

POVERTY, CHANGE AND THE  
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF  
THE CHURCH

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Joseph Chengiah

Durban

6 September 2011

## **Declaration**

The Registrar (Academic)  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Dear Sir/ Mme

I, Joseph Chengiah

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Hereby declare that this dissertation titled, **POVERTY, CHANGE AND THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH** is the result of my investigation and research and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree or to any other University.

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Student name

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Date

As supervisor, I agree to the submission of this dissertation.

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Supervisor

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Date

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# CHAPTER ONE

## THE RESEARCH DESIGN

### 1.0 Introduction

SABC3 produced a Special Assignment programme on the 6 April 2004 entitled “Finger-prints of Poverty”. One of those interviewed stated, “I don’t have any hope: poverty follows me; I stress a lot about poverty”. This for me epitomizes the tragedy of the ‘poverty-situation’ in South Africa. It takes away the hope and will to live (Trawler, 1996: 27-28).

Poverty takes away the hope of people, and their will to live. This psychological effect however actually means that people do not have the means to live.

At its simplest, poverty refers to a basic lack of means of survival; the poor are those who even in normal circumstances are unable to feed and clothe themselves properly and risk death as a consequence (Dixon and Macarov, 1998: 1).

It is true that poverty must also be understood in relative terms. Some may be poorer than others or in need for certain products while their lives are not really threatened. This may differ from culture to culture in Africa (Bauer, 1981: 195). However, in real or absolute terms there are a very large proportion of South Africa’s people who are engaged in a daily struggle for survival. People who live in poverty in absolute terms cannot escape their circumstances. They do not have a choice nor do they have the means to escape or move out of poverty (see Jordaan 2006). ‘Escape’ here does not mean that they merely move away to a different place. They cannot because they do not have the resources to move. They are caught



in poverty. They can only depend on outside help. Outside help may be in the most basic forms of the provision of food, clothing and shelter. More constructively, it may be the assistance and training provided by outside organizations – so that people can help themselves. It is here where self-help organizations, NGOs and also the church as one of the most significant organizations in civil society have to play a role. The church can play a role at the most basic levels of poverty alleviation. However, it may also play a more constructive role and educate people to prevent them from falling into poverty. We have little understanding of humanity as a unity that is why we as communities allow people to fall into abject poverty. Since the church as faith-based organization is a socially-constituted organization, it could play a vital role in poor areas. Here it can empower poor people to address their situation and not placate them for their suffering, which often has causes outside their own knowledge and skills pool.

It is in this context that I also wish to refer to the many statements former President Thabo Mbeki made on poverty. In his address to the nation on the 6 February 2004, for instance he said:

During the first decade, we have made great progress towards the achievement of the goals we enunciated as we took the first steps as a newborn child. We also laid a strong foundation to score even greater advances during the exciting and challenging second decade ahead of us - a people united to build a better South Africa and a better world. However, poverty is our greatest obstacle (Ndungane, 2003: 60-63).

Despite his many statements on this matter, one is continuously struck by the fact that the issue of poverty does not receive the attention it deserves.

South Africa has seen and experienced tremendous change from the apartheid system to our new democratic dispensation. The country has been in transition on this score and this will continue for some time to come. Yet, one cannot remain unmoved at the abject poverty that millions of South Africans find themselves. Poverty has ripple effects in the family, and society. Poverty is also more than just a lack of money or even a limited life expectancy. It includes aspects of lifestyle and environment such as abuse, loneliness and stress. It must be noted that human requirements are more than the economic as a person is a multi-faceted whole (Seers, 1979: 27). Moreover we note that South Africa has the highest measure of inequality of countries for which data is available (Wilson and Ramphela, 1989: 4). On all these levels, the poverty of the nation is however not addressed and this flies in the face of most people in this country claiming to be Christian.

It is the contention of this dissertation that for the church to play a constructive role in the continuing social transformation of the country, it should engage the multi-faceted phenomenon of poverty. Christians should not only feel compassion for others as they follow the teachings of the Bible. The church should transformatively impact social transformation in the area of poverty and deprivation.

The Christian in particular must view poverty and wealth from a wide perspective (Matthew 6: 24). God desires people to have food and beauty and a fulfilled life. This is on the social level. However, it must include the religious element because a person is capable not only of a relationship with others but also with God or the divine and spiritual. The lack of this is real poverty. Christians should therefore be motivated to act for the poor. In my view a Christian should act against poverty because poverty in fact is a spiritual matter and especially where those with wealth generally do

not care for those who suffer. The other side of the coin of this issue, however, is too, that there is tendency for some Christians to concentrate on 'spiritual' and 'personal' ethics and thus to ignore the realities of material poverty. As the church start to play its constructive role in the material realities of social transformation, this should be changed.

Christians in local communities can provide facilities to empower people e.g. to teach computer skills, plumbing, building, sewing, planting, entrepreneurial activities, cooking, literacy and numeracy. Retired educators, nurses, builders, plumbers, housewives and other important stakeholders can be incorporated in the teaching of skills. It is important to teach people how to 'fish'. The mission statement of churches should include a vision for teaching skills in order to fight poverty.

Inter-alia, there have been many causes of poverty in South Africa: economical, policies of apartheid, job reservation, the group areas act, illiteracy and unemployment. There have also been many effects of poverty: crime, prostitution, illiteracy, malnutrition, diseases (HIV, AIDS, TB etc.), poor housing, squatter camps, poor sanitation, water borne diseases, abortion, teenage pregnancies, depression, suicide and drugs (*Daily News*, 23 March 2004 among other reports). In order to intervene in such a situation, government is providing unemployment grants, job creation, free education, provision of housing and provision of basic amenities, the teaching of skills to the unemployed and provision of basic foods to the poorest of the poor. Government should also play a constructive role in changing the ever-widening wealth-gap and addressing inequality (Wilson and Ramphela, 1989: 4). At global level, the President of the I.M.F. stated on the 16<sup>th</sup> April 2005 on a SABC 3 News item that the World Bank should make efforts to halve the global poverty

situation by 2015. In 2010 we are half-way there, yet the wealth-gap is continuing to increase both nationally and globally

In the final analysis, however, the onus rests on communities themselves, to cater and care for themselves and for their own welfare. This is where the church as a central pillar in local communities is a very significant role player in civil society and where it could play a much more constructive role.

### **1.1 What are the rationales/ reasons for the research?**

Poverty touches the very heart of the human race. Human beings and especially children are affected by poverty. Poverty threatens the social, economic and moral fabric of society. It also has a bearing on the political order of the country. The Bible speaks volumes on the topic of poverty and the responsibility of the religious community towards the poor. The Hindu and Islamic scriptures too, have much to say about poverty. I am doing this research so as to obtain a local, global, and national and perspective on the problem of poverty. I am also doing this research so as to gain knowledge and to make the local churches more aware of the extent of poverty in South Africa.

There has been much research on the issue of poverty in South Africa and the role of the churches in eradicating poverty. However, there is a gap in the research especially in the local churches. Churches at large are periodically involved in feeding schemes. However, the challenge is to go beyond poverty alleviation. Local churches should become involved in teaching skills so that, as a result, communities can become better equipped in fighting the scourge of poverty. The church as a community of believers in Christ should be more pro-active in fighting the scourge of poverty. It is my fervent hope that the local churches will come to share

my vision of implementing skills programmes in the local churches and communities. I hope to achieve this goal by firstly developing my knowledge-base through this research and then, in my capacity as teacher, to work with local pastors in setting these programmes in place.

## 1.2 **Objectives**

- To develop a coherent and integrated design that comprehensively introduces the main topic as well as the different chapters of the dissertation.
- To provide a representative overview of existing research and scholarly research and scholarly materials on the socio-contextual definitions and descriptions of poverty. This will also include local perspectives with specific reference to Christian views.
- To critically review research and scholarly views on the nature of globalisation and its various impacts on local communities. This also needs to include the possibilities that globalisation will provide to local communities.
- To study existing materials and opinions with regard to the impact of landlessness and the HIV/AIDS Pandemic on the South African population.
- To study existing research on moral and social views on poverty and poverty alleviation emanating from the Bible.
- To discuss the reasons and ways in which the local churches can address the issue of alleviating poverty.
- To critically conclude and summarize the research.

## 1.3 **Key critical questions**

- What would be the main points and nature of a research design addressing the objective outlined above?

- What constitutes the relevant body of scholarly literature needed that would provide a representative overview of existing research on the socio-contextual definitions and descriptions of poverty? What are the local Christian perspectives that scholars have developed, and how can these views be accounted for in terms of socio-contextual understandings of poverty?
- What is the nature of “globalisation” and its various impacts on local communities? How can “globalisation” be described in terms of the “culture of poverty” which is more comprehensive than understandings that limit poverty to the shortage of money?
- What are the impacts of landlessness and the HIV/AIDS Pandemic on the phenomenon of poverty in South Africa?
- What are the existing scholarly views that researchers have developed on moral and social views with regard to poverty and poverty alleviation emanating from the Bible?
- What are the reasons and the nature of intervention in poverty by local churches?
- What would be a comprehensive and integrated conclusion and summary for the research?

#### 1.4 **Research approach**

I am an educator and also involved in teaching children and adults in my local church and my local community. My main purpose for this Masters dissertation is to gain knowledge to be able to educate and train people in the poor communities where I live and work. For this reason, my main approach is to make an extensive study of existing scholarly and research materials relevant to the objectives and key critical questions stated above. This is needed, because this is a body of material which is constantly developing and which researchers and teachers like myself need in the communities in which we live and work. We need to be

informed of the latest research dealing with the topics outlined in the objectives and key critical questions above. In order to meet my objectives, my approach is also guided by the fact that I shall study the relevant material and then integrate it into a coherent argument. This, hopefully will also lay the basis for further research.

The theoretical approach comprises of a critical review of scholarly literature on the stated objectives. In addition, the topic is addressed from a Christian perspective by providing a critical biblical and theological approach to poverty. This provides the basis for the potential constructive engagement of poverty by the church.

### **1.5 Methodology**

The basic methodology followed is that of a critical engagement of available scholarship on the topic and its sub-topics identified. On the one hand, the aim is to gain knowledge on these topics. On the other hand, the aim is to evaluate this knowledge in terms of its relevance in our own South African context. This is done systematically throughout the whole dissertation. The main area of the dissertation is the critical contextual reflection on the topic from Biblical and theological perspectives in chapters seven and eight.

### **1.6 Chapter outline**

#### **Chapter One: The research design**

In this chapter, a presentation is made on what the researcher plans to achieve with the research. An introduction gives a brief resume about the topic, 'poverty' and few seminal critical perspectives on the topic. It also provides perspectives from Christian perspective. The role of the church is brought to the fore in that it can constructively engage the issues surrounding 'poverty'. I also indicate how individuals and Christians in a

corporate body can go about helping and teaching the poor 'skills' development. The chapter also contains my rationale/reasons for the research.

The objectives of the research are carefully listed and set out.

The 'key critical questions' are posed with the objective of satisfactorily answering them with respect to the objectives of my dissertation.

The main approach is to conduct an extensive study of scholarly research on the topic and sub-topics of the dissertation, as well as its main and secondary objectives.

## **Chapter Two: Socio-contextual definitions and descriptions of poverty**

In this chapter I concentrate on existing socio-contextual definitions and descriptions of poverty. I discuss subsistence poverty, basic needs poverty, the measurement of poverty, relative poverty and absolute poverty. I also analyse the fact that poverty is more than material needs and how to escape from poverty. The chapter also focuses on the central issue namely that poverty should be of particular concern for Christians. In order to fight against poverty, the necessity of an engaged Christian reflection on poverty is also highlighted.

## **Chapter Three: Globalisation and poverty**

In this chapter I provide an overview of existing research on globalisation and poverty. I define the term 'globalisation' and elaborate on the four dimensions of globalisation. This is followed by a further discussion on the end of third world wars and the globalisation of poverty. The fact that this allows for a greater freedom for globalising forces to engage in local



communities means that we should explore ways in regulating globalisation. This section also includes a focus on how globalisation has impacted on the local communities in South Africa.

#### **Chapter Four: Southern Africa and poverty**

In this chapter I will discuss the nature and impact of poverty in Southern Africa. I will elaborate on the ways of uprooting poverty. I will further discuss how women perceive men as a cause of poverty. I will discuss the many causes of poverty.

#### **Chapter Five: Poverty, human rights and education in South Africa**

Human Rights and education as well as the work of NGOs are three of the most important aspects of the constructive engagement of poverty. This chapter focuses on these issues. I discuss human rights and poverty, human rights at issue, the human right to an adequate standard of living, the human rights to a safe and healthy environment, the right of access to land, the right to education and the human right for children.

I also discuss the role of education and non-governmental organizations in the fight against poverty in South Africa. I also highlight the role of NGO's in response to those with HIV/AIDS and especially the role of NGO's in response to HIV/AIDS in my community of Chatsworth.

#### **Chapter Six: Poverty, landlessness and the HIV/ AIDS pandemic in South Africa**

Apart from other factors, the question of land is a serious issue for people in Africa when they wish to address poverty. The problem dates from colonial times and strategies and has come to the forefront in recent times both in Zimbabwe and South Africa. This topic is studied with regard to the dynamics and legacy of land dispossession as well as how land should be

made available to the poor and how the poor could use and develop it for their own benefit. In addition, the HIV/AIDS pandemic also impacts negatively on people's cultural and economic well-being. This phenomenon is also researched especially since it mainly affects the younger generations creating a vacuum in skills and knowledge education for future generations.

### **Chapter Seven: The Bible and poverty**

This chapter comprises of a critical study of existing scholarly research on the issue of the Bible and poverty. It is done from a moral and social perspective. Morally, the main focus relates to the moral codes, norms and values which the Bible espouses with regard to the "poor". Socially, it is especially Judaeo-Christian laws and directives which are studied i.e. as to how they impacted on Israelite society and how they were central to the early church and its message.

### **Chapter Eight: Poverty and the role of the Church**

Poverty has been an issue within the church since the time of the New Testament. It has acquired much attention also throughout church history. This chapter analyses perspectives on how the local church can address the issue of poverty. Since Christian proposals throughout history were determined by the culture and time and place in which they were made, this chapter provides perspectives on how the church can address poverty in the local contexts today. It is stressed that the church has a wonderful message in the Bible. Yet, this message about the Gospel for the poor, must be applied in local contexts. The church, in fighting the scourge of poverty, should resist tyrannical dictators and systems, structures and laws passed that perpetuate poverty. The church should be the voice of today and make its views without fear, favour, or prejudice.

## **Chapter Nine: Conclusion**

An overview of the research is provided in this chapter. A critical summary of each chapter is also provided. The conclusion is the crucial aspect of the dissertation. It provides a framework for summarizing the findings important for addressing the main topic of the dissertation. It gives a graphic picture of the state of poverty and the poverty line that determine the levels of poverty in South Africa. The government of South Africa needs to play an even greater role to put measures in place to alleviate the suffering of the poor. The church has to be pro-active in its fight against poverty without fear, favour or prejudice.

### **1.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter I briefly addressed the fact that poverty constitutes one of the most challenging phenomena facing society today. This is a world-wide phenomenon with global as well as South African aspects to it. In order to work towards and strive for equality, the church and Christians have a very significant role to play. This is so because it forms part of the primary focuses of the Bible. My research objectives as well as the key critical questions and research approach and methodology outlined these focuses of the dissertation.

It is noted that poverty manifests itself globally and constitutes one of the most challenging phenomena facing humanity today. It is a very real issue for about half the population in South Africa. It is hoped that this dissertation may add to the research pool of knowledge from which we may learn to constructively address poverty. Generally, we may learn about the issues at stake. More particularly, it is hoped that it may inspire individual Christians and Churches to constructively engage this main obstacle standing in the way of the comprehensive social transformation of South African society today.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **SOCIO-CONTEXTUAL DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF POVERTY**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

There is no one single definition of poverty. There are as many definitions of poverty as there are aspects of poverty. Given the aspects, one can come up with the related definitions. Yet, poverty, in my understanding carries its different meanings as it manifests itself to people economically, culturally, aesthetically, politically and emotionally. Francis Wilson (2001) says in this regard:

There is a parallel debate over poverty definitions with some definitions of poverty closely tied to lack of income and basic services while others argue strongly for a multi-dimensional view of poverty which includes the lack of economic, social, political and environmental assets and resources.

It is important that one does not accept one kind of definition at the expense of the other. For this reason, I shall make the distinction between a more limited and a more expansive definition of poverty. The more limited definition focuses on the lack of basic income and basic services, while the more expansive encompasses not only the more limited, but also the wider understanding that poverty involves different dimensions at the level of economics, but also the social, political and environmental assets and resources levels. To this we may also add the spiritual or religious level.

Against this background, I wish to discuss the definitions of poverty by scholars, poverty and development, global poverty, concepts of poverty, poverty and development, poverty as a concern for Christians, problems in the fight against poverty and Christian reaction. Given the realities of poverty, the most important challenge is to change the current systems which mostly benefit previously advantaged people and not previously disadvantaged and poor.

## **2.1 Definitions of Poverty**

### **2.1.1 Poverty, a persistent global reality**

As already shown according to John Dixon and David Macarov (1998),

the concept of poverty is a basic lack of the means of survival; the poor are those who, even in normal circumstances are unable to feed and clothe themselves properly and risk death as a consequence.

Further a review of empirical studies have suggested that the concept of poverty as absolute deprivation continues to be of primary relevance in countries where the per capita income is low and the incidence of poverty is high. This definition has not been accepted in those areas of the world where higher general levels of living have been achieved. Poverty is defined in relative terms in countries experiencing rapid growth and apparent reductions in the incidence of absolute deprivation. As the threat of starvation is reduced questions concerning the distribution of income and opportunity assume greater importance. In this situation the definition of poverty moves away from the minimal physical survival notion to attach value to the quality of life that even the poorest member of a community should survive.

The idea of relative poverty is a powerful one because it invites variable interventions and remedial actions. Remedial action may be the responsibility of charitable individuals, family, government or communal responsibility. Yet, it is important that this matter of relative definition also become an issue of public debate. Healthy debates can create the opportunity for people to feel free to agree or disagree on the concept of poverty. Even so, the first element in the analysis of poverty will always remain the question of material well-being, the most basic level which distinguishes the poor from others. This may cause people to only think of poverty as no more than a question of material resources, usually expressed in terms of cash. The discussion may then centre on the fact that the basic issue is not the money itself but the effect lack of money has on the lives and lifestyles of the poor. However, it may be wrong to focus on the lack of money itself as a definition of poverty at the expense of other dimensions of poverty which cannot be simply reduced to monetary values.

The concept of poverty should therefore also be more inclusive and a fuller one concerned with the quality of life and not only lack of money or a lack of buying power.

Another perspective is also that poverty has a bi-polar moral dimension. In a situation where “the rich get richer and the poor poorer” the rich should be conscientised with regard to the uplifting of the poor. This conscientisation has global dimensions, addressing the gap between the “rich North” and the “poor South”. The other pole of this issue is the moral dimensions of the lives of people living in poor conditions. Their struggle for survival may give rise to a lack of education (illiteracy), malnutrition and disease, different forms of crime, etc. These may give rise to a wide variety of moral challenges within poor communities themselves.

However, for themselves, it may be impossible to move out of poverty. We know that life is about making choices. However, for the poor people the area of effective choice is restricted and the measure of the depth of their poverty narrows their remaining choice.

The global understanding of poverty also impacts on cultural customs and conventions, as these are challenged to transform in the face of continuous pressures of modernisation.

It is evident that the concept of poverty must be interpreted sensitively.

### **2.1.2 Definitions of poverty**

Against this background, there is a range of definitions of poverty. The next section treats some of these aspects of poverty.

#### **2.1.2.1 Subsistence poverty**

The basic definition focusing on subsistence poverty has to do with the capacity to survive. The main human needs that are highlighted in this definition are biological ones viz. the need for food, water, clothing and shelter. The definitions based on this absolute concept of poverty may allow for a measured approach to change from time to time and context to context. Yet, the basic requirements remain the same. All people function according to an absolute poverty line based on survival criteria, meaning that poverty is ultimately defined by some notion of subsistence and survival. It can be argued that a people do not only need enough food to survive but must also be able to maintain their health so that they can live (and work) unimpaired.

There have been many attempts to calculate the costs of meeting subsistence needs. On this level, one of the best known but rather

misunderstood examples come from the work of Seebohm Rowntree. He established a precise poverty line by drawing up a list of essential foodstuffs and other indispensable household items which he priced to establish an irreducible budget without which it would be difficult to maintain health and physical efficiency. In Rowntree's view this measure represented "a standard of bare subsistence rather than living". Amongst others, his important studies are: *Poverty, A Study of Town Life* (1901); and *Poverty and Progress* (1941) (see Rowntree).

The minimalist definition of absolute poverty is in fact fraught with both theoretical and practical difficulties. For example, even trying to determine something as fundamental as the nutritional requirements of people of different ages or physical types is a contested matter about which dieticians and other competent experts disagree. Rowntree himself was well aware of many of these difficulties. We recognise the constantly shifting and relative nature of poverty.

#### 2.1.2.2 **Basic needs poverty**

The basic needs definition of poverty is an influential variant of the subsistence model moving somewhat towards a more relative approach. Basic needs are defined by the international labour organization as the minimum standard of living which a society should set for the poorest groups of its people. The major importance of the basic needs concept is that it is not confined to the physical needs for individual survival as above, but also recognises the importance of a range of community services and facilities. It also recognises that the basic needs objective will vary from one country to another in the light of specific circumstances.

It is clear that the attempt to construct an absolute and presumably universal definition of poverty is fundamentally flawed both in theory and



practice. Poverty analysts are driven remorselessly to accept that poverty has to be understood as a socially constructed concept with powerful qualitative and normative components. As such it is inherently a relative concept.

### 2.1.2.3 **The measurement of poverty**

If policies are developed that try to reduce the extent of poverty, then reliable and relevant measures need to be developed that will enable us to determine how many poor people there are in any given population and what are the social characteristics of the poor (for example, their gender, ages, family circumstances and work experience). There is a wide range of possible measures that have been developed and deployed in different countries. However, the kind of measure chosen reflects the underlying concept and definition of poverty that has been adopted.

If the chosen measure has been adopted by responsible public authorities to help make informed policy decisions then the measure will also reflect the dominant prevailing ideology of social policy. It will also be influenced by the availability of appropriate and reliable social data which can be used as the basis of calculation. In this instance, the notion of the poverty line was developed in the early 1960s by Molly Orshansky, an economist in the United States, working for the Social Security Administration. The Orshansky approach is widely used to compromise between nutritional and income-based methods for establishing poverty lines. It is calculated by first finding the minimum expenditure required to satisfy nutritional requirements of a family, then grossing up the figure by an appropriate proportion to allow for non-food expenditure requirements. In this way the Orshansky approach incorporates the view that poverty has a social as well as a biological dimension (see Orshansky).

#### 2.1.2.4 **Relative poverty**

A relative definition of poverty means that one compares existing living standards in the community being researched. One may then compare prevailing patterns of expenditure and consumption and identify a median line in terms of which people who do not measure up, are identified as poor. They are unable to purchase or access those goods and services that will enable them to live a life that is in line with the median line. In this context, the Ministers of the European Community in 1984 defined the poor as “Persons, families and groups of persons whose resources are limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the member states in which they live” (Council of the European Communities 1984, Council Decision on Specific Community Action to Combat Poverty 85/8/Eec).

Peter Townsend (1979:31) defines relative poverty in terms of the community in which people reside.

Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary ... in the societies to which they belong.

He also said that the poor are

... those whose resources do not allow them to fulfil the elaborate social demands and customs which a society [or community] has placed upon citizens of that society.

Adopting a relative definition of poverty certainly complicates the research and policy processes in theoretical and practical terms. In South Africa, this matter impacts especially on the wealth-gap. Whereas the poorest of the poor in South Africa may still have relative access to social resources and systems, the gap between them and the most affluent part of the population is one of the largest in the world.

## **2.2 Poverty and development**

According to Johann Graaff (2004) the defining of concepts is not an innocent exercise. Concepts reflect theoretical concerns and ideological conflicts.

### **2.2.1 Measures of development and poverty**

In general, in South Africa people measure the poverty of people in terms of the amount of money necessary to keep someone alive. Healthy economic growth is no guarantee against the ever widening inequality. South Africa's economy grew at quite a spectacular rate during the 1950's and 1960's but it produced one of the most extreme cases of inequality in the world. Alongside economic measures came measures of educational level, physical health and political democracy. Poverty is as much about income as it is about the quality of life, power and access to resources.

### **2.2.2 Absolute poverty**

Perhaps the most basic measures of poverty in South Africa are the minimum living level and household subsistence level. As an example of absolute poverty, Wilson and Ramphela (1989) worked with the measuring of the amount of money necessary to provide a household with the very elementary necessities to stay alive. Studies by the World Bank worked with similar statistics which include the necessary needed

expenditure for survival to the buying of the minimum standard of nutrition and other necessities (May 2000: 29).

### **2.2.3 Relative deprivation and structural poverty**

Social scientists distinguish absolute poverty from relative property or relative deprivation. Measures of relative deprivation consider people's perception of how poor they feel. Significantly they are measures that recognise some of the complexities of poverty. They recognise that poverty is not just a physical phenomenon. Poor does not mean just being without money. Being poor frequently also means subjected to physical abuse and violence, being subjected to humiliation and indignity, being subjected to exploitation by the powerful and wealthy. It frequently involves experiences of humiliation, helplessness, ill-health, indignity, anxiety, rejection and denigration, powerlessness and insecurity and deep injustice.

We note that poverty has economic, political, cultural, emotional and psychological dimensions. Thus physical deprivation then is often a symptom of something more important, namely, a position of structural deprivation, an exposure of exploitation which people are unable to escape (Webster, 1992).

