On being the 'Salt of the Earth': A Case Study of the United Church of Christ as a Community Asset in Chipinge, Zimbabwe.

By

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DEDICATION

I HUMBLY DEDICATE THIS THESIS TO MY FAMILY AND CHURCH (United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe): MY LATE AUNT MRS DAISY HOHOZA DUBE (nee Hlatywayo), MR & MRS W.B. JAMBAYA AND MY WIFE ANNIEGRACE HLATYWAYO WHOSE PRAYERS, ENCOURAGEMENT, SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO BE AWAY FROM THEM DURING MY ENTIRE TIME OF STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA, NORTHWEST CHRITIAN UNIVERSITY, USA AND UNITED THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE, ZIMBABWE.

REV. JAIROS D. HLATYWAYO.

DECLARATION

This is to declare that this dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work.

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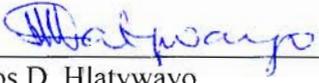
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As supervisor, I agree to the submission of the thesis

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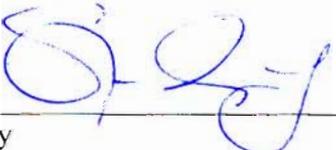
Prof S. De Gruchy

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ABCFM	American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
ABCD	Asset Based Community Development
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CSO	Central Statistical Office
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Program
EU	European Union
FLP	Food Poverty Line
HIV	Human Immune Virus
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LMS	London Missionary Society
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MHCW	Ministry of Health and Child Welfare
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SLF	Sustainable Livelihood Framework
UCC	United Church of Christ
USA	United States of America
UNMS/D	United Nations Millennium Summit/Development
UNC	United Nations Conference
WHO	World Health Organization
WB	World Bank
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZCC	Zimbabwe Council of Churches

ABSTRACT

The research investigates whether it is appropriate, practically and theologically, to think of the United Church of Christ in Chipinge, Zimbabwe as a community asset in the struggle against poverty. A number of key questions were asked and explored concerning the context of poverty in Chipinge, the theological grounds for understanding itself as a community asset in the struggle against poverty in Chipinge, and whether the 'asset portfolio' can actually contribute to the eradication of poverty.

The thesis is rooted in a contemporary development approach known as Asset Based Community Development which argues that sustainable community life is built on what exists in a community rather than what is lacking. The theory and its relevance are explored in the thesis. Further, drawing on contemporary thinking about *missiology* and *ecclesiology*, the thesis argues whether the Church should understand itself as a 'community asset'. This leads to the use of the metaphor taken from Matthew 5:13, where the people of God are called to be 'the salt of the earth' who would draw others together into a living relationship with God. It is argued that being the salt of the earth requires the Church to take faith into action through utilizing the God given gifts which are available in the Church and Chipinge community.

Through a key informant survey of the pastors from seventeen UCC Churches in Chipinge, the thesis demonstrates that the United Church of Christ (UCC) in Chipinge, Zimbabwe, has a range of assets, or what we could call an "asset portfolio" which can and should contribute to the struggle against poverty in the region.

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THE MAP OF ZIMBABWE and the location of Chipinge Region.

The bold arrow on the map shows the Chipinge region which is the focus of this research.

The map modified from the Zimbabwe Information Centre-maps_files.[1]

[1] http: www.worldatlas.com

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

This thesis argues and demonstrates that the United Church of Christ (UCC) in Chipinge, Zimbabwe has a range of assets, or what we could call an "asset portfolio", which can and should contribute to the struggle against poverty in the region.

1.1. Research Questions

The key task in this thesis is to find out whether it is appropriate, practically and theologically, to think of the United Church of Christ in Chipinge as a community asset in the struggle against poverty. However, in order to consider this, a number of questions need to be raised such as: to what extent is poverty a significant element in the socio-economic context of Chipinge? On what theological grounds should the UCC in Chipinge concern itself with the struggle against poverty? Can the Church understand itself as a community asset in the struggle against poverty in Chipinge, and if it is a community asset, what is the 'asset portfolio' it can actually contribute? The hypothesis guiding this study, therefore, is that from a theological perspective, the Church can and must understand itself as a 'community asset' and should use its strong 'asset portfolio' in the struggle against poverty in Chipinge. With the above questions in mind, the objective of this thesis is to provide an overview of the challenge of poverty in the Chipinge district of Zimbabwe, then to examine the Asset Based approach to community development with particular reference to the Church and to explore, from a theological perspective, why the Church should understand itself as a community asset, and finally to test this theological argument with a survey of the actual "asset portfolio" at the disposal of the Church. The research process follows two clear logical steps. These are theory building and theory testing. Here, the study has worked on the interdisciplinary boundary between the two theories of Asset

Based Community Development and missiological ecclesiology. The argument that the Church should understand itself as a community asset, using the metaphor of the Church as 'the salt of the earth' was developed to assist in the shaping of the study.

