chapter will argue that, women's spirituality cannot be separated from their hospitality and eschatology. Therefore, issues that challenge women's spirituality will be presented and discussed in relation to Western feminist view of spirituality as a framework. Also the chapter provides working definitions of key concepts to provide a clear understanding of African women's spirituality. These concepts are Spirituality, Hospitality and Eschatology.

5.2 Spirituality

There are many ways to define and describe spirituality. For example, Spirituality is the "condition of spiritual mindedness, devotion to God and the things of the spirit."²⁴⁴ "Spirituality is our connectedness to God, to our human roots, to the rest of nature, to one another and to ourselves."²⁴⁵ Mananzan et al advance these descriptions of spirituality to mean "the shape in which the Holy Spirit has moulded herself into one's life."²⁴⁶ It is the "magnet that draws us to God. It immerses us in a consciousness of the God who is with us and the God who is beyond us."²⁴⁷ Rakoczy goes further to state that "Spirituality is multi-dimensional and comprises beliefs, practices and values which assist the person and community in growing in this God-consciousness and its implications in their lives."²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ J. I. Parker. *New Dictionary of Theology*. England: Inter-Varsity Press: 1988, 657.

²⁴⁵ V.Fabella and R.S. Sugirtharajah (eds.) 'Spirituality' (189-190) *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*. MaryKnoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000, 189.

²⁴⁶ M. J. Mananzan et al. *Women Struggling Against Violence: A Spirituality for Life* (141-146). Maryknoll: New York, Orbis Books 1996, 77.

²⁴⁷ J. Chittister. *Heart of Flesh: A Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company and Ottawa: Novalis, 1998, 19.

²⁴⁸ Susan Rakoczy 2004, 377.

5.3 Western Feminists' view of Spirituality

In feminist discourse, spirituality is “an interpretative, existential tool” which describes “the attitude and interpretation we adopt towards our experiences to give meaning.”²⁴⁹ Focussing on Christian women, Rakoczy says, “For Christian women, it is the new perspectives they bring to the Christian symbols of God, Christ, Church and the practices of the faith-prayer, worship, community, action, which are making distinctive contributions to Christian spirituality.”²⁵⁰ However, Schneiders traces the origin of feminist spirituality “not in religion or even in the critique of religion but in the realisation by feminists that women’s estrangement and oppression are fuelled ...by the dichotomy between spirit and body, with the former assigned to the male and the latter to the female, which is intrinsic to patriarchy.”²⁵¹ According to Schneiders, feminist spiritualities of all kinds seek to end this dualism through integration of “spirit and body, heaven and earth, culture and nature, eternity and time, public and private, political and spiritual.”²⁵²

5.4 African Women’s view of Spirituality

Mpererwe Township women like other African women; have an inclusive spirituality because it involves other concepts like hospitality and eschatology. To begin with, it has been observed that African women pray in all circumstances even without liturgy. It is their day to day experiences that direct them to pray in times of sickness and health, for rain, for planting and sowing, for harvests, for the well-being of the community, in thanksgiving, for children and their safety and times of death. African women’s spirituality then is associated with a kind of inner healing to women, as this study will argue. This corresponds with Oduyoye that spirituality is “connected with the idea of healing, of being whole and healthy.”²⁵³ All these prayers are directed to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. According to Mpererwe Township women’s spirituality, their prayers are heard and therefore answered to them by God. African women’s spirituality is celebrated

²⁴⁹ Ursula, King. Spirituality for Life, ‘1147-160’ in M.J. Mananzan, et al (eds.) *Women Resisting Violence: Spirituality for Life*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996, 154.

²⁵⁰ S. Rakoczy 2004, 375.

²⁵¹ S.M.Schneiders 1986, 32.

²⁵² S.M Schneiders 1986, 32.

²⁵³ M. A. Oduyoye. ‘The Empowering Spirit of Religion’ (361-376), in Ursula King (eds.) *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*. London & Maryknoll, SPCK/Orbis Books, 1994, 361.

in songs, rituals and symbols that show the energising spirit animating the community to move together in response to God.²⁵⁴ In joy and in sorrow, Mpererwe Township women like other African women sing prayers and dance their faith in God. In fact, this singing and dancing declare Mpererwe Township women's search for God to liberate them from despairs such as violence, oppression, exploitation, grief, to mention but a few. Oduyoye expounds on this by explaining that these sung prayers demonstrate three strong beliefs: Satan is real and strong but God is stronger... all pains can be conquered if we tell them to God, and all breaks in community relationships can be healed by God.²⁵⁵ Moyo adds to Oduyoye's interpretation of African women's singing and dancing by saying "the use of songs and dances demonstrates the wholeness of women at the heart of African religious experience, which are liberating experiences for women. To sing and dance, explains Moyo, liberation demands that the composer and the dancer have the spirit of the Lord upon them..."²⁵⁶ Oduyoye advances this explanation by emphasising that in songs, prayers and dance, African women "have not been subverted as in other aspects of life."²⁵⁷

Therefore, Oduyoye describes the spirituality of African women as sacramental: their fasting, ritual meals, objects, symbols and signs are based on the belief that the spirit-dimension of life is ever close, and that this spirit-world "is on the side of those who protect life and combat all that carries death in its wake."²⁵⁸ In fact, it is this deep sense of the spirit-dimension of life, which is a source of strength for women's spirituality Mpererwe Township. Although Cynthia Eller is not an African scholar, she adds that the spirituality of women has a long and venerable history in virtually every religion ever practised by human beings.²⁵⁹ Conscious of their dignity as God's beloved creation, Mpererwe Township women in diverse contexts are creating Christian feminist spirituality, which reflect their search for God in their daily experiences. For "common

²⁵⁴ V. Fabella and R.S. Sugirtharajah, 2000, 189.

²⁵⁵ M. A. Oduyoye, in King, U 1994, 372.

²⁵⁶ F.L. Moyo. 'Singing and Dancing Women's Liberation: My story of faith,' (389-408) in J.A. Phiri, D.B. Govinden and S. Nadar (eds.) *Her – Stories: Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2002, 407.

²⁵⁷ M.A. Oduyoye 1994, 375.

²⁵⁸ M.A. Oduyoye 1994, 375.

²⁵⁹ Cynthia Eller 'Spirituality, Women' (274-277) in Letty M. Russell and J. Shannon Clarkson (eds.) *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996, 274.

threads weave themselves together, just as birds of the same feathers fly together.²⁶⁰ It is this commitment to life, which is the source of the hope that enables women to live each day in confidence that God is indeed with them.²⁶¹ Indeed it is in this realm that women of Mpererwe Township have had greater freedom to explore their spirituality, frequently connecting it to the domestic activities that have formed bulk of their lives. Therefore, As Mbuy-Beya puts it; women's role as givers of life in all its physical, moral and spiritual dimensions gives them a sense of honour and dignity.²⁶²

5.5 The effect of patriarchy on Mpererwe Township women's spirituality

The effects of male power on women's search for God has had serious consequences on Mpererwe Township women's spirituality especially when it comes to taking up roles and leadership in public institutions like the church. This has been going on in the church since Christianity was introduced in Africa. To expound on this observation, Rakoczy cites Schneiders illustrating, "until recently, most spiritual directors, theologians and writers of spiritual books were men who habitually proposed for women a combination of masculine spiritual practices and the ideal of the eternal feminine..."²⁶³ Schneiders continued to elaborate on this and raised an important issue that

While the constant stress on masculine forms of spirituality has been harmful to women's spiritual development, it has also had two important positive elements: First, women have learned how to integrate the masculine dimension of themselves, to be home with the opposite. Second, women often understand men's spiritual experience better than men understand women's.²⁶⁴

From this, Rakoczy expresses that it is this that makes women much better spiritual directors than men since they have more experience of both dimensions of religious experiences, male and female. Schneiders summarises this insight by saying that because women have usually been totally dependent on men for access to the liturgical and

²⁶⁰ A proverb said by the Samia-Bagwe ethnic group of the Eastern Province of Uganda.

²⁶¹ S. Rakoczy 2004, 408.

²⁶² B. Mbuy-Beya 'African Spirituality: A Cry for Life' (64-76) in K.C. Abraham, and B. Mbuy-Beya (eds.) *Spirituality of the World*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994,74.

²⁶³ S.M.Schneiders 1986a, in S. Rakoczy 2004, 378.

²⁶⁴ S.M.Schneiders 1986a, in S. Rakoczy 2004, 378.

sacramental dimensions of Christian life, they have become specialists in personal prayer. Unveiling the reality, Schneiders comments that “anyone with much experience in the ministry of spiritual direction can testify to the fact that women, by and large, have much better developed personal prayer lives than men.”²⁶⁵ This relates to Rakoczy’s comment that “central to all discussions of women spirituality is prayer, both personal and communal.”²⁶⁶ In Mpererwe Township, though women’s church attendance is low in the sense that out of 50 women interviewed 31 women no longer go church, the reality is that these women are spiritual because they do personal prayers to God in search for help.

Concerning prayer as an element of spirituality, Rakoczy quotes Ann and Barry Ulanov describing prayer as “primary speech” because in it “we say who in fact we are – not who we should be, nor who we wish we were...”²⁶⁷ Therefore, to this, Nachisale in Oduyoye sees African women’s prayer that has changed a little bit from praying through a grandmother and great grandmother who have gone before them, to praying through Jesus. Nachisale observes that women’s prayers focus first on others, the needs of the world, their families, and then lastly their own needs. Oduyoye stresses this observation by asserting that “the hearts of women in Africa meet in prayer.”²⁶⁸ So, African women hope for the resurrection of the body that is based in the resurrection of Christ and they argue that:

It was women who were determined to do honour to the body. It was women, who were entrusted with the message of hope that said death does not have the last word.²⁶⁹

Resurrection strengthens women’s spirituality as they focus on the *eschaton*. Women’s hope of victory over death is an assurance that leads to God’s unerring spirit and that they “shall not stray in the desert nor miss their providential way.”²⁷⁰ African women’s spirituality and particularly those of Mpererwe Township therefore should be seen as a

²⁶⁵ S.M. Schneiders 1986a, 44.

²⁶⁶ S. Rakoczy 2004, 399.

²⁶⁷ B. Ulanov et al 1982 quoted by S. Rakoczy 2004, 399.

²⁶⁸ M.A. Oduyoye 1994, 367.

²⁶⁹ M.A. Oduyoye 1996, 110.

²⁷⁰ M. A. Oduyoye 1996, 120.

way of unveiling and advocating true humanity as far as hospitality and eschatology are concerned.

5.6 Mpererwe Township women's view of hospitality

The word hospitality is derived from the Greek word *philoxenia*, which means “the love of strangers” or “the friend of strangers.”²⁷¹ Douglas broadens this definition by explaining, “Hospitality is the art of welcoming travellers, strangers and those in need in one's home...”²⁷²

In the Mpererwe Township community, hospitality is one of the things that women are well known for. They practice it among themselves and extend it to strangers who are commonly known as visitors. Therefore, Mpererwe Township women's hospitality can be defined as the extending of generosity, giving freely without counting the cost. It is willingness to help as it is mentioned in the Bible that we should carry one another's burden;²⁷³ and that if someone asks you to help him carry luggage for one mile, carry it for two miles and if someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.²⁷⁴ Mpererwe Township women's hospitality therefore explains what it means to exercise practical love to one another as sisters and brothers so that each may have life and have it to the full. In fact, Mpererwe Township women's hospitality is expressed in all aspects of life, for instance, in joy during traditional initiations and marriages; and in sorrow during social gatherings like funerals, misfortune and disasters. It also includes drinking, eating and having times of leisure together, for instance, around fireplaces where stories are shared. It also includes material supports because, in most cases Mpererwe Township women like other African women when they come together in their social gatherings such as marriages and funerals, they bring with them some raw or cooked food, drinks and firewood, and they work together as children of one family. They express their unity

²⁷¹ C. W. Atkinson and Field. *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*. Leicester: Inter Varsity Press 1995, 460.

²⁷² D. J. Douglas. *New Bible Dictionary*. Leicester Inter Varsity Press 1962, 386.

²⁷³ Galatians 6: 2.