### **2.2.4 Measuring development**

As indicated the first criterion which people use to compare countries is gross national product (GNP). GNP is the total value of all the goods and services produced in a country in a particular year. As with our measures of poverty, the Human Development Index is another measure and has an underlying theory of development which is different from GNP-based measures. Here development is a multi-faceted phenomenon with significant roots in structural inequalities and power differences.

Why is inequality so important? There are a number of reasons why people are right to worry about inequality. The first is a moral reason. The world has so many resources that it could send people to the moon and into orbit around the world through extensive NASA programmes. Yet there are more than 1 billion people who earn 1 dollar or less a day.

The second reason is a political one. A country where there is a high level of inequality is very vulnerable politically e.g. Sudan, D.R.C. and South Africa.

The third reason is economic. There are serious reasons for believing that a country's economic growth will be significantly inhibited if large parts of its citizenry are illiterate, unskilled, politically angry and unsupported by the government in their attempts to make a living. Therefore economic growth cannot be for a minority in a country. It is imperative for a country who wants to prosper to utilize its whole population and use the full range of potential at its disposal.

### **2.3 Poverty: a global review**

Poverty research has mostly been conducted within national borders because poverty has been considered to be a national problem of countries. It was also assumed that the solutions to poverty must be sought within the national borders. This has made poverty to a large extent culture-bound, prone to stereotyping of certain communities and cultures, and also leading to the seeking of causes and manifestations which are culture-bound. This general approach has taken away the focus on poverty as universal phenomenon and that its causes and manifestations can be demarcated also at global levels. From this perspective, poverty as global phenomenon should be understood as something which is not the mere responsibility of a nation but that of

universal community. To various degrees we are all part of universal systems that seem to be part of poverty-producing processes, asking for redress at universal levels independent of the culture where poverty is found.

It takes fortitude to break down stereotypes of poverty when communicating research results to policy makers who already have their embodied images of poverty. The comparative studies in the social sciences involve a whole set of methodical and theoretical problems of their own which run as an undercurrent in all comparisons irrespective of the field of research and is an important area to be addressed by researchers but also educators and teachers at local levels (see Øyen, Miller and Samad 2001).

#### **2.4 Concepts of poverty**

The social science field is far from being without conflict. There has for instance been heated debate about the conceptual problems of poverty and its measurement around issues already addressed above. Townsend (1993) shows that it was Piachaud (1987) who particularly stressed the question of whether the poor have an “opportunity to choose” at all. Piachaud reviewed three approaches to defining poverty levels viz. social consensus approaches, budget standard methods, and behavioural approaches. Each addresses its own complex of questions and none can of itself provide an objective definition of poverty. He also extensively dealt with problems related to the treatment of time and home production: 1) the time and ability of individuals to prepare food or to wash and feed without assistance, for example, vary greatly depending on circumstances and in turn affect income needs; the choices and constraints affecting the household formations in which people live and their budgeting behaviour are also important in assessing poverty. He asserted that individual

variations in behaviour need to be explicitly recognised if practical definitions of poverty levels are to be found.

An even more important issue is the problem of the causes and reasons of the incidence of poverty and the determining of the rate or level of poverty. Apart from the lack of material sources the poor also suffer from a lack of opportunity to choose their lifestyle. They have no opportunity to choose whether to eat meat or vegetables for instance. The debates also focus on poverty as observed by Westerners of others – that they are the cause of the poverty themselves. To then truly come to universally acceptable understandings of poverty and the relevant concepts is virtually impossible.

## **2.5 Poverty concept classics**

Various social scientists employ different principles in classifying applied poverty concepts and if a common dividing line is applied, a dichotomised picture appears. The classic poverty concepts can be grouped around two pillars. The first one deals with poverty “causes”, focusing on the lack of resources and the second one deals with poverty “outcomes” observing them by means of a poor way of life, poor living conditions and customs, and attitudes towards poverty. The concepts making up the first category are labelled “Anglo-Saxon”, “indirect” or “subsistence”. Concepts labelled “continental”, “direct” or “basic needs” and “relative deprivation” make up the second category.

Frequent debates on the explanatory capacities of the poverty concepts between Townsend, Piachaud and Sen (Townsend, 1993) undoubtedly showed that the subsistence idea applied in the poverty “causes” concepts offers a more transparent and less ambiguous picture of poverty. In contrast, the poverty “outcome” concepts cope with wide variations in poor

living conditions. They provide a clear distinction between opportunity and choice but remain vague as regards the distinction between way of life and lifestyle. The “Anglo-Saxon” conceptualisation focuses on distributional issues: the lack of resources at the disposal of an individual or household is of principal interest. The lack of disposable income and opportunities can be seen as indirect conceptualisation of poverty as stressed by Ringen (1987). Douthitt (1994) conceptualises poverty as “time adjusted” focusing on families with young children that need time as well as money to provide child care to prepare meals and to perform other housekeeping functions. The “time-approach” can be interpreted as one form of social capital that might be considered in conceptualising poverty. The child does not get the cultural and intellectual stimulus that interaction with adults can provide.

Two other important concepts are Net Earnings Capacity (NEC) and Earnings Capacity Poverty (ECP). These deal with the long-term potential earnings of families and not relative income determined by events and phenomena and individual tastes. Haveman and Buron (1993:143 and 144) explains that:

Unlike current cash income, this measure abstracts from transitory events and phenomena and from individual tastes for income relative to leisure. As such, it reflects the potential of the consumer unit to generate real consumption. It also adjusts for the size and composition of the family unit. Net Earnings Capacity is designed to measure the potential of a family to generate an income stream were the family to use its human and physical capital to capacity. Using this concept, we establish a new definition of poverty, which we call Earnings Capacity poverty. A family is poor according to this definition if full (or capacity) use of its earnings capabilities would



fail to generate enough income to lift the family out of poverty. Families in Earnings Capacity Poverty, then, cannot escape poverty without the support of other citizens or the state. In this sense, they are the nation's truly dependent population.

We note that the direct conceptualisation of poverty concentrates on the 'outcome' aspect of the poverty situation. It deals primarily with living conditions, stressing either a poor way of life or poor consumption standards or attitudes towards living in poverty. The approach relates to Townsend's (1979) conceptualisation of poverty as relative deprivation in which participation in the customary lifestyle of a particular local community is the central issue.

The Nordic approach to living conditions represent a special contribution to the relevant stock of knowledge. Two major points of departure need to be noted. First, poverty must be visible and second poverty is not how people feel but how people live. It is seen as an accumulation of social deprivation and represents a 'third stage in measuring poverty' (Ringen, 1987).

In Ringen's term (1987) observation of income offers only indirect evidence of poverty.

#### **2.5.1 Regional variations on poverty concept classics**

The classic poverty concepts show a common feature: they consider poverty simply as an individual and less frequently a group experience. It is believed (Piachaud, 1987) that extreme poverty as described by Charles Dickens has been eradicated. In contrast realities, particularly from Asia and Africa, fail to prove that poverty has been eradicated.

Empirical evidence further proves that the concept of poverty is far from being constant and has temporal, contextual and spatial attributes.

## **2.6 Poverty and Development**

Poverty is of grave concern but 'development' has become an important concept especially since the end of the Second World War. Governments and inter-governmental organisations continue to adopt ambitious development targets. The United Nations World Summit on Social Development, in Copenhagen in 1995 resolved to reduce poverty by half in 2015. From this perspective, poverty means a lack of development whereas development implies getting rid of poverty. However, it has also proved possible for development to occur without alleviating poverty (Allen and Thomas 2000).

In the new era of globalisation the question of the appalling poverty of large numbers of the world's people remains as potent as ever.

### **2.6.1 Conceptions of poverty**

In areas where development is needed, it is generally agreed that if development has to occur then poverty must be tackled. In this regard, it has become a central tenet of the World Bank's involvement in development that any economic development has as prime requirement, the reduction of poverty.

### **2.6.2 Income measures of poverty and development**

For some researchers development is determined by income levels. If poverty applies to individuals and households, then development translates into the income of individuals and households. In this perspective, financial income in real terms is seen as the ultimate value. Health care, that aims at the production of healthy workers, and other

variables important for comprehensive development are secondary. The same is true with regard to the development of healthy diets that aims at producing healthy workers. However, a poor health care system and poor diets will lead to poor health and hamstrung development. It is important that Christians view poverty and wealth from a different dimension.

## **2.7 Poverty as more than material need**

Against the background of the discussion so far, it is evident that much of the research works with a limited conception of poverty. These limited understandings do not include aspects of lifestyle and environment. They also do not include the lack of community, infrastructure and community services. Human beings who suffer different forms of poverty need much more than money or the economic.

Human beings are multi-faceted beings and in need of communal existence. Communal existence also by implication could care for well-being – as is evident in different notions of *ubuntu*. There are many more things than the need of money. It is true that one's basic needs need to be met. But beyond this, there are aspects related to culture, traditions, religious beliefs, self-esteem, and freedom.

Another aspect is that human beings need infrastructure to live modern lives. Infrastructural development does not only require its actual use but also its upkeep. Central to infrastructure is therefore the developing of the economy of the poor area and economic systems so that the poor can become able to provide for themselves. If these systems are developed, they may assist the poor to form part of these systems and benefit from them. Such infrastructure may include such issues as the building of roads, dams, industries, agriculture and manufacturing. When such systems are developed, they will have to go hand in hand with community

services that will cater for the people's social needs. The developing of the systems more comprehensive will therefore also by default be able to prevent people from going hungry.

## **2.8 The escape from poverty**

Poverty is a fact. Can we escape from poverty? Not in the real sense because we have established that poverty is more than a lack of money and hence even basic material needs. Yet there have been many people in the world who have escaped from at least material poverty but yet there are countless millions that daily face abject poverty. It is important here to emphasize Novak's (2001) observation that it is not wealth that is natural but poverty. There have been three factors that have helped people especially in the west out of a natural state of lack and into affluence. Firstly, there has been work; secondly division of labour and trade that has made work more effective; and thirdly technology has enhanced the effectiveness of work. The way to escape poverty is the maximisation of these factors.

Poverty is overcome through working and wealth is generated by working for it. The more work is done, the sooner the problem of poverty will be solved. Human, not natural resources give prosperity (Davis, 2004: 17). We note that work is essential but the shortage of resources, continual thieving, natural disasters and the influx of cheap goods may undercut local production. Since a few years ago, in South Africa we have seen a pattern of people losing jobs especially in the textile industry because of the influx of cheap Chinese clothes and textiles that is flooding the South African market. As a result thousands of people around the country are facing a bleak future and hence abject poverty. Although the Government is using a slogan, "Proudly South African", this is not bearing much fruit. It is noted that not all problems can be solved by work.

## 2.9 Co-operation

We note that if anything that has to succeed there must be co-operation. This is very evident in family and animal life.

Nobody is really able to do all that is necessary for a modern life-style alone but with co-operation and trade, a higher standard of living becomes possible. One of the reasons for the affluence among the rich is increasing specialisation which obviously requires trade to ensure all the wants of society are met. The poorest nations are those with little trade and very little contact with the West. There are bound to be problems when there is trade between the rich and poor countries. In this way goods from the West flood their countries and essential capital flows out of the country. The poorer nations get poorer. As a result debt is accumulated because the imported goods could not be paid for. The emphasis on production has had negative effects. With greater production the prices go down and the benefit reduced. Trade has caused cultural dependence on the West and a destruction of local values and production. The availability of goods reflects increasing choice and a move towards a fuller, richer existence which is looked upon as good. It is argued that withholding goods and thereby limiting choice in the third world effectively treats the inhabitants not as mature individuals but as children (Bauer, 1981: 81). We can conclude that co-operation among countries is essential but if this co-operation implies that the poorer countries get poorer and the richer countries get richer then co-operation is more a problem than an asset.

## 2.10 Poverty as a particular concern of Christians

Christians should be concerned about the impact of poverty on the human race. Christian believers especially in the richer sections of the West should be involved in the alleviation of poverty for two reasons. On one level they have a responsibility simply because they belong to the richer

segment of the world. On another level they must act because poverty is not simply a material matter but a spiritual and a religious concern.

Christians are caught in a debate whether poverty may be established because a man is lazy and a sinner or because a man is sinned against. On another level wealth and prosperity may be established because a man is a hard worker, because he is righteous or precisely he is not righteous, and exploits the people of God (Cotterell, 1990: 196).

Christians have displayed different attitudes. Some have stated that the duty of Christians is to concentrate solely on the spiritual and on personal ethics. There may be some degree of involvement in charity for the poor. Others have rejected the material altogether becoming ascetic in their approach to life. However, these attitudes have hardly helped to combat poverty.

## **2.11 Emerging Problems in the Fight against Poverty**

The three-pronged attack on poverty viz. work, co-operation and technology has borne much fruit but in certain parts of the world it has not been without difficulty.

However, the overcoming of poverty has generated another set of problems of a more grave nature. It is because of prosperity that material resources are shrinking, pollution is becoming a major problem and that the world population is rapidly rising.

### **2.11.1 Resources**

The high population growth is of great concern and this no doubt has led to the dwindling of resources. There is a concern about several aspects such as food, the limitation of suitable land, the supply of fresh water,

mineral resources and energy. All these factors are interrelated and contra-determining. The availability of food depends on land, where it is produced, which in turn depends on water, which in turn depends on energy.

Estimates of resources vary considerably (Davis, 2004: 105). There is also a belief that minerals will only last for a few decades more. Others claim a “safe prediction” of the abundance of food and raw material in the calculable future (Schumpeter, 1976: 11; Gilder, 1981: 261).

Optimists believe that the problem of resources can be solved by recycling but this requires energy which some then see as the major problem. Nuclear energy is a limited solution as it just uses a different resource; it also raises concern about nuclear pollution. There are others hope for a technical breakthrough, for example, in nuclear fusion which would provide unlimited energy.

Other resources, such as amount of land are also diminishing because of urbanization. Land is also lost through erosion which was caused by intensive farming. Water is also seen as a great concern; countries aim at using all their available supplies. This is something that still need to be developed with regard to the vision of developing countries.

Many see a resource crisis looming and predict a conflict over resources among the poor, especially when they see the extent of depletion that has taken place (Schumacher, 1973: 28). The most alarming account is Meadows (1972: 25f) who predicts a catastrophic collapse when the pressures of population, resources and pollution get out of hand.

The question of resources particularly affects the poor because it is the rich people who are consuming the vast majority of available resources, giving rise to fears that the poor just will not be able to catch up as there is nothing left. For example, as regards energy, it is the rich that are the main consumers (Schumacher, 1973: 23). As Goudzwaard (1979: 123) says, if everybody lived as the Western world lives, the world could not last ten years.

### **2.11.2 Pollution**

The use of resources also leads to pollution. Waste is unavoidable and causes problems of disposal. The environment suffers damage by pollution which in turn reduces the length and quality of life (Meadows, 1972: 114). Protecting the global environment is inextricably linked with eliminating poverty (Jamieson 2010).

Pollution is naturally dealt with by the world eco-system over a period of time. The air and oceans are good at cleansing (Davis, 2004: 103). Waste products are of such a nature that natural degradation takes a long period of time.

The rich even export their pollution by the placement of multi-national corporations or even by dumping. The poor because of their sheer poverty devastate the environment by using cheap fuels and consume resources which should be conserved. It is clear that capitalism naturally produces pollution. Increased pollution is due to modern technologies rather than increased production. Many aspects of modern life cause perhaps more damage than necessary, such as cheap products intended to have a short life, or modern foods which are not as healthy as natural foods, but which in general are more profitable (Dammers, 2001: 45, 121). Many see



environmental damage as flowing directly from Christianity's belief in human rights over the world (Rifkin, in Davis 2004: 98).

### **2.11.3 Population growth**

Population explosion is in many ways connected to poverty. Population growth is very much concentrated in the third world countries which exacerbate already existing poverty. Africa has the highest fertility rate in the world and the rate of population growth is higher than in any other region. Since 1960, Africa's population has doubled and this exceeded the growth in agricultural production in at least fourteen African countries (Kibirige 1997).

The problem is of course essentially an economic one. Even a small population may experience famine, and in practice be over-populated (Rushdoony, 1975: 1, 45). Southern Africa is in many ways a part of the third world and shares in the problem, but it is exacerbated by extra factors in the subcontinent. It is a cause for alarm that population growth is almost totally in the Black population. The growth in the population of towns and cities is phenomenal. Southern Africa also experiences great problems in providing for its population, for example in the provision of water. In Southern Africa with its very large population there are fears that the population can unlikely be provided for.

### **2.12 The need for a system**

The question of poverty is more than charity or how much aid is necessary. The question involves economic theory and practice on a large scale and so demands the choice of an economic system. In fact every economic system is in any case an approach to poverty, as it deals with the production and distribution of commodities which will never be enough to meet the human need for them. Economics presupposes choice and

scarcity (Munby, 1956: 44). People often fell into extreme poverty, starvation and death before the emergence of the modern world. With regard to the problem of wants and needs and due to enlightenment thinking, two basic secular systems have evolved, namely socialism and capitalism. We note that capitalism has motivated to work and this helped to fight poverty. Socialism focused on co-operation but at the cost of self motivation.

### **2.12.1 Secular systems**

America and the U.S.S.R. have mixed economies viz, capitalism and socialism. America is heavily criticised for becoming over involved in the market, especially in the field of welfare, preventing the free operation of the market and thus harming the poor in the process. Within these systems, individuals have differing attitudes to the question of wealth and poverty. Clouse and Diehl (1984: 101) for example says that free capitalism with government control give the greatest of what he sees are the basic requirements, namely justice, responsibility and freedom. Dammers (2001: 151) believes that modern democratic socialism is the most likely system to give justice, rather than extremes to left or right.

Both capitalism and socialism has their drawbacks and as such neither are effective for the poor (Gheddo, 1973: 30). Capitalism is a system where people exploit their fellows while socialism is the other way round.

### **2.12.2 The Christian reaction**

Generally Christians either choose capitalism or socialism based on Christian perspectives. If they choose one system, they reject the other because it is responsible for poverty. Generally Christians recognise that both systems are secular. The ideal for Christians is a system founded on

Christian principles. It is worth taking note that the world is predominantly non-Christian.

The Christian approach is to advocate a system that will be the best for the world and thus Christians will have to recognize the nature of humanity in the light of what is understood to be the best. Christian attitudes will also be very important to determine which-ever secular system is propagated.

### **2.12.3 Individual action**

It is of paramount importance that individual Christians should be concerned in eradicating poverty living in the context of a secular economic system. Christian engagement of poverty should be based on the teachings of the Bible. One thing though is certain: poverty must be addressed on both the level of overall economic structure as well as that of the individual.

### **2.13 Conclusion**

I was able to provide a representative overview of existing research and scholarly materials on the socio-contextual definitions and descriptions of poverty. I also included some local perspectives with specific reference to Christian views. We can conclude that there is no one single definition of poverty. Poverty to me has different meanings as it manifests itself to people culturally, politically and emotionally. We note that it is increasingly difficult to break away from the vicious cycle of poverty. However, Christians can play a meaningful role in helping people to escape from the vicious cycle of poverty. Christians need to be more proactive and need to realize that the church is the body of Christ and need to be the hands, eyes and feet of our Lord Jesus. Poverty is more than material need. The

church can play a more meaningful role in fighting the scourge of poverty and thus bring the necessary changes that are needed in society.

Systemically, the church could constructively contribute towards pressures to change the general capitalist system to one that is more conducive to equality. The church and religious organisations cannot make this change but they could be an important critical voice toward the realisation of such a change.

The church can introduce measures to teach people skills like sewing, literacy, plumbing, carpentry, computer, technical, cookery and other skills. Christians in particular should feel for others as our Lord has set a model for compassion. We should be like our Lord for we are in this world but not of the world.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **GLOBALISATION AND POVERTY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

In order to understand poverty one has to evaluate what is the nature of “globalisation” and its various impacts on local communities. The world is not an island. Poverty in one country impacts on other countries. Political and economic events at a global level, impact on local economics and politics. Political events in one country can have negative effects on the problem of poverty in another. For instance, the events of 9/11 in 2001 in New York, and the 11/3 and 7/7 bombings in Madrid and London in 2004 and 2005 respectively have had political and economic impact worldwide. If not always directly economic, these events have economic aspects to them.

The programme of President Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe to repress the Matabele, to confiscate white farms, and rid the country of inner-city slums likewise has had both political and economic dimensions inside his country, but also impacting on neighbouring countries. Irrespective of whether he was right or not, Zimbabwe disintegrated with its people fleeing poverty, starvation, police brutality and disease, impacting on other countries too. It drew alarming negative response from the international community and has accelerated the problem of poverty in Zimbabwe. As a result of these actions amongst others, the International Monetary Fund has been reluctant to provide financial aid to Zimbabwe.

The problems related to the wars in the Middle East, especially Iraq, are adding to the experiences of poverty of a wide diversity of people(s). The escalation of oil prices by OPEC countries is having a negative economic

effect on the world at large. As a result of the rising prices of fuel, poor countries become ever poorer. This is exacerbated because it diminishes funds needed to produce, transport or buy food in countries which are already facing abject poverty. Locally-produced food become more expensive and they find it ever more difficult to import food so as to feed their population.

The global currency issue is another global issue with an impact on the world. The depreciation of the dollar and pound has serious consequences especially for the poorer nations. We live in a “global village” and the political and economic problems in one country impacts on its neighbours. More globally speaking, global events also impact the smaller nations. The first world have a definite bearing on the world, and hence, local communities. Against this background, this chapter will provide a few perspectives on globalisation and poverty. It will focus on poverty and globalisation, the globalisation of poverty, the idea of the developmental state, sustainable development in a globalising world, the way in which globalisation impacts on developing countries, the issue of being included or excluded from processes of globalisation, participation in globalisation and the impact of globalisation.

### **3.1 Poverty and globalisation**

#### **3.1.1 What is globalisation?**

Globalisation refers to the growing sense of international interconnectedness. As a concept it refers to the ways in which developments in one region can rapidly come to have significant consequences for the security and well-being of communities in quite distant regions of the globe. It is also associated with a perception of powerlessness and chronic insecurity in that the speed and scale of contemporary global social and economic change often overtake

governments and countries, especially in the developing world. An example is the East Asian crisis of 1997 that seemed to overwhelm governments, politicians and communities. The unevenness of globalisation compounds such insecurities since “it would appear that the strong are becoming stronger and the weak weaker” as the benefits of globalisation accrue to a relatively small proportion of the world’s population whilst global poverty and social exclusion continue to increase (Dickson, 1997 in Held and McGrew; UNDP, 1997b). This, therefore makes the notion of globalisation the subject of debate from an international public and academic view-point. Economic instability in one region, would impact on the economics on another – often far removed from it. As the economic problems in the developed world escalate, they also impact negatively on other areas, often in developing countries. In this regard, Alan Greenspan said, “there can be no islands of prosperity” in an “ocean of economic instability” (McGrew 2000: 347).

More generally, however, globalisation involves much more than interconnectedness in terms of economics for it captures a sense that world-wide connectivity is very much a permanent feature of modern existence. This means that it signifies the deepening enmeshment of societies in an international web of world-wide flows of capital, goods, migrants, ideas, images, weapons, criminal activity and pollution. It is evident in all the key areas of modern life: the economic, political, legal, cultural, military and the ecological. “We live in one world, and have done so for a long time” (Frank, 1998: 29).

Contemporary globalisation as internationalisation is also organised and reproduced through distinctive mechanisms and infrastructures of control from the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organisation to the internet, global corporations and non-governmental

organisations. There is here a contradiction in terms of globalisation as internationalisation. On the one hand globalisation opens up new opportunities and possibilities but it also generates constraints upon what governments can do. Since globalisation is also a highly uneven process, it results in clear winners and losers not just between countries but within and across them. Globalisation discriminates between the rich and poor. It empowers the affluent with jet travel, global television and access to the worldwide web but for the majority of people it disempowers them as their fate is sealed by their unconnectedness. It is sadly noted that the World is deeply divided and as a result millions of poor people are disadvantaged. The continuing forces of globalisation therefore nurtures a sense of alienation that says “Power is elsewhere, untouchable” (Walker, 1998: 134; in McGrew 2000).

Globalisation is a process that both unites and divides people and communities. Globalisation arguably engenders a more “unruly world” but also a more unequal one (UNDP, 1997b; Herod *et al.*, 1998 in McGrew 2000:348).

### 3.1.2 **Four dimensions of globalisation**

According to Anthony McGrew (2000:347), there are four dimensions of globalisation as it relates to “change”. These merit being quoted in full.

- It involves a stretching of social, political and economic activities across political frontiers, regions and continents.
- It suggests the intensification, or the growing magnitude, of interconnectedness, i.e. flows of trade, investment, finance, migration, culture, etc.
- The growing extensity and intensity of global interconnectedness can be linked to a speeding up of global interactions and



processes, as the evolution of world-wide systems of transport and communication increases the velocity of the diffusion of ideas, goods, information, capital and people.

- The growing extensity, intensity and velocity of global interactions is associated with their deepening impact such that the effects of distant events can be highly significant elsewhere and even the most local developments may come to have enormous global consequences. In this sense, the boundaries between domestic matters and global affairs become increasingly blurred.

From the first, we can say that globalisation means the internationalisation of social, political and economic activities. These cross over political frontiers, geographical regions and even continents. This can be called “extensity”.

Secondly, the nature of interconnectedness intensifies. This means that different systems do not only start to interact and become connected but that the nature of the connectedness deepens and becomes evermore widespread, impacting local cultures even more significantly. One can say this of trade, investment, finance, migration, culture, etc. The intensity of interaction on one of these levels, spreads to others. It is also the other way round. What happens in local situations, may spread worldwide. Even the most local developments may come to have enormous global consequences. This can be called “intensity”.

Thirdly, globalisation speeds up global interactions and processes. People find that they can move faster from place to place, but in the process, they also find that there is a speed-up of the evolution of the diffusion of ideas information as well as capital and people. This can be called “velocity”.