1.2. An Outline of the Research Theory, Process and Findings.

As we have just noted, this thesis draws on two principal theories: From a development perspective, Asset Based Community Development, and from a theological perspective, 'missiological ecclesiology'. Reference is made to the asset based approach promoted by John Kretzmann and John McKnight that is discussed in *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* In short, ABCD believes that 'you cannot build a community on what people do not have', and therefore seeks to identify and align the assets which already exist in a community as a crucial first step towards making a difference. This approach differs from a 'deficit based approach' which focuses on people's needs and problems. However, it does recognise that whilst a community's assets are absolutely necessary for development, they are in most cases not sufficient for the task, and so the second step is an ongoing engagement with outsiders to solicit their resources only on the basis of community strengths rather than weaknesses.

Theologically we will use 'missiological ecclesiology'. This means that the Church (the *ecclesia*) understands itself not as an end in itself, but as a vehicle for God's engagement in the world, that is the *missio Dei*. This theological position emerged as a way of thinking about the Church in the midst of global political and economic struggles. It is the *ecclesiological* implication of liberation theology.

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If the theory suggests that the Church is the "salt of the earth' or in development terms, "a community asset", then this claim needs to be tested. This was done through a rapid key-informant survey of the assets that exist within the seventeen local Churches that make up the UCC in Chipinge region. A number of questionnaires were prepared for different UCC ministers in the area of study-Chipinge region. The idea was shared and piloted with the ministers of the UCC in Chipinge over the annual Easter gathering in April 2006. This was characterized by much excitement and willingness to participate by all ministers. They took 30 minutes to complete the survey. The questionnaire asked about the assets that the Church has in terms of: membership, spiritual networks, professional skills, physical assets, existing projects, relationships to other agencies, and the minister's own civic responsibilities. These elements constitute the 'asset portfolio'. The veracity of the rapid survey is based on the assumption that the ministers are reasonably aware of what they have in their congregations, and thus enable us to undertake a basic testing of the thesis. The answers to the rapid survey have been tabulated and analysed in the fourth chapter. This presents the actual data on the asset portfolio that exists amongst the Churches. This is also a confirmation of the theory, suggesting that the hypothesis about the strong asset portfolio is correct.

1.3. Brief History of Zimbabwe and Chipinge

In order to locate this research in context we need to provide a basic overview of the history of Zimbabwe and Chipinge. The United Kingdom annexed Southern Rhodesia from the British South Africa Company in 1923. A 1961 constitution was formulated that favoured whites in power.[1] In 1965 the (white) government

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[1] http://www.history.und.ac.za accessed 10/01/07

unilaterally declared its independence, but the United Kingdom did not recognize the act and demanded complete voting rights for the black African majority in the country, then called Rhodesia.[2] The United Nations sanctions and the guerrilla uprising finally led to free elections and independence in 1980.

The Republic of Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in the southern part of the continent of Africa and lies between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers. It borders South Africa to the south, Botswana to the southwest, Zambia to the northwest, and Mozambique to the east. The name *Zimbabwe* derives from "dzimba dzemabwe" meaning "houses of stone" in the Shona language.[3] The country's name is a tribute to Great Zimbabwe, the site of the ancient capital of the Munhumutapa Empire.

Chipinge district is in the south-eastern part of Zimbabwe in the province of Manicaland near the Mozambique border (see map on page x). One of Zimbabwe's landmarks, the Birchenough Bridge is located on the Save River near Chipinge. The hot climate is well suited for agriculture and the local people grow coffee, tea, tobacco, cotton, maize, sorghum, bananas and sweet potatoes. The population size of Chipinge was 283,671 in 2002.[4] Different parts of Chipinge region are still under-developed.