²⁷⁴ Matthew 5: 41 – 42.

through singing, dancing, exchanging of gifts, speaking with encouragement and teachings especially for the young ones among them.²⁷⁵

Therefore, in general African women's hospitality can be seen as a way of life that is intimately bound up with personal relationships among the children of God. Rose-Zoe Obianga sums this up by saying, "Africans are unanimous that hospitality is a fundamental African value."²⁷⁶ Giving an example of the present situation, in the turmoil of Africa, refugees are received in the 'modern' camps for the masses and the small groups that arrive later become part of the local population, especially if they speak the same language. Also the element of looking after orphans, caring for the old and the sick in Mpererwe Township is a sign of hospitality. "...those three boys are not my biological children, but orphans from my close relatives."²⁷⁷ This explains that Mpererwe Township homes are still open to, extended families, strangers or visitors and this is an act of spirituality.

Mpererwe Township women's hospitality is inherent because they are African. Oduyoye has rightly said, "God never forgets a deed of hospitality. That is my faith as an African".²⁷⁸ Oduyoye continues by citing Murigande who reviewed Matthew 25: 31-45 as stating that "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat..." and therefore the author sees the African women's situation as one in which taking hospitality seriously led them to act in a Christ-like fashion even before Christ had been preached to them.²⁷⁹ Murigande points to the fact that it is the moral values present in African communities that greatly helped evangelisation of the continent.²⁸⁰ Murigande emphasises that the hospitality taught in the Bible has an affinity with the African cultural characteristics of sharing, welcoming and solidarity.²⁸¹ Therefore, offering and receiving hospitality is a key indication of Mpererwe Township women's emphasis on sustaining life force at all costs both as individuals and as communities.

²⁷⁵ Cultural life of Samia-Bagwe ethnic group in Eastern Uganda.

²⁷⁶ Rose-Zoe Obianga 1996 quoted in M. A. Oduyoye 2001, 93.

²⁷⁷ A response from an interviewee in Mpererwe Township 10th of December 2003.

²⁷⁸ M.A. Oduyoye 2001, 94.

²⁷⁹ Catherine Murigande (1996), in M.A. Oduyoye 2001, 96.

²⁸⁰ C. Murigande (1996), in M. A. Oduyoye, 2001, 96.

²⁸¹ C. Murigande (1996), in M.A. Oduyoye, 2001, 96.

In summary, Mpererwe Township women like other African women view hospitality as having religious roots as is demonstrated in the New Testament where one finds many examples of hospitality being exercised in Christian circles. In Paul's writing, hospitality is not a choice but a command. He says, "Welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed you" ²⁸² and "practice hospitality."²⁸³ Peter goes a step further when he says, 'offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.' God's love for the world in giving His only Son...was a sign of hospitality,²⁸⁴ Julius-a prison guard exercised hospitality to Paul while he was under arrest,²⁸⁵ as did the poor widow ²⁸⁶ and Mary of Bethany.²⁸⁷

Nevertheless, it is also recognised on the other hand that the virtue of hospitality is sometimes used to oppress women in some traditional societies. For example, in Mpererwe Township in some cultures, a woman is accused of not offering food to any visitor who comes in the family even if it is obvious that there is nothing in the house to offer.

5.7 Challenges to Mpererwe Township women's view of hospitality

5.7.1 Poverty

The most threatening challenge to Mpererwe Township women's hospitality is the effect of HIV/AIDS and poverty. It has been discussed already in previous chapters that poverty and HIV/AIDS are challenging women's spirituality in this township, women who are the main providers of hospitality. This prevents them from providing appropriate services to their family members, orphans, the sick and the aged. These problems as presented in this study, have gradually eroded Mpererwe Township women's hospitality, which is meant to welcome visitors or strangers, within the nuclear family. This has led to the social phenomenon of individualism. "...My husband and I are finding it difficult in taking care of our 4 biological children. How then can we extend our services to my brother-in-law's

²⁸² Romans 15: 7.

²⁸³ Romans 12: 13.

²⁸⁴ John 3: 16.

²⁸⁵ Acts 27: 3.

²⁸⁶ Luke 21: 1- 4.

²⁸⁷ John 12: 1- 8.

2 children?”²⁸⁸ This kind of eroding shows the absence of hospitality and the way in which moral, spiritual and cultural values of African women’s hospitality have been sacrificed.²⁸⁹ One said, “Even if one needs to assist, the present condition of poverty limits us.”²⁹⁰

5.7.2 Foreign and/or Modern Culture

Foreign cultures and new styles of life that is acquired with technology, especially in the urban areas, have undermined the good will that was the basis of African women’s hospitality.²⁹¹ This is seen in the intervention of sexuality into hospitality, which is a source of real danger to women’s health and well-being. In Mpererwe Township, women are expected to be available to all who claim their attention and their service and due to the fact that hospitality is built on reciprocity, openness and acceptance. But to open one self to others has become a risk, especially to Mpererwe women in this era of HIV/AIDS. Many reports have indicated that the strangers who pretend to be looking for hospitality in the form of shelter rape most women in Mpererwe Township. This result in bad experiences for women because some women get infected with HI Virus and others conceive and give birth to children for whom they have not planned for. “I separated from my husband because he kept on pointing to one of our sons that he is not his biological son.”²⁹² This is one of the cases that women find as they welcome strangers in their houses as a sign of hospitality.

5.7.3 Childlessness

In Mpererwe Township, childlessness within marriage is a strong challenge to women’s hospitality. “...my husband mistreated me until I had to leave his home because for 12 years in marriage I had not been able to give him children.”²⁹³ This experience concurs with Oduyoye’s view that African women’s creative literature is filled with what has

²⁸⁸ A respondent lamenting during interviews in January 30 2005.

²⁸⁹ M. A. Oduyoye 2001, 97.

²⁹⁰ A woman respondent explains her poor conditions that limit her hospitality in Mpererwe Township on the 16th of December 2005.

²⁹¹ M. A. Oduyoye 2001, 91.

²⁹² A separated woman narrating her disappointment during interviews on 3rd December 2005.

²⁹³ A respondent narrating her reason why she separated from her husband during a group counseling in Mpererwe Township on the 4th September 2005.

come to be named the “child factor.”²⁹⁴ Childless couples are pitied or even sympathised with and in most cases confusion arises, to the point of separation in that unfortunate family,²⁹⁵ or becoming infected by HIV/AIDS in longing for a child. In agreement with all Oduyoye’s sentiments with regard to the plight of a childless woman, in particular one who is sometimes ridiculed, abused, mocked, and sympathised with, this study acknowledges that in Mpererwe Township women’s hospitality turns out to be hostile in childless situations.

Indeed there are many cases to cite with regard to the plight of barren or childless women all as a result of patriarchal ideologies in Mpererwe Township. Some women believe that they got HIV/AIDS from their husbands because their husband went outside marriage circles to look for children from women whose HIV/AIDS status were not known. One said, “ He started spending weekends outside the home without explanation and each time I asked him where he was he responded by asking me if he left me with a responsibility of looking after his child.”²⁹⁶ But, this study concurs with Oduyoye’s assertion that children are gifts from God ²⁹⁷ and the Bible is clear on this. This explains that children are part of God’s free gifts to us, which is hospitality in this case. As this study has argued that in Africa hospitality is never demanded, demanding hospitality would amount to corruption.

5.8 Abuse of African/Mpererwe Township women hospitality

Earlier, this chapter has indicated that women in Mpererwe Township like other African women exercise hospitality at all times and to every body who comes their way. However, this hospitality has been abused in several ways. For instance, a story is told of the great South African settler from Britain, Cecil Rhodes, in the 19th century. It is said that he was dying of cancer while he was in Europe. Modern medication by then had been tried on him with no or very little response. It turned out that in the end, adverse

²⁹⁴ M. A. Oduyoye ‘A Coming Home to Myself: The Childless Woman in the West African Space’ (105-120), in S. Jones and M. A. Farley *Liberating Eschatology: Essays in Honour of Letty M. Russell*. Louisville: Westminster John and Knox Press, 1999, 107.

²⁹⁵ M. A. Oduyoye 1999, 108.

²⁹⁶ A childless woman expressing her heartfelt disappointment during interviews on the 15th of January 2006.

²⁹⁷ M. A. Oduyoye 1999, 110.

weather conditions in Europe were worsening his condition. It was suggested that he should be taken to Africa due to its warm habitable climate. On arrival in South Africa, the local people received him with great hospitality. In addition, they gave him their traditional medicine and he healed quickly. When he tried to give tokens to the African healers, who are most likely to have been women, they refused, arguing that their services were not for sale. As he grew stronger, he started grabbing huge tracts of land as the Africans helplessly watched.²⁹⁸ In fact, Rhodes was not the only European who enjoyed African hospitality. A large number of them like Henry Stanley, Samuel Baker, and many others are notable examples. Unfortunately, those who were explorers went back to Europe to report negatively on this African hospitality. "False information was passed on to the people in Europe that almost made the rest of the world equate Africans with animals."²⁹⁹ In previous chapters, this study has discussed that land is an important asset where food is produced and that women are food producers and food processors for the family and visitors. Therefore, assessing Rhodes' story there is no doubt that the women were most affected when the pieces of land were taken by Rhodes because the result of it all was that they now had no where to cultivate and plant food, hence less to offer to families moreover in African tradition visitors depend on women as far as food is concerned.

In fact, this kind of abuse of inherent hospitality affected Mpererwe Township women as well. This is seen in the way some women in Mpererwe Township were sexually abused by the foreigners whom they opened their hearts to and the result was to conceive and to give birth to a coloured generation. This coloured generation, with their mothers, suffered a lot during President Idi Amin's regime.³⁰⁰ For when this president wanted to get rid of the foreigners, the coloured people did not have black ancestry because Uganda is a black and patrilineal country. This led most of them to commit suicide because they could not trace their ancestry. Some killed their mothers because they blamed them for being promiscuous and conceiving with the foreigners whom they knew would leave the

²⁹⁸ Julius M. Gathogo, *The Truth About African Hospitality: Is there Hope For Africa?* Mombasa: The Salt Production, 2001, 36.

²⁸⁰ J. M. Gathogo 2001, 36.

country since they were visitors. In fact, there are many sad stories about the abuse of African women's hospitality.

The sincerity of Mpererwe Township women's hospitality has from time to time been abused in numerous ways. Some have dismissed it as foolishness, others as a weakness. In general, African women's hospitality has been exploited right from the time of slavery and the slave trade, colonialism and even by neo-colonialism. African leaders have also abused African women's hospitality through dictatorship, political assassinations of opponents, corruption and bad governance. This raises a question: What then can be done to restore Mpererwe Township women's intrinsic hospitality?

5.9 Should Mpererwe Township women quit hospitality?

The answer is debatable. Mpererwe Township women are aware that hospitality can be perverted, that providing hospitality can be risky and therefore result in challenges to their spirituality, but then, "Did God not take a risk to hand over this beautiful earth to human beings?"³⁰¹ To say with Obianga indeed it is exactly in this context of impoverishment, exploitation and uncertainty that we are called not only to exercise hospitality, but also to spread the message of hospitality with our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author of hospitality and therefore life in abundance.³⁰² Having in mind the gospel according to St. Matthew, "The one who receives you receives me, the one who receives me receives the one who sent me..."³⁰³ Mpererwe Township women especially Christian women have no option, but to obey Jesus even in the context of the changing culture. Furthermore, it is necessary to preserve the values and the richness of African culture that is also Christ-like.³⁰⁴ Since, according to Justine Kahungu "those who offer hospitality see in the receiver, God..." then all believers in God, especially Mpererwe Township women are continuing to extend hospitality to strangers. For both the giver and the receiver of hospitality do so in the name of God³⁰⁵ and more so, since women are created

³⁰⁰ Idi Amin was one of the former presidents of Uganda between 1971-1979.

³⁰¹ M. A. Oduyoye 2001, 93.

³⁰² R. Z. Obianga 1996, as quoted by M. A. Oduyoye 2001, 99.

³⁰³ Matthew 10:40-42.

³⁰⁴ C. F. Marguerite as quoted by M. A. Oduyoye 2001, 91.