Fourthly, the growing extensity, intensity and velocity of global interactions are also associated with their impacts on local communities and vice versa. This can be called “distance”.

Globalisation, then has to do with an increase in international connectedness, that this continuously intensifies, and speeds up, and that no local space or community remains unaffected and are integrated or affected by globalisation in terms of its “distance” from the core of globalising forces.

### 3.1.3 **Globalisation, inequality and world order**

The *neoliberal school* tends to view economic globalisation as a benign force for change which through free trade and capital mobility is creating a global market civilisation in which prosperity, wealth, power and a new liberal world order is being constructed (McGrew 2000:348).

The critical or *radical school* views these developments as an expression of western - mainly American - imperialism in which corporate empires and global markets have come to replace the world and colonising empires of the era of western industrialisation and expansion. The radical school suggests that the world is becoming ever more fragmented and unruly as the gap between the affluent north and increasingly impoverished south escalates.

The *transformationalist school* suggests both these two schools listed above do not take into consideration how contemporary globalisation reorders relations between rich and poor or North and South. North and South are the dominant and subordinate states in the global system (McGrew 2000: 349). We can elaborate on these systems of thought as follows.

### 3.1.3.1 **The neoliberal analysis**

A global market civilisation has developed. The power of national governments is declining both in the north and south. The driving forces of globalisation are capitalism and technology. The relation between north and south has suffered. There has been a spreading affluence for global solidarity.

### 3.1.3.2 **The radical analysis**

New developments took place as the empire strikes back. In the north the power of National Governments has expanded and in the south there has been a decline. The driving forces of globalisation are the G7 (G20) states and transnational capital. The north-south relation has seen increasing immiseration and marginalisation of the Third World. There has been unfortunately an erosion of global and national solidarity.

### 3.1.3.3 **The transformationalist analysis**

The idea of development has been a shared concern. There has been a reconfiguration of state power in both north and south governments. The driving force of globalisation has been modernity. There have been new patterns of inclusion and exclusion in the north-south hierarchy. Fortunately there have been new forms of transactional solidarity.

## 3.2 **The 'end of the Third World' and the globalisation of poverty**

The phrase 'the end of the Third World' may refer to the growing differentiation between the economic fortunes of countries in the south, or to the demise of a coherent geopolitical coalition of developing states or the reordering of the old north-south hierarchy in world politics. It must be noted that the phrase refers to the ideal of the ending of global poverty, especially in the Third World. There is a perception that globalisation is strongly associated with an intensification of global inequality. There is

much evidence that indicates that growing poverty is no longer confined to the south but is on the rise in the affluent north. Globalisation is generating new patterns of inclusion and exclusion in the global political economy which transcend the north-south divide. Contemporary patterns of globalisation are associated both with a more affluent world and with growing global inequality.

Compared to the previous five hundred years, there has been a strong decrease in poverty in the past fifty years. However, are also three related global patterns evident:

- the growing polarisation between the richest and poorest in the world economy;
- the segmentation of the global workforce into the winners and losers from economic globalisation; and
- the growing marginalisation of the losers from the benefits of development (McGrew 2007: 7).

Globalisation is beginning to transform the old north-south hierarchy as it creates new patterns of domination and subordination, inclusion and exclusion. This exclusion and inclusion transcend the global and the geographic division of global economic space. The term 'third world' remains apt as a label for all the communities marginalised and disenfranchised by the forces of economic globalisation. Today the globalisation of poverty transforms the question of development into a matter 'which impacts on all societies' such that it is increasingly a shared global concern (Dickson, 1997: 162).

### **3.3 The end of the developmental State**

Globalisation therefore has significant consequences for how economies

are governed and the capacity of states - their sovereignty and autonomy - to shape their own destiny. Even though many of the poorer states in the world have all the constitutional and legal attributes of statehood, a significant number lack the vital capacities and resources to act as such. In a number of regions, amongst them sub-Saharan Africa, globalisation has not so much emasculated the state but bypassed it since only weak state structures exist. The intensification of globalisation poses a challenge to the capacity of developing states for self-governance.

Global financial markets configure the agenda or the parameters of the policies of local governments within which national strategic choices are made. The real choice for many states "is not how best to fight globalisation but how best to manage it" (Haass and Liton, 1998).

Rodrik concludes his study of G7 nations and globalisation, by saying "the point that government policies lose their effectiveness in highly open economies should not be controversial" (Rodrik, 1997). This does not mean that globalisation spells the end of the nation-state or effective national economic policies. Globalisation in a way may lead to more activist states with an ever growing number of entrepreneurs in them.

### **3.4 Sustainable development in a globalising era**

Governments and citizens in developing states are rethinking development strategies in relation to how they engage with a globalising world. This has produced three distinct responses: regulation, regionalism and resistance.

#### **3.4.1 Regulating globalisation**

Today the struggle is largely over the terms of globalisation, especially in relation to the form and content of global regulation (Woods, 1999).

Developing countries exploit the rules of the system in order to advance development goals. At the broader level, the World Trade Organisation is increasingly being used by developing countries and those interests damaged by free trade to ensure that industrialised countries are subjected to multilateral trade rules.

Governments in the emerging economies of Asia and Latin America resort to the WTO trade dispute settlement mechanisms in their conflicts with the European Union and US since in a rule based system “might has less chance of trumping right”. These mechanisms provide weaker states with instruments through which they could ensure the compliance of more powerful states with the rules of fairness and justice in trade. For instance, in 1999 the WTO forced the EU to abandon the system of preferences for Caribbean banana producers. World-wide political pressure for reforms to both the rules and the institutions of global economic governance is also growing G7 governments. We note that there were reforms to the rules following the East Asian crash in 1997. The architecture of global finance became a major topic of deliberation within the IMF, World Bank and other multilateral fora. There is also a growing debate about representation in the institutions of global economic governance. In the case of the IMF there have been moves to widen consultation and participation in rule making. The NAM has also recently formed the G20 of leading developing states which seeks to establish a role as a kind of “poor man’s G7” at the global level. The NGO’s have pressured the World Bank and WTO to adopt institutional reforms to make them more user- friendly to the people. We note that these developments reflect one of the basic challenges of globalisation for existing modes of global governance (Allan and Thomas 2000:360).

### **3.4.2 Regionalising globalisation**

In recent years there has been a shift towards regionalism as a political strategy for engaging with a globalising world. Regionalism amongst developing states and emerging economies is a recognition that effective development policies are possible only in if they are coordinated with others, e.g. the organising of regional trading groups. Through such collaboration, regionalism advances the bargaining power of subordinate states within the arena and amongst the global institutions of global economic governance.

Regionalism should however not be seen as an opposition to globalisation. In practice, regionalism is in fact a “open regionalism” with the purpose of deepening global engagement and at the same time creating an institutional and political capacity to “modify the conditions of globalisation” (Gamble and Payne, 1996: 75). According to Elazar, regionalism is ‘a mechanism for “constitutionalizing globalisation, that is, a political strategy for disciplining globalisation to accord more closely with the political priorities of sustainable development”’ (Elazar, 1998). Regionalism is by no means purely benign as a political strategy for developing countries faced with a globalising world.

### **3.4.3 Resisting globalisation**

Recently there has been a vigorous ‘globalisation from below’ as social movements, social groups and communities resist and contest the terms of neoliberal economic globalisation by building transnational alliances and coalitions to promote an alternate programme which aims to make markets work for people, not people for markets’ (UNDP, 1997: 91). As a result of the effective global mobilisation of opposition, the Multilateral Agreement on investment negotiations collapsed in 1998.

#### **3.4.4 Toward a global 'new deal' or 'global anarchy'**

The dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has confronted the international community with the situation whether 'it can manage the globalisation process in a way that offers a more equal sharing in its benefits', i.e. engendering sustainable globalisation (UNCTAD, 1998: 5). Globalisation is transforming the national economic systems of governance. It also presses for the prospect of a global 'New Deal' between rich and poor states and peoples, as sustainable development increasingly becomes a shared concern.

It is argued that there are two ways of thinking about the future which involves much political discussion about globalisation and its outcomes for development. It is established today that the poorest countries are also the least integrated and affected by global networks. Such a distancing from the globalising forces for the next century 'will not be the basis for growth ... but of increasing poverty' (Stallings, 1995: 388). In the wake of the East Asian crisis, there is evidence of a shift in attitudes and thinking within the framework of global governance towards more effective regulation of globalisation. There are efforts by advanced countries to assist developing countries. This is highly commendable. Nevertheless some of the political preconditions for sustainable globalisation may be in place but yet it remains an unrealised ambition.

### **3.5 Globalisation and the developing countries**

#### **3.5.1 Globalisation and the developing world**

The G8 Gleneagles summit met in July 2005 in Scotland to discuss aspects of globalisation. Yet again we have seen riots and protests by protesters who are vehemently against globalisation. David Bigman (2002) echoes similar views. He states that after the 1990 World Trade Organisation negotiations broke down it has become very difficult for



international organisations to meet without protests and in some cases these have been rather violent. Protesters include representatives of labour organisations worried about unemployment as a result of advances in technology, cheap markets, free trade and political upheavals and coups. Farmers are also eager to defend the generous support to agriculture in the European Union and United States. At these global summits we also see Environmentalist and Green Peace organisations who are vehemently opposed to globalisation. The work of these non-governmental organisations do very little to uplift the plight of the poor and fail to present a convincing case on whether and why globalisation is detrimental to the poor.

The developments in poverty were shown in reports of World Bank studies (2000 – 2001). The World Development Report focused on poverty and its finding is that the percentage of people living in extreme poverty (on less than 1 U.S. dollar ppd in 1993) declined during that decade from 29% to 24% although there were wide variations between countries and groups. Another World bank report entitled *Globalisation, Growth and Poverty* (Collier and Dollar 2001) emphasised that although globalisation has reduced poverty to a certain extent not all countries or population groups have benefited. The people of China and India have benefited from their integration into the global markets but this cannot be said about countries in Africa, the Middle East and the former Soviet Union. Many of these countries were negatively affected by the decline in commodity prices. Moreover, inside these countries, some may have benefited from globalisation but not all sectors of the population, especially those living in rural areas and in some of these areas poverty has increased.

### **3.5.2 Overview of globalisation process**

During the 1960s and the 1990s the globalisation process was character-

ized by the rapid growth of international trade and investment. There was a sharp reduction in transport costs for commodities and people. At the same time there was a growing influence of regional and global institutions and agreements. There was also an increase in all forms of communication and this was made possible by advances in information and communication technologies. In the 1960s and 1970s there was a great gap in the economic and financial relations among developing countries. This gap was also mostly determined by the cold-war era, where countries were either aligned with the West (America) or Russia (the USSR). This had a great impact on the entire global economy. Even so, there was a steady increase in trade and flow of especially raw materials from the developed and developing countries. These were mostly influenced on the whole (sometimes indirectly) by the growing pressure of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organisation. The reforms these organisations demanded in the long run helped to enhance the role of the free market and measures to reduce government controls of economies.

Most East Asian countries enjoyed phenomenal growth during the 1980s and 1990s as they increased their trade with the global markets. As a result their growth improved and a certain percentage of people came out of abject poverty. However, many of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have benefited very little and have become increasingly marginalised. It is noted that many of these countries were negatively affected by the changes in the global trading system. Even though much of their raw materials were exported to first and second world countries, they were excluded from the positive spin-offs of globalisation because of geographic, socio-economic and political constraints that discouraged investment.

The global financial markets have become the main source of capital of the developing countries and the main driving force for new investments. There is a perception that the gains from globalisation are distributed very unevenly because there has been an uneven distribution of foreign investments. The diverse experience of developing countries has led to opposing views on the pros and cons of globalisation for a developing country. There are two sides to the globalisation issue. The one side opposes globalisation and blames the processes and international organisations that guide it for pushing reforms that marginalise many developing countries and this helps to widen the gap between the rich industrialised countries and the poorest developing countries. The other side views globalisation as a process that leads to economic reforms and integration into the economy as the most effective way to enhance economic growth and reduce the scourge of poverty.

It was mostly the East Asian countries that benefited from globalisation and not sub-Saharan Africa. The growth in their economies had a positive impact on the urban population whereas the rural population suffered immensely. The countries that did not benefit from globalisation remained agricultural. On this score, the large peasant communities who are dependent on subsistence farming are indicative of this situation. Even though post-independent African countries made major improvements and interventions in this area – the well-known facts of 1980s Zimbabwe is a case in point – much of these systems only lasted for a decade or so and then fell into misuse. In the long run, the many reforms in the agricultural sector did not amount to much in terms of sustainability. Maybe it was because these reforms also imposed a heavy burden on large sections of the population, which in the long run, could not sustain these systems and their demands. The general perception, however, is that globalisation does not benefit people on the ground in developing countries, and least

of all, the rural peasant farming communities. In some cases, we can also talk of a 'backlash' against globalisation.

The backlash against globalisation is gaining momentum in spite of the views held by researchers that developing countries have benefited immensely as a result of their integration with the global economy. See for instance the online debate on 'Globalisation and Poverty' organised by the World Bank Development Forum in mid-2000 followed by protests in Seattle, Washington and Prague who were vehemently against globalisation. The participants stated that "Globalisation may improve growth rates, increase productivity, enhance technological capability, but it cannot redistribute created wealth and income in favour of the poor. In fact, it does the reverse - it redistributes wealth and income in favour of the not so poor" (see Bigman 2002: 27).

The participants further stated that "with the opening of our market, our country has become a supermarket of foreign goods, which are cheaper, killing our local industries, rendering many more jobless. The disparity between the rich and poor has widened, and although some may have benefited from the effect of liberalised economy the majority continue to languish in poverty" (see Bigman 2002:28).

Labour organisations are opposed to globalisation because of the loss of jobs. Most countries of sub-Saharan Africa and quite a few countries in South Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean did not benefit from the globalisation process. These countries are burdened with heavy debts and the AIDS pandemic. The rich industrialised countries have reaped large gains from increased trade and faster growth whereas poor nations have become worse off and their economies have suffered. The positive effects

of globalisation on productivity can be attributed to the advances in technology.

Special appreciation must be shown to India and China for their phenomenal growth. However, even in our country, the cheap goods from China have drastically affected our economy and caused great unemployment and suffering. Although these countries made great gains from the process of globalisation yet their rural populations did not benefit. In South Africa, our labour has suffered the most under the import of cheap products from China – especially the clothing industry.

### **3.6 Poverty and exclusion in a global world**

#### **3.6.1 Globalisation as an ideology**

In the neoliberal discourse on globalisation, modernisation takes the form of competitive poles of capital accumulation on a world-wide scale, designed to generate growth and an increase in the population's well-being. However, the requirements of the global economy take priority over national requirements. This poses a major challenge to local nationalist governments – as we have come to experience in South Africa over the last two decades. If we as a nation wants to benefit from the growth potential that globalisation offers, our engagements with the international community must be designed in such a way as to provide a favourable environment for the local community's engagements with international organisations.

Despite the major challenges of local communities, the “ideology” of globalisation, however, beliefs integration into the global economy offers growth prospects to all on condition that the requirements of the global economy are satisfied. It is argued that if one favours greater liberalisation in order to benefit from the global economy, the protagonists of

globalisation see the phenomenon as a triumph of neoliberalism and market forces. In this scenario, growth is always good for the poor because the income of the poor rises one for one with overall growth in the region (see Dollar and Kraay 2002).

### **3.6.2 The neoliberal pattern of globalisation**

Globalisation is leading to increased impoverishment, growing inequalities, job insecurity and unemployment. The social systems and institutions are feeling the effects of globalisation. In the year 2000 it was found that 77 percent of 89 countries realised that their per capita rate of growth fell by 5 percentage points from the period 1980-2000 (Weisbrot and Ray, 2011).

It is argued that globalisation is a game with winners and losers and unfortunately many seem to be on the receiving end, because of an uneven globalised economy that seems to favour the interests of corporations and the rich. The protagonists believe that if one allocates resources this will accelerate economic growth. Instead globalisation is benefiting some regions of the world and some sections of the population but not all equally – especially in the developing world. Globalisers, however do not concern themselves about this very pressing issue.

## **3.7 Participation, globalisation and culture**

### **3.7.1 The need for local participation**

Global trade existed centuries ago at the time of Marco Polo and Alexander the Great. During the periods of colonisation, we see that most goods flowed from the colonies to Europe. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century trade is expedited and revenue easily accrued because of the advent of technology. It becomes possible for technology to be available in the developing world to degrees not heard of before. Despite this however, the core of globalisation lies outside local arenas of labour and production.

It is a space above the national space which has its own structures and laws. This does however raise the question of how to participate in globalisation. How can a developmental state participate in globalisation? How can its citizens and their organisations, i.e. civil society participate? Globalisation also questions our needs. Can our developmental needs really be met by globalisation forces? We note that needs are fundamental to humanity. If business is the driving force behind today's globalisation, what does this say about our human condition? Markets are as such not driving for human development. It is noted that they may strengthen competition but not necessarily lead to the improvement of the quality of life of humans. Many needs cannot be fulfilled by the markets alone. These questions set limits to globalisation, but also raises the issue of the continued need for locally produced goods and services for the local market. Corporate markets cannot meet these needs. Globalisation needs direct and various involvements from citizens and workers. In this respect, we need to temper "wild globalisation" (Széll, Chetty and Chouraqui 2002).

### **3.7.2 Participation, globalisation and culture in the era of the African Renaissance**

As Pitika P. Ntuli argued in his 'Participation, Globalisation and Culture in the era of the African Renaissance' (in Széll, Chetty and Chouraqui 2002) participation should not be based on tokenism. We have had enough of that in South Africa. We have had our Bantustans and then the tokenistic promises of the participants in the then Tri-cameral Parliament. Africa has had enough of such tokenistic promises and need to be developed to become full participants in global developments. In this, education needs to play a primary role.

### **3.7.3 Culture and participation**

The end of the Cold War refracted many cultures which were kept together due to the hegemony of the major role players of this dispensation. This became evident in Eastern Europe in the numerous indigenous cultures which were clamouring for independence. Ntuli points out that there was a proliferation of cultural resurgence and indigenisation at the end of the Cold War across Eastern Europe and beyond. This introduced many local cultures into the global village with a growing sense of the independence of individual languages this spurned. Ntuli also says that we are witnessing cultural realignments in Europe even as Europe consolidates its Europeanism, with its Euro monetary system, and the unification of the European Community. In this new dispensation, culture plays an important role in world affairs. In terms of this dynamics, it is therefore with regret that one sees South Africa seeking to join the West by clamouring for climbing onto the bandwagon of uncritical globalisation. Different from South Africa, countries in the East embrace their cultures in an attempt to expand their own monetary, productive and military powers and so resist and create a balance of power against the West.

Globalisation from above is upon us. Following Ntuli, we should position ourselves in such a way that we align all available forces to combat marginalization, and promote participation by the majority in the determination of economic policies. The down side of this dynamics is that globalisation from above also brings with it the rise of rightwing extremists and many other evolving political movements whose presence and growth may be detrimental to moderate governments. We therefore need to re-evaluate the commitments of the variety of movements in South Africa in terms of the challenges of global economic arrangements that may or may not compromise their populations.



### **3.8 The impact of globalisation on local communities in South Africa**

Local communities are negatively affected by globalisation. Even more than under the Cold War regimes, they may find that they are marginalised even more than what they experienced under apartheid for instance. We inherited from apartheid a legacy of economic and social distress and dysfunction. After obtaining our democracy, South Africa took its place in the global village. Sustainable development, however, is being undermined continually by market failures especially in the extremely turbulent global financial sector. In the context of global financial instability and crisis, we need to assert that the market is not always right. Market forces are not the solution as liberals propagate. Even if they are morally neutral – which often they are not because they are controlled and directed – by outside forces, their competitive nature leads to a situation where the strong becomes stronger and the weak weaker, the rich become richer and the poor poorer. “The worth and dignity of people in human terms is irrelevant to the workings of market forces. Global financial instability and crisis have shown us that market forces can produce poor results for poor people. Market forces have no value base and produce a system which supports the already rich” (see Ndungane 2003:22).

The World Trade Organisation of which South Africa is a member has seen the flooding of goods especially from China. The cheap clothing has led to many clothing factories to close down. This had a spiralling effect on unemployment. Tens of thousands of South Africans have been retrenched as a result of the flooding of all types of goods onto the South African market, especially from the East. This in turn has led to abject poverty in South Africa. Recently there have been many protests led by the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African

Communist Party. The Government seems helpless because it is a member of the World Trade Organisation, and in the interim millions are suffering. Globalisation on the whole has negatively impacted the local communities of South Africa.

### 3.9 **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown clearly what globalisation is and highlighted some important aspects of the dynamics of globalisation in the world. It has provided an overview of relevant perspectives on poverty and globalisation, the globalisation of poverty, the idea of the developmental state, sustainable development in a globalising world, the way in which globalisation impacts on developing countries, the issue of being included or excluded from processes of globalisation, participation in globalisation and the impact of globalisation.

What is a fact, is that globalisation has negatively impacted the poorer nations of the world. The continent of Africa has felt the disadvantages of globalisation. In some ways, many Asian countries have benefited from globalisation. Within these countries the rich have become richer and the poor especially in the rural areas have become poorer. As protests have shown at many of the global meetings that discuss and engage the financial situation and dynamics in the world, there is a rising tide of discontent with globalisation, the forces of globalisation and those who represent globalising forces. The African states in particular have been strangled by debt and the rich nations are refusing to clear them of their debt. This sad state of affairs is not helping the poor countries to develop. This is affecting the implementation of democratic governments in southern Africa and has thus lead to abject poverty for millions in the world and especially for Africa.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **SOUTHERN AFRICA AND POVERTY**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

South Africa is nearing the end of its second decade as a democratic country. Yet, the socio-economic challenges we as a nation face must be regarded as opportunities rather than obstructions and impediments. As we entered our second decade of freedom, then former President Thabo Mbeki, said in his State of the Nation Address (6 February 2004): “the global environment is uncertain with increasing tension, unilateralism and unresolved trade issues. But there are also new opportunities for developing countries to assert their interests. While many developments could marginalize Africa, there are opportunities for the continent to mobilise itself for a more humane approach to its plight and that of other poor regions. Among the governments and citizens of developed countries there is potential to focus attention on the common objectives of humanity contained in the UN Millennium Declaration. South Africa is equipped to play a critical role in this regard due to its location, the size of its economy in the continent and its current endeavours and outlook”.

From the global world, there has been some support for such novel objectives. This is especially evident on macro-economic levels, where a large portion of the debt of some African states was written off.

Peter Fabricius reporting for the *Sunday Tribune News*, 10 July 2005, stated that the “G8 Gleneagles Summit this week took a big step towards making African poverty a thing of the past. The leaders of some of the world’s richest nations, shrugging off the distractions of terrorist attacks in London and demonstrations by activists agreed to a huge R171 billion

dollar a year increase in aid to Africa by 2010. This had been the ambitious target set by British Prime Minister, Tony Blair's Commission for Africa. They cancelled the debt of 14 of Africa's most indebted countries with nine more waiting in the wings. This together with an earlier agreement to forgive about R116,5 billion of Nigeria's bilateral debt amounted to R343 billion in African debt written off. Blair himself hailed the deal as 'very substantial progress indeed'. It would not make poverty history, he added, using the slogan of the antipoverty campaign, 'but it would show how it can be done and it signified commitments to do so'. The anti-poverty NGO's, however, complained that the Africa package fell short of demands. Caroline Sande Mukulira from Action Aid's Southern Africa programme said, 'What Africa needed from the G8 was a giant step forward. All it got was tiny steps. We have some aid but not enough and virtually nothing on trade'.

The main challenge of poverty in South Africa is however not only that of macro-economic debt, but also real-life poverty, unemployment and inequality.

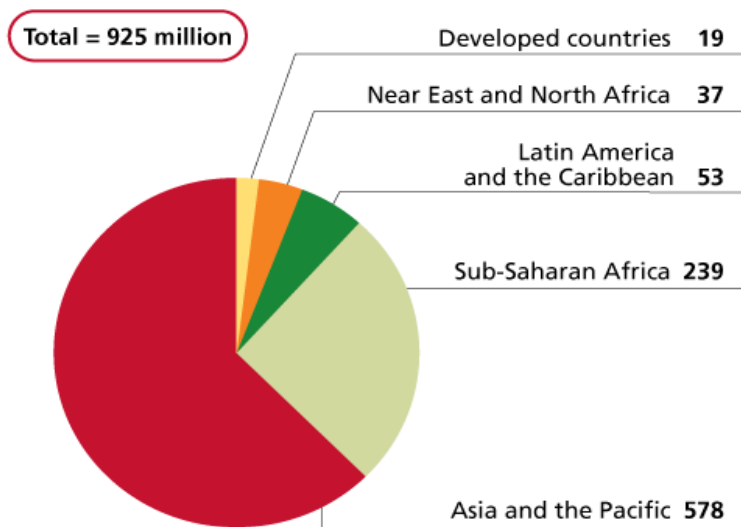
The last available survey for the Thekwini Municipality (*Tribune Herald Issue* September 11, 2005) on the quality of life of people living in Durban, for instance, reveals that about 43% of households are surviving on less than R500,00 a month. According to national figures more than 40% of the working population is unemployed. Congress of South African trade organisations have worked on the forming of alliances of non-governmental organisations to fight poverty and unemployment.

Brendan Boyle reporting for the *Sunday Times* (6 March 2005) wrote about Ann Grant, Britain's outgoing high commissioner who spoke about "Make Poverty history". "Grant is an energetic advocate of the anti-poverty

movement and of British prime-minister Tony Blair's Commission for Africa, an initiative to cancel developing world and support the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Her strongest message is about poverty in South Africa, Africa and the rest of the developing world. One of the things that is brought home to you very strongly in South Africa is the reality of inequality; not just absolute poverty, but the enormous gaps between the haves and the have-nots living close to each other. 'I think the biggest threat to South Africa is the gap between the rich and the poor'.