1.4. Brief History of the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe

The United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe is the result of the work of the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign

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[2] http://www.history.und.ac.za accessed 10/01/07
[3] http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/zimbabwe-119k accessed 10/01/07
[4] http://www.worldatlas.com. Zimbabwe information centre. Accessed 23/09/06

Missions (ABCFM).[5] These missionaries came either from South Africa, or via Mozambique. The mission work in Chipinge began in Mozambique, and then arrived at Mt Selinda Station on the 19th of October 1893, when they met Chief Mapungwana.[6] The missionaries led by Rev. Banker held a long discussion with the Chief, and an agreement was reached that the mission be established. The missionaries called it Mt Selinda Mission, which was derived from the local name, Chirinda. This marked the birth of the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe, through the American Board Mission. Later on, the UCCZ became a self-governing Church in 1973.[7]

The United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe (UCC) is a congregational Church, which believes in the priesthood of all believers and democratic participation of all members in building the Church of Christ. The UCC believes in life before death and life after death.[8] Nationally, the United Church of Christ comprises of 125 Churches with approximately 30 000 members nationwide. The General Synod is presided over by an elected minister who serves a four-year term. There are 7 national ministries, which are Women's Fellowship, Christian Youth Fellowship, Volunteers Fellowship, Education Council, Medical Council, Station Council, and Local Church ministries.[9] There are 37 ministers serving as full time pastors, 17 still training, 4 pursuing further studies overseas, 5 serving other organizations, 5 retired and 6 ministerial candidates.[10] The UCC is an active member of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches

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[5] Abbort, J. *God at work in Gazaland/Chipinge*, (Mt Selinda, United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe Centenary Report, 1993). pg. 9
[6] Abbort. *God at work*. pg. 9ff
[7] Abbort. *God at work*. pg. 9ff
[8] Kuchera, M.C. "8 Years of Joyful Witness in the United Church of Christ" (Harare, Synod Report, 2004). pg. 1
[9] Kuchera. *"8 Years of Joyful Witness"*. pg. 2
[10] Kuchera. *"8 Years of Joyful Witness"*. pg. 3

(ZCC) that is involved in discussions on political plurality, national economic development and human freedom. The United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe is divided into three regions which are Chipinge/Eastern region, Northern region and Western region. This research focuses on the Chipinge region.

1.5. The United Church of Christ in the Chipinge Region

The United Church of Christ is a key Church in the Chipinge region of Zimbabwe. It was allocated land by the colonial government to evangelize the Chipinge region as early as in 1893, but was restricted from crossing to other regions in Zimbabwe. At the same time, there was no other Church in the Chipinge region and so the UCC became the dominant denomination, a position it still holds. In this region it comprises of seventeen congregations in both rural and urban areas. We will examine these Churches in greater detail in chapter four.

1.6. Current Development work of the UCC in Chipinge

The United Church of Christ is currently involved in programs aimed at developing its people and actively preaching the Gospel. "The UCC sees poverty as a curse and number one enemy of the people and the Church is fighting right, left and centre in order to free people from the bondage of poverty".[11] The primary concern of the Church is to enable people to help themselves make a living and afford three decent meals daily, which should raise their nutrition level and standard of living.

Currently, the Church in Chipinge has a development plan that covers many programmes and is deeply involved in promoting sustainable livelihood projects in

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[11] Kuchera. *"8 Years of Joyful Witness"*. pg. 3ff

the region. A full-time development officer works in this arena with the local Churches. The UCC is in charge of most development projects that are taking place in the Chipinge region and many local people are skilled in different fields. Some people are involved in selling sweet potatoes, bananas, and avocados to commercial buyers, sewing, knitting, and engaged in baking clubs. The UCC in Chipinge is involved in the Heifer Project, where 90 families were given 270 young cows on the understanding that they pay 10% of the cost of the beast and will pass on a gift of a Heifer to the next family. By the end of 2003, 60 families had passed on a heifer gift to others.

Other projects include rainwater harvesting tanks, garden irrigation, borehole drilling, keeping pigs, goats, fish farming, and beehive.[12] The Church in Chipinge also has a "Sow seed to grow food" project, in which it has been distributing seeds to many people in the rural areas and schools in Chipinge for the development of agriculture activities. The Church also provides education facilities through its schools, and health facilities through its hospitals. Furthermore, it holds regular jumble sales and provides food relief services in order to assist the poor.