³⁰⁵ J. Kahungu 1996 cited in M. A. Oduyoye 2001, 99.

in the image and likeness of God who is “Love,” they must practice God’s Love, which is in them. Obianga sums it all up by saying that African women do not exercise hospitality solely because it is a fundamental virtue of our African traditional society, but also and above all, because it is derived from our faith in Jesus who for us is the way, the truth and the life.³⁰⁶ Therefore, African women’s spirituality especially those of Mpererwe Township, which is an inclusive concept for the good of the societies should not be abandoned because hospitality is a way of life, in Africa, in families and among friends. It is a mark of divinity and/or spirituality, therefore, something which human beings should aspire to. Hospitality goes hand in hand with sacrifice as a way of life.³⁰⁷ Therefore, “all men and women must empty themselves in sacrifice and for the good of others and the survival of the community.”³⁰⁸ It is not an easy practice however, but, “a caring and compassionate Jesus travelled the path towards Golgotha not to perpetuate crucifixion, but to bring them to an end.”³⁰⁹ Thus hospitality is the way of life through which Mpererwe Township women are able to relate to the doctrine of the last days (eschatology).

5.10 Eschatology

The word Eschatology comes from a Greek word, *eschatos* meaning ‘last’ and ‘logos’ meaning ‘word.’³¹⁰ Milland et al continue to explain that “Biblical eschatology is not limited to the destiny of the individuals, but it concerns as well the consummation of the whole history of the world, towards which all God’s redemptive acts in history are directed.”³¹¹ According to Rakoczy, eschatology describes the ‘four last things’, which are both personal and collective. These are experiences of the individual, which are named: death, judgment, heaven and hell.³¹² In addition, Rakoczy explains that eschatology also includes the collective symbols of the *eschaton*, the climax of history, the Parousia or Second Coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the general

³⁰⁶ R. Z. Obianga 1996 cited in M.A.Oduyoye, 2001, 95.

³⁰⁷ M. A.Oduyoye 2001, 105.

³⁰⁸ Grace Ndyabahika, (1996) quoted in M. A. Oduyoye, 2001, 105.

³⁰⁹ N. Njoroge in M. A.Oduyoye 2001, 105.

³¹⁰ A. R .Milland; J.J.Packer; D.R.W. Wood; and D.J.Wiseman (eds.) *New Bible Dictionary*. Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1996, 333.

³¹¹ A.R.Milland et al 1996, 333.

³¹² S. Rakoczy 2004, 413.

judgment.³¹³ Therefore in brief, eschatology can be described as the science of the last things.

5.11 Mpererwe Township Women's view of eschatology

First and foremost, Mpererwe Township women's view of eschatology and to a large extent, for many Africans women and other traditions in the world relates to Njoroge's view of eschatology, which focuses on the fullness and fruitfulness of life here on earth.³¹⁴ One said, "... I have not been able to give my husband children which in actual sense I am preventing him from resurrecting, but it is not my fault for I too need my biological children..."³¹⁵ Also in an African context, explains Rakoczy eschatology has a special importance because of the role of the ancestors, the "Living dead." The ancestors' existence beyond death and their continuing care for their families are particular examples of a realised eschatology in an African context.³¹⁶ This therefore promotes Mpererwe Township women's view that hospitality fits well within African women's eschatology because these women do not focus on the last things without due regard to the present time. As Phan puts it, women's eschatological views revolve around their daily experience such as cooking, cleaning and nurturing the younger generation.³¹⁷ This also means that Mpererwe Township women's eschatology is in line with Christ's teaching in the Lord's Prayer for us to seek first the kingdom of God to come here on earth as it is in heaven.³¹⁸

Admittedly, African cultures have a much more holistic understanding of eschatology through death, because those who die before us still continue to live and therefore are still in communion with us. For example, the Samia-Bagwe ethnic group of the Eastern province of Uganda even go further by offering food and drink to the living dead in order to keep in touch with their living dead. The living generation offers prayers to the living dead in case of sickness, disasters, misfortunes and for protection. They even give new-

³¹³ S. Rakoczy 2004, 413.

³¹⁴ N. Njoroge 1996 cited in M.A.Oduyoye 2001, 105.

³¹⁵ A respondent giving her view about African eschatology on 20th of January 2006.

³¹⁶ S. Rakoczy 2004, 413.

³¹⁷ Peter. C. Phan 1995, 213.

³¹⁸ Matthew 6: 10

born babies the ancestors' names, which indicates that a new-born baby is a sign of a realised eschatology here on earth. This is strengthened by Tlhagale's description of the status of the African ancestors. According to Tlhagale ancestors are believed to possess supernatural powers in their own right without reference to God. Supernatural intervention attributed to the ancestors and not to God. They are alive and active in the affairs of their own descendants.³¹⁹ This view also implies that death fulfils the eschatological process in the African context.

Based on the four central characteristics of an African ancestor, namely sacred status acquires through death, mediation, exemplary behaviour and the right to regular communication with the earthly family, Charles Nyamiti points to Christ and describes Him as the "Ancestor of all Church members, who are His descendants."³²⁰ Analysing Nyamiti's focus on Christ as an ancestor, he points us to the clear understanding of the African women's eschatology, especially where Nyamiti asserts that in this perspective, the present, the past and the future are united. Furthermore, Nyamiti stresses that, "Because, in the past Christ became incarnate and redeemed humanity and these are the foundations of the faith now and humanity's future hope." For when a person dies in Christ, states Nyamiti, "death is the necessary step into participation in divine Ancestorship to humanity and the entry into the life of beautifying vision, love of, and company with, the divine Ancestors."³²¹ Rakoczy observes this African interpretation of Christ as the "Great Ancestor to be knitting together the living faith in the ancestors, which is so central to the life of African people, including most Christians and the key themes of eschatology."³²² However, with Oduyoye, African women's eschatology focuses on the resurrection of the body through birth. The female body, affirms Oduyoye, is a contested body in African culture.

For it is honoured only if it is fertile and has children, because it perpetuates human life. This is the reason why men have made women's body their property, but, they have no scientific argument

³¹⁹ B. Tlhagale. *The Enculturation debate: A Southern African perspective*. Pretoria: s.n. 2000, 2

³²⁰ Charles Nyamiti. *African Ancestral Veneration and its Prevalence to the Christian Churches*. *African Christian Studies* 9 (3), 1993, 23.

³²¹ C. Nyamiti 1993, cited by S. Rakoczy 2004, 430.

³²² S. Rakoczy 2004, 430.

for laying claim to their progeny and therefore to the hope of immortality.³²³

This portrays that eschatology and ethics intertwine in the sense that the body of a person, (male or female) is not owned by another human, now or in the future, because, according to the African traditional religion, “we rise from death through the infants that we give birth to.”³²⁴ Therefore, as Rakoczy puts it, “the eschatology of African women centres on hope, the fullness of life which is both very concrete (wealth, children, prosperity, rain and harmony with nature) and transcendence new life in Christ.”³²⁵

Hence, the African women’s hope (which is their eschatology) as described by Ackermann is “our human response to evil and adversity and destruction... as our refusal to accept defeat.”³²⁶ Oduyoye advances this by emphasising that, the hope of African women is grounded in their human dignity and their refusal to settle for a future of the same suffering as experienced since time immemorial.

These hopes make women to utilize their anger against unnecessary suffering leading to compassion as a route to transformation. Transformation of their cultures, their societies and of the Church, the body of Christ which is called to resurrection to new life where men and women are equal around the table of the Risen Christ.³²⁷

To strengthen the argument, Oduyoye refers to 2 Corinthians 5: 17-18, “The African women’s “anchor of hope” is truly in God who is making a new creation in and for all those who are in Christ.”³²⁸ Therefore, being spiritual as discussed in this study, Mpererwe Township women work for liberation for all, not only for themselves; they work for a transformed community life in the power of the spirit through Christ. Indeed as Oduyoye puts it, African women look unto Christ as an anchor for their hope since He “has challenged tradition and acted on the side of justice and compassion.”³²⁹ In addition,

³²³ M. A. Oduyoye 2001, 111-112.

³²⁴ M. A. Oduyoye 2001, 112.

³²⁵ S. Rakoczy 2004, 434.

³²⁶ Ackermann, Denise. The alchemy of risk struggle and hope, in M. J. Mananzan et al (eds.) *Women Resisting Violence: Spirituality for Life*, 1996, 144.

³²⁷ M. A. Oduyoye 2001, 114.

³²⁸ M. A. Oduyoye 2001, 116.

³²⁹ M. A. Oduyoye 2001, 117.

Ackermann sees the mystery of life overcoming death that is seen in the resurrection of Christ, sustaining women and therefore affirming that their suffering cannot and will not be the last world. The promise of the fullness of life is that of love, peace and justice in which everything is made new.³³⁰ To crown it all, the eschatology of Mpererwe Township women rotates around their hope that holds the desire for the end of their sufferings and the renewal of new social relationship, dignity and full participation in all spheres of life. Mpererwe Township women's hope is thus in Christ who sided with the discriminated, and the powerless like some other African women, so that all may have life to the full.

5.12 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with women's spirituality in Mpererwe Township and it has portrayed that these women's spirituality, hospitality and eschatology are linked together in the way in which they give hope for life to come (eschatology). The chapter also argued that Mpererwe Township women are fully spiritual beings. Therefore, the study explored how the spirituality of women, especially those in Mpererwe Township, is being challenged. In doing so, the study identified factors that affect and challenge women's spirituality, hospitality and eschatology. These are males' power on women's search for God, poverty, foreign and modern cultures, childless situations and abuse of women's hospitality among others. However, the study suggested and encouraged that women should not quit, but maintain their spirituality and hospitality as the way of life at present and in future. Furthermore, the study encouraged women of Mpererwe Township to push on just as Njoroge puts it, women have to soldier on the journey to Golgotha and will be met with misunderstandings, violence, threats, denial, rejection, abandonment, torture, cruelty, insults, arrogance, ignorance, name it.³³¹

In summary, Mpererwe Township women's hospitality, spirituality and eschatology require both men and women to appreciate one another, the poor, the rich, the refugees,

³³⁰ D. Ackermann 1996, 143.

³³¹ J. N. Njoroge. "Groaning and Languishing in Labour Pains. But for How Long?" (3-15) in Kanyoro, R. A. M. and Njoroge, N.J. (eds.) *Groaning in Faith: African Women in the Household of God*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers. 1996, 10.

the strangers and children. These will then show love for one another. Therefore, and to take Njoroge's idea, the African women's project of reclaiming their heritage and telling their stories demands primarily that they transform their mind from an inferiority complex. There is a need to re-vitalise this spirituality of resistance, of not giving up and deep yearning for healing, transformation and wholeness as we look forward to life in full.³³² This section connects us to the field research done among the women of Mpererwe Township. Is there a proof that the spiritual life of women in Mpererwe Township is being challenged with poverty and HIV/AIDS as the working title of this study says? What then can be done to restore women's spirituality in this township?

³³² J. N. Njoroge, in I. A. Phiri 2002, 53.

CHAPTER SIX

INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the introduction of this study, a social analysis of any kind is an important aspect of human experience, which should not be omitted in an academic study. This chapter aims to explore and interpret the field research findings done among Mpererwe Township Christian women. As seen in the title of this study, this research has investigated and analysed the concrete life situation of Christian women's spirituality in Mpererwe Township as challenged by poverty and HIV/AIDS. Following the structure of the research design, the chapter also, by means of pie charts, has statistically analysed and recorded the data from the research procedures. The methodologies and limitations of this study are already recorded in chapter one of this dissertation.

6.2 Data analysis

Data collected from the respondents was analysed by comparing the responses with the literature review as discussed from chapter two to five in this study. What follows is an analysis of the responses under the following subheadings: community leaders and women's responses. The women's responses have been further divided into 3 sections namely: women's education profile, women's spirituality and women's interest for and against group work.

6.2.1 Mpererwe Township Community Leaders

The researcher approached the community leaders of Mpererwe Township for interviews. Four community leaders were interviewed of which three were men, and one was a woman. Of the men, two were married and one was single, and the one woman interviewed was married. A questionnaire used for the interviews had eleven sections. It was the eleventh section that was particularly designed for Mpererwe Township community leaders, although they also responded to section one. Section eleven needed their attitudes and opinions about poverty, HIV/AIDS and developmental advancement for women in Mpererwe Township. Accordingly, these community leaders relied on their

observations and experiences to give their opinions on what they felt were the major problems and needs of women in this township. As observed and experienced by the researcher, the community leaders also mentioned that poverty and HIV/AIDS is the biggest problem in this township and that it has hindered the development and advancement of not only women, but also men.