To this we can refer to people going actually hungry and coupled with HIV/ Aids, this makes life even worse for many. For instance, in a video-recording by the United Nation's Children Fund (Unicef), Kaliati 83, narrates the misery of being too old - but having to remain young enough to till the fields and scrounge for food to feed a big family of mostly Aids orphans. Her misery illustrates the plight of 10,7 million people across Southern Africa facing famine, unless donors urgently respond to the nearly R 1,2 billion UN appeal. Of these, at least 8,5 million need urgent assistance in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique, according to World Food Programme (WFP) according to regional spokesman, Michael Huggins. "Hunger has once again returned to haunt southern Africa" said Huggins. "We need urgent assistance now to avert a major catastrophe". ("Bellies filled only with dread", *Sunday Tribune News* September 18, 2005).

According to the latest statistics, 239 million of the 925 million people that consistently go hungry in the world come from sub-Saharan Africa.



Source: FAO.

There are many causes to hunger (see Cohen and Reeves n.d.). Yet, in our near vicinity, Zimbabwe and Malawi jointly account for about 8 million of the 10,7 million facing hunger, with one million in Zambia and the remainder in Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique.

Against this background, I shall analyse the nature of poverty in South Africa in this chapter. It stands to reason that much of the poverty and inequality we currently experience has been inherited from the past. For this reason we need to analyse the critical perspectives on those socio-economic dynamics that has caused the poverty we currently experience. I focus on aspects of this history of poverty, malnutrition, crime, lack of education and information, the housing shortage, corruption, health care, welfare, communications, financial institutions, poverty from the perspectives of women, conflict, domestic violence and the bread-up of family life, and drug abuse.

## **4.1 Uprooting poverty**

### **4.1.1 Many causes of poverty**

There are many causes of poverty. In the South African context, the most severe, is that which has been caused by our colonial and apartheid histories. For this reason, I shall first provide a brief overview of the impacts of this history and then turn to some of the main challenges facing our country in our democratic dispensation.

#### **4.1.1.1 Burden of the past**

Wilson and Ramphela (1994) agree that it is difficult to trace the causes of poverty in South Africa in the nineteenth or the beginning of the twentieth century. However, they concede that despite rapid economic growth during more than a hundred years of industrial revolution (diamonds were discovered in 1867 and gold in 1886), there are countless millions of people especially Blacks that are still impoverished and live in abject poverty in South Africa.

The invasion by the Dutch and British colonists led to large scale poverty by the indigenous inhabitants. The Khoisan, Xhosas and other inhabitants lost their land to these hungry, greedy settlers who pretended to be Christians but were bent on exploitation of the poor. In fact these colonists stole the land. The long process of conquest may finally be said to have culminated in the passing of the notorious Land Act of 1913. In terms of the Act no African was allowed to own land outside the reserves. The Land Act later led to the obnoxious Group Areas Act and the many different apartheid laws led to great suffering and poverty among the Blacks of South Africa (About SA – History).

#### **4.1.1.2 Apartheid's assault on the poor**

The roots of South Africa's current poverty and the on-going process of

impoverishment go deep into the past. The apartheid policies of the National Party in 1948 and up to 27 April 1994 had entrenched white supremacy at the expense of millions of Black people who faced abject poverty. It was not only the land that was confiscated for white use but also labour legislation that prevented the equal development of black labour. The notorious artisan laws are a case in point. To this we can also link the pass system which prevented freedom of movement and development.

#### **4.1.1.3 From incorporation to dispossession**

The South African Act of 1909 had left a door open for other territories to join the four provinces (Cape, Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal) as part of the new Union of South Africa. We note that it was the policy of the various governments to incorporate Southern Africa into the Union. These apartheid borders excluded these states like Lesotho, Swaziland, and Botswana from the economic power of South Africa and thereby dispossessing and impoverishing the inhabitants (South Africa Act, 1909).

#### **4.1.1.4 Prevention of Black urbanization**

One of the main aims of the National Government of South Africa was to hinder the movement of Africans to the urban areas. The government adopted three techniques:

- pass laws;
- the limitations to housing; and
- the outright destruction of black communities.

Each of these measures cruelly disrupted the lives of black South Africans and directly contributed to the process of impoverishment, and hence led to abject poverty for countless millions of blacks.



#### 4.1.1.5 **Forced removals**

Forced removals added to the woes of misery and hopelessness and the ravages of poverty. Within a period of 23 years from 1960 to 1983 no fewer than 3,5 million people were forced to be relocated. The obnoxious Group Areas Act of 1950 led directly to the forced removal of over three-quarters of a million people. Amongst them Coloured families, Indians and a fewer Whites were forcefully removed to fulfil the policies of apartheid and racial separation. My families were also affected by the Group Areas Act and this caused untold suffering and poverty. The effects of the Group Areas Act, although abolished are still felt today. The whole system of life was affected and hardships and poverty had escalated. The process of forced removals was not only impoverishing but also intensely painful (see Mac).

One of the families that was forcibly removed to a settlement known as Glenmore on the banks of the Fish River was the Mapapu family. Mr Mapapu said, “the children were not the only ones suffering. We were hungry, my wife and I. There is no way that you can describe that hunger” (Wilson and Ramphela 1994). Forced removals had made the masses powerless, frustrated and the nationalist government had sowed the seeds of revolution and the quest for freedom from the shackles of apartheid.

#### 4.1.1.6 **Bantu education**

Bantu education under the disguise of ‘Christian National Education’ had a profound impact on political economy. The apartheid policy was to deliberately ensure that blacks receive an inferior education and this inevitably sowed the seeds of the causes of poverty. The education in South Africa was such that the whites had advantages over blacks in acquiring the skills necessary for well paid jobs. Bantu education was the main reason for whites being rich and Africans being poor. It is hoped that

with the dawn of democracy in South Africa and the provision of equal education that the masses of disadvantaged people in South Africa will have a better education and thus try to escape from the vicious cycle of poverty (see Kallaway 1984).

#### 4.1.1.7 **Crushing of organizations**

It counts for any society that its people must have political power. For decades in South Africa the plight of the people were crushed when political organisations were banned by the apartheid government. The majority of the people in this country were denied the power to vote, thus depriving the masses to improve their lives. The apartheid government denied the masses economic power. Political movements, trade unions and activists have been banned and in many cases leaders were killed. The death of Black Conscious leader, Dr Steve Biko, who died in the hands of the apartheid police had repercussions for the economic and political situation in South Africa (see Biko).

At the dawn of our democracy all organisations have been unbanned. However, the Congress of South African Trade Unions and its partners have formed alliances to pressure the South African Government to introduce measures to fight poverty and unemployment. The apartheid government was bent on destabilising the Southern African countries. Many of these countries were providing asylum to the African National Congress Freedom Fighters.

The countries that felt the greatest threat of destabilisation was Angola and Mozambique. These countries were ravaged by wars. South Africa's aggressive military presence in Angola and her support of Renamo in the early eighties led to untold misery and poverty for countless millions of people.

#### 4.1.1.8 **Population growth**

During the apartheid rule whites made population growth a big issue. They blamed the problem associated with poverty to the mass population of blacks. A common response from the apartheid government that the poverty found in South Africa was caused by the poor themselves who have 'too many children'. The problem of poverty was exacerbated by the employment of workers from neighbouring countries like Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana. The local population could not find jobs. Through mounting landlessness and commercial agriculture, thousands of women were unemployed. There is some equation between poverty and family size. According to Nomusa Ndaba, 'for many mothers, often undernourished, the burden of yet another pregnancy and child outweighs any prospective gain from an additional labourer or security for the family. But many women are powerless to make reproductive decisions' (Wilson and Ramphele 1994).

In South Africa under the new democracy not much is said in the media about family planning. However, there is an increase in population. Teenage pregnancies have added to the population growth. Recently there has been great demand on social grants for unmarried mothers. The present population growth is adding to the causes of poverty.

#### 4.1.1.9 **Inflation**

Inflation is essentially an increase in the general level of prices. The wealthy are generally not adversely affected by inflation. The poor are hard hit by rising prices.

The present democratic government is trying hard to manage inflation. However, outside factors like political instability, wars, natural disasters and the rising price of oil makes a dent in inflation and may lead to bond

increases. The present petrol, diesel and paraffin prices are having a marked influence on inflation. The cost of fuel has a spiralling effect on the economy and the poor are getting poorer. The poor are in a no-win situation. They are most vulnerable to inflation.

#### **4.2 Poverty and unemployment**

Unemployment is a very important contributor to poverty. Almost 40% of the active working force in South Africa are unemployed. This presents a very serious problem in South Africa. The unemployed especially many women are forced to turn to prostitution. It is in this context that I wish to refer to an article that appeared in the *Daily News* Tuesday 23 March 2004. "Unemployment has bitten so deeply that jobless men are pimping their young wives on the streets in order to survive", an incredulous President Thabo Mbeki has been told. A resident of Garden Flats told the President. "The poverty is so bad that husbands join their wives at night when they go out to sell their bodies and collect the money" (*Daily News* 23 March 2004).

It is noted that high levels of poverty are in the rural areas where the majority of people are unemployed. In 1995 the rate of unemployment was 59% among the poorest quintile (fifth) of the population, compared to 5,5% among the richest quintile. With respect to the characteristics of the people in the poorest quintile, 93% of the unemployed poor are Africans, 56% are female, 70% are below the age of 35, 58% are from rural areas, 50% have completed primary education or less and 72% have had no previous job experience.

#### **4.3 Malnutrition**

Poverty definitely leads to malnutrition. Malnutrition is not only a lack of

food or regarded as a medical problem. It is the outcome of complex inter-related social, economic, political and other processes. Malnutrition impacts on the quality of life and opportunities of those affected and their ability to earn adequate income. Immediate causes of malnutrition include inadequate dietary intake and diseases; underlying causes are related to household food security, adequate maternal care and childcare and adequate access to basic health services and a healthy environment and basic causes relate to the availability and control of human, economic and organisational resources. Poverty is the basic cause of malnutrition. It is argued that in order to overcome malnutrition, South Africa requires that nutrition goals be explicitly incorporated into the activities of economic and social sectors.

The Lund Committee on Child and Family Support ([1996] 2008) has advised the government that there should be continuation of the child benefit grant to the primary care-giver. The implementation of these recommendations will address the problem of inequality to the extent that assistance should reach a far greater number of children and also be less racially and geographically skewed. It is hoped that in this way poverty will be addressed to the extent that the grants reach intended beneficiaries.

#### **4.4 Crime**

South Africa has one of the highest crime rates in the world. South Africa is the rape capital of the world. It has been noted that poor people are more at risk from personal crime than the affluent. This in no way means that the affluent are not influenced by crime. In particular violent crime is one of the more severe shocks that can cause vulnerable households to become impoverished.

#### 4.4.1 The links between crime and poverty

The wealthy tend to be victims of property crime whilst the poor are at risk from personal crime. In 1995, 95% of reported rapes were of African women. Poverty, high unemployment and marginalisation of men increase the risk of violence against women, and poorer women are often trapped in abusive relationships because of their dependence on partners for food, shelter and money. We note that areas inhabited by the poor are less likely to have infrastructure such as street lighting and telephones, public transport and decent roads that facilitate crime prevention. We note that poor people are unable to supplement the services of the police and security companies (see Anderson n.d.).

#### 4.4.2 State responses

The Government has stated in the month of September 2005 that it is doing all in its power to stop the rise of crime. It also appealed to the nation to assist it in fighting crime.

Over the years, the police have provided many statistics about crime.

The most popular in the press has been about which crimes increase and which decrease from year to year. Yet, the most important to note is the trends over the last decade. The most recent data shows these trends. Below, I highlight only the incidence of crime between 2009/ 2010 and 2010/ 2011. See for the full Crime Report 2010/ 2011 of the South African Police Service (2011).

**Table 1 Serious crime during the 2003/2004 to 2010/2011 financial years and the percentage increases/decreases in crime between 2009/2010 and 2010/2011**

Crime category	incidence of crime per 100 000 of the population							
	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011

									Decrease 10/11 vs 09/10
<b>Contact crime</b>									
Murder	42.7	40.3	39.6	40.5	38.6	37.3	34.1	31.9	-6,5%
Total sexual offences	142.5	148.4	145.2	137.6	133.4	144.8	138.5	132.4	-4,4%
Attempted murder	64.8	52.6	43.8	42.5	39.3	37.6	35.3	31.0	-12,2%
Assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm	560.7	535.3	484.0	460.1	439.1	418.5	416.2	397.3	-4,5%
Common assault	605.7	575.0	485.3	443.2	413.9	396.1	400.0	371.8	-7,1%
Robbery with aggravating circumstances	288.1	272.2	255.3	267.1	247.3	249.3	230.6	203.0	-12,0%
Common robbery	206.0	195.0	159.4	150.1	135.8	121.7	116.7	109.8	-5,9%
<b>Contact-related crime</b>									
Arson	19.0	17.6	16.3	16.6	15.5	14.1	13.6	13.1	-3,7%
Malicious damage to property	341.2	323.7	307.7	302.5	286.2	275.8	267.9	250.7	-6,4%
<b>Property-related crime</b>									
Burglary at residential premises	645.2	592.8	559.9	526.8	497.1	506.5	520.2	495.3	-4,8%
Burglary at non-residential premises	139.3	120.3	116.0	123.3	131.7	143.8	145.5	138.2	-5,0%
Theft of motor vehicle and motorcycle	190.0	180.0	183.3	182.1	167.7	156.0	145.5	129.0	-11,3%
Theft out of or from motor vehicle	370.8	318.8	296.6	261.7	233.4	225.0	245.1	246.2	0,4%
Stock-theft	89.0	70.1	61.3	60.8	60.1	61.7	65.7	60.3	-8,2%

The statistics provide an idea of the nature of crime in South Africa, as well as the decrease compared to the previous year. We can safely conclude that the factors in many instances that lead to crime can be associated with the high levels of poverty, and experienced by countless millions in South Africa. It is incumbent on the government to take urgent steps to eradicate the high levels of poverty.

#### 4.5 Lack of education and information

A serious cause of poverty, disease and malnutrition is the lack of educational services. Irrespective of gender, limited and sub-standard education greatly reduces ones chances in life. A shortage of skills and training ensures that a great proportion of the population remains trapped into the now too familiar cycle of poverty. Low educational standards by

women are also known to correlate strongly with the incidence of malnutrition amongst children. Poor education not only limits the opportunities that women will be able to acquire employment or improve their productive skills but also limits their knowledge of the nutritional and hygienic needs for a healthy family.

#### 4.6 **Housing and poverty**

The apartheid era was characterised by the provision of poor housing. Millions of Africans were forced to live in slum conditions. In these conditions the people felt the pangs of abject poverty.

Poor people in South Africa are still badly housed. Most of the Whites, Indians and Coloureds live in substantial dwellings (see Borat *et al.* 2001).

The PSLSD data shows a strong association between income and housing. It is noted that 36% of the very poor live in shacks or traditional dwellings with very poor households crowded at 2,3 persons per room as against 0,5 persons per room for the richest 20% of households and in most cases the rooms of the poor are smaller and in a worse condition. Only 15% of the poor households have electricity, 19% have piped water and 11% have a flushed toilet. In fact no rich households cook with wood which is the fuel used by 60% of the poor households.

The government has made strong gains in housing, and water and electricity provisioning over the last few years. The government is committed in continuing to provide these services to the poor.

Even though it was shelved prematurely, *The Reconstruction and Development Programme* (1994) initiated by the government has provided



the bedrock for these services. This is so despite the fact that some houses were provided and were of an inferior quality and that corruption has also played a negative role in the provision of houses for the poor.

#### **4.7 Corruption**

One of the contributing factors to poverty is the high levels of corruption in the South African society. There is a perception in South Africa that “white collar crimes” and corruption have become rife in private and public institutions. We note that according to Transparency International’s 1995 Corruption index, South Africa scores a disquieting 5,62 (21<sup>st</sup> out of 41 countries). Various reasons have been advanced for this situation.

In particular during the apartheid regime South Africa provided an environment which was structurally conducive to corruption where there was a culture of secrecy that resulted in the lack of transparent and accountable systems which led to criminality. Official corruption was identified at very high levels, especially in the former ‘homelands’ where it was more apparent. The government’s National Crime Prevention Strategy places corruption as a priority crime concern.

Recently in South Africa there has been an increase in corruption. Many government departments, especially the Social Pensions and Housing, has experienced levels of corruption. As a result many poor people have been affected. We have also recently seen in South Africa strikes against municipalities for poor delivery and lack of skills. As a result many poor people’s lives have been disrupted (Lodge 2001).

#### **4.8 Health care**

The poor of South Africa are not in a position to afford quality health care. We note that health care is merely one of the determinants of health. A

range of other factors such as sanitation and access to safe drinking water, impact on the health status of poor people. The Government is in the process of legislating a new health care system that will include all South Africans (see Health Care in South Africa).

#### **4.9 Welfare**

The inadequate provision of welfare has affected the plight of the poor in South Africa. The government is making strides to improve the situation. Nevertheless, welfare provisioning still bears the mark of apartheid inequalities with poor people, especially in the rural areas, having limited or no access to welfare services from government or NGO's. In fact welfare should ideally help people escape from the poverty trap (see White paper for Social Welfare 1997).

#### **4.10 Communications**

Inadequate tools of communication add to poverty in South Africa. The inability to afford access to telecommunications deprives the poor of employment opportunities, education and health facilities which in turn impact on productivity and social networks which in turn influence the ability of individuals and households to participate productively in the economic sphere.

Telkom, the main service provider has improved telecommunications in South Africa but there is still much to be done especially in the rural areas of South Africa. The Government's agreement to grant a licence for other service providers is going a long way to assist the poor as there is now greater competition.

#### **4.11 Financial institutions, credits and cash benefits**

Most of the poor are unable to access loans from financial institutions. As

a result the poor are not able to own property or undertake renovations. The government is endeavouring to address this situation. Recently the South African Communist Party was making recommendations to financial institutions to put in structures to assist the poor in obtaining loans. They also recommended to the government to grant amnesty for all those whose names appear in the Credit Bureau (see Collins and Morduch, 2009).

#### **4.12 Poverty: Women's perception of men**

Some women regard men as dangerous and a liability and, as such, a drain on the resources of women and a factor contributing towards their poverty.

A study conducted by Murphy and Teixeira and Chambers who said that men often demand money from women. A further study conducted by the Black Sash concluded that women were unwilling to obtain maintenance for their children from the father because "he might hit you". At another level women in Hlabisa indicated that the presence of men at certain times of the year placed a demand on their already committed time. "When the father is at home during the holidays, he disturbs us from feeding the child, the father demands his own time" (see Chopra and Ross, 1995). These are samples of a continuing epidemic of men who do not develop themselves.

Other women perceive men differently. They regard men as useless, contributing nothing towards their struggle to make ends meet. Bank (1995) cites the example of Ntombekhaya and Sizwe, commenting that the employed Ntombekhaya felt that long term unemployed Sizwe had no right to play a role in household decision-making because he had failed to fulfil his responsibilities as husband and father to her children. In Hlabisa,

women stated that handicraft production was important to them because “most of their men were lazy and did not contribute much to household income” (Chopra and Ross, 1995).

#### **4.13 Conflict, domestic violence and divorce**

Conflict in South Africa prior to the advent of democracy on 27 April 1994 was a contributory cause of poverty. Much of the conflict was fuelled by the apartheid government so there will be conflict among the black people. We saw this type of conflict was very evident between the Inkatha Freedom Party and the African National Congress. Many thousands had to flee their homes throughout South Africa and especially in KwaZulu-Natal. The ‘third force’ fermented the violence which was sponsored and orchestrated by the white national government. Thousands of blacks lost their lives and yet countless thousands faced abject poverty. Many revelations of the ‘third force’ were made during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Domestic violence has increased in South Africa, especially against women and children. This has led to marked levels of poverty. Families have been uprooted. This domestic violence was mostly carried out by men.

Divorce is causing great hardships and suffering for thousands of people. There is an African proverb which states ‘when two elephants fight the grass gets hurt’. When a divorce is made final thousands of children are hurt. In many cases the father refuses to pay maintenance and as a result children are not well fed, education suffers and the children are left traumatic and face a bleak future coupled with abject poverty.

#### **4.14 Drug abuse**

Drug related crimes have risen in South Africa. Poverty leads to drug abuse. Many people want to forget about the effects of poverty by drug abuse. On the other hand we often see on television programmes that many teenagers are taking their parents' possessions to sell it so that can enjoy their drug habit. This sad state of affairs leads to crime and abject poverty (see Parry 1998).

#### **4.15 Conclusion**

Poverty is on the increase in Southern Africa. On the one hand, we have inherited a dynamic from apartheid which continues to plague our country. There are different aspects to this, and the government is systematically attempting to deal with this – as it has done over the nearly two decades of coming to power.

On the other hand, we have the realities of poverty and crime in our country. There is a widespread need for pro-active action to deal with the various aspects of poverty. In this situation, it is not only government but the civil society organisations, NGOs, and religious organisations that can play an important role.

Furthermore, most of the Southern African States are in debt. The political turmoil and corruption is aggravating the situation of abject poverty. The rich nations are not doing much to assist the states in Southern Africa. There should be an abolition of debt and a firm helping of African states with agricultural benefits. In this way the states in Southern Africa will be assisted to alleviate to a great degree abject poverty.

This chapter grappled with some of the aspects of poverty in South Africa and Southern Africa. I focused on aspects poverty, malnutrition, crime,

lack of education and information, the housing shortage, corruption, health care, welfare, communications, financial institutions, poverty from the perspectives of women, conflict, domestic violence and the bread-up of family life, and drug abuse.

The South African Government is trying its best to alleviate poverty. There is still a long way to go. The legacy of apartheid has had a negative impact on poverty alleviation. There is still wide disparity of wealth, the majority of Blacks still live in abject poverty whilst most of the economic power is still in the hands of the white minority. The low G.D.P. of the neighbouring states has an adverse effect on poverty. There is great influx of foreigners and this is also impacting on poverty where the locals are unemployed. The fragile political situation in Zimbabwe where millions are flocking into South Africa is also impacting negatively on poverty. The succession debate in South Africa for the presidency of the African National Congress will also have an important bearing on the poverty issue in South Africa in the next year to two years.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **POVERTY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

The erosion of human rights during the dark days of apartheid had contributed to poverty for millions of South Africans. During the reign of the Nationalist government harsh laws were passed. The pass laws, job reservation, forced removals, and group areas act eroded Black people's rights. The laws were passed to deprive Blacks of political rights and especially the right to vote. Thousands of activists were banned and put into prisons. These harsh acts of the apartheid government added to economic and political misery and exacerbated the high levels of poverty in South Africa. Quote ironically, it originated from the fact that there was no Human Rights Charter in the country. Smit (2010) points out, that when the world decided to adopt the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* on 10 December 1948, the South African apartheid regime decided in that same year (26 May 1948), to go in the opposite direction, and opted for the apartheid system which was devoid of any form of human rights. Closely linked to the absence of a Human Rights charter was the poor education offered by the Bantu Education system. Rather than adding to their improvement, it could be argued that it impoverished the vast majority of Blacks even further – by making them believe in their second class status. The apartheid government hid this racist system under the cloak of Christian National Education but the poor provision of education to the Black masses was nothing but unchristian.

The transition of South Africa from an apartheid ideology to democracy is characterised by the fact that it did so under the new umbrella of the South

Africa Constitution that embeds Human Rights as a central component in it. This fact has in some measure improved the plight of people – at least in so far as there are pressure groups in government and society that now openly champion human rights. The democratic government is also trying to improve education but there still has much to be done to eradicate the inequalities of education that have escalated poverty levels in South Africa.

This chapter has a few main focuses, namely the relationship between human rights and poverty, the rights people have and how these impact on the need of an adequate standard of living, the right to a safe environment, the right to the availability of land, the right to education, and the human rights of children, and finally, the role of non-governmental organisations in the fight against poverty.

### **5.1 Human rights and poverty**

We learn that poverty is a human rights violation. Every woman, man, youth and child has the human right to a standard of living that is necessary for health and well-being, to food, clothing, housing, medical care and social services. These fundamental human rights are defined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

*The Bill of Rights* which is Chapter 2 of our constitution, is a corner stone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom.

### **5.2 Human rights at issue**

The human right to live in dignity, free from want, is itself a fundamental right, and is also very important for the realization of all other human



rights. These rights are universal, indivisible, interconnected and interdependent. We note that the right to be free from poverty includes the following:

#### **5.2.1 The human right to an adequate standard of living and work**

Unfortunately the standard of living of millions of South Africans has been eroded by poverty. The Congress of the South African Trade Unions recently stated that over 40% of the active South African population is unemployed. On 26 October 2011, Zwelinzima Vavi, COSATU, said: “In our growth path document we noted that 40% of the unemployed are new entrants into the labour market, who are almost likely to be young people. Statistics further show that 41% of the unemployed are between the ages of 25 and 34. In addition, 62% of the unemployed have less than secondary school education and 33% have completed secondary education but have no tertiary education. In short, 95% of the unemployed do not have tertiary education. In addition, more recent statistics show that the long-term unemployed, i.e. people who have been unemployed for more than a year, have increased from 60% of the unemployed to 65%” (see Vavi 2011).

Unemployment impacts negatively on poverty. Children become the victims of the cycle of poverty. The lack of nutritious foods leads to malnutrition. Over the last few years, we have seen in South Africa many factories, especially clothing and textiles, have closed down because of globalisation and the unregulated free market the ANC government opted for. Thousands of cheap goods from China and other Asian countries have flooded our markets. This has in great measure led to unemployment. Some companies under-pay workers and exploit them. The poor wages paid to workers dictates a poor standard of living.

### **5.2.2 The human right to a safe and healthy environment**

The Human Rights relating to the environment are set out in basic human rights treaties and include: the human right to a safe and healthy environment. Poverty impacts negatively on the safety of people in South Africa. The overcrowding of cities and townships leads to an unsafe environment. We have come accustomed to the reports on the disappearance of children, many of whom have been found murdered. Parents are worried about the safety of their children and our country needs to cultivate and foster environments in which children feel safe. In addition, crime and drugs have become the past time of many unemployed people. As a result many places in South Africa have become unsafe. People's safety is being threatened daily.

Over the last few months we have seen many demonstrations on service delivery. This is one major area in which the governance systems in the country could contribute in developing safe environments.

The provision of health care is a basic human right. However, the inability of the poor people to access medical aid impacts negatively on the well being of millions of South Africans. Poverty impacts negatively on the well being of poor people. Everyone has a right to have access to adequate housing. However, millions of South Africans live in squatter camps because of abject poverty and as a result are faced with mounting health problems coupled with poverty.

### **5.2.3 The right of access to land**

Conflict over land has been a central theme over the centuries in South Africa. The policies of the apartheid government robbed the blacks of land which was rightfully theirs. Like housing, the right to own land is a very emotional and moral issue in South Africa. The Bill of Rights enshrines the

right of its citizens to access land. Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, since 1994, the government has been hard at work addressing the issues of land re-distribution. However, 87% of land is still in the hands of Whites and this situation is unacceptable. Blacks are deprived of land and as a result they are not able to grow crops and practise stock farming. This impacts negatively on poverty. If land is available the Land Bank must give loans to engage the plight of the poor. In this way the poor can plant and harvest and provide food for themselves.

In 2005 there was a *Land Summit* in South Africa. The Minister of Land and Agriculture, Thoko Didiza, discussed many issues with the objective of expediting the re-distribution of land. Yet, nothing was done. Compare for instance the recommendations following the Land Summit. We can also compare the Secretary of the South African Communist Party, Blade Nzimande's call for "Red October" on the land issue in 2004, that resulted in the 2005 Land Summit – "a summit that resolved that the 'willing seller, willing buyer' model of land reform must be changed as it is an obstacle to access to land by our people" (see Nzimande 2011). The purpose of this campaign was to pressure the government to redistribute all vacant and private land to the poor so that the poor will have enough land at their disposal to farm so that they can escape from the ravages of poverty. Yet, again, nothing was done.

#### **5.2.4 The right to education**

The Bill of Rights states that "Everyone has the right to basic education including adult education".

The apartheid government provided "Bantu Education" which was far inferior to the Whites. Africans were provided with poor schools with inadequate resources. Training provided for teachers was very

demeaning. As a result African children received inferior education and this to a large extent contributed to abject poverty. There is a definite correlation between education and poverty. The right to a good education was eroded by the apartheid government.

In 1994 per capita expenditure varied between R 5 403 on white schools and R 1 053 on schools in the Transkei, repetition and pass rates correlated closely with these differences. Young men and women in impoverished areas tend to stay at school despite poor performance because of high unemployment results. The main problem, however is that the general quality of life of people in South Africa is on the decrease, as the latest figures on the Human Development Index (2004) shows. The HDI The HDI comprises three components: an 'educational attainment index' constructed out of adult literacy rates and gross school enrolment rates; a 'life expectancy index' derived from data on life expectancy at birth; and an index of GDP per capita taking into account purchasing power (see Seekings 2007:12).

During Kadar Asmal and Naledi Pandor's heading of the ministry of education there have been improvements in education. However, the ravages of poverty still heavily impact on educational standards in South Africa. The Congress of South African Trade Unions recently stated that the drop out rate before matric is about 60% because of the impact of poverty.

#### **5.2.5 The human right for children**

The Bill of Rights state that "every child has the right to family care, basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services, to be protected from abuse, exploitative labour practices and to education". However, many rights of children are violated because of poverty. We read with horror the abuse,

neglect, malnourishment, inability to afford school fees and exploitation of labour. The UNICEF report of “The State of the World’s Children 2011” states that the most urgent need for poverty-stricken areas, is to invest in adolescents. “Poverty may be the single biggest threat to adolescent rights. It catapults young people prematurely into adulthood by pulling them out of school, pushing them into the labour market or forcing them to marry prematurely.”

The government although involved in the eradication of poverty among children should do more to eradicate poverty. They should jealously be guided by ‘The Convention on the Rights of the Child’, and for investing in the next generation, engage poverty of the young today.

### **5.3 The role of non-governmental organizations in the fight against poverty in South Africa**

#### **5.3.1 Background**

Non-Governmental Organisations have played no small measure in dismantling apartheid in South Africa. During the dark days of apartheid non-governmental organisations were largely responsible for having projects to assist the poor and needy of South Africa. Oscar Dhomo may be quoted: “However representative our new government may be it cannot hope to transform our society by acting on its own; this task will also require the active involvement of civil society itself. On this score South Africa is fortunate to have a large and vigorous community of NGO’s. However, these organisations are under pressure; with the struggle against apartheid over, funding is drying up, adding greater urgency to the need to retail or their operations”.

NGO’s have been functioning in the past against state oppression and neglect of the poor. They have over recent years been gearing themselves

towards rebuilding a society from the remnants of the destructive area of the past. Now NGO's are actively involved in active programmes of transformation.

Jinabhai and Meharchand (1993) argue that "new paradigms of development congruent with the material and human conditions prevailing in South Africa will have to be fashioned. The unshackling of this enormous human potential, and the liberation of the creative energies of the masses, require to be channelled into such a new development direction".

The Development Resource Centre is debating the definition of an NGO, and makes a distinction between the concept and organs of civil society. It regards civil society as 'all society outside the government or public sphere of life', and which includes the non- government, not-for-profit sector, which it calls the voluntary or NGO sector.

The emergence of NGO's in South Africa have not been without its contradictions and problems. The past government found the political activities threatening and placed a series of restrictions on their registration and activities in an attempt at curtailing their advocacy role. The result of this scenario was that NGO's in South Africa became highly politicised and operationally politically active in order to survive and to continue to attack the root causes of poverty, rather than provide band-aid assistance to the symptoms.

We note that at the local levels communities have high expectations from NGO's. When these expectations are not met, disadvantaged communities are filled with suspicion and distrust, anger and hostility. Most NGO's which try to become involved in development programmes

inevitably operate from a position of weakness. To this is added the problem of over ambitious expectations (Davies, 2001). Many NGO's become product orientated rather than process orientated, the actual work and delivery with and in communities.

Disadvantaged people at local levels usually have clear views about what their needs are. At the grassroots levels they know what their needs are because their day-to-day experiences of deprivation and inequality are a continuous reminder of the gaps and shortcomings in their lives which have been fashioned by decades of apartheid policy and practice.

With the advent of democracy there have been greater opportunities for NGO's so that they can make a meaningful contribution to the development of South African society. At the local government level, civic organisations are playing a meaningful role in community development issues. The so-called Indian and Coloured communities have enjoyed great assistance and help by NGO's in the fight against poverty.

In Black residential areas in the mid-1970's, NGO's were involved in a broad range of issues and campaigned against high rents and service charges where the plight of the poor were highlighted. Civics operated on well-established structures which have constitutions. By the mid-1980's civics had become a significant force as they engaged in consumer and rent boycotts as the majority of people were poor. Many civic organisations have focused their attention on development. Yet, the civics were disbanded with the coming to power of the ANC government.

NGO's also played a significant role in partnership with the Reconstruction and Development Programme which was designed to uplift the needy by the provision of houses and other basic services. However, the

government decided to go-it-alone without the NGO's in the Reconstruction Development Programme. This exclusion had very serious consequences, so much so there has been a wave of strikes and protests about the poor quality of houses provided for the poor as well as the numerous problems associated with service delivery.

Although the previous Minister of Public Works, Jeff Radebe gave assurances to the NGO sector that "Government regards NGOs as equal partners in the process of developing previously marginalised communities in this country" there has been not much faith by the government in assisting NGOs to achieve these ideals.

### **5.3.2 The role of NGO's in response to those with HIV/AIDS**

A number of NGOs have rallied to those who are suffering with HIV/AIDS. They are involved inter-alia in orphan care, provision of food, assisting with anti-retroviral drugs. Many NGOs have campaigned the government to the provision of free drugs and also the lowering of the cost of medicines. One such organisation is the Treatment Action Campaign. The Treatment Action Campaign has protested vigorously against the Government's refusal to provide anti-retroviral drugs especially to the poor. The government has relented and now provides the much needed anti-retroviral drugs to those infected with HIV/AIDS. We note that the rollout is gathering momentum as health facilities develop the capacity to manage patients on ARVs. We also note that the Government is making available social benefits available to people living with HIV/AIDS and impoverished households (see Guide to HIV/ Aids NGOs in South Africa).

### **5.3.3 The business sector's response to people with HIV/AIDS**

The business sectors are showing great interest on the HIV/AIDS pandemic and are putting in place measures to treat and prevent the



spread of HIV in the workplace. It was especially the mining industry that realised that there was a reduction in profits, absenteeism and deaths among its workers due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The Anglo-American group decided to invest in maintaining the health and productivity of infected workers. Since 2002, Anglo-American has incorporated into its HIV/AIDS programme free ARV treatment for all the employees that are infected. We must hasten to compliment Anglo-American company for investing in human resource and in this way the life of the employees are prolonged and their dependents are able to escape from abject poverty.

#### **5.3.4 Traditional medicine, culture and health**

Traditional healers play an important role in the treatment of people with HIV/AIDS. The poor sections of the community infected with HIV/AIDS feel comfortable visiting traditional healers. These healers provide herbal remedies and prayers that help people with HIV/AIDS. The herbal medicines dispensed are far cheaper than drugs from pharmacies. The Government has recognised the vital role played by traditional healers in the fight against HIV/AIDS (see WHO on Traditional Medicine).

#### **5.3.5 The Gift of the Givers organization**

The Gift of the Givers is a non-governmental organisation. It is headed by Dr Suliman who is a medical doctor. This organisation has done sterling work among the poor of the poorest in South Africa and many African states that are facing abject poverty. This organisation has also done work in other parts of the world, e.g. Pakistan and Turkey when they were hit by a deadly earthquakes, as well as other parts of the east where we have had the tsunami (Japan) as well as floods. The destitute, poor, sick and homeless were cared for by this worthy organisation.

### **5.3.6 Non-governmental organizations in Chatsworth**

#### **5.3.6.1 The Chatsworth Rotary Club**

The Chatsworth Rotary Club is doing sterling work among the poor in Chatsworth and surrounding areas. This club makes bursaries available to all races of disadvantaged communities, so that children from disadvantaged communities can pursue tertiary education. This organisation recently had a campaign entitled “Uniting Against Hunger Campaign”. This initiative was in response to the escalating poverty and hunger. Mr. E.S. Chetty, Chief Superintendent of Education Management said, “I encourage all schools to empower their pupils to be part of this socially relevant initiative”.

#### **5.3.6.2 Life healthcare’s community involvement programme**

This organisation is made up of business partners who help to alleviate poverty. This organisation has helped more than 15 000 disadvantaged children countrywide. The group’s programme started in 1994 with 15 projects, focused on making a difference in the lives of underprivileged children. Presently more than 80 projects are run in South Africa and Botswana. We also note that staff from Life Chatsmed Garden Hospital have adopted Welbedacht Upliftment Programme for children from disadvantaged areas.

#### **5.3.6.3 HIV/AIDS Unit – Chatsworth Child Welfare**

The Chatsworth Child Welfare HIV/AIDS unit is providing a useful service to the communities in Chatsworth and surrounding areas. It services the many ‘poverty pockets’ by providing social assistance and with regards to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Every Thursday two HIV/AIDS counsellors are sent to Seven Tanks to assist this underprivileged and under-resourced community. This diverse community is ravaged by social ills such as poverty, crime, lack of education. Besides an educational component they

have a social component which assists with distributing of groceries and clothing.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has dealt with three main focuses, namely the relationship between human rights and poverty, the main rights issues involved, and the role of non-governmental organisations in the fight against poverty.

Poverty has led to the erosion of human rights and a social reality and practice in South Africa. This is evident from the fact of the absence of a Human Rights Charter in apartheid South Africa. It is also present in the fact that the Bantu Education system aimed at the production of secondary citizenship and not provided a primary basis for all to participate on an equal basis. All of this sowed the seeds of abject poverty in South Africa. However, the Human Rights Charter in our constitution as well as our education system aims at uplifting all to an equal level of existence.

There remains much work to be done on human rights in South Africa. Labour is still being exploited, and as a result employees are given poor salaries and this definitely contributes to levels of poverty. Farm labourers are still being exploited but the Government is taking measures to address this issue. Domestic workers are still being exploited and the government has introduced the necessary legislation to address this issue. Government has introduced measures to assist the very poor schools as “free fee schools” but this is not enough. Thousands of children are not able to afford school fees coupled with starvation. As a matter of urgency the Government has to provide free education and this in keeping with the constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **POVERTY, LANDLESSNESS AND THE HIV/ AIDS PANDEMIC IN SOUTH AFRICA**

#### **6.0 Introduction**

Apart from other factors, the question of land is a serious issue for people in Africa when they wish to address poverty. In South Africa the land issue is becoming a serious problem. We have a situation in South Africa after nearly twenty years of democracy, that 87% of the land is still in the hands of whites. No developing democracy can afford to see the majority of its people "landless". For me this is a recipe for disaster. We have seen in Zimbabwe the "land re-distribution" programme of the Mugabe government. This has led to untold suffering for the people of Zimbabwe. Thousands of White farmers were displaced off their land. As a result Zimbabwe has a serious food shortage and unemployment.

Land has to be re-distributed in South Africa but this has to be done in an orderly manner. However, White farmers should be willing to sell parts of their land to the government so that the government can re-distribute the land to black people. In this way they will be able to plant crops and commence stock farming so that the people may escape from the ravages of abject poverty. The "Land Summit" of 2005 held by the government under the ministry of Thoko Didiza (Agriculture and Land Affairs) discussed important issues with the objective of re-distribution of land.

The then Deputy President of South Africa, Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka also stated that land re-distribution must be expedited in South Africa. The Secretary General of the South African Communist Party, Blade Nzimande has stated that 2004 October would be declared "Red October"

month focused on the land issue in preparation of the Land Summit of 2005. Mass action and the occupation of vacant, private and government lands, were to take place. It aimed at making government aware that the masses needed land for agriculture and farming so that the poor can have food.

In addition to the land issue, we have the HIV/ AIDS pandemic that devastates the people. This chapter deals with these main issues. It starts off addressing the land issue by focusing on colonialism and land, the land acts, the land reform programme as well as the land summit and GEAR and NEPAD. Focused on HIV/ AIDS, the next section provides a background, and the addresses the pandemic in KZN, the Christian response, the orphan explosion and growing costs. Access to land will constructively engage poverty on the level of subsistence, and addressing the HIV/ AIDs pandemic will constructively address our people's health.

### **6.1 The colonists' conquest of land in South Africa**

The colonists from Holland (1652 – 1795) and Britain (1820 – 1910) have plundered and exploited the land from the indigenous people of South Africa. These invading colonists wanted the land for farming and later for its resources and raw materials. What makes this worse is that they brought with them the slavery system (1652 – 1838) and treated the indigenous peoples as secondary human beings in their own land of birth.

Further these European invaders reduced the indigenous population to a few percent of the total population and colonised most of Africa, in which Europeans became an administrative and trading elite accounting for no more than a few percent of the population. Further Europeans gained ownership of most of the land. This ownership was defined in exclusive, individual terms derived from European culture. We note that the state

was active in transferring land into settler ownership, some of it as late as the 1980s.

## **6.2 Land Acts: Land dispossession and restriction**

The dispossession of land and other assets through the various Land Acts was particularly important in the creation of poverty.

The concept that separate land areas should be set aside for Africans in South Africa predates the founding of a modern economy in South Africa and evolved from the policies followed by early White settler governments who set aside land known as “native reserves”. This was institutionally formalised by the Union Government in 1913 with the passing of the Land Act. At this time, it was never seriously envisaged that the African population should remain limited to the land which had been set aside for their use. However, with the victory of the Nationalist Party in 1948, the segregationist views of the party were translated into the policy of apartheid and “a wide range of legislation was introduced between 1949 and 1959 to balkanise South Africa into a number of ethnic based territories. These culminated with the Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 which ushered in the Homeland structures or Bantustans” (Hunter, May and Padayachee 2003). Enforcing segregation meant that large numbers of people were forcibly removed from “Black Spots” into these Bantustans. This term referred to areas in which African households were living but were located in that part of South Africa designed for White residence. In some instances, these areas were found on commercial White owned farms, but in most cases, the “Black Spots” were freehold land in which the residents had been issued certificates of occupation by the colonial governments. An estimated 475 000 people were removed from “Black Spots” between 1960 and 1983. These forced removals led to untold

suffering for the masses of people (see Hunter, May and Padayachee 2003).

Many of the studies undertaken for the South African Poverty Reduction Strategy (SA-PRS) have drawn attention to the impoverishment which accompanied the intervention and restrictions imposed by the implementation of the Land Acts and other legislation that controlled access to and use of land. The experience of the Blinkwater community on forced removals is an example:

- 1962-65: They were forcibly removed from their farm lands
- 1965: The people were forcibly removed - settled in Blinkwater (Betterment Planning)
- 1968: The community built the first primary school
- 1971-72: The villagers were not allowed to keep more than 15 cattle
- 1978: They built the secondary school
- 1980: The government erected a reservoir
- 1989: They built a pre-school
- 1991-92: There was a great drought and many of their livestock died.

The experience of the Blinkwater community is illustrative of the dispossession and neglect which was associated with removals and subsequent impact of Betterment Planning in rural areas. The effect of this was to strip the Blinkwater community of wealth considered to be 'surplus' by the authorities. This active dispossession that was carried out by the apartheid structures thus had the effect of pushing already vulnerable households further into poverty.

The impact of forcible resettlement appears to have gone beyond the loss of assets and had an impact on social structures within the affected communities. Westaway (nd) documents the circumstances of one such community in the Eastern Cape living in the Mgwali area. Here we notice a complex set of power relations have emerged which mediate people's relations to each other. These are underpinned by a number of sociable variables of which access to land is the most important.

Forced removals thus acted to both strip the physical assets of those who were re-located while eroding social relationships by increasing conflicts over resources in the communities into which people were relocated. This situation exacerbated the high levels of poverty.

### **6.3 The land reform programme**

The historical inequalities caused by the apartheid government and the accompanying land laws meant that there was no easy solutions to the land question. Government enforced land reform to “modify, redirect or change rights, usage and relations on the land” (Marcus, Eales and Wildschut, 1996: 179).

According to Walker (1997:7) and de Wet (2008) the debate on land redistribution and property rights was one of the most contentious issues at the negotiations leading up to the democratic transition in 1994. Initially, the ANC argued that the market would exacerbate existing inequalities since the dispossessed did not have the capacity to buy land.

We note that the Land Reform Programme endeavoured to remedy past injustices and achieve reconstruction and development by improving household welfare and reduce poverty (DLA, 1997b).



The White Paper on Land Reform (1997) identified land reform as the central and driving force of a rural development programme. The South African land reform programme had three key elements viz. the restitution of land to people dispossessed of a land right after June 1913 in terms of racially discriminatory law, the redistribution of land and providing land for the dispossessed and poor and for residential and productive purposes, and tenure reform that would improve tenure security for all South Africans (White Paper on Rural Development, Agrarian Transformation and Land Reform [1997] 2011).

The following Acts were instituted to alleviate the destruction of more than 3,5 million black people's lives who were affected by apartheid forced removals and denied access to land.

- a. The Restitution of Land Act, 22 of 1994
- b. Extension of Security of Tenure Bill
- c. Land Reform Act 3 of 1996

The Department of Land Affairs offered grants to support beneficiaries of the land reform programme to acquire land. We note that the South African land Reform Programme was based on free market and willing seller and willing buyer principle. This was against the popular struggle for freedom which used the lack of access of land as a political rallying call (Walker, 1997).

The World Bank maintained that the poor should be given government grants and land bank loans to purchase commercial farm land from willing sellers.

#### 6.4 Land summit: 27 July 2005

Mr Mhabazima Shilowa made the following remarks at the Land Summit: “The rich live near places of work with transport facilities; the poor live far from their work and have to pay more money in transport to get to work”.

The Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs the Hon. Ms Thoko Didiza made the following statements at the Land Summit: The theme of the Minister’s address was “Can the Rich Afford to Help the Poor?” and quoted the book “The end of Poverty” by Jeffrey Sachs. After expanding on the contents the conclusion was that it isn’t whether the rich can afford to help the poor, but whether they can afford not to? Reflecting deeper on this question and answer by Jeffrey Sachs, we may reflect whether this is not the question we need to ask ourselves in relation to Land Reform in South Africa today and if we don’t do it what will be the political and the social costs and if it is done better what will we gain?

The Minister further said that in order to assist the poor the following need to be done.

- re-affirm redistribution targets by 2014;
- pro-active acquisition;
- establish a register for land needs;
- identify specific interventions for target groups;
- introduce a comprehensive support package for new owners;
- make land and agrarian reform a cluster priority;
- orderly management of eviction; and
- illegal occupations

Most Africans still remain landless. The Government needs to reassess its political will for land reform. The Land Summit held in 2005 passed many resolutions with the view of expediting land reform. Yet, nothing has come of this as already pointed out. According to the South African Communist Party and Congress of Trade Unions the masses of the poor are becoming impatient with government's slow pace of land reform.

### **6.5 The GEAR and NEPAD programmes**

It was evident by early 1996 that it was difficult to attain sustainable economic growth that was likely to have an impact on poverty reduction, income distribution, employment creation and financing of essential services. This gave rise to the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme as macroeconomic strategy aimed at addressing the above shortfalls. GEAR recognised that a sustained reduction in inequality requires accelerated job creation. Yet, most of this was a failure. Jobs were in fact shed and redistribution did not take place at all. "Rhetorically, attempts were made to align GEAR with the socially progressive objectives of the RDP. But the central pillars of the strategy were fashioned in accordance with standard neo-liberal principles – deficit reduction, keeping inflation in single digits, trade liberalization, privatisation, tax cuts and holidays, phasing out of exchange controls, etc. (Marais 2011:171).

When NEPAD was conceived, it was hailed as not only dealing with the shortcomings of GEAR but also that it would facilitate the developing of "partnerships" on the globalising world. Yet, this too proved fatal. This programme did not only continue the neo-liberal ideology of the ANC-led government. It also opened the doors for ever greater self-enrichment by the black neo-riche. In the first place, it moved further apart from the RDP document because it did not consult with the social movements or

endeavoured to bring them on board – extremely necessary if we want to engage poverty on the ground. It also did not engage the legacy of economic exploitation, colonialism, neo-colonialism and neo-liberal systems exploiting the Third World. It avoided the problem of power and propagated closer integration into the world economy. Yet, this means ever greater poverty for those on the ground. “NEPAD calls for closer relations with the rich countries, it wants Africa to be “integrated“ more into the global economic system. But economic development theorists such as Andre Gunder Frank and Samir Amin have long shown how integration leads to growing poverty and underdevelopment because the structure of insertion is designed to benefit the rich; they get richer and the poor get poorer. Third World scholars have recommended less not more integration, namely, “de-linking“. Argentina's crisis is due to its integration which made it vulnerable to global financial and market fluctuations. The falling rand (currency) in South Africa is due to the ease with which money can move in and out of the country - an indicator of integration into the global markets“ (Ngwane 2002).

## **6.6 The HIV/ AIDS pandemic in South Africa**

### **6.6.1 Background**

A combination of factors such as poverty, natural disasters, violence, social chaos and the disempowered status of women facilitate the transmission of HIV. The illness increases the risk of a household or individual becoming impoverished and lowers the general level of health in communities because there is a close connection with other communicable and poverty-related diseases such as tuberculosis.

It is important to note that the economic implications of HIV/AIDS will affect all South Africans. The Labour Resource and Research Institute (2003:16) for instance says: “The authors of NEPAD seem to think of a

development process in Africa without making HIV/ AIDS one of the key issues. Whilst this pandemic has become the number one killer in Africa, NEPAD seems to gloss over the issue and does not present it as one of its priority areas. HIV/AIDS is responsible for an annual 0,5% - 1,2% GDP loss in the hardest hit countries on the African continent. It is estimated that by 2020, heavily infected countries may lose up to 20% of their GDP to AIDS. The drastic reduction in life expectancy on the continent from 62 to 47 years is largely attributed to AIDS. This affects the most productive sector of the population on a continent where 4 out of 10 people live on less than U\$ 1 per day. An estimated 28% of mineworkers in South Africa are infected with HIV and the virus is a direct cause of about 50% of bed occupancies in Southern African hospitals.”

The result of the AIDS epidemic is that most young adults are falling ill and dying leaving behind orphans and as a result thousands of households are headed by young children who are facing abject poverty. Families are caught up in the vicious cycle of poverty because the pandemic is affecting the lives of breadwinners in the family. AIDS can cause financial difficulties as family members become ill and die of AIDS. The family are faced with poverty because of the costs both in time and money, of purchasing drugs and medical services. The cost of providing care, the cost of funerals is taking its toll on surviving families. It is because of this, that one cannot address the issue of poverty without reflecting on the economic circumstances in which it continues to impact on people.

The stigma attached to the disease also impacts on the high level of poverty. Some families cut off ties with the infected and as a result the plight of those suffering with AIDS becomes worse. They cannot tap into the generosity of extended families. The factors of migration, urbanization and unwillingness to adopt or foster orphans impacts heavily on poverty

and thus the government is faced with major challenges. HIV primarily affects people who are at the most productive stage of their lives and this has disruptive effects on production. Thus productivity will be affected as skilled or experienced staff fall ill, stay absent and finally the training costs will accelerate as some employers find that some of their trainees die after completing training courses.