These community leaders confirmed that women are poorer compared to men. One said, “the poverty among women seems to have exacerbated the spread of HIV/AIDS in the township.”³³³ Some of the reasons given by the community leaders for women’s conditions were: “first, because many women in Mpererwe Township are economically dependent on their spouses or partners, therefore, many find themselves unwillingly participating in sexual intercourse.”³³⁴ Secondly, “because of fulfilling the immediate needs such as food and shelter for themselves, their children and dependants, they have no option but to give in to unsafe sex with their spouses and/or partners.”³³⁵ Thirdly, “some women are the heads of the families and in most cases their expenditure is higher than their income.”³³⁶ Lastly, the community leaders also stressed that these women are poor partly because of the civil wars in the country. One explained that,

Men leave women with heavy responsibilities of feeding and providing for the extended families that are burdened by the orphans, the aged and the sick. On the other hand, when these men are away both parties get tempted to have sex with other partners where they are, partners whose health status, as far HIV/AIDS is concerned, is not known.³³⁷

The community leaders also disclosed that most of these women are doing casual work and small-scale businesses that do not earn them enough. It is in this situation that women do extra activities in search of money for the up-keep of their families. This confirms

³³³ One of the community leaders giving his idea as one of the causes of HIV/AIDS spreading in Mpererwe Township as per 17th November 2004.

³³⁴ One of the female married community leaders in Mpererwe Township said during interviews on 17th of November 2004.

³³⁵ The same female married woman community leader in Mpererwe Township lamented on the same day of the interview.

³³⁶ The male community leader in Mpererwe Township during interviews on 17th November 2004.

³³⁷ Same male community leader in Mpererwe Township during interviews on 17th November 2004.

multidimensional...³³⁸ Also the community leaders' observations find support in what Snyder and Tadesse said: that the extended families dependence on women's earning has led women to move rapidly into market-oriented activities in order to meet the basic needs of the families.³³⁹ Hence, it is no wonder women in Mpererwe Township find themselves taking on extra activities including prostitution that has also exposed them to the killer disease HIV/AIDS. This has not only spread HIV/AIDS in Mpererwe Township, but has also increased separation in marriages. Separation affects the women most because the same women remain with the responsibilities of caring for the children, by providing shelter, clothes, food, health care and education.

On the other hand men, who separate from their spouses, especially those who are unemployed or less privileged, join the rich single women for shelter and food. In cases of HIV/AIDS infection, these men are then deserted by their partners whom they had joined and the results are that they then go back to seek hospitality from their first wives, from whom they were separated. It is the deserted wife who offers hospitality again to this man and in the process relationships build up, and in most cases this end in either infections or getting re-infected. Probably it is this situation that inspired the community leaders to indicate that,

As much as the fight against poverty, HIV/AIDS in Mpererwe Township is going on, there is just as serious a war of separating the single women from the men who run away from the responsibilities in their homes to find green pastures, and then later come back in their respective homes.³⁴⁰

This situation is believed by the community leaders to be the major cause for the spread of HIV/AIDS in this township. Therefore, according to the community leaders, there is need for Mpererwe Township societies to revisit human anthropology in order to understand about the destructive imbalances between men and women; about the prevention, the infection, the care and the treatment of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases that pave way for HIV/AIDS infections.

³³⁸ A. Abuom, 2001, 111.

³³⁹ M. Snyder and M. Tadesse, 1995, 181.

³⁴⁰ A male community leader interviewed on 17th of November 2004.

They therefore suggested initiatives and small-scale income generating projects that might help advance the role(s) of these women in this township. The community leaders pointed out that there is a need to empower Mpererwe Township women through informal training with regard to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, leadership, counselling, managing small-scale business, teamwork and the like. Among the small-scale income generating projects, the community leaders were of the view that since women in Mpererwe Township have a unique aspiration to work hard, despite the bad health and poor situations they are encountering, "they need help to boost their small businesses."³⁴¹ Accordingly, new businesses may need formal training that is acquired by means of financial contributions as well as time factors that are scarce. For at the present time a woman who is the head of a house-hold of five children and taking care of the extended family orphans plus the aged and/or the sick, cannot leave the home to go for the formal training which, is resource demanding of time and money. Instead she opts to engage herself with activities that may put her life at risk in order to provide her household with daily bread and shelter over their heads. However,

Women in this township are very hard working and if provided with the necessary education on how to run small-scale businesses as well as budgeting and planning, they can do well in their businesses. They also need to be educated in leadership skills to help each other.³⁴²

The leaders pointed out that as much as these women work hard to earn a living, in most cases they overspend on themselves due to competition.

...they do admire other women in the township who dress expensively. So they over spend on expensive shoes, dresses, handbags and hairstyles in order to look like the other well-dressed women who in actual fact do not struggle like the do.³⁴³

This study has shown that the leaders in this township are concerned, observant and supportive in the way they appreciate women's efforts for the good of the community.

³⁴¹ A female community leader expressing what should be done to boost women's small-scale projects on the 17th of November 2004.

³⁴² A male community leader interviewed on 17th of November 2004.

The community leaders' support in this township can encourage women if women initiate joint income generating projects. In fact, the community leaders indicated that women in this township need informal education, counselling and financial support to boost their daily activities, because, women are the providers of food, school fees for the children, care for the sick and the elderly. This corresponds with what Boserup indicated that the major productive functions of women are seen in food production,³⁴⁴ confirming the fact that women are the focal point in providing food and therefore the nurturer of lives in Mpererwe Township.

6.2.2 Mpererwe Township Women's responses

The number of women interviewed in Mpererwe Township was 50. The women's sections in the questionnaire were from 1-10. Sections 1-5 were on the basic information about the biographic data of the respondents, such as the sex, age, marital status, educational background and the denomination of the respondent. This information was useful in assessing the age range of women who were interviewed in this township. Their age range was between 18 – 60 years old. The significance of the age range to this study is that in the case of an income-generating project, it is easier to team up people according to their age and experiences. Furthermore, the biographical information also helped to discover and analyse the problems faced by women of different marital status. Lastly, this section helped to discover the educational profile of the women in Mpererwe Township, which might assist in identifying those with leadership skills or other skills that might be of great help if passed on to other women informally. The figure below indicates women's educational profile in Mpererwe Township.

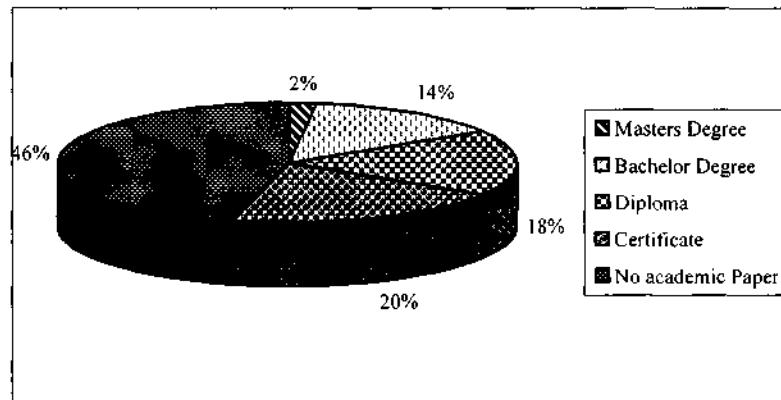
6.2.2.1 Women's education profile in Mpererwe Township

Out of 50 women interviewed in Mpererwe Township, 1 woman has reached a Masters level in formal education, 7 are degree holders, 9 are diploma holders, 10 after form four obtained professional Certificates in various areas such as secretarial, computer science, business studies, teaching and nursing. Those who have neither school leaving certificates nor any qualification at all were 23 women.

³⁴³ A female community leader interviewed on 17th of November 2004.

³⁴⁴ E. Boserup (1970) cited in B. G. Haddad 2000, 113.

Figure 6 Women's educational profile of Mpererwe Township (%)



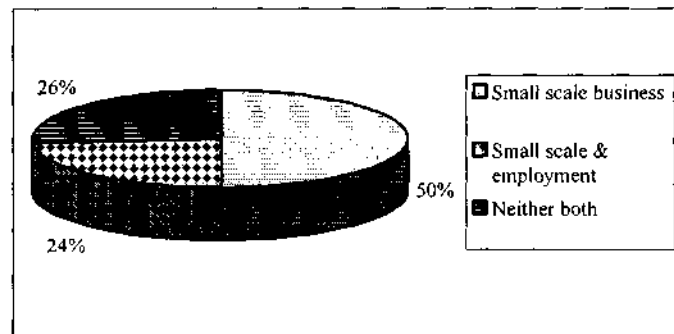
The interesting fact is that despite women in this township having acquired less formal education, they are involved in activities that generate income for their dependants. "...I have not gone to school, but my small scale business of selling tomatoes and vegetables earns me something that helps me, my 3 children and my parents in the village."³⁴⁵ Many of these are informally acquired and a few are formally acquired. It was discovered during the research procedures that these women have acquired different skills. If mobilised, these skills can be improved upon to better their way of living. The skills include: cooking and selling food, tailoring, baking, hair salon activities and different kinds of handwork. In fact, 50 women indicated that cooking is a skill that they acquired when they were young and through their life they are still exercising it. One said, "I enjoy cooking as a hobby, not as work."³⁴⁶ Out of 50 women, 47 women indicated that they could do different kinds of handwork. This confirms what the community leaders stressed that when these women are mobilised and educated on how to plan and manage businesses by locating the markets for their produce, and then given a financial support, they can build on their skills and abilities to boost their income.

³⁴⁵ A single mother expressing her ability through small-scale activities during interviews on the 30th of December 2004.

³⁴⁶ A married and food seller in one of the food kiosks within Mpererwe Township expressing her joy in cooking and selling food as her small scale income generating project.

Sections 6-10 of the questionnaire required information on household structures, women's employment opportunities, capacity inventories, HIV/AIDS and women's religious involvement. Household structure explored the loads that women, who are the heads of the household, carry. Under women's employment opportunities, this section exposed women's formal and informal knowledge. This can be of help especially when an income generating project is implemented in the township. This section also identified trained and dormant skills that are helpful if morally and financially empowered. The capacity inventories section was meant to identify dormant formal and informal skills that might have been learned at teenage, youth age at home or in a community or at places of work. It also helped to locate the skills that need moral and financial empowerment for the advancement of women in poor situations. As a result, the study discovered that out of 50 women interviewed, 27 women are involved in income generating small-scale businesses, such as hair salons, drug stores, selling fresh and cooked foods, fruits and firewood. More interestingly, 12 out of 50 women are involved both in small-scale business and they are also employed in formal sectors. The figure below shows women's economic activities in Mpererwe Township.

Figure 7 Women economic activities in Mpererwe Township (%)



As Haddad observes, "...women wage the struggle against poverty, they employ a variety of survival strategies that have practical, cultural and religious dimensions."³⁴⁷ This confirms Buckley's lament that women's functions in the homes is not natural but a social and political construction that manipulates them to the point that they are kept in

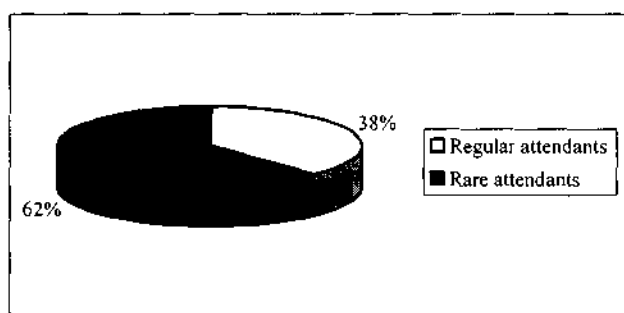
³⁴⁷ B. G. Haddad 2000, 103.

fixed situations to engage in the work that is an extension of their domestic roles.³⁴⁸ The worst part is that, all that women are doing is unappreciated and unpaid, and instead taken to be their home responsibility and also a sign of love for their families. “My husband died 5 years ago and have been struggling to feed and keep children at school. But, none of my in-laws has expressed any appreciation about what I am doing.”³⁴⁹

6.2.2.2 Mpererwe Township Women’s spirituality

All the 50 women are Christians by baptism. However, the research indicates that only 19 women are involved in Church issues such as attendance, ushering, cleaning, arranging flowers and singing in the choir. The biggest number of 31 women is no longer active in the Church. “I am a Christian and I used to attend church but I no longer attend due to family responsibilities that are on my head. I am the head of my family.”³⁵⁰ Some of the reasons are traced from the research findings. First, the research indicated that women’s daily schedules are tight as they search for food for their families, since many are heads of the families for the reasons mentioned in previous chapters. Secondly, it has been acknowledged that women are the nurturers of the sick and it is observed that HIV/AIDS is challenging women’s spirituality in this township; therefore, it is possible that women are occupied with their nurturing roles that prevent them from going to Church. Below is a figure showing women’s church attendance in Mpererwe Township.