According to Kinghorn and Steinberg (1999) further HIV/AIDS results in increasing costs of employee benefits such as insurance and medical aid. This, for them, will depend on the number of affected employees, their skills and particular nature of the production processes and the effectiveness of the prevention management programmes. It can be argued that the report by Kinghorn and Steinberg further states that AIDS will be a major obstacle in advancing poverty and socio-economic inequality.

For Whiteside (1999: 37-42) the following are the ways in which AIDS might affect the macro economies, the illness and death of productive members of society and thus their loss of their production and the diversion of savings and eventually, investment care. Inside the household, the care of HIV/ Aids patients are also a severe stress of households. The individual requires medical care and possibly special diets. This for Whiteside (1999: 37) increases demand on the household resources.

#### **6.6.2 HIV/ AIDS in KwaZulu-Natal**

The Province of Kwa-Zulu Natal is in the middle of an HIV epidemic (Fransen and Whiteside,1997). As more people get sick, this is largely to impact on household income and expenditure and as parents die, there will be an increase in AIDS orphans. All this will impact negatively on the

economic growth in the province. It is also clear that HIV will impact on the development of the province generally. This is likely to reduce life expectancy, increase infant mortality, child mortality and increase death rates.

The move of government according to Nzimakwe (1999: 23) is to promote home-based care as hospitals are not in a position to look after the sick patients. This means that doctors will rely on family members to care for HIV infected and AIDS patients. The result of the AIDS pandemic is that most young adults are falling ill and dying leaving behind orphans and the elderly who are not in a financial position to offer home-based care for the sick people. Families are caught up in the vicious cycle of poverty.

We note that AIDS can cause financial problems as family members become sick and die of AIDS. As a result the family can become poorer because of costs. The cost of funerals and the provision of drugs is causing great financial drains on the part of families. HIV primarily affects people who are at the most productive stage of their lives and this has disruptive effects on production. However, we take note that many business sectors including the mining industry have committed themselves in the fight against AIDS.

### **6.6.3 The HIV/ AIDS epidemic and care**

In their work, "The Aids Epidemic, Balancing Compassion and Justice", Wood and Dietrich state that the type of economic help AIDS patients need vary. They are of the view that most of the needs of AIDS patients can be provided with small amounts of money but large amounts of time. They state that shopping for groceries, cooking meals or providing transport are all ways of helping meet those needs. As one observer noted, "AIDS is a virulent one-way ticket to poverty". The writers also state

that housing is a special economic need of AIDS patients because they are often evicted due to the fears of others.

The writers are of the firm view that the dissemination of information on sex and HIV/ AIDS is vital for teenagers. They are of the view that there should be sex education at schools but this should be based on sound Christian principles. In this way the youth can be spared of this fatal disease. In this way the youth will be protected culturally and economically.

#### **6.6.4 HIV/ AIDS: A Christian response**

In the face of this severe epidemic, it is important to point out that many people intervene and make substantial contributions to alleviate the problems related to HIV/ Aids. From Christian perspective, Ronald Nicolson identified the following, in his “Aids: a Christian Response”.

The writer is of the view that churches can play a pivotal role in the lives of those who are infected or affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The churches can do the following:

- visit the sick at home with full blown AIDS;
- do basic shopping;
- teach literacy, dressmaking, simple carpentry and other skills;
- adopt or foster AIDS orphans;
- make school uniforms for AIDS orphans;
- form local care committees to co-ordinate orphan relief and AIDS home visiting; and



- provide facilities and leadership for support groups for AIDS sufferers, AIDS widows where they can meet, socialize, advise each other.

The writer states that enormous community help will be needed to care for the dying, to feed and foster orphan children, to support widows, to provide love and company to the lonely and bereaved. It is important that the provision of church care will need to be carefully planned and strategised. It is vital that real love requires that churches try to equip carers with a knowledge about AIDS, about counselling techniques, about how best to meet the needs of people with AIDS.

#### **6.6.5 South Africa and the HIV/ AIDS orphan explosion**

In 2003, UNAids estimated there were 2,3 million children without parents in South Africa (Desai 2005). The assessment for 2005 was that about 1 million of those children have lost parents through AIDS. This became clear at a three-day conference in 2005 on Resource Mobilisation for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children at the International Convention Centre in Durban. The aim of the conference was to try to “find an effective strategy that will help to deliver resources to poor communities that are struggling to take care of their orphans”. A main problem that was identified was that vast amounts of funds and resources directed at assisting millions of orphans were not being delivered to communities in need. Children First is one among other non-governmental organisations committed to fend for children’s rights in South Africa.

#### **6.6.6 The growing costs**

Arlene Georgeson and Tjaart Esterhuysen of Metropolitan Employee Benefits, say that care and prevention can work only effectively in environments that are conducive to the implementation of intervention

initiatives. They point out that HIV/AIDS is clearly costly but it is often difficult to quantify the many ways it has affected the workplace. Indirect costs like absenteeism and aids sick leave exact a high toll in the workplace.

HIV/AIDS is expected to place a significant burden on medical schemes but especially on production and industry. According to Dick (2005), the following are some of the issues which affect the operating profits of industries, workplaces and production sectors.

- Aids related illnesses and deaths of employees increase company expenditures and reduce revenues;
- Expenditure on healthcare costs, funeral costs and the recruitment and training of replacement employees increase;
- Revenues decrease as a result of absenteeism due to illness, provision of care to persons with HIV/ Aids or funeral attendance, as well as time spent on training;
- Labour turnover increases resulting in a loss of skills, tact, knowledge and experience and consequently declining morale and lower productivity. Resultant labour replacement will increase production costs;
- An increased demand for benefits (including insurance cover, retirement funds, health and safety provisions, medical assistance, testing and counselling and funeral costs) will lead to increased remuneration costs;
- The customer/ client base is reduced and sales affected;
- Investment in capital-intensive technology/ production is more likely.

## 6.6 Conclusion

When one engages the issue of poverty in a developmental country, the question of land is a central and serious issue. This is also the case in southern Africa – as is evident from a variety of developments around land in Zimbabwe. A main problem in South Africa is that much has been said about this issue but very little done. Closely related to this issue is that it appears as if the two main economic programmes developed for our region has not delivered on their promises – the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme and the New Partnership for African Development Programme. This situation is compounded by the HIV/ Aids pandemic on the continent.

If the Government is serious in addressing the poverty question and if it wishes to address it, it will have to address the land problem which has led to abject poverty in South Africa for the masses of people. The Land Summit of 2005 addressed pressing issues around the land problem. We cannot have a situation in South Africa where about 87% of the land is still in the hands of the Whites. The government cannot remain complacent on this matter. It has to address this problem urgently so that we will not have a similar situation like Zimbabwe. The first section of the chapter dealt with these issues.

The AIDS pandemic is a serious matter in South Africa. As we know that the AIDS pandemic impacts negatively on people's cultural and economic well being. We note that AIDS is affecting the younger generation and this does not augur well for the future. The church cannot remain complacent and silent on these matters. It needs to speak out and strengthen government's hand in intervening on all these accounts. The church should be fully involved so that the HIV/AIDS pandemic, coupled with abject poverty could be wiped out.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **THE BIBLE AND POVERTY**

#### **7.0 Introduction**

The Bible gives much information on poverty. There is no book in the world that critically addresses the realities of poverty like the Bible. The Bible provides moral and social perspectives on poverty. I wish to discuss from a moral perspective the origins of poverty according to the Bible, how the Old and New Testaments reflect on poverty, and conclude with theological view and reflections from the Hebrew Law codes.

#### **7.1 The origin of poverty according to the Bible**

The beginning of poverty had its origin in the Garden of Eden when the first human beings disobeyed God. They were told not to eat the forbidden fruit but went against God's word and disobeyed Him. This for me epitomises the moral and social aspect of poverty. In Genesis 3:16-17, 19 we read "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. 'To Adam He said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it.' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life ... By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground since from it you were taken; for dust you are and dust you will return".

These curses carry with them the beginning of moral and social aspects of poverty for the whole human race. We also note the significance of land in these curses. An even today the land is a big issue. This was very evident already in the days of the production of Scripture. Even up to this day, it is

important. The current examples come from the land issue in postcolonial situations such as Zimbabwe and South Africa but also other parts of the world where there are land disputes, such as the fight between the Palestinians and Jews over basically the ownership of land. God's curse is also still felt today because of droughts and poor yields. This in no doubt leads to abject poverty which is so common in our world today.

### 7.1.1 Provisions under the law

During the time of the Mosaic Law, God established some guidelines to assist the poor. In the book of Exodus Chapter 22 and 23 God encourages the Israelites to help the aliens, widows, orphans and the poor. God sets up a system of "gleaning" to help prevent starvation and malnourishment (see Childs, 1874:482).

<sup>10</sup>For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; <sup>11</sup>but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the wild animals may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard. <sup>12</sup>Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have relief, and your homeborn slave and the resident alien may be refreshed (Exodus, 23: 10-12, NRSV).

In the book of Leviticus (25: 8-43) we see that God establishes the ceremony of the "Year of the Jubilee" to be practiced every fifty years. The word of the Lord is made abundantly clear when He states:

If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you. Do not take interest of any kind from him, but fear your God, so that your countrymen may continue to live among you ... (Leviticus 23:35-36, NIV).

These verses reinforce God's compassion for the poor and needy. In the book of Deuteronomy 15 we see that God is concerned about the debts of His people. Debts will be cancelled every seven years.

Every seventh year you shall grant a remission of debts. 2 And this is the manner of the remission: every creditor shall remit the claim that is held against a neighbor, not exacting it of a neighbor who is a member of the community, because the Lord's remission has been proclaimed. 3 Of a foreigner you may exact it, but you must remit your claim on whatever any member of your community owes you. 4 There will, however, be no one in need among you, because the LORD is sure to bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as a possession to occupy, 5 if only you will obey the LORD your God by diligently observing this entire commandment that I command you today.

This was Israel's way of giving a kind of amnesty to the people in the name of their God.

### 7.1.2 The names of God

The names given to God shows His infinite love, care and compassion for the poor. He is known as follows:

- **Defender of the fatherless and widows** (see Phillips, 1973:77)

17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, 18 who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing (Deut.10:18, NRSV).

16 The LORD is king forever and ever; the nations shall perish from his land. 17 O LORD, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear 18 to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed, so that those from earth may strike terror no more (Psalm 10:16-18, NRSV).

- **Protector of the poor** (see Perowne, 1976:177)  
5 "Because the poor are despoiled, because the needy groan, I will now rise up," says the LORD; "I will place them in the safety for which they long" (Psalm 12:5, NRSV).
- **Rescuer of the poor** (see Mays, 1994:154)  
10 All my bones shall say, "O LORD, who is like you? You deliver the weak from those too strong for them, the weak and needy from those who despoil them" (Psalm 35:10, NRSV; see also 1 Samuel 2:8 and Isaiah 19:20)
- **Provider of the poor** (see Delitzsch, n.d. 395)  
5 Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God, 6 who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; 7 who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; 8 the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. 9 The LORD watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin (Psalm 146,7, NRSV)
- **Saviour of the poor** (see Kroll, 1987:328)  
6 This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD, and was saved from every trouble (Psalm 34:6, NRSV; see also 109:31)
- **Refuge of the poor** (see Weiser, 1962:239)  
6 You would confound the plans of the poor, but the LORD is their refuge (Psalm 14:6, NRSV; see also Isaiah 25:4).

## 7.2 Poverty as reflected in the Old Testament

Poverty in the Hebrew Bible reveals the following:

- a lack of economic resources and material goods.
- political and legal powerlessness and oppression.

The poor constituted a diverse body of social actors, small farmers, day labourers, construction workers, beggars, debt slaves and village dwellers. There are various Biblical texts that talk about the plight of the poor. These texts offer diverging analyses of their situation. We note that these legal texts regulate the treatment of the poor. The legal codes seek to ensure the social well being of the poor through the redistribution of goods and food and through the establishment of restrictions regarding slave ownership. Prophetic texts align themselves with the poor who are exploited by the large landowners and ruling members of ancient Israelite society. We note that the wisdom tradition divides over the question of poverty. The writer of Proverbs, King Solomon promotes the traditional wisdom view that poverty is the undesirable result of laziness (see Toy, 1959 on Proverbs 10:4).

The Book of Job also portrays poverty as an act of laziness to a lesser extent. The Book of Ecclesiastes perceives poverty to be the result of political and economic exploitation. We note that the Book of Psalms shows a rich language for poverty and many texts discuss God's concern for the poor. It is not easy to figure out to what extent the language has moved away from concrete cases of poverty to a more spiritualised level of worship discourse, although much scholarly work has been devoted to characterising the ideas of poverty as expounded in the Bible (see Dhorme, 1967:359).

The narrative literature of the Pentateuch is unconcerned with the issue of poverty. Even the Deuteronomistic History does not take up the topic of poverty. These books viz. Ruth (3:10), Esther (9:22) and Daniel (4:24) touch on poverty in an ancillary way. However, the Prophet Nehemiah deals with the issue of poverty in a more significant way (Nehemiah 5:1-13) (see Batten, 1961:238). The meaning of these words should be based



more on the context and usage rather than the etymology. We note that too many of the studies of the Hebrew terms for “poor” particularly in the Psalms have become enmeshed in the discussion of Hebrew verbal roots rather than on a word’s actual usage, is far more important to explicate the semantic field of these words as they actually appear in the biblical text. It is important to note that no biblical writer or text uses all the Hebrew terms for “poor”, “poverty”. There has been selectivity on the part of the biblical authors. Although the writers may use the same term the writers may not mean the same thing by that term. We note that in Proverbs the dal is a lazy person whereas for the prophets the dal is an object of exploitation. There are a number of Hebrew words for “poor”, “poverty” viz. ’ebyon (see Amos 2:6; 4:1; 5:12; 8:4,6); dal (Prov 22:16); ras (be in want, poor); mahsor (need, thing needed, poverty – see Deut. 15.8; Judg. 18.10; 19.19-20; Ps. 34.10 [Eng. 34.9]. 8.); misken ani; anawim (see Pleins, 1997:286 - 287).

There are different terms for “poor” in the Hebrew Bible. There are diverging notions about poverty that infuse the biblical text. The etymological approach fails to grapple with the diverging ideologies that exist in the text and that are brought to the surface in a contextual analysis of the terms for “poor”. We note that there are some streams of the Biblical tradition that are clearly concerned about poverty although their theologies and analyses of poverty differ radically. The liturgical traditions all see poverty as a matter of grave significance to the community (see Henry, 1961:16). These philosophies derive and explain their social visions in the light of their confrontation with the realities of poverty in ancient Israelite society. We note that poverty is a decisive issue in the prophetic and legal traditions. It is in these traditions that one is confronted with the harsh living conditions of the poor, hungry, thirsty and homeless and those who were deprived of farmland in Israel. We can conclude that all these form

the web of poverty in ancient Israel. The prophets of the Old Testament have protested vehemently as they saw the exploitation of the poor at the hands of the society's rulers while the legal traditions offer some limited provisions to ease the burdens of those who suffer in this sad situation. In the Book of Psalms we read of a God who assists the poor in their distress. We also note that the psalmist David offers many prayers on behalf of the poor. The Book of Proverbs offers divergent positions. King Solomon develops a divergent position. He develops a different view of poverty. To the wise poverty is either the result of laziness or represents the judgments of God. In the Book of Job the poor are portrayed as victims of economic and legal injustices. We note that poverty has become one of the book's major issues. It is the Prophet Job that has to defend himself against the charge that he has exploited the poor. However, we note that what was in his favour in real terms that he was able to defend the cause of the poor. It is sad to note that the plight of the poor was not a vital issue for Israel's historians. We note that a lack of poverty language distances the Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic historical writers from the issues of socio-economic injustice; one must press the text to have these chroniclers address the topic of oppression. The story of Ahab's taking of Naboth's vineyard (1 King's 21) is very useful for developing sociological perspectives on the treatment of the poor in ancient Israelite society. We also read in the Book of Exodus God's concern for the poor (see Robinson, 1972).

### **7.3 The poor – Perspectives of New Testament writers**

The New Testament is quite specific about concerns for the economic condition of "poor widows" (Luke 21: 4-5). We also note that the socio-economic dimension of Lukan teaching is "good news to the poor" (see Plummer, 1975).

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18, NRSV).

The 'Q' source provides us with the most radical presentation of New Testament teaching on poor and poverty. The Q materials reflect the teaching of itinerant prophets who took the instruction of Jesus' mission discourse literally. See also the teachings of Christ on 'homelessness', (Luke 9: 57-58) and a separation from family (Luke 9: 59-60).

57 As they were going along the road, someone said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' 58 And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' 59 To another he said, 'Follow me.' But he said, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' 60 But Jesus\* said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.'

For the 'Q' group Jesus is viewed primarily as the prophet and his 'homeless' followers as prophets too. In 'Q' the priority attention given to the poor and evangelism of the poor is evident from the first beatitude (Luke 6:20, Matthew 5:3). The apostle Paul was also a 'homeless' prophet who wandered through the world without a wife or family. The apostle Paul also set an example to his fellow Christians by working as a 'tent maker' instead of living on 'handouts' (see Meier, 1983).

The disciple Mark makes references to poverty. The references are Mark 10:2, the rich man, Mark 12:42-43, the widow's mite, Mark 14:5-7 the anointing in Bethany. There are other references to poverty, the lifestyle of John the Baptist, Mark 1:6, Mark 6:17-18 and of Jesus Mark 6:3, 11:12, the voluntary deprivation of the disciples, Mark 1:18,20.

18And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

We note further the socio-economic level of the 'crowds' (Myers, 1988: 120) and their environment as reflected in Jesus' teaching, Mark 2:2 and the use of old mended clothes, Mark 5:2-3.

The evidence presented leads Stegemann (1984: 23) to conclude: "The movement within Judaism in Palestine associated with the name of Jesus was a movement for the poor. Jesus, the carpenter and his disciples shared situations of abject poverty as their fellow Jews." We realize that Mark's gospel may be directed to a similar poor church in Roman occupied Syria. There have been numerous references to the beggarly poor in the Book of Mark and proves conclusively that the disciple was concerned and aware of the plight of the poor during his time (see Lenski, 1964:205).

The disciple Matthew begins his account of Jesus' ministry with reference to Matthew 5:3 when Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit". This is one of the most radical texts in the New Testament on the subject of poverty. The references to the 'poor' are included in Matthew 19:21, 26:9,11 (see Ogilvie, 1982).

<sup>21</sup>Jesus said to him, 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'

<sup>11</sup>For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.

Matthew's concern for the poor is further illustrated when he attaches importance to almsgiving (Matthew 6:1-4) (see Hill, 1975:133) and his fierce denunciation of oppression (Matthew 23:1-36 and Jesus' "woe's").

Matthew states very categorically that good works for the poor will be the only criterion for the final judgment. We can safely conclude that the disciple Matthew was deeply concerned for the well being of the poor and oppressed.

The doctor, Luke, also had special concern for the beggarly poor. There is evidence for his concern for the poor in the following references: Luke 9:51, 19:27, 14:13,21, 16:20,22, 19:8. Luke 4:18 stands as a programmatic introduction to Jesus' ministry (see above) (see Ellis, 1974:97).

The Book of Acts is devoted on the main on the needs of the poor. The references for that are the following: Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-37 which encourages the early church believers to be concerned of the needs of believers and to have 'all things in common' (see Smith, 1970).

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 44 All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

The concern for the 'poor' is further reinforced in the appointment of seven deacons to correct the injustice in the church's ministry to Hellenistic

widows, the heart-rending ministries of Dorcas (Acts 9:36-43) and Cornelius (10: 2,4,31) in providing alms, is sufficient proof for the welfare of the poor. We note that older studies have viewed Luke as the 'social radical' among the gospel writers. It is noteworthy that Luke heavily concentrated on the economic dimension of the gospel and this can be viewed as his response to a relatively poor church. There are numerous references to this viz. Acts 1:51-53, 3: 10-14 ,6:34-36, 9:58, 11:41 (see Fraser, 1965). We can conclude that Luke the author of the Gospel of Luke and Book of Acts had a profound influence on the 'poor' of his generation.

The Pauline letters are rather explicit about Paul's concern for the poor and destitute. It is a Pauline pre-occupation to empower the weak (Romans 14:1-15:7). It is also closely related to the Synoptic concern for healing the sick, empowering the poor and accepting the marginalised (see Barrett, 1991).

In the letter to Galatians 2:10 the apostle Paul encourages the believers in Galatia to remember the 'poor', "continuing to remember the destitute".

10 They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do.

In 2 Corinthians 6:10 the apostle concludes the catalogue of affliction, describing his life-style as 'poor' and yet 'but having nothing and yet possessing all things' (see Furnish, 1984).

Paul's concern for the poor is further evident when he requests for the offering for the destitute among the saints in Jerusalem. He refers to Christ who was rich and "became 'poor' for us". This shows that Jesus

identified himself with the 'poor'. The apostle Paul in his letters exhorts the rich churches to show concern for the 'poor'.

The letters in 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians are in harmony with perspectives on poverty. We note that both these letters have stressed the church's experience of oppression in the form of persecution which eventually led to impoverishment and abject poverty. We note that elitist Greek prejudices against manual labour were corrected by exhortation to work and by church discipline (2 Thessalonians 3:10, 14-15) (see Morris, 1975:254).

10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. 11 For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. 12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. 13 Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right. 14 Take note of those who do not obey what we say in this letter; have nothing to do with them, so that they may be ashamed. 15 Do not regard them as enemies, but warn them as believers.

In Colossians, reference is made to oppression and persecution endured by Paul and certain churches and this led inevitably to suffering and poverty. In Colossians 3:18, 4:1 the inclusion of fathers and lords suggest a social structure. From the priority given to women in Colossians 3:15 and children 3:20 plus the treatment of slaves in 3: 22-25 it is evident that the weaker and poorer classes dominate the church membership. The letter to the Colossians reflects certain economic effects of the authentic good news to the poor (see Martin, 1974:113). The immediate solutions for poverty may be reflected in the hope of radical changes (1:5, 12-13). The agape love among the "saints" shows that all social issues including the amnesty for debts were addressed. Further we need the challenge of good works to meet the needs of more destitute members. We also note

that 'good works' as reflected in Titus is the immediate goal of salvation, Titus 2:8-10. We also know that in the letter to the Ephesians there is direct reference to poorer classes as seen in the former unemployed 'thieves' and the one having 'need'.

The apostle Paul was an impoverished person. This is clearly evident in 1-2 Corinthians and Romans. In the Pastoral letters, the author – whether Paul or not – encourages Timothy and Titus whom he so affectionately addresses as sons, to continue the impoverished apostolic lifestyle. This is clearly indicated in 1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12; 2 Timothy 1:6-8 (see Bassler, 1996:45). We note that the lowly socio-economic status of the churches in Ephesus as reflected in the care for impoverished widows and the maintenance of social responsibility in the extended family and in the qualification of ministers and deacons who minister mainly to the poor. The author admonished the rich women to dress modestly to minimize socio-economic differences. The 'good works' so central in the book of Titus is a pre-requisite for eternal life (Titus 3:3-8).

8 The saying is sure. I desire that you insist on these things, so that those who have come to believe in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works; these things are excellent and profitable to everyone.

The factors that produce poverty indicated in the Pastorals include persecution, oppression and injustice (2 Timothy 2:19, 1 Timothy 1:19). We note that in the Pastorals the evangelism of the world with the gospel gives hope to the poor. Salvation also implies material relief in this life (2 Timothy 4:18). Proper church government should be so structured that the churches 'remember the poor' (Galatians 2:10). It can be pointed out that these so-called 'conservative' epistles have contributed more to economic



development and liberation of oppressed classes in those countries that came under the influence of colonialism.

We note that in 1 Peter the Jewish and Gentile believers are described as 'homeless', 'visiting strangers', or 'resident aliens' (1 Peter 2:11). These terms speak of a situation of abject poverty. The analysis of the causes of poverty can be gauged by the sub-economic situation of the five provinces, of the Diaspora Jews in the area and of gentile converts. We note that the Diaspora experience of homeless aliens and separation from official Judaism resulted in frequent oppression and persecution. The suffering and deprivations of the uprooted 'homeless' is seen in 1 Peter where the apostle encourages the 'poor' to be incorporated into the 'household of God' or a 'spiritual house' (1 Peter 2:5) (see Kelly, 1969:104). The proclamation of the gospel as 'good news to the homeless' made the uprooted to feel a sense of worth and dignity. We have seen that the new converts were born again to a living hope as reflected in 1(Peter 1:3,21) that meant life in the new people of God which was seen as the final solution to all persecution, homelessness, oppression poverty and suffering.

The apostle Jude also shows concern for the poor. His writing reflects the kind of violence the 'poor' suffer at the hands of the rich. Jude also condemns sexual excesses of the powerful and this impact on the poor and vulnerable. 2 Peter also vividly portrays the cause of poverty which is heaped by the rich on the poor of society (see Cedar, 1984:260).

The Book of Revelation uses symbolic language to describe situations of poverty. We read that the poverty of the church in Smyrna is associated with the oppression-prosecution of certain 'Jews' (Revelation 2:9). There is also reference to the 'poor' Laodicean church. We note that the rich and

'poor' succumb to the idolatrous economic demands of the second beast in Revelation 13:16.

John's prologue speaks of the 'Word' becoming 'flesh' and is referring mainly to a humanity that is 'intrinsically poor'. The homelessness and marginalisation of the incarnate word is another expression of John's gospel to illustrate a painful dimension of poverty. We note that the miracles of Jesus are directed to the 'poor' (John 9:8 'beggar'; the weak John 5 :1-13). The provision miracles are also directed to the 'poor' (John 2:1-11, John 6: 1-15). In the limits of the temple Jesus helps the sick, poor, publicans, women and children. The Johannine perspective on the 'poor' is also clearly seen in 1 John 1; 5:17. In general the epistles of John may be viewed as outlining the causes of poverty in the areas of persecution, oppression and violence suffered by the community (1 John 2:17; 3 John 5-8).