Figure 8 Women’s Church attendance of Mpererwe Township (%)



³⁴⁸ M. I. Buckley 1984, 6.

³⁴⁹ A woman expressing her sorrow during interviews in Mpererwe Township on the 6th January 2004.

³⁵⁰ A single woman responding during interviews within Mpererwe Township on the 7th of January 2004.

Thirdly, among the women interviewed, none of them indicated that they are in the hierarchical Church leadership. The issue of women not appearing in most Church leadership raises a number of questions of which the first is: what happens to the spiritual gifts that these women received on baptism for the sake of the Lord's ministry? Is it not the Church's patriarchal system that has severely limited the ability of women to exercise their gifts for the good of the Church community? To this, Ruether emphasises, that women's gifts that are empowered by the Holy Spirit must not be suppressed because this means that the Church community is missing something that is God-given.³⁵¹ This may be another reason that frustrates women's spirituality. Also this seems to be one of the reasons that inspired Ruether to assert, "The more one becomes a feminist the more difficult it is to go to Church."³⁵² This is because women are not getting the spiritual food that they expect to get in the missionary Churches, but instead, they are discriminated and suppressed to exercise their God given spiritual gifts. Looking at the African Indigenous Churches, African women have a wider role of initiating, leading and ministering as prophets, evangelists and healers.³⁵³ According to this research, a few women in Mpererwe Township have remained in missionary Church particularly those who hold leadership positions such as Mothers Union and treasurers. However, some have joined African Indigenous churches where there are given freedom to share and exercise their God given gifts. The rest seem to have been taken away by routine activities such as responsibilities for their families and economic activities that seem to have replaced God's place. "Every day I leave home very early in the morning to purchase fruits and bread for sale in order to sustain the family. There is no time for church activities."³⁵⁴ In fact, the women who are spiritual beings are now not able to meet in groups to nurture their spirituality due to challenges of discrimination, poverty and HIV/AIDS. The section about religious involvement revealed the information about the challenges of women's spirituality. The major reasons are that they are involved in small-scale business for survival and others are more taken up by the nursing of the old, orphans and the

³⁵¹ R. R. Ruether, 1983, 193.

³⁵² R. R. Ruether, 1983, 194.

³⁵³ S. Rakoczy, 2004, 198.

³⁵⁴ S. Rakoczy, 2004, 198.

³⁵⁴ Married woman responding during interviews in Mpererwe Township market place on the 23rd of January 2005.

HIV/AIDS patients. According to these respondents, the section about HIV/AIDS is frustrating because the Church seems to be of no help to some women as far as poverty and HIV/AIDS are concerned. One respondent said “The church only comes in for burial, but not for material support.”³⁵⁵ Another confirmed by stating that “A part from few close relatives, our church members even our parish pastor never visited us during my husband’s illness.”³⁵⁶ They pointed out that in some cases, only the rich are recognised when they are in problems or when they lose their relatives, but the poor are not. Also the rich are the ones who are chosen to take church leadership positions like chair persons for Mothers Union, Fathers’ Union, Youths, assistant treasurers, to mention but a few. “For church responsibilities the rich within the church congregation choose among themselves to head groups, but not common people like us.” The worst of it is seen when people’s minds are misled into believing that HIV/AIDS is a punishment from God to the evildoers. People’s morale to pray to a God who contradicts the Word of love and forgiveness, and punishes innocent ones such as the foetus and those who are infected during acts of rape, fades away because they think they are praying to a God who is not faithful. “I no longer want to go to church because God hated me and punished me with HIV/AIDS, for those God loves are enjoying life without HIV/AIDS.”³⁵⁷

The HIV/AIDS section in the questionnaire helped to assess the effects of HIV/AIDS on women in Mpererwe Township. Out of the 50 women who were interviewed, 49 are infected and/or affected by the HIV/AIDS in one way or the other. This was measured by their stories that they shared with the researcher. The stigma that is around HIV/AIDS has led most women to keep it to themselves. “From the time when my husband became very sick, I lost many friends. Even if I request to be involved in their businesses they keep on telling me that they are full in their groups.”³⁵⁸ Most women now do not want to declare their health status. Others have resorted to self-medication or traditional medication, which their situation demands, but with no change as far as the viral load is

³⁵⁵ A widow lamenting during interviews in Mpererwe Township market on the 14th of January 2004.

³⁵⁶ A widow expressing her disappointment during interviews in Mpererwe Township on 15th of January 2004.

³⁵⁷ A woman who said has lost her three daughters and a son through HIV/AIDS lamenting on the 8th January 2005 during the interviews.

concerned because the virus is still spreading. This weakens the immune system of the women who are breadwinners in the families. The reality is that the HIV/AIDS affected are many in this township. This relates to what Ward asserts that women are more vulnerable to the HIV/AIDS epidemic not because it is a new disease, but another life-threatening condition with serious health problems which women already experience in this population.³⁵⁹ According to Ward the broad continuum of disease and health for poor women is linked to such factors as poverty, self-medication, infant mortality, infant morbidity and cervical cancers.³⁶⁰ In fact, Ward says, there is indeed a connection between poverty and ill health because many studies show the complex associations between poverty and education, employment, teen birth and the health of mother and child.³⁶¹ In short, women's status and socialisation has at its core the notion that the major institutions of contemporary society are gendered. This is seen in the sexual division of labour in Mpererwe Township where the distribution of jobs, status, and working hour in day differs between men and women.

According to the responses, 31 out of 50 women in Mpererwe Township are affected by poverty. This was measured by their responses and the fact that out of 50 women, only 19 were formally employed. This research indicates that poverty is the primary and determining factor of the women's lives. This findings corresponds well with what other scholars have said as discussed in the previous chapters of this study. From the explanations, women in Mpererwe Township seem not to be happy with those spheres of their lives that include payments and wages. Among them some indicated that they are being discriminated against at their place of work probably because they are women. One respondent said, "It hurts to have been working in a place for more than ten years, but a young man comes and he is paid more than you even though you have the same qualification." She added, "Within one year, that same one is promoted to be a senior to you, meaning that his payment will be higher than yours." Others indicated that their education status couldn't allow them to take up paying jobs. Some 5 respondents said that

³⁵⁸ A widow explains her poor condition during interviews in Mpererwe Township on the 15th of December 2005.

³⁵⁹ M. C. A. Ward, *A Different Disease: HIV/AIDS and Health Care for Women in Poverty*. Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993, 413.

³⁶⁰ M. C. A. Ward. 1993, 413.

their spouses do not allowed them to engage in any income-generating activities because of the patriarchal assumption that women cannot be trusted and are the major tempters of men. Their husbands tell them that women are home keepers, while men are breadwinners. This type of disempowering women by men is one of the reasons that has condemned women to a life of absolute poverty. This relates to what Phiri says that 'patriarchy has defined women as inferior to men...and this has hampered the development of women in Africa, in Church and society.'³⁶²

Out of 50 women in this Township, 34 are heads of the families. The findings also show that 13 out of 34 who are the heads of the families are widows, 14 are single mothers and 7 are divorced. In addition, 22 out of 50 women are not employed nor are they doing anything to generate income for themselves. This confirms what the community leaders of Mpererwe Township and many scholars in this study have said that women are poorer partly because most of them are the heads of the families while others depend on their spouses economically. Writing from the American society, Buckley has observed that out of the 45 % of women who head their homes, more than 31% of them come from black families."³⁶³ This is due to the skyrocketing unemployment, racism, crime and imprisonment of many black men. Buckley's point also confirms that the causes of poverty among women are the same with other women worldwide. As indicated earlier on page 65, it is partly because of less education of women in Mpererwe Township that they earn less, own less, and control less, hence poverty. But indeed reflecting back to what Haddad said about other women of the world, women of Mpererwe Township also employ survival strategies in their experiences to fight against poverty by actively intersecting their spirituality with their gendered poverty.³⁶⁴ Women in times of dire need are unable to explain how they manage to provide meals, shelter for their children and themselves, and also to try to pay school fees for their children.³⁶⁵ This related to what a

³⁶¹ M. C. A. Ward 1993, 414.

³⁶² I. A. Phiri 2000, 12.

³⁶³ M. I. Buckley, 1984, 9.

³⁶⁴ B. G. Haddad 2000, 98.

³⁶⁵ B. G. Haddad 2000, 105-107.

respondent said, "I am a divorcee but God provides from no where and my 3 children go to school, we eat and dress just as others in the township."³⁶⁶

6.2.2.3 Mpererwe Township Women's interest for and against group work

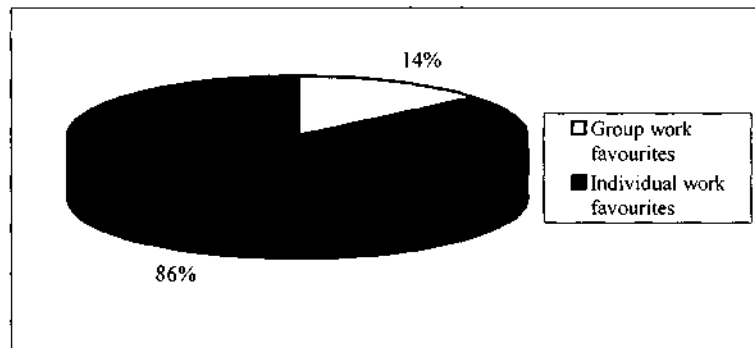
The research statistics for this study shows that only 14% of the women interviewed were in favour for group work while 86% were against. This is because of discrimination which is fuelled by tribalism. Others stated that they do not want to team up with those who are known to have lost their husbands due to HIV/AIDS. The assumption is that they will automatically fall sick and die any time hence causing setbacks in the businesses. "I am labelled a moving corpse in this township because my husband died after a long sickness; so I do my things alone."³⁶⁷ Another reason was lack of trust and competition among women of Mpererwe Township. This point was brought out by the community leaders on page 96.

However, teamwork in Mpererwe Township is recommended since it involves encouraging and learning from one another. But unfortunately, this study indicates that women in this township were not willing to work together. This is viewed in the way they responded to the question whether they would appreciate working together as a team for their good and the good of the entire community. Out of 50 women interviewed, 7 indicated that they would appreciate working together with others in a group. The implication is that 43 women were not ready for teamwork as far as businesses and/or development are concerned. This attitude is not constructive because any community that is not united, it collapses. Below is a figure showing Mpererwe Township women's favourite.

Figure 9 Women's interests' for and against group work in Mpererwe Township (%)

³⁶⁶ A woman in Mpererwe Township expressing her success during interviews on the 9th of January 2005.

³⁶⁷ A woman in Mpererwe Township expressing her fate during the interviews on the 10th of January 2005.



From the research carried out in Mpererwe Township, it was discovered that some men do not allow their wives to join teams for the reason that women might become wild after getting money and that could cause separation in families. But, the community leaders portrayed support to the grouping of women because there are some agencies that lend money to groups of people rather than individuals. Women, who would like to work independently, suggested that they would employ fellow women to help them with the work in their businesses. However, since the less privileged are the ones to be employed in this case, there is a possibility that as much as some women appear to help each other, they are most likely to be dominant and therefore exploit the weak. The result of it will be that the few women in this township who are well off will remain rich and the majority women will remain poor.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has investigated and evaluated Mpererwe Township women's physical, spiritual, economic, and social life as challenged by poverty and HIV/AIDS. The findings in this chapter confirm the working title of the study: 'poverty and HIV/AIDS challenge Mpererwe Township women's spirituality.' This view is connected to the fact that most of the women in this township are in want, especially those who are the heads of their households, due to challenges that come up as a result of discrimination, rejection, lack of basic and social needs that in most cases lead to practices that expose women to HIV/AIDS infections. The findings in this chapter corresponded with the chosen literature reviews for this study. The analysis covered areas like women's education profile, women's economic activities, women's spirituality, women's health in relation to HIV/AIDS and women's poverty. The purpose of this social analysis was to transform

the above-mentioned conditions in accordance with communal liberation. Therefore, the study has identified four strategies that are expected to transform women's life in Mpererwe Township community. These strategies have been laid out in the next chapter after the general conclusion of this study.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusion

This chapter summarises the issues raised in this study by indicating that the intended aim of the study, which was to investigate the extent to which poverty and HIV/AIDS challenge women's spirituality in Mpererwe Township, is to a large extent successful.