The chapter 2 of Hebrews clearly illustrates the author's perspectives on poverty. In this chapter he makes references to 'others, ...of whom the world was not worthy,' Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel and the prophets who worked and struggled in light of the promise (Hebrews 11: 35 – 40). In verse 37 there is reference to their lack of sufficient clothing, brutal violence, ridicule and torture.

Such impoverished souls were rich in faith. Reference is also made of impoverished saints and the poor Israelite slaves of Egypt to further reinforce his perspectives on poverty. The author's assertion that God spoke through prophets emphasises the aspect of oppression and persecution as the fundamental causes of poverty. The author is of the view that the body of Christ is partially able to solve the problems associated with poverty. He speaks of members 'coming together'

(Hebrews 10: 24-25) for two reasons, one is edification of believers and the other to render material assistance to the needy – ‘good deeds’. We are also read that brotherly love must be shown in acts of hospitality. Hebrews stresses that evangelism should involve aspects of caring for the ‘poor’.

The writing of James is very closely associated with the perspectives on poverty as of the Old Testament prophets. In addition to the term for “beggary poor”, the apostle uses the term “humble”, “orphans and widows” and “workers and harvesters”. We note that the beggarly poor are characterised by shabby clothing (James 2:2) or being naked and lacking in daily food (James 2: 15-16) (see Hughes 1991:89).

15 If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?  
17 So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

The weak, needy and marginalised also include women. In keeping with the Old Testament paradigm, James does not attach blame on the victims rather he focuses on oppression as the basic cause of poverty. The oppression of the poor is seen in three ways by the James: financial legal mechanisms, especially against poor debtors, greedy and boastful merchants, wealthy landowners withholding wages was a common method of oppression. The rich according to James drag the poor to court. He concludes that such oppression is characteristic of the worldly system. He was a visionary who saw the world of the disciples whose lifestyle embodies the ‘word’ proclaimed in a ‘world’ characterised by greed, domination and oppression of the poor and weak. We realise that James is concerned especially with the kinds of sins of the tongue that create a false sense of security for the affluent who use their economic power to

deny dignity, honour and justice to the poor and weak. James also stresses that the performance of good works to the poor should be the hallmark of the believer. He denounces the cruel oppression and violence that impoverish and destroy.

#### 7.4 **Biblical and Theological perspectives**

Don Lattin, Religion writer of the *San Francisco Chronicle* gives an important moral perspective. In his article of 2004, he criticises the moral right for always harping on issues of abortion and same-sex marriage, while continuing to elect leaders who do not address the real issues in the economic domain. We should not be content with “conservative Christian forces monopolizing the morality in politics debate.”

The first concern then, is *leadership* about “the really big issue such as who is benefitting from current economic and political arrangements.” Leaders therefore need to clearly understand the dynamics and realities of economics, but especially be able to make analyses about who benefits from the existing economic and political systems and structures. It is true that these mostly benefit those who are already well-off and not the poor. Closely related to this concern, is the willingness of politicians to not only analyse the systems and structures, but to develop alternative systems and structures that will benefit the poor. This is the harder and more difficult challenge, since these raise the question of proposals that may be unpopular with the voting public.

The second issue is that of *community*. With reference to Rev. Leslie Tune, a representative of an ecumenical organisation, Lattin puts forward the case for the “communal responsibilities to one another” amongst Christians but also amongst legislators and policymakers. In his argument he then refers to the Hebrew scriptures’ views on “care for the poor”.

There is a growing sense that there is an ever growing number of people internationally who commit themselves to address the structures and realities of poverty. A left leader and editor of *Sojourners* magazine, Jim Wallis, for instance says: "One issue that brings us together is the commitment to overcome poverty" (see Lattin). "We need to get to understand that there's more to morality than who you have sex with and whether or not you have an abortion". A central concern that needs to be fostered among Christians is their concern for the poor. The study and addressing of poverty needs to foster community of all those who wish to see it substantially addressed and eradicated. This means that it should not only comprise of Christians who meet together for their own benefit, but should also involve legislators and policymakers. Christians should become informed and be able to analyse the systems and structures causing poverty and petition legislators and policymakers to engage and change existing systems so that we could have more equitable systems and structures.

Alison Boden makes some important comments from a social and moral perspective on poverty using the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). He states that in this age there are a number of conservative moralizers who attribute people's poverty to their supposed moral state before God. In his exegesis, the rich man in this parable did not mind that the destitute man lie on his doorstep. "He gave the poor man no help, no shelter, no food or any form of comfort." Jesus showed that the rich man did not intervene in the plight of the poor man. The rich man was indifferent even though he was aware of the suffering of the poor man. If one is aware of something that is wrong and does not do anything to intervene, it shows one's own moral and social poverty. The prophet Amos already lamented the indifferent attitude of the people of his day towards the poor (Amos 6:1,4-7). In today's world, we are also indifferent

to the plight of the poor, even though we see and know of millions of people in the world who live in abject poverty. Rather, what needs to be done is to build community amongst those who are concerned about the suffering of the poor and to petition legislators and policymakers to develop laws and policies that would provide greater equitability in the social and economic systems. An important place to start is to see “moral value” in tax policies that would bridge the widening gulf between the rich and the poor.

The third perspective is *economic legislation* and is closely related to this one. Monsma (1991) states that Israel restrained poverty in the Old Testament era by means of the economic legislation that they developed in their Scriptures. The Mosaic Laws limited and distributed the property rights of the human stewards of God’s resources in such a way as to assure all families and individuals access to food at all times. The poor were also given access to necessities in the short run by means of interest free loans which were to be cancelled every seventh year. We note that the Israelites were admonished to lend enough to the poor to meet their needs. If a family were so poor that they were forced to sell their land, then that land was to be returned to them in the year of the Jubilee. God gave a promise along with these Mosaic Laws that “there will be no poor among you if only you will obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all these commandments which I command you this day” (Deuteronomy 15:4-5). From the Mosaic laws one can see that there was a strong movement in old Israel to foster a just society in which there was to be no poverty. In the long run all families were to have their basic needs met. The call to prevent poverty was given in a special way to those with governmental authority “Open your mouth; judge righteously; maintain the rights of the poor and needy” (Proverbs 31:8-9). Similar to these Old Testament laws, one need legislators and political leaders who can make

laws and create systems that will provide for uplifting of the poor and equality. At a very basic level, for instance, money and resources should be made available to the poor for their own upliftment. The way to help the poor is not “a massive redistribution of wealth”, but “small, low-interest loans that will allow low-income people to start small business, buy homes and better themselves through hard work.” “Micro-loans are the most effective tools to promote social justice”. This is certainly true, since one needs resources to produce more resources. One needs money to make money, and the poorest of the poor do not have any money to use for developing sustainable economies.

A fourth perspective comes from G.N. Monsma (1991) who argues that *human beings were created in God's image*, and should therefore be concerned about those who live in poverty. Originally, all human beings were created to live in harmony and not to face poverty. Yet, sin and greed had entered into human social life and human beings started to search for wealth at the expense of the poor and vulnerable. Yet God did not wish poverty to exist in the world. There are many passages in the Bible to this effect. Deuteronomy 10: 17-18 for instance say: “For the Lord your God ... executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing”. Psalms 113:7 says: “God raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap” (see McKane 1970:473). God calls on human beings to be the stewards of his resources and to aid the poor. “Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house, when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? (Isaiah 58: 6-9). God is on the side of the poor. “He who oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is kind to the needy honours him” (Proverbs 14:31).

The fifth perspective is closely related to the previous one, namely *concern for the poor*. The New Testament shows Jesus' great concern for the poor. Jesus said, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor..." (Luke 4: 18-19). He also sent a message to John the Baptist in prison, where, he believed the good news should be preached (Matthew 11: 4-5). Jesus' whole life was a life of service to those who were poor in one form or another. Many authors agree that the teachings of Jesus as the Christ and the disciples demonstrated clearly that being of service to those with economic needs is an integral part of the Christian service in the Kingdom of God. This is reinforced very clearly on Christ's exposition in Matthew 25:31-46 where the things that distinguished the goats from the sheep were whether they had fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked and visited those in prison (see Albright 1971:189). Most significantly and central to the Christian message is 1 John 3:16-18: "By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?"

#### **7.5 African perspectives on poverty from the Hebrew Law codes**

According to Wafawanaka (2001), African people do understand the reality of poverty. Africans have faced severe poverty for generations but have survived such poverty to a great extent. A look at poverty in the Bible "with African eyes" seeks to bring a fresh perspective and illuminates our understanding of the subject from a Biblical point of view. Whenever Biblical perspectives on poverty were studied, it was done from a Western/European view point. He argues that to do this from an African view-point is just as important.



The missionaries who came to Africa to preach the gospel of Christ did not meet the expectations of African people. They in some ways preached that the Kingdom of God should be enjoyed in heaven no matter what sufferings people endured. Very little was done by the missionaries to address the issues of economic poverty, oppression and exploitation. A gospel that was not appealing to the masses was rejected by liberation theologians who sought to relate social structures and economic conditions to the word of God. These liberal theologians sought to empower the poor to see the Bible as a tool of liberation from oppressive social structures. The African Biblical interpreters viewed the exegetical task as an opportunity to address experiences of poverty, oppression and injustice.

If we want to do an analysis of the poor in the legal texts of the Hebrew Bible, we can follow Wafanaka and focus on the Covenant Code (Exodus 20:22-23:33), the Deuteronomic Code (Deuteronomy 12-26) and the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17:26).

The Israelites organised itself as a tribal unit of twelve tribes of Israel. In the initial stages the Israelites enjoyed a communal type of living. Wafanaka points out that the egalitarian picture was shattered by the rise of the monarchy. We note that between the tenth and eighth century a “social revolution” took place as kingship created a class of “rich” and “poor”. This meant that the poor suffered from the oppressive burdens of the monarchy. During the monarchical period the poor were the “structural” poor. We note that their poverty was caused mainly by social circumstances such as the lack of land as the monarchy and landlords appropriated land for their own uses. It is important to note that the poverty of wage earners and day labourers fall into the category of those who lack resources. We learn that Israel’s legal codes presuppose an

agrarian and pastoral community. The African people can relate easily to these realities for they too depend on their land and livestock for survival. We can identify several categories of the poor, powerless and socially or socially disadvantaged persons in the law codes. The different Hebrew words for “poor” have many meanings including perceptions of the people’s physical and economic conditions. The poor in the law codes are those who are “socially inferior, economically needy, politically powerless” and thus they are “dependent on the rich and powerful for their survival.” We learn that the majority of references to the “poor” in the Hebrew Bible puts a cause to the people’s poverty, namely that they are poor because of oppression and exploitation.

We note that the references to the “poor” in the law codes reveals a social underclass with no land of their own to cultivate crops or resources to exploit. The poor often had to sell themselves into slavery because of economic needs or debts (Deuteronomy 15:12). The Levites lacked inheritance privileges. We learn that according to Illiffe’s theory (whom Wafanaka follows), these are the structural poor whose poverty is caused by social circumstances. In Israel society the fatherless child would be considered poor because she or he was a minor child, who could not support him- or herself. There were many measures in place to alleviate the suffering of the poor. The poor were not to be charged interest on loans (Exodus 22:25, Leviticus 25:35, 37). We note that a pledged garment was to be returned before nightfall in order to keep the poor person warm at night (Exodus 22:26,27). We have to assess what are the ethical implications of poverty in the Hebrew law codes. These codes are concerned with the well being of the weaker and less powerful members of society. We learn that the poor were to be taken care of by their own families and neighbours who are in a better position to do so (see Hyatt 1971:243). For Israel, it was against the will of God to neglect the poor

and powerless – it was even punishable (Exodus 22:21,27). These texts make it easy for African people to understand and empathise with those who are poor. This brings to light the African principles of Ubuntu. The colonial experience in fact exacerbated poverty. The African people can easily identify with the programmes initiated by Ancient Israel to assist the poor.

We can safely conclude that the biblical “mandate for the poor” in Israel’s law codes is of great relevance to people of African culture. These texts are a source of inspiration to African people with regard to liberating them and affirming their aspirations. Important lessons can be gleaned from the texts of the Ancient Israelites. The important lesson is to deal with the effects of poverty.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

The God of the Bible is very concerned about the poor. Israel’s God took care of them throughout their history. Following on the Old Testament, the message of the New Testament is that Jesus as Messiah, became human and became poor, so that those who believe in him, may become rich.

This chapter provided an overview of a number of important Biblical perspectives on poverty. Starting from the beginnings of poverty in sin, it traced a variety of perspectives and beliefs and values that show God’s compassion for the poor. These perspectives, values and beliefs come from the law’s provisions for those who are poor, the embedding of the values and beliefs in the names of God as well as a rich variety of reflections in both the Old and New Testaments. We have also seen that since this is such an important biblical theme, one should not get side-tracked into what is held by the so-called religious right to be contemporary issues about morality – abortion and homosexuality for

example. The issue of poverty is much more significant in terms of the biblical traditions and perspectives. We have also briefly overviewed the fact that there is much resonance between these traditions and African experiences and realities about poverty. This is one of the reasons why the Bible plays such an important role in religious life in Africa. From the Old Testament to the New Testament, it is evident that the message is that God is involved in the life of the poor. Jesus said that we will always have the poor. We are encouraged in the Word of God to be hospitable and be kind to widows, orphans and strangers. God encourages believers in Christ to take care of the poor and needy. The concept of 'poverty' in the Bible is more than the issue of money. God is concerned about the moral and social issues of poverty.

The chapter also dealt with how many Biblical scholars have expounded and critically reflected in depth on the levels of poverty and how the church can help to alleviate poverty. However, the writers have lamented that certain missionaries who came to Africa to preach the gospel of Christ did not meet the expectations of African people. These missionaries unwittingly contributed to poverty by preaching that the kingdom of God should be enjoyed in heaven no matter what the sufferings are that people endured here on earth. Liberation theologians have opposed the views of missionaries with such a mentality. We have seen that the writers have carefully stated that the references to the 'poor' in the law codes reveal a social underclass with no land of their own to cultivate crops or resources to exploit. It was a travesty of justice when the poor had to be sold into slavery so as to pay off their debts. For this and similar practices biblical authors and prophets made rules and preached values that were aimed at addressing such wrongs. It is these moral codes, values and beliefs that should also be employed in our modern world in order to address the plight of the poor.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **POVERTY AND THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH**

#### **8.0 Introduction**

According to the New Testament, poverty has been an issue within the church since the time of its founding. The church is not a building but a body of the members of those who believe in Christ. The church as we know is a spiritual institution but the individuals it serves are real people whom we try to understand and serve in terms of their spiritual, psychological, emotional and material well being. Therefore, in order for the church to be at the forefront of addressing the wrongs of the past, needs to have a primary focus on poverty. The believers in Christ cannot remain unmoved about the issues of poverty. Christians need to be proactive about the issues of poverty. The Bible states that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:17).

The church of Jesus Christ cannot remain passive but it needs to be involved in a real world with real people. Jesus Christ was concerned about the ‘poor’. Christ was concerned about the holistic person i.e. the physical, spiritual and psychological aspects of human life. The Lord was not only referring to poverty in terms of lack of money and food but also the moral and social aspects of poverty. Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). Since Jesus Christ is the founder of the Christian faith, the church, which consists of members of the body of Christ must rally to his purpose for church. He has revealed his expectations of believers when he states in Matthew 25: 35-36 (NRSV), “for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I

was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.”

I wish to discuss this issue with regard to poverty and the role of the church, in terms of early theology, theology and its context, liberation theology, liberation theology in South Africa, church in New South Africa, scholarly work on poverty, church responsibility, church's capacity to effect changes and church poverty reduction strategies in Kwa- Zulu Natal.

### **8.1 Early Theology**

The early church was deeply concerned for the poor and downtrodden. In Luke 7: 22 we read, “.... to the poor the Gospel is preached”. This, however did not merely remain at the level of the message. It also impacted materially on the early church. We read in Acts 2: 44-45 (NRSV), “All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.” We also read about the appointment of deacons to look after the poor Greek-speaking widows. These are just a few indications of the earliest reflections on poverty in the church, at its founding. We note that concern for the poor was part and parcel of the teaching and preaching of the church as well as its actual practice from its earliest beginnings. However, with the passing of time, we note that Biblical teachings began to deviate from this basic doctrine as the church began to be used as an instrument to legitimize the different and divergent, even the most inhumane social, economic and political regimes. We note that the Roman Catholic Church has published an Encyclical which contained the social agenda of the church under the Pope (Pope Paul II, 1981: 10). Further, we note that Pope Leo XIII in his *Rerum Novarum* published in 1891, developed an agenda that addressed the condition of the working classes.

We note that we have indicated the major perspectives of the church on poverty in the previous chapter.

A part of the church which is the Body of Christ has reacted to issues of apartheid and to the problems associated with oppression, deprivation and abject poverty. The Bible has recorded incidents of oppression, neglect and abject poverty. The Bible has clearly stated its views on poverty. The church has realized that besides its spiritual purpose on earth, it cannot be naïve to the ministering of nourishment to the physical body.

The church realizes that it has responsibility to the worst-off in society. It particularly holds the rich, developed countries responsible for the well-being of all. In this regard we note that the G8/ G20 countries are not doing enough to address the scourge of poverty in the world and especially in Africa. There is much talk at their conferences but very little action.

## **8.2 Theology and its context**

According to Pieterse (2001: 79), in his book, *Preaching in a Context of Poverty*, "If one thinks homiletically about the process of interpreting the biblical text for a relevant sermon in a specific context in which one has to preach to a congregation, one has to concede ... the point of contact with Gadamer's and Ricoeur's hermeneutics to reach the culmination of the hermeneutic process is their notion of application".

Pieterse further states that the purpose is the interpreting the message of the text existentially so that the application will have a transforming effect on people's lives. It is therefore of no use if we have such powerful Scripture but it is not preached or it is not applied to specific contexts. It is

theology that takes the biblical message seriously but it should be applied with a critical viewpoint with regard to the actual sufferings of the poor. According to Pieterse this helps us to analyse society in the eyes of the poor. One should critically reflect on the systems and structures as well as the social and moral codes and values that prevent us from actually engaging poverty constructively. The Bible's message must be contextualised in terms of the realities of the systems and structures that its message opposed and criticised in Biblical times. This same message must then be interpreted and critically contextualised in terms of the global and national systems and structures which produce poverty. Pieterse encourages preachers to tell the poor that God is on their side and that he will deliver them from the scourge of poverty. It is however just as important to interpret the text in terms of its criticism of systems and structures of oppression and exploitation. Therefore it is important to interpret the biblical text in the context of poverty.

Theology according to Dwane (1989: 7) "is a reasoned discourse, the purpose of which is to articulate coherently and intelligibly what the community believes about God, His revelation, and His purpose on creating the world". Such beliefs, however are not de-contextualised but contextual. There is therefore a powerful movement in the world to label such theologies contextual theologies. The most prominent among these is, for example, liberation theology. It was brought about by the context of oppression and suffering of the poor people of the Third World countries.

According to Kaufmann (2001: 17), "contextual theology by its very nature is a theology of the people. It is not an academic theology or a book theology, but a theology written in the flesh and blood of ordinary people".



### 8.3 Liberation Theology

Liberation theology is a specific approach to the poverty issue as the very existence of poverty is due to the social, systemic and structural conditions in which people find themselves. It has come about as a reaction to the systems and structures that produce poverty, marginalisation and oppression. Poverty is a direct result of the capitalist economic system. The basic idea of liberation theology is that poverty is the direct result of the capitalist economic system and its desire is to transform society in accordance with socialist practice. It is through radical societal changes that the poor of our society will be freed from their burden of need. Its action is normally seen as Marxist. The transformation of society should be done by conscientization and by direct political action.

Liberation theology does not agree with the ideals of western theology. They advocate practical action. They believe that a glorious future is only possible through God's interaction with humanity.

Liberation theology has its roots mainly in Roman Catholic theology although there are notable Protestant liberation theologians. The foremost protestant liberation theologian is Jose Minguez Bonino. Others include Emile Castro, Julio de Santa Ana, Rubem Alves among others. A very important point of diversity emerges from the activities of the believers grappling with the meaning of faith in terms of resistance to oppression (Germond, 1987: 217).

According to Archbishop Tutu (1979: 163) "liberation theology more than any other kind of theology issues out of the crucible of human suffering and anguish". Further he states that it seeks to inspire the downtrodden to do something about their condition. Archbishop Desmond Tutu presented an address inter-alia on issues of poverty at the University of

Pennsylvania. He responded to a question on tackling poverty. "Well you can distribute resources only if you have resources. I believe that it would have been far better for the acts of generosity to emanate from those who have benefited for all these years who still own a big share of the resources". It is along this line of argument that he also recommended a wealth tax for white people in South Africa. The argument is clearly that it is primarily whites who have benefited from colonialism and apartheid and that this race-group has and controls most of the wealth in South Africa. If we strive for equality then it is whites who must come to the table and make their contributions. Those with the resources must make the contributions. At large, Blacks do not have the resources and suffer under inequality.

Liberation theology recognizes as a legitimate Christian option the use of violence in serving the ends and interests of the oppressed in creating a just and humane society (Germond, 1987: 215, 216). These contradictions manifest in the division of humankind into the privileged and the deprived. Anxiety, insecurity and fear of change characterize the privileged while helplessness, frustration and even cynicism and despair mark the lives of the deprived (Dwane, 1989: 8). It is hope that our country will not irrupt in violence as the abolition of inequality is not taking place.

It is a central value and belief in Liberation Theology there is only one humanity because God created us in His own image. It is because of this belief that all should collaborate to strive and work towards equality. In this process, much will be asked, especially from those who have benefited from the previous systems and structures in South Africa. Today, we have a new Constitution and new systems in the country that work towards equality. Yet we note that such equality is not being eradicated and that the gap between rich and poor is ever increasing. It is for this reason that

the message of the Bible about the God of the poor should be preached and applied in specific contexts of transformation.

#### **8.4 Liberation Theology in South Africa**

Liberation theology must be understood within the political context of South Africa. During the apartheid period, people were aware of their rights but these rights were restricted due to the obnoxious laws of apartheid. The tide of liberation theology with its attendant anger, frustration, expectation and violence began to rise in the 1980s (Balcomb, 1993: 17) and became part of the people's struggle for liberation as "it tried to help victims of oppression to assert their humanity and to look the other chap in the eye and to speak face to face without shuffling the feet and apologizing for their black existence" (Tutu, 1979: 168).

Liberation Theology has an important role to play in addressing the economic woes of the poor. Liberation should provide an explanation of God's redemptive work through Christ as it relates to all ramifications of human life. It is therefore an attempt to fully draw out "the implications of the biblical statement that God is father of the fatherless, the husband of the widow, and the one who sets at liberty those who are captives" (Dwane, 1989: 58).

There was great opposition by the Nationalist Government against liberal theologians. The apartheid government used detention without trial, house arrest and interrogation to harass liberal theologians. Such opposition became a stumbling block in the church's fight against oppression, injustice and poverty. Balcomb emphasized that the reason why the church could not bring itself to engage in the struggle against apartheid was about a theology whose exponents attempted to adopt a politically

neutral position during a period of South African history when it was impossible to be neutral (Balcomb, 1993: 14).

Liberation theologians are fully aware that even after the advent of democracy there is still much work to be done by the churches in addressing the plight of the poor as systems and structures that produce poverty and inequality in the country continue.

### **8.5 The church in the new South Africa**

We note that the major cause of poverty in South Africa was the apartheid policy. Apartheid was sanctioned with the Bible (Cheol-Yi Ho, 2002: 1). It does seem that the problem of poverty will require a solution from the Bible. Tsele suggests five ways in which the church can contribute towards the eradication of poverty in South Africa:

- Providing a Christian perspective to poverty
- Promoting economic justice
- Conducting research on the nature of poverty in South Africa
- Developing mechanisms of engaging public policymakers to influence policy towards prioritizing poverty eradication
- Facilitating the development of actions and projects by the churches and local congregations to eradicate poverty.

The Archbishop of Cape Town, Archbishop Ndungane (2003: 38) emphatically stated that the profit mechanism alone cannot “put food in the bellies of millions of mothers, fathers, children, grandparents, workers - the millions who hunger and starve, here on the African continent, in Latin America and Asia”.

Ndungane also states in his book *A World with a Human Face* that the first thing is to establish that poverty requires a holistic approach. Many of the churches in the Archbishop's opinion have a vision that goes beyond relief work to address the root causes of poverty. He believes that there should be a joint approach by religious institutions, business, the state and civil society to join hands to come up with a comprehensive approach to fight the scourge of poverty. He further states that there should be urgent attention by the churches to have systems and policies by which the poor will be able to survive. He is of the firm view that we need a long term view which will inextricably bind human development with economic growth and the sharing of resources.

Certain church leaders established an Ecumenical Commission on Poverty. Some of its tasks include:

- to raise awareness of the issue of poverty in their congregations and among their people
- to study the issue and raise questions about what needs to be done
- to encourage initiatives , projects and funds
- to stimulate giving among their own people in terms of caring for each other
- to encourage a culture of compassion, giving and caring.

The Methodist Bishop Mvume Dandala has suggested that as churches we adopt a programme based on the idea of sacrificing a meal so that everyone has a meal a day.

He stated that if only half of South Africa's nine million households sacrificed one meal a week and contributed what they would have spent to relief and development, we would be able to help the poor.

Julius Nyerere, an ex-president of Tanzania said in his address to the Maryknoll Sisters in New York in 1970 that ‘poverty is not the real problem of the modern world. For we have the knowledge and resources which could enable us to overcome poverty. The real problem, the thing which creates misery, wars and hatred among men is the division of mankind into rich and poor’. It is this division and the fact that people get used to the idea that there are rich and poor people that is the problem. We need to propagate the fact that this division is unacceptable in the eyes of God. The whole Bible is against it as we noted in the previous chapter.