Chapter one introduced the study and provided a guide to the rest of the study. It included Mpererwe township background, the motivation for the study, research problem, the theoretical framework, the aim and objectives of the study as well as the research design, procedure and methodologies that were used to achieve the intended aim. The limitation of the study and the planned structure of the dissertation were also indicated in this chapter.

Chapter two dealt with gender as a tool of analysis in this study. It described what patriarchy is and how in the case of Mpererwe Township women's it leads to their vulnerability to poverty and HIV/AIDS. This is to say that patriarchy touches the whole of women's sphere of life: physical, spiritual, economic, educational, political and social lives. This was discovered by examining different views of anthropology such as patriarchal before and during the Reformation, egalitarian, African women theologies' and biological anthropologies. Controversial issues that affect women's humanity were also identified and discussed. These were male bias, handicap of the female child, polygamy, domestic violence and widowhood. This pointed to the fact that there is a need to revise oppressive concepts like those mentioned above in order to move towards an improved society, a chosen race and a holy nation where each one is able to enjoy life in full.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for men in Mpererwe Township to deepen their understanding of how gender inequalities work in limiting women. Men in this township should stand with women to demand significance of women's contributions and ensure their just rewards in homes, which will most likely combat violence and other injustices

in our lives. Men and women in this township together should be concerned about advocating for investment in education and imparting skills to women. Men and women in this township should work within the church to advocate for equality and a just partnership among themselves. Men and women in this township ought to revisit scripture such as the Acts of the Apostles; in the last days, God says, “I will pour out my spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy...”³⁶⁸ This is expected to refresh human minds in a way that can lead to renewed broken relationships among the children of God in this township.

Chapter three dealt with women and HIV/AIDS in Mpererwe Township. It discussed and articulated that poverty and gender inequality makes a society, and particularly women, more vulnerable to many sorts of ills especially HIV/AIDS. The study also realised that the largest number of people with HIV/AIDS is women and children. Therefore factors that expose women to HIV/AIDS infections were identified and discussed. These were: women’s biological make up, gender inequality that render women powerless, poor health of women due to poor nutrition and high fertility, some cultural practices, economic needs, some religious beliefs, violence against women and sexual abuses. The study also discussed the impact of HIV/AIDS on women and children. For women it included that HIV/AIDS has physical, spiritual, emotional, social and economic impacts. While for children it included that HIV/AIDS has health, malnutrition, growth, educational, discriminatory, rejection and emotional impacts. This pointed to the fact that there is a need to identify strategies that can fight HIV/AIDS, which is a complicated disease that should be approached from all dimensions of life. These are political, economic, social, and spiritual dimensions.

Therefore, the study realised and suggested that there is urgency for Mpererwe Township women’s spiritual care especially in this era of HIV/AIDS. People with HIV/AIDS live longer and better lives when they receive spiritual care. For spiritually, they become comforted and strengthened to such an extent that it makes a marked difference to the quality of the lives they continue to live. This finds support in the research done by

³⁶⁸ Acts 2: 17ff

Karolynn Seigel and Eric Schrimshaw. They discovered that people's spirituality could be restored and sustained through spiritual care and religious practices. This was viewed in the way people's emotions and feelings are comforted after counselling. People become strengthened and empowered to face reality and therefore feel in control. The emotional burdens of the illness are eased since they would experience the sense of support and belonging. Their personal relationship with God builds up and develops into a significant support system since the acceptance of the sickness would have been facilitated. This is most likely to reduce the self-blame, which has been course in the deteriorating of people's lives and early death.³⁶⁹ In fact, Tangenberg's study clearly described women's ability to fight the HIV/AIDS' effects when supported by a healthy spirituality. It also reveals that positive thinking, inner strength, and social support help many women to cope with the complexity of living highly stigmatised conditions.³⁷⁰ These then call out for forms of spiritual care like Prayer, Bible Study and Counselling.

For example, counselling as a form of spiritual care given to Mpererwe Township women who are affected and/or infected with HIV/AIDS is an imperative now. The kind of counselling, which will address Mpererwe Township women's religious concerns regarding the infection, and help them develop their religious belief into a system of hope and support is an argent need in this township. For instance, a counselling in form of spiritual care-giving is urgently needed in areas which will break through the infected and affected women's isolation in this township. Also a prayer as a spiritual care-giving, which will make denial unnecessary and a Bible study as spiritual care-giving which will strengthen their belief in a caring God are essentials. This would help women in Mpererwe Township to acknowledge and maintain their human dignity and a spiritual care giving which will keep these women from escaping the false safety of marriage, money and status.³⁷¹ Accordingly, a mutual process between the infected and affected women with the spiritual counsellor is significant because they depend on each other in the sense that the counsellor has knowledge of spiritual and secular theories, while the affected and the infected have the experience of living with a deadly and stigmatising

³⁶⁹ K. Siegel and E Schrimshaw (2002); in I. A. Phiri 2003, 189.

³⁷⁰ Kathleen Tangenberg 2001, 517-524.

³⁷¹ Christina Landman, in I. A. Phiri 2003, 191-198.

infection. This is badly needed in this township because by sharing experiences as women they unite and in the process explore different cultural discourses governing their individual lives. In addition, Landman raises an important issue that Mapping, Externalising, Empowering and Telling an alternative story (MEET) is an alternative way of dealing with women's problems hence enabling them to transform themselves from being victims to being survivors and moral agents.³⁷² Now it is the responsibility of researchers to share the discovered information with Churches, governments, None Government Organisations in order to work hand in hand for the good of the entire township.

Chapter four dealt with women and poverty in Mpererwe Township. This chapter argued that, women in general remain the poorest of the poor due to factors pointing to gender inequalities. This led the study to conclude that most women and children are poorer because they live in situations marked with discrimination, rejection and subordination, hence poverty. This was realised because the study articulated and discussed issues that render Mpererwe Township women vulnerable to poverty. These issues included gender inequalities that limit women's access to critical assets such as land, capital and financial services like loans, labour, education, time pressures put on women compare with men, women's political participation, and woman herself. At the end of it all, this study suggested that to achieve equitable improvement and sustainable development among women and societies at large, one necessary step is to reduce gender inequalities in access to and control of women's diverse range of assets. As Haddad puts it, poverty is not a gender-neutral issue, but rather, is circumscribed by patriarchy.³⁷³

Therefore, the basic facilities desirable to women in Mpererwe Township are most likely to be empowerment and support in education, adequate health care, capacity inventory and freedom to fully participate in social, economic, political and spiritual circles for the common good. This is expected to improve women's poor situations of poverty and HIV/AIDS. However, to empower women, this has to start by men supporting women in

³⁷² C. Landman 2002, in I. A. Phiri 2003, 198-206.

³⁷³ B. G. Haddad 2000, 98.

all spheres of life as their counterparts. For instance, men should acknowledge that gender inequalities work to limit females' progress. These limitations have resulted in a decline in community development in Mpererwe Township. Men ought to appreciate women's participation as a labour force not just a service, which does not deserve any kind of payment. Indeed these are some of the situations that challenge women's spirituality.

Chapter five dealt with women's spirituality in Mpererwe Township. This chapter argued that women in this township are fully spiritual beings. Therefore, the study explored how spirituality of women in Mpererwe Township is challenged. The study also confirmed that Mpererwe Township women's spirituality is not separated from their hospitality; hospitality though challenged which gives them hope for the future and that is one of the reasons why it is still debatable for them to quite it. In doing so, the study identified factors that affect and challenge Mpererwe Township women's spirituality and hospitality. These are males' power over women's hospitality and culture among others. However, the study suggested and encouraged women not to quit, but maintain their spirituality and hospitality as the way of life at present and in the future. Therefore, women of Mpererwe Township should push on, just as Njoroge puts it, women have to soldier on the journey to Golgotha which will be met with misunderstanding, violence, threats, denial, rejection, abandonment, torture, cruelty, insults, arrogance and ignorance.³⁷⁴ It is better to try than to give up.

Chapter six is based on field research findings of women in Mpererwe Township. This chapter deliberately investigated and evaluated the conditions of Mpererwe Township women's physical, spiritual, economic, political and social life. These findings were from 50 women, who were interviewed, from the age range of 18 -60 years old, and demonstrated that indeed poverty and HIV/AIDS are a challenge to Mpererwe Township women's spirituality. The field research involved Mpererwe Township community leaders who confirmed that women in Mpererwe Township are poorer compared to men. The reasons given were: first, many married women in this township are economically

³⁷⁴ J. N. Njoroge 1996, 10.

dependent on their spouses or partners, hence find themselves powerless to make most decisions in relation to their physical, spiritual, economic and social issues. These are the same situations of being powerless that lead them to participate unwillingly in sexual intercourse that expose them to HIV/AIDS infections. Secondly, 68% of women in this township are single mothers due to widowhood; divorce, separation and rejection, so they are the heads of the families. Some have no permanent jobs that provide them with regular income. Some are operating small-scale businesses that do not earn them enough money for the entire family.

Also the study showed that the low standard of women's education in Mpererwe Township is one of the strong factors that expose women in this township to ill situations that challenge their spirituality. This was realised when the statistics of the study indicated that 2% hold Masters Degree, 14% Bachelors Degree, 18% diplomas, 20% certificates and 46% have no academic papers. Out of 50 women interviewed, only 38% are regular Churchgoers and 62% are no longer active in Church. This however does not mean that these women are not spiritual in any way, but these women fall victim to situations that challenge their spirituality. A big percentage of 98% indicated that they are affected and/or infected with HIV/AIDS, while 2% indicated that they are not affected with HIV/AIDS in any way! From the field research, 14% were in favour of group work while 86% were in favour of individual work, which is an indication of what is holding back the progress of development in the township. However, reflecting back to Mpererwe community leader's comments, development is a process that needs collective efforts not individualism. The researcher supports the community leaders' comment of collective effort especially where the community leaders mentioned that some lending bodies lend money to groups to operate small-scale business, but not to individuals.

Chapter seven is the general conclusion of the whole study and it provided the summary of each chapter. It also recommended possible strategies for transforming the women's status in Mpererwe Township. These are first, two workshops on HIV/AIDS awareness and an introduction to Asset Based Community Development, the Distance Education program and the Bible Study Workshop. Below are the said recommendations in details.

7.2 Recommendations

Way forward to the well being of women in Mpererwe Township

From the conclusion drawn above, the study chose to borrow some of Buckley's (1984) summarised suggestions. First and foremost, the work of education and of raising consciousness about gender sensitivity in our communities remains central³⁷⁵ if we are to have life and have it to the full. Therefore, training in skills is vital to development because without technological know-how people are not able to transform the available natural resources and/or raw materials into useable commodities. Accordingly, this study recommends that Mpererwe Township introduce informal training in the township for the school-leavers and those who are skilled but never went to schools. This can be done by involving the available Christian Churches and None Government Organisations in the communities to offer other training places of, which can be accessed especially by the low-income-earning artisans, like establishing local industries, which can permit appropriate training at a minimal cost.³⁷⁶

Since the causes of poor women in Mpererwe Township seem to be similar to most women elsewhere, to resist the use of the great dividers- patriarchy, tribalism, class, religion, ethnic background, and sexuality can be a way forward in this struggle.³⁷⁷ We must be on guard against divisions and conquer tactics arising from the above mentioned systems of injustice that have caused discrimination, control of women's sexuality, control of women's economic and social independence by "breaking the culture of silence."³⁷⁸

Secondly, concerning HIV/AIDS in Uganda and elsewhere, each and every one has to actively contribute to the fight against HIV/AIDS challenges by protecting him or herself and others from contracting the virus. Indeed, by working together as a people of one family we can make marked constructive progress. Women need an autonomous political union especially for women in the entire Uganda. Such a union, which is to represent

³⁷⁵ M. I. Buckley 1984, 9.

³⁷⁶ D. Kobia, 'in Search of a Participatory and Inclusive Society' (255-283) in R. Koegelenberg, (ed.) *The Reconstruction and Development Programme: The Role of the Church, Civil Society and NGOs*. Cape Town: EFSA, 1995, 264.

³⁷⁷ M. I. Buckley 1984, 9.

women's issues across racial, religious and class lines, is essential to save these programs. Such a union must also work hand in hand with other coalitions for the common good of God's children. There is a need in this township to consider a new economic order because it is not enough to affirm actions and equal pay for comparable work. But, a just economic order that affirms people over profits and that seeks the common good of all must be environmentally conducive.³⁷⁹

Thirdly, Christian women in Mpererwe Township need to work together with the women of other communities and traditions to fight against injustice in the communities. At the same time there is a need for community leaders, the entire community, and Church leaders to question issues that are unjust and evil in the community, while searching out the liberating strands of Christian faith. There is also a need for women's unions in the Church to put forward women's issues and to work in coalition with other groups for a vital Body of Christ.³⁸⁰

7.2.1 Four suggested Possible Strategies for the transformation of women in Mpererwe Township: (2 Workshops, first about HIV/AIDS awareness and second, the introduction of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Framework, thirdly Distance Education and lastly Women's Bible Study)

To save the situation in this Township, the study proposes four different strategies. First: a six day workshop to educate the community about HIV/AIDS disease that has kept Mpererwe Township community's economic productivity dragging behind. This will first of all involve the community leaders who will identify those to participate and then later to pass the information on to the entire township. Second, community and Church leaders, the researcher, together with the community itself to try and introduce Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Framework to Mpererwe Township community. ABCD framework has been selected because it is appropriate to Mpererwe Township in the sense that its approach aims at building communities from the inside out. This implies that the community has to be encouraged to use the available resources in the community to improve on the way of living. This is to be mobilised by the

³⁷⁸ P. Freire 1970, 12.

³⁷⁹ M. I. Buckley, 1984, 10.

community and Church leaders, the researcher and educational teachers in the community. Thirdly, the utilisation of Distance Learning is also an appropriate strategy for Mpererwe Township because it caters for the, illiterate and semi-literate, especially those women who do not meet the requirements of the formal institutions of learning due to their responsibilities both at home and/or at work. Lastly, the utilisation of Bible Study groups in Mpererwe Township where arrangements are to be done for these women to have spiritual get together sessions like retreats, quiet day/time, share testimonies and prayers and also to share dinners. However, during the workshops, women will be required to make arrangements on who to take care of their children, business and their sick ones in their homes. Nevertheless, these proposed strategies could be modified according to the community's desires and agreement.

7.2.2 The Workshop Action plan on HIV/AIDS awareness to Mpererwe Township Community

This workshop is to give information on what HIV/AIDS is, and then settle down to the core issues of how HIV/AIDS spreads, its impact on an individual, family and the entire community. The workshop is to educate the community on how to prevent and treat the HIV/AIDS infection. It is also to inform the community about the vaccine, testing and how to live with HIV/AIDS infection and still continue doing routine activities. Lastly, the workshop is to educate the community on how to care for already infected people with minimum risks to acquire the disease. The expected facilitators for this workshop are to be drawn from different appropriate positions. For example, Church and community leaders, HIV/AIDS co-ordinators, HIV/AIDS programme managers and/or Directors, Medical personnel and Youth co-ordinators.

Since HIV/AIDS has become a development issue and therefore a concern for everybody in Mpererwe Township community, mobilising initiatives and partnerships between local communities and ordinary people must take place to incorporate strategies for stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS in this community. Below is a table showing the breakdown of the activities in the suggested workshop.

³⁸⁰ M.I. Buckley, 1984, 10.

Table 4 Six Days HIV/AIDS Educational Workshop Timetable for Mpererwe Township Community

Time	Topic	Resource
	<i>Monday Day 1</i>	
9.00a.m-12.00noon	Official Opening of the Workshop	Community & Religious Leaders / Political Representatives/ Church Elders/HIV/AIDS co-ordinators/Organiser
1.00p.m-2.00p.m	Lunch Break	
2.00p.m-4.00p.m	Introduction to HIV/AIDS	Medical Personnel
	<i>Tuesday- Day 2</i>	
9.00a.m-12.00noon	The spread of HIV/AIDS	Medical Personnel/ Religious Leaders/HIV/AIDS co-ordinators
1.00p.m-2.00p.m	Lunch Break	
2.00p.m-4.00p.m	Impact of HIV/AIDS to individuals, family and the entire community	Medical personnel/HIV/AIDS Programme co-ordinators
	<i>Wednesday- Day 3</i>	
9.00a.m-12.00noon	How to prevent the infection (Life skills)	Medical Personnel/Youth co-ordinators/Counsellors
1.00p.m-2.00p.m	Lunch Break	
2.00p.m-4.00p.m	About HIV/AIDS treatment/ Vaccine	Medical Personnel
	<i>Thursday- Day 4</i>	
9.00a.m-12.00noon	Testing/Caring for the infected	Counsellor/Doctor/Nurse /Religious Leaders/Elders/PLWHA
1.00p.m-2.00p.m	Lunch Break	
2.00p.m-4.00p.m	Living with HIV/AIDS Virus	Counsellor/Doctor/HIV/AIDS support groups/PLWHA
	<i>Friday- Day 5</i>	
9.00a.m-12.00noon	Open Forum / Questions about HIV/AIDS	Doctor/Counsellor/PLW HA/Religious leaders/HIV/AIDS/Youth co-ordinators

1.00p.m-2.00p.m	Lunch Break	
2.00p.m-4.00p.m	Open Forum (Free Discuss.)	Doctor/Counsellor/PLW HA/Religious leaders/HIV/AIDS co-ord./Youth co-ord.
<i>Saturday- Day 6</i>		
9.00a.m-12.00noon	Evaluating the Workshop	Organiser/Church & community leaders/Medical personnel/Counsellors/ Youth co-ordinators & Participants
1.00p.m-2.00p.m	Official Closing of the Work- shop/Lunch Break	Community Leaders or Representatives/ Organiser/Church Leaders

**Note: Lunch to be the responsibility of the community.
Venue: Church Hall (Free)**

7.2.3 The aims of the first (HIV/AIDS) Workshop

7.2.3.1 Planning

People must not look at the origins of the disease, but to think critically on how to fight the disease with collective efforts in order to save lives and minimise the spread of the disease. This is to say that the township community and Church leaders, Medical personnel and the community itself must be involved in the move against the plague of the pandemic. This requires the promotion of Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT). This will help people to know of their health status in relation to HIV/AIDS. This helps the infected to be connected to the caregivers in Churches, in health centres and None Government Organisation for help. In fact, the knowing of ones health status also helps those who can afford the provision of life prolonging medication to start the medication earlier enough. To those who cannot afford it especially women, the community and Church leaders to develop policies and present them to agents that can assist women in this township so that people can be helped in the long run.

7.2.3.2 Education

Religious and community leaders, HIV/AIDS co-ordinators, the community itself and medical personnel have to come in vigorously to educate people that HIV/AIDS is real and it should not be taken for granted that it is witchcraft. Therefore, workshops for community leaders and members, Church leaders and laity should be set up. In these workshops, people should be taught about the holiness of human life, spirituality and the love of Christ in this Era of HIV/AIDS. More emphasis should be given to the youths to be faithful because promiscuity leads to HIV/AIDS infections. The giving of Life Skills to the target group is necessary because Life Skills are intended to prepare the target group to face challenges and influences of their world in general. The kind of Life Skills required in this workshop are self awareness, assertiveness, coping with emotions, coping with stress, personal relationships, friendship formation, empathy, peer resistance, negotiations, non-violence conflict solutions, critical thinking/creative thinking, decision making and problem solving. Therefore, sessions that portray behavioural change, which takes into account the need to revisit some religious, social and cultural beliefs, should be emphasised. People in Mpererwe Township should be sensitised to change their discriminating attitudes towards the people infected and affected with HIV/AIDS and therefore accept them as people with dignity and created in the image of God. This may help to eliminate the stigma and discrimination in this township that affects the victims most.

Those who are not yet infected should be informed that condoms “provide close to 100 % protection”³⁸¹ but not 100%. Therefore, people must be taught clearly on how to use condoms perfectly to avoid sliding off that might result in HIV/AIDS infections. For it is clear that condoms are made out of materials (latex), which are most likely to tear during the action because people engage in sex differently. There is also a possibility that a condom can tear due to poor storage or industrial defaults and/or damages.

People should be informed about therapies. HIV/AIDS Therapies have been manufactured with an aim of reducing viral load. They do not cure but “improve the

³⁸¹ A. Whiteside & C. Sunter, 2000, 19.

quality of life of the infected people.”³⁸² Therefore, those who are not infected yet should be faithful in their sexual relationships and/or abstain as much as possible. It is also important to mention that besides testing, openness to disclose ones health status before engaging in sexual activities is vital. Knowing your desired partner’s health status helps the other party to make a constructive decision. Cases where the infected are reticent because they are on therapies and therefore look healthier are most likely to increase the rate of infection to the HIV/AIDS-free people. This is expected because the infected will appear normal and continue infecting others and on the other hand re-infecting him/herself, and also the already infected ones. For instance, the one infected with the HIV-1 can be re-infected with HIV-2 causing the person now to possess HIV-1 and HIV-2, and this becomes a heavy load. This makes the issue more complex, for the body that is meant to be free and healthy is now doubly loaded with two different kinds of HI viruses. People must be educated to know and understand that though all drugs are not 100% safe to use, Therapies sometimes improve the infected person’s life. But, sometimes they can weaken other people hence making them more vulnerable to any infections, which may occur during peoples’ life spans and take their lives. In addition, since the majority in Africa live in poverty most people can probably not afford the cost of the Therapies. Therapies are for the few rich ones who may afford the cost to prolong their lives. Therefore, this again takes us back to the emphasis of faithfulness and abstinence.

People should know that although the medical advances have been impressive, people should be extra careful about agreeing to participate in the vaccine trials for AIDS if vaccination still means introducing the virus in the virus free body. Of course, this becomes dangerous for the free body because once the HI virus is introduced into the body, there seems no reversal nor is there a cure yet. It is this that results in infection, which causes people’s regrets, stigma, discrimination and the like.

People must have accurate information about this dangerous disease rather than speculations about the virus. Probably this will initiate the alteration of people’s sexual

³⁸² A. Whiteside& C. Sunter, 2000, 22.

behaviour by sticking to one partner for those who are married. The youths should try as much as possible to reserve their first experiences of sexual intercourse until marriage and then be faithful to each other for the word of God is against adultery.³⁸³ Indeed people must see the necessity of testing before they get involved in marriage or sexual relationships.

People must be reminded that some cultural practices like keeping virginity for both male and female and sticking to one sexual partner is still valued in this time of AIDS. The infected ones must know and understand that being infected with HIV/AIDS does not mark the end of their lives. They need to seek counselling and be encouraged to take medical advice and therapies to prolong their lives and also to change their sexual behaviour as they plan for their families. The counselling is most likely to heal the psychological effect while they wait upon the cure for the disease, and who knows what is in the future for all of us? Having explained the first strategy of educating people on HIV/AIDS by organising a workshop, the following stage is the introduction of the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) framework.

Table 5 Six Days Poverty Eradication Workshop Timetable for Mpererwe Township Community - Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)

As mentioned earlier, a workshop that includes sessions of Life-skills that are meant for sustainable development with a view to eradicating poverty in Mpererwe Township are imperatives. This is expected to reduce the syndrome of poverty among the people, especially women, in Mpererwe Township.

This workshop is to be organised by community leaders, the researcher, and community members, as it will be agreed upon. The expected resource persons for this workshop are to be drawn from various appropriate positions. These will include government representatives from department of planning and from municipality, the researcher, None Government Organisations development departments and Church development coordinators.