The Archbishop Ndungane also encourages the believers in the church to draw of the clear biblical imperatives and to prioritise poverty. He refers to Matthew 25: 41-46 where our Jesus his followers that whoever has fed the hungry has done this to Him. In the book of James 2 believers are admonished that ‘faith without works is dead’. He refers to the concept of ubuntu under which there is an obligation to uphold each other’s dignity and to ensure that everyone has to live a full human life. The Church of England’s report, “Faith in the city” stated that “poverty was not just about the shortage of money, it is about rights and relationships, about how people are treated and how they regard themselves, about powerlessness, exclusion and loss of dignity”. The advice proffered by Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane in his book, *A World with a Human Face* offers great insights and encourages the church to be proactive about the problem of poverty.

## **8.6 The church in response to the poor**

According to Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, in their book *The Church in Response to Human Need* are convinced that the solution to poor people’s suffering lies in the power of Jesus Christ. They believe that the spreading of the Good News of Christ is the way to meet the basic human

needs of all. The church should be able to confront poverty when they are dependent upon the wisdom of God. The writers state that many Christians are pessimistic because they are confronted by the reality of increasing poverty and misery. There is also fear by many Christians that the planet earth will not be able to sustain the population because of humanity's greed and depletion of resources. The writers state that the followers of Christ must transform society and be proactive in the fight against poverty. They advocate many changes in society so that the poor can be helped. The church needs to be vocal on the issues of transformation. Transformation seeks to bring about a change where people are able to enjoy the fullness of life in harmony with God (John 10: 10, Colossians 3: 8 -15, Ephesians 4: 13) (see Simpson, 1975). Transformation will lead people to love and care for the poor. The writers reinforce their views on transformation by referring to the doctrine of creation where God gives the responsibility to human beings to look after the resources of nature (Genesis 1: 26-30) and to share them equitably with their neighbours. The doctrine of Redemption according to the writers gives believers freedom and a desire to serve others and fight for the rights of all exploited people. The main thrust of transformation from a biblical perspective is to share our basic resources like food, water, the means of healing and knowledge with others.

The writers lament that God's people have forgotten their responsibilities. We are supposed to be stewards of God's creation and we ought to manage it well. We have become indifferent to the conservation of non-renewable resources of minerals and the preservation of animal life. Believers in Christ have a wrong conception of tithing, they feel only one-tenth belongs to the Lord and the rest they use anyhow and this impoverishes other people and negates their identity as God's stewards. The writers believe that Christians everywhere who are enjoying the "good

things of life” (Luke 16: 25) must be mindful that others have their basic needs met. They believe that in this way the poor will be able to bless others.

Christ through His death on the cross has made all believers members of the Body of Christ. In this way there will be equality among believers so that there can be a concerted effort to eliminate abject poverty. We learn the meaning of stewardship is that the poor have equal rights to God’s resources (Deuteronomy 15: 8-9). As children of the living God believers ensure that resources are redistributed to the poor and the results of greed limited (Acts 4: 32 - 5: 11) (Munck, 1967:39).

It is wrong that governments spend a large portion of their budgets on the acquisition of arms to the detriment of the poor who are deprived of basic necessities. Believers are encouraged on a global scale to make the nuclear and arms trade questions a matter of prayerful concern and prioritise it for action.

God has imparted cultures to every human being for their enrichment. Christian Relief Agencies that work with the poor should make their views vocal when government laws exploit the poor. Poverty is not a necessary evil but is the consequence of social, political and religious systems characterized by injustice, exploitation and oppression. Millions of people in the world are destitute. The Bible says that the human heart is desperately wicked and so are the political structures that govern the world. Christians must engage in acts of mercy and act in justice. The church should evangelise, transform society and respond to human needs.



Jesus was not a spectator to the needs of the poor. The Bible says that “Christ was moved with compassion” for the poor. He identified himself with the poor. He saw them as “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9: 36). He exhibited many acts of mercy and did not hesitate to expose the injustices in society and condemned the self-righteousness of its leaders (Matthew 23: 25). He was able to form a compassionate society that accepted the values of the Kingdom of God.

Identification with the poor may be costly and people who struggle for the poor may even suffer great persecution. There may be times to go beyond the call of mercy and call upon those in authority to measure up to God’s aspects of justice. Christians should show love and do acts of mercy even to the non-Christians. Justice must characterize the government’s laws and policies toward the poor. In terms of Proverbs 29:7 “The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern”.

In Samuel and Sugden’s argument, the local church should be the basic unit of Christian society. In the early church believers demonstrated the love of Christ to their community in a practical way (Mark 10: 35 45; 1 Peter 2: 5). We note that the local churches throughout the generations had a three-fold ministry inter-alia the proclamation of God’s word in deed. This in a way demonstrated the reality of ethical, moral and social transformation (see Kelly, 1988:111).

The church should be aware of injustices and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit be ready to reassess their attitude towards social issues (Luke 18: 24- 30). Church leaders are often insensitive to the needs of their communities and often unwilling to expose themselves to the traumas of global need and information which will challenge their comfort. If church

leaders are apathetic towards the social dimensions then inevitably the church members may overlook social issues.

Church leaders and members should be sensitive to the needs of widows, orphans, prisoners and strangers. Believers should minister to the poor in the local area who are not members of the church (James 1: 27; Romans 12: 17). Christians are further encouraged to engage in purposeful protests that will in no way harm the name of their Lord Jesus Christ. The local church should be aware that it is part of the universal church. There is a need for help, sharing and fellowship between churches of different localities and contexts. This will ensure that the principles of giving and receiving are adhered to a lived out. The method of exchange will also ensure that skills are shared between churches locally and nationally.

Aid agencies should also see their role as one of facilitating the churches in their fulfilment of their mission. Aid agencies are concerned with human suffering, hunger and need. There is concern for more integrity and circumspection in the handling and execution of donor funds so that they can maximize their resources for the poor. There should be no competition with other agencies who are called to work among the poor. The poor should be consulted on how resources are used. Aid agencies should be aware that God is sovereign and His love is at work among the poor. Agencies should be able to listen to the concerns of their communities. Communities should develop ownership of the programmes. Agencies should be accountable to donors and should always exhibit integrity in all their transactions.

Samuel and Sugden are emphatic that the church has been established for the sake of the Lord and for the sake of human kind (Matthew 22: 32-40). The church is called to be an agent of hope for the present and future

age. They encourage believers to be aware of the Second Coming of Christ. They also ask members to be dependent on the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ should be the centre of their being and their unconditional love in word and deed should especially be for the poor of this world.

### **8.7 Church responsibility**

According to Robert L. Strivers in his book *Hunger, Technology, and Limits to Growth*, the church has a social responsibility to the community it serves. Prayer, study and action should be the centre of the community life.

The poverty that face present communities and the task of responding to the world's poor should be seen by the churches as opportunities and not impositions. The mission of the church should be to lay ethical foundations for justice, participation and sustainable sufficiency and to lend a helping hand to churches who are trying new ways of living and alternative energy sources that will help to alleviate abject poverty.

Strivers advocates the stewardship of money so that the monetary resources can be put to good use for the benefit of the poor and needy. The crucial ministry of the church is that its members identify themselves with the poor and malnourished. With the rapid technological advancement, the rapid population explosion and the rising cost of living, the task of standing with the poor of helping to open opportunities for them is becoming increasingly important.

There should be individual responsibility of Christians beside a collective one. Strivers states that individual Christians should think of others rather of themselves. There should be concerted efforts to be sensitive to the plight of the poor.

Strivers makes a passionate plea for rigorous discipleship where individual interests will not be the focus. He further calls for a communal way of life where all things are shared. In this way the needs of the poor will be satisfied. He gives an example that when the church wants to purchase a television set then an equal amount of the purchase price must be donated to an organisation that work with the poor. He offers a number of strategies in order to help the poor. He suggests inter-alia, the cutting down on unnecessary consumption, buying more energy efficient products and eating less of certain foods. He also campaigns for efforts to conserve resources, to preserve the environment, to seek tax relief and welfare justice so that the plight of the poor can be improved. The poor can also be assisted by having self-help programmes, agrarian reform and low interest home loans. Finally, he concludes that all these efforts and programmes to alleviate the suffering of the poor will be futile if it is not done as a response of their faith and trust in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

According to Jon Sobrino, *The True Church and the Poor* is an expression to describe on a new way of being the church. It further represents the resurrection of the true Church. The new life that only Christ can give serves as a catalyst for believers to value the poor and care for them. The writer states that the church is relevant to the needs of society and hence to the poor. The writer passionately states that the church “must descend into the hell of this world, into communities with the misery, injustice, struggles, and hopes of the wretched of the earth for of such is the kingdom of heaven”. Jesus is seen as “the Poor One, who identified with the oppressed and plundered of the world”.

Most of the first members of the church were ordinary people and most of them were poor. The poor and outcasts were able to identify with the teachings of Jesus. Christ's teachings gave them hope.

The "church of the poor" does not mean that a church only assists the poor and ignores the poverty. The church is not sanctified by poverty when it becomes a "Church for the poor". It is clear that a 'Church of the Poor' is an urgent necessity. In principle we note that the Church for the poor is not a Church of the poor.

It can be argued that the church of the poor represents an ethical approach. The 'Church of the poor' does not mean that other sections of the church are neglected at the expense of the poor. It can be argued that the poor are those who confront the church with its basic theological problem and with the direction in which the solution to the problem is to be found. The 'poor' are seen as not a part of the whole church but as centre of the church. In this way the 'poor' give direction and meaning to everything that makes up the concrete church. As in Biblical times the Good News is focused on the 'poor'. We note that the 'poor' are in the best position to analyse the meaning of the 'Good News'. The writer is convinced that the 'poor' are the inspiration of the church.

According to D.T Williams in his book, *Capitalism, Socialism, Christianity and Poverty* there should be concerted Christian action against poverty. According to Schnitzer, (2000), the institutions of capitalism are:

- Private property;
- The profit motive;
- The price system;
- The price mechanism;

- The price determination;
- Freedom of enterprise;
- Competition;
- Individualism;
- Consumer sovereignty;
- The protestant work ethic; and
- Limited government.

The main features of socialism according to Schnitzer (2000) are as follows:

- State ownership of the means of production;
- State ownership of most natural resources and capital;
- Central economic planning responsible for resource allocation;
- Distribution of income by the state.
- Elimination of private property and other forms of capitalism.

There has been an on-going debate by the churches that both socialism and capitalism have failed to deal effectively with the issues of poverty. Any attempts by Christians to look at the past periods in history like the Period of Enlightenment and medieval Europe to solve the problems associated with poverty will be an exercise in futility. However, some modern Christians have tried to find an answer to poverty in a manner connected to the Christian faith. Christians should be mindful that the whole world system is not Christian in itself and therefore it is incumbent for Christians to work out ways of dealing with the predominance of the approaches of the secular systems, particularly that of capitalism which is so pervasive today. The Christian world view states that Christianity has the final solution to poverty. There has been a school of thought that

Christianity has been the cause of poverty. It is difficult for Christians to accept the fact that their faith instead of providing a solution has actually been the cause of poverty.

Christianity according to Williams concentrates more on the spiritual rather than the material dimension of life. This in many ways had led to a number of consequences relevant to the Christian attitude to poverty. In this way many people have treated the material as of little consequence in comparison to the spiritual. Even more damaging is the attitude that the material has resulted in damaging to a person's spiritual well-being. This type of attitude has led to asceticism, a positive desire for poverty. The fact that Jesus took the form of a human being and was acquainted with people's struggles behoves believers not to have a negative attitude towards the material world.

The negative attitude to the material world and the environment by Christians contributes in no small measure to poverty. Christians have a wrong conception of Genesis 1: 28 – that the dominion that God has given humanity over His creation meant the exploitation of creation. Williams admonishes believers that the material world was also created by God and is also divine and thus it must in no way means to abuse His creation. This is especially evident in what the Eastern religions teach – that the material is divine and thus in no way to be abused. In fact the Williams states that Genesis 1: 28 must be viewed by Christians as living in perfect harmony with God's world. In fact Williams reinforces the fact that Christians should act as stewards of God's creation. This in fact prevents the abuse that can occur as expressed by capitalists and socialists.

The population explosion has been seen as another major issue and cause of poverty in our world. Williams states that Christianity has boosted

science and technology to such an extent that life has been prolonged. This has led to massive pro-creation especially in the third world which is now experiencing a population explosion. Christianity is accused of preventing the solution that technology provides. The Catholic Church states that most birth-control methods are in conflict with the will of God. It is against abortion.

Even though it was God's command to Adam and Eve to multiply and replenish the earth, this was for that particular period only.

According to the Bible (Proverbs 10: 4), "a slack hand causes poverty". Christianity should encourage work. There is a tendency not to work if God will provide. Even some Thessalonian Christians (2 Thessalonians 3: 6) could not see the point to work as Christ promised to return. This is a total misrepresentation of scriptures. The great reformer, D.L. Moody once said, "I will plant an apple tree even if I know that Christ is coming tomorrow. Our Lord Jesus expects believers to be occupied at His Glorious Appearing."

There is no reason within the secular systems why they should generate poverty. The reason for poverty within these systems is due to the actions of the people that operate them. Williams points out that that no matter how these systems operate they should be aimed at wealth creation, but not only for the few. The actions of Christians within these systems can ensure that they produce wealth for all. There is much that affects poverty. If there is drought then animals and crops are affected.

The evangelism of the world to bring people to Christ involves economic activity. A great proportion of Christians will minimize drug trafficking and prostitution and hence reduce poverty. As Christians are taught to make



the correct economic decisions then the benefits will be mutual. The funds that they generate will be used to empower the poor and stimulate economic activity. Christians need to be taught the principle that shape their lives and obey the teachings of Christ. The higher the proportion of Christians in economic activity will assist to reduce levels of poverty.

Williams urges that Christians must be relevant and contextual. He reinforces his beliefs by stating that there is a need for action against poverty. This is a consequence of the Christian worldview. It is important to note that the solution to poverty is a matter for humanity as a group. Williams is of the firm view that there should be a balance in the proactive stance viz. there should be charity coupled with social action.

The action of the early Christians in the Book of Acts should act as a paradigm to fight poverty in the modern world by the church. We learn that the main responsibility of the early Christians was to take care of the poor within the church. If there is true love among believers there should not be poverty as we see it today. The idea of communalism was also practiced during the history of the church especially in the monastic movement in modern communes and as such groups as the Amish. Poverty is a sense of salvation, prompting generosity and grace. Communalism should not be seen as the only way to end poverty. There have been many critics on communalism charging that God is only interested in the welfare of Christians. This is not true as the Lord Jesus loves the whole world. There are very few believers who practice their faith and if believers practised their faith then levels of poverty will be minimized.

Reconstructionism takes a strong line on the question of poverty. A totally free market would lead to oppression and poverty. However, if Biblical principles are adhered to, then this would not occur. Reconstructionism

has proved very valuable as it has reminded the Church that human activity is essential if we have to overcome poverty. We can affirm that the Christian faith is not irrelevant to the question of poverty. Rather, to address poverty on all social levels is a central task of the church.

### **8.8 Church's capacity to effect change**

There have been many questions posed by concerned people, about the church's capacity to effect social change in a secular society. Does the church have the capacity to effect changes in terms of poverty reduction? The church on a national scale has great resources at its disposal to affect change. The experiences of Archbishop Ndungane give an insight into the kind of network and resources open to the church.

As Archbishop of the Anglican Church with is 70 million people worldwide, he sees the church as a close knit family where concern and practical love is shown to each other. He is of the opinion that the churches are in a strong position to take part in the fight against abject poverty. More than that, he is convinced that the church has "people of tremendous calibre in business, and among the ranks of government, committed Christians and others who have heard the rallying call to address poverty; and who will be prepared to take the necessary action to eradicate it" (Ndungane, 2003: 43).

The church is one of the main civil society social institutions. It is the most visible and active organization committed to the instilling and cultivation of specific values and norms (see van Rooy 2000). At local level, these are propagated and cultivated within the church among believers as well as in their interaction with other individuals and groups in society. At national level, the church has provided the most significant platform for the liberation struggle when the democratic organizations and leaders were

banned. It was at the forefront of the anti-hegemonic struggle in South Africa. It conscientised the people then and it can do so with regard to poverty and inequality too. It can do so and involve all the many people that represent it in all walks of life as well as those who do so internally.

Globalisation has played a pivotal role in enacting changes in and through the church so that it could oppose apartheid. It can now do so again, in its fight against poverty. It is noted that it is today much easier to mobilise internationally than during the time of apartheid and the cold war. It is now easier for the church to engage and mobilize Christians worldwide to actively participate in church programmes in order to reduce the impact of poverty, and so effect change.

#### **8.9 Church poverty reduction strategies in KwaZulu-Natal**

Since the advent of democracy, the church in South Africa has devised strategies to tackle the problem of abject poverty. In the suburb of the sprawling Chatsworth township where I reside churches are working together to tackle the problem of abject poverty. My interaction with the many pastors of Chatsworth, is that they are devising programmes to teach people skills like sewing, cooking, plumbing, electrical solutions, mechanics, gardening, computer and technical skills. They also have introduced literary classes to assist people to be educated.

In KwaZulu-Natal the churches are getting together to tackle a number of social, political and economic problems. The Diakonia Council of Churches in Durban is playing a pivotal role to tackle these problems. To maximize the impact, the Diakonia Council works with formal church leadership, including church women and youth leaders, key influential people in Christian organizations and independent indigenous church leaders. Special attention has been paid by the Council to go into the root

causes of social injustice as well as networking with International churches. The centre assists member churches to tackle issues of economic justice and thus making the churches to become economically literate. There have also been attempts by the Council to assist unemployed people to find jobs and thus create work and this equips the people to escape from the vicious cycle of abject poverty. The Council also teaches people skills development. The Community Resource Centres also assist people to access grants and pensions and this goes a long way to assist people to escape from abject poverty.

#### **8.10 Conclusion**

This chapter engaged the issue of poverty and the role of the church, in terms of early theology, theology and its context, liberation theology, liberation theology in South Africa, church in New South Africa, scholarly work on poverty, church responsibility, church's capacity to effect changes and church poverty reduction strategies in Kwa- Zulu Natal.

The church from its inception has engaged the subjects of poverty, hunger and oppression. The church must continue to be relevant to our world. The church cannot exist in a vacuum. The church must play a meaningful role in all aspects of human life.

Believers in Christ are called to heed Jesus Christ's teachings especially those that concern the poor. In the past the church has been limited to short emergency reactions like feeding schemes or theological doctrines. The modus operandi is changing from just feeding schemes to teaching people 'skills' so that they can help themselves in fighting the scourge of poverty. The various writers that I have discussed in this chapter have made it abundantly clear that believers must take tangible steps to engage the oppressive systems and structures and help the poor.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **9.0 Introduction**

This study has been focusing on poverty, change and the social responsibility of the church in alleviating poverty. Throughout the study the issues regarding poverty, change and the social responsibility of the church were systematically and progressively addressed. The study started out by addressing the socio-contextual definitions and understandings related to poverty, followed by a focus on globalisation and poverty. Against this background the focus then moved to South Africa, and the nature of poverty in our own country. It has been produced historically. As an important systemic and structural mechanism to address poverty, the next focus was on the nature and relationships between human rights, education and poverty. Two of the most important challenges currently in South Africa are the issues of landlessness and the HIV/ AIDS pandemic. These were addressed in this chapter. In the final two chapters, the focus was on the Bible and poverty and the final and more focused attention was on the role of the church in addressing poverty. The heart of the study was the important role that the church should and ought to play in the addressing poverty.

#### **9.1 Chapter One: The Research Design**

Here I discussed that poverty constitute one of the most challenging phenomena facing society today. I was able to point to the main issues of poverty and I canvassed views from opinion makers in the newspapers, television media and religious circles. I emphasised the important role that the church and Christians should play in the alleviation of abject poverty. I also enumerated the causes of poverty. The objectives were clearly

defined. The asking of key questions gave more meat to the research design and this was coupled with a quest for a study of existing scholarly research materials. The research methodology was clearly stated.

## **9.2 Chapter Two: Socio-contextual definitions and descriptions of poverty**

There is not one single definition of poverty. The scholarly research that was done revealed that there are many definitions of poverty. There is subsistence poverty, basic needs poverty, absolute poverty, relative poverty. I also discussed at length the measurement of poverty and development. Poverty was also reviewed from a global perspective. I also gave views on how to escape from poverty. There was much focus on Christian concerns and reactions to poverty.

## **9.3 Chapter Three: Globalisation and poverty**

We live in a global village. The global events of our post-1990 era, have serious impacts on local communities. The issues of global currency and the price of oil have an impact on the continent of Africa and also at a local levels.

I also reviewed research and scholarly views on the nature of globalisation and its impact on local communities. The influx of cheap products from the Asian countries especially China has had serious economic consequences in South with many factories closing down coupled with widespread poverty and unemployment.

## **9.4 Chapter Four: Southern Africa and poverty**

I critically reviewed scholarly research in Southern Africa. I focused on the causes of poverty. I discussed inter-alia the causes of poverty viz. burden of the past, apartheid's assault on the poor, dispossession, prevention of

Black urbanisation, forced removals, Bantu education, destabilisation, unemployment, malnutrition, crime, lack of education and information, poor housing, corruption, poor health care, gender discrimination, crime and the drug problem.

Many Southern Africa states are still gripped in abject poverty. The rich nations are not doing enough to rid Africa's debts and spiralling poverty. The World Trade Organisation is showing a degree of complacency to address the issues of abject poverty in Southern Africa.

#### **9.5 Chapter Five: Poverty, Human Rights and Education in Southern Africa**

I critically researched studies on the ways in which the South African society address the phenomenon of poverty e.g. the role of Human Rights and Non-Governmental Organisations. It was found that poverty is the violation of Human Rights. It has also impacted on the delivery of poor education, poor health resources, lack of access to land and the rights of children have been violated. Non-Governmental organisations have played and are playing a vital role in addressing the issues of poverty. They in no small measure have played a role in helping to alleviate abject poverty in South Africa.

#### **9.6 Chapter Six: Poverty, landlessness and the HIV/ AIDS pandemic in South Africa**

I critically researched scholarly material on landlessness and the HIV/ AIDS pandemic in South Africa. The question of land is a serious issue for people in Africa. South Africa is no exception. I addressed the question of landlessness with respect to land dispossession and the passing of obnoxious land acts in South Africa. The government has put in place the land reform programme. The Land Summit of 2005 has been an important

eye-opener. The question of the HIV/AIDS pandemic was also researched. The effects of HIV/AIDS have far-reaching economic consequences and it has a serious impact on poverty. I also discussed the role the church can play to address the problem of HIV/AIDS and its impact on poverty.

### **9.7 Chapter Seven: The Bible and Poverty**

The Bible which is the infallible word of God addresses the issue of poverty from moral and social perspectives. I was able to critically evaluate scholarly research on a number of different perspectives on poverty. I discussed the origin of poverty, poverty in the Old Testament and poverty perspectives in the Old Testament. The God of the Bible is very concerned about the poor.

### **9.8 Chapter Eight: Poverty and the role of the church**

I discussed the issue of poverty and that it has been of primary concern within the church since its inception according to the New Testament. I also discussed the role of the early church and the New Testament writers in terms of the church's initiatives in alleviating poverty. I discussed early theology, theology and its context, liberation theology, liberation theology in South Africa and the church in the New South Africa. I also provided brief perspective from a few scholars and their perspectives on the role of the church in alleviating poverty. I also focused on the church's responsibility, the church's capacity to effect change and church's poverty reduction strategies and practices in KwaZulu-Natal.

### **9.9 Chapter Nine: Conclusion**

It has been a very refreshing and stimulating experience for me personally doing this dissertation on, Poverty, Change and the Social Responsibility of the Church. It has afforded me the opportunity to research 'poverty' with



reference to its definition, global impact of poverty in South Africa, Human Rights and education in South Africa, poverty, landlessness and the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa, the Bible and Poverty, Poverty and the role of the Church in alleviating abject poverty. As a believer in Christ I do realize that the church which is the Body of Christ cannot remain complacent in the challenges that poverty poses to the church. The church has to reflect the teachings of Jesus Christ in practical ways. The interaction that I had with many pastors while doing this research and the many invitations I had to address congregations on these issues is a measure of the need for this information in the local churches. I believe I have played a role in reawakening their thinking on poverty issues and many in the Chatsworth area have decided to teach skills in their churches with the objective of reducing poverty. I will make available copies of my dissertation to the pastors in Chatsworth with the view of discussing and having on-going workshops in their churches on the ways of reducing poverty and how the churches can play a vital role.

On the 17 October 2007 our school with learners and educators have pledged to fight poverty and inequality. In one of the biggest events ever organised worldwide on one day, millions of people came together in South Africa and around the world to pledge their support to fight poverty and inequality in the world. Millions of ordinary people, politicians, celebrities, workers and youth stood up for a few minutes and took a universal pledge on 17 October to defeat extreme poverty and remind world leaders of their promise of achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The participants stood up to urge the rich countries to keep their promises of better and more aid, debt cancellation and fair trade and the poorer countries to make it their responsibility to save the lives of the poorest citizens. Amongst others, this was one of the prime events that indicated to me that there is a gap in the churches on the

issues I addressed in this dissertation. It also then motivated me to engage in this research from available scholarly material.

In conclusion I must hasten to state that researching this thesis has afforded me great insights into the poverty issue and especially how the church can play an effective role in alleviating poverty. Personally I am enriched through this experience and I pledge through the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to do more for the poor. As an educator and a preacher I have been blessed with this information and learning and will carry it forward. We need to do more for the poor.

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