³⁸³ Matthew 5: 27.

Time	Topic	Resource persons
	<i>Monday Day 1</i>	
9.00a.m-12.00noon	Introduction to poverty eradication strategies (ABCD)	Comm. Leaders/ Political Representative/Organisers
1.00p.m-2.00p.m	Lunch Break	
2.00p.m-4.00p.m	Leadership and Management skills	Govt representative from depart. of planning
	<i>Tuesday- Day 2</i>	
9.00a.m-12.00noon	Project managing and Capacity Inventory	Representative from division Municipality
1.00p.m-2.00p.m	Lunch Break	
2.00p.m-4.00p.m		
	<i>Wednesday- Day 3</i>	
9.00a.m-12.00noon	Writing a Project proposal	The Researcher / NGOs development co-ordinators
1.00p.m-2.00p.m	Lunch Break	
2.00p.m-4.00p.m	Sustainability strategies	Govt representative from depart. of planning
	<i>Thursday- Day 4</i>	
9.00a.m-12.00noon	Evaluation strategies	Govt representative from depart. of planning/ Researcher/ Representative from division Municipality
1.00p.m-2.00p.m	Lunch Break	
2.00p.m-4.00p.m	Training volunteers	Representative from division Municipality/Researcher
	<i>Friday- Day 5</i>	
9.00a.m-12.00noon	Open Forum / Questions about HIV/AIDS	All facilitators/all participants
1.00p.m-2.00p.m	Lunch Break	
2.00p.m-4.00p.m	Open Forum (Free Discuss.)	All facilitators/all participants
	<i>Saturday- Day 6</i>	
9.00a.m-12.00noon	Evaluating the Workshop	Community leaders/Govt representative from

		Depart. of planning/Researcher/ Representative from division Municipality/participants.
1.00p.m-2.00p.m	Official Closing of the Work- shop/Lunch Break	Community Leaders Political Representative and Workshop Organiser

Note: Lunch to be the responsibility of the community. Venue: Church Hall (Free)

7.2.4 ABCD Framework

The aim of the second workshop is for the researcher to introduce ABCD Framework in Mpererwe Township. The ABCD framework is well presented by Kretzmann and McKnight. This framework's approach avoids building a dependency syndrome between poor people with lots of problems and non-poor providers of services with lots of solutions. But, it aims at speaking out of a faith perspective of the role and the contribution of the local community and religious bodies towards community development. The community can make use of this approach that recognises that all people are made in the image of God, they are equal and have inherent value whether young, aged, disabled, illiterate, male or female. This approach affirms that all people have a vocation, meaning that God has a calling on each person's life that requires him or her to be an agent for the good of each other in a community. The approach recognises that all people have gifts and talents that they should use to the glory of God as individuals, in the family, in the Church and in the community.³⁸⁴

Kretzmann and McKnight alert the public to the fact that any religion in the community can be one of the key assets in any community. They say that:

Each particular religious institution offers a unique configuration of specific resources which can be utilized in the process of community building." "...Whether large or small, urban or rural, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, or other, offer

³⁸⁴ John Kretzmann and J. L. McKnight. *Building Communities from the inside out: A path towards finding and mobilizing a community's assets*. Evanston: ACTA, 1993, 8.

certain common sets of resources which can be mobilized effectively to assist in community renewal.³⁸⁵

This gives Mpererwe Township Christian women an opportunity to use their available human resources in the township to transform the bad situations in this community. Since this study has argued that women are one of the major available resources in the communities, then Mpererwe Township community and Church leaders stand a better chance of starting from grassroots to mobilise women as major resources in a manner that releases them as community assets to work for the common good.

In regard to releasing individuals' capacities in Mpererwe Township that seem to be a good eye-opener for the community to eradicate poverty, Kretzmann and McKnight have provided steps that involve all people: The thorough "capacity inventory" outlining of all the assets and skills of the individuals in the community- the youths the elderly, disabled, women, men, children, artists and people on welfare; compiling of Inventory of key assets and resources of the community, namely citizens' organisations, None Government Organisations, Public institutions, private sector institutions plus local residents and special interest groups; the use of information to build strong partnerships between the individuals, organisations and associations that exist within the community. Finally, on the basis of these partnerships and the active participation of local people in the community building process, to go on to encourage the Mpererwe Township communities to build new relationships with resources that exist outside the immediate community. This will mean, therefore, that community development is the process whereby local capacities are not only identified, but individuals are also mobilised for the building of their communities.

Secondly, by making use of locally controlled lending institutions namely, the Community Development Credit Unions and the Community Development Loan Fund. These locally controlled Lending Institutions seek to make lending available for the development of low-income communities; they make lending available to individuals who are shut out of the financial market for the start-up or expansion of businesses. These

³⁸⁵ J. Kretzmann and J. L McKnight 1993, 143.

The relevance of Distance Learning is that the learning process is broad and it is provided and enhanced by the use of media such as print, television, radio, video, audio and email.³⁸⁹ Thomas, J. justifies this point by saying that the choice of the media depends on accessibility to both the institution and the students.³⁹⁰ In fact, this mode of learning is better for the non-literate and the post-literate communities, because these kinds of communities “need learning methods that replace reading skills with hearing and seeing.”³⁹¹ Therefore, there comes Kithome’s suggestion that distance learning is an ideal for the illiterate or semi-literate because its teaching model involves the use of learner-friendly methods such as group discussions, audiocassettes, flip-charts, pictures, songs and dance, games and role-play, demonstrations, puppets, biographical story telling and traditional symbols such as visual aids. This is appropriate when plans are made at the centre for the distance learners to meet once in a while in order to encourage each other. Accordingly, Kithome supports this method of learning because the learners are the key participants in the knowledge discovery process.³⁹² Since distance learning is mostly for adults, the learning process is quick because the learners combine their experiences and informed ideas.

7.2.6 Bible Study

Bible Study is a moment where an individual or people group together to study and understand the word of God so that they can live by it. It can be done in a group and also individually. This Bible study is meant to demonstrate to Christian women in Mpererwe Township that both group and individual Bible study can be an exciting adventures. Because, the Bible as God’s word do avails those who playfully studies it with abundant wisdom and peace of mind that the world can not give.

³⁸⁹ R. Agunga. “*The Politics of Distance Education in the Development of Africa.*” *A Keynote Address at the 12th African Educational Research Symposium on Politics and Education in Africa held at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, February 21-22 1997*, 1.

³⁹⁰ J. Thomas, “*Media Patterns and Combinations*” *In International Extension College, Course 2: The Development of Distance Education*. London: University of London, 1994, 55.

³⁹¹ P. Kalilombe, quoted in I. A. Phiri, 2003, 250.

³⁹² L. K. Kithome 2003, 254.

The components of this suggested Bible study are reading the word of God understand and personalise it, Prayer, Quiet time, Witnessing, Personal testimony, Fellowship, to mention but a few. The benefits of Bible study are illustrated in the Bible itself “All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...”³⁹³

Table 6 Four Days Bible Study workshop timetable for Mpererwe township Christian women

Time	Topic	Resource persons
	<i>Day 1(Thursday)</i>	
8.30 –9.00 am	Opening Prayer	Church leader
9.00- 11.00 am	Introduction to Bible Study theme (Christ is the Centre of our life)	Diocesan Mothers Union Representative
11.00-11.30a.m	Formulation of small groups.	Organiser / Participants
11.30am-12.00 noon	Identification of group leaders	Organiser / Participants
12.00noon-12.30pm	Choosing of the biblical text (Galatians 2:20)	Organiser / Participants
12.30-1.30pm	Lunch	
1.30-4.30pm	Bible Study-Session 1 (Prayer)	Church Leader /Workshop Organiser
	<i>Day 2(Friday)</i>	
9.00am-12.00noon	Bible Study-Session 2 (Quite –time and meditation)	Church Leader /Workshop Organiser
1.00-2.00pm	Lunch	

³⁹³ 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

2.00-4.00pm	Bible Study-Session 3 (Reading and understanding the Bible text)	Church Leader /Workshop Organiser
	<i>Day 3(Saturday)</i>	
9.00am-12.00noon	Bible Study-Session 4 (Sharing the text/personalising the text)	Church Leader /Workshop Organiser/counsellors
1.00-2.00pm	Lunch	
2.00-4.00pm	Bible Study-Session 5 (Sharing the text/personalising)	Church Leader /Workshop Organiser/counsellors
	<i>Day 4 (Sunday)</i>	
9.00-11.00am	Open forum (sharing Experiences/testimony)	Church Leader /Workshop Organiser/counsellors
11.00am-12.30pm	Evaluating the workshop	Church Leader /Workshop Organiser/counsellors
12.30-2.00pm	Official closing of the workshop/Lunch	Church Leaders /Workshop Organiser/Mothers' Union Representative/Participants

Lunch to be provided by the community and well wishers. Venue: Church Hall

The aim of the Bible Study workshop whose THEME is “Christ the centre of our Christian Life,” is to help Christian women in Mpererwe township to renew their spiritual life. This workshop is to remind Christian women in this township that Christ is the centre of our Christian life and the source of our salvation.³⁹⁴ Christ provides us with strength, light and life that we need in our time of difficulties. Although there are obstacles like HIV/AIDS and poverty among others that distract us from Christ’s focus, Christian women in Mpererwe Township ought to have the same attitude like Peter’s “Lord, to whom shall we go to? You have the words of eternal life.”³⁹⁵

³⁹⁴ Galatians 2:20.

³⁹⁵ John 6:68.

Therefore, Christian women in Mpererwe Township are to be reminded that Bible study helps to understand the Bible as an individual's spiritual food as well as a sword for a spiritual battle.

This Bible study in Mpererwe Township is meant to restore women's spirituality through sharing the word of God and prayer. Because, reading and studying the Bible prayerfully draws one close to the heavenly Supreme Being who provides help for all one's needs for prayer is an evidence that one trusts and depends on God for his/her need(s) and/or help.

The workshop is also meant to explain that prayer is conversation with God. Therefore, women in this township are to be reminded to be responding back to God in prayer after studying the word. This then will mean that these women are sharing their heart with the one who created them and thus longs for the fellowship which strengthens the relationship between the creator and the created.

Fellowship as a components of Bible study concerns relationships among God, believers through Christian fellowship and with unbelievers through witnessing. This is so because any fellowship centred on the Lord Jesus Christ offers the mutual encouragement, correction and unity which one needs.³⁹⁶ True fellowship is not merely attending a meeting. Nor is it accomplished simply by attending a Bible study. True fellowship means giving to and receiving from other followers of Christ in the way that encourages one another to draw closer to God. Indeed women in this township need fellowship as a Bible study component to restore their Christian lives and to unite them.³⁹⁷

Personal experience as a component of Bible study prepares one for a personal testimony that paves way for a clear presentation of the witnessing process. Witnessing is passing on the Word of God to others or sharing personal experience of Christ with others. It can be shared in a group or in a normal conversation. This is necessary for women in

³⁹⁶ Acts 2:44-45.

³⁹⁷ Psalms 133:1 and John 17:21.

Mpererwe Township and one example of personal testimony is portrayed in Paul's personal testimony.³⁹⁸

Quiet time is another component of Bible study, which is expected to keep women in this township in personal contact every day with Jesus Christ the centre of their lives. The Quiet time helps one to listen to God's voice from a personal message especially in this present HIV/AIDS context. It gives one a clear thought to reflect on each day, helps to see trends in God's dealing overtime. It provides one with something specific to share with others. It helps to sharpen and/or organise ones mind by focusing on what is presently important. It also stimulates consistency in ones studying the word of God.

7.3 Conclusion

This last chapter has two sections .The first section is the conclusion that summarises all seven chapters of this dissertation. The second section is the recommendation that gives away forward to the physical, economical and spiritual well being of Christian women in Mpererwe Township. The chapter suggested four possible strategies for the transformation of women's situation in Mpererwe Township. These include first a workshop about HIV/AIDS awareness, second a workshop about the introduction of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Framework, third Distance Learning and lastly a workshop about Christian women's Bible study in Mpererwe Township. The collective effort to put the above four suggested possible strategies into action is expected to transform the challenges facing women in Mpererwe Township into a better situation.

³⁹⁸ Acts 22:1-21 and Acts 26:1-23.

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