The giant killer-disease HIV/AIDS has brought a new dimension to the United Church of Christ's work in Chipinge. "The epidemic demands immediate attention and it places itself among the top priorities of the mission and evangelism, social action, agriculture, education, health, integrated sustainable development, capacity building, technical and vocational life skills training, and employment creation".[13] The UCC is working together with Heads of other Christian Denominations to make

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[12] Kuchera. *"8 Years of Joyful Witness"* pg. 5
[13] Kuchera. *"8 Years of Joyful Witness"* pg. 6

Zimbabwe free of HIV/AIDS by the year 2010. The UCC HIV/AIDS programme in Chipinge concentrates on prevention education, orphan care of the terminally ill, community home-based care, care for people living with HIV/AIDS and de-stigmatizing the disease. The UCC has two hospitals and two clinics, which are heavily involved in supplying HIV/AIDS medication, VCT and counselling, peer education to sixteen Mission Schools and the prevention of mother to child transmission.[14] These activities are all done in a Holistic Health Care approach.

Given all this, this thesis argues and demonstrates that the United Church of Christ in Chipinge, Zimbabwe has a range of assets which can and should contribute to the struggle against poverty in Chipinge. However, as we shall argue below the Church still approaches poverty eradication with a 'deficit' mindset and has not done enough to utilize its assets in order to eradicate poverty in Chipinge. Therefore, this research identifies a range of assets that can be used by the Church to alleviate poverty in Chipinge.

1.7. Outline of the Thesis Chapters.

In order to explore the research question at the heart of this thesis, chapter two explores the nature, causes, effects and challenges of poverty in Chipinge. The philosophy of the Asset Based Community Development approach is discussed in chapter three. This will enable us to analyse the data on the inventory survey in chapter four. Chapter five will return back to the theological understanding of the Church as the salt of the earth in eradicating poverty in Chipinge. Chapter six will summarize and conclude the thesis.

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[14] Kuchera. "8 Years of Joyful Witness". pg. 8

1.8. Summary and Conclusion

This first chapter gave the general introduction and background to the thesis, the research process, Zimbabwe and Chipinge, the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe and Chipinge and its current development work. As the dominant Church in Chipinge, the UCC sees itself as a liberator of the poor people but has not done enough to realize its dream. It is clear that the situation of poverty in Chipinge constitutes a major challenge to the UCC. The following chapter will explore the nature of poverty at length.

CHAPTER TWO: POVERTY IN CHIPINGE, ZIMBABWE

The objective of this chapter is to discuss the concept of poverty, then poverty in Zimbabwe, and its impact in the Chipinge region. The causes of poverty in Zimbabwe, and the Chipinge region in particular are identified as follows: the colonial legacy, the liberation struggle, political instability, poor governance, drought, economic structural adjustment programme and HIV/AIDS. These have resulted in the following: high crime rate, low education turnout, high unemployment, high inflation, environmental degradation, gender imbalances and a high mortality rate.

2.1. Definition of Poverty

There are different ways in which poverty can be understood and measured. Traditionally, poverty has been measured against income levels. In international documents like the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), for example, poor people are those who live on less than US$2 per day.[15] However, in some contexts, like rural areas, the above definition cannot adequately measure poverty, as David Hallowes and Mark Butler point out:

> The simple equation of poverty with cash income legitimizes forms of development which dispossess people of their remaining access to environmental resources and forces them into total reliance on market economy which will not adequately provide for most of them.[16]

So being poor is not necessarily about not having money to buy goods. Those who are poor often sustain themselves through non-income means. Power relations, including

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[15] The Millennium Development Goals were set at a United Nations Summit held in 2000. The goals have been widely used as indicators of development, including poverty alleviation.

[16] Hallowes, D and Butler, M. "Power, poverty and Marginalized Environments: A Conceptual framework", in David A. McDonald (ed), *Environmental Justice in South Africa*, 51-77, (Athens: Ohio University Press; Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.). pg. 51-77

those based on race and gender, the political climate and historical factors also impact strongly on poverty.

Amatya Sen agrees with Hallowes and Butler when he argues that poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than lowness of income, which is the standard criterion for the identification of poverty.[17] Sen further points out that being poor means a loss of both the ability to function, and the freedom to choose amongst a range of functioning factors. Therefore, the solution to this predicament is freedom; and development has to be more concerned with, "enhancing the lives we lead and the freedom we enjoy. Expanding the freedoms that we have reason to value not only makes our lives richer and more unfettered, but also allows us to be fuller social persons, exercising our own volitions and interacting with-and influencing-the world in which we live".[18]

The World Bank defines poverty as the presence of hunger, a lack of shelter, joblessness, powerlessness, lack of clean water, poor health facilities and a lack of freedom.[19] Poverty is "the inability to attain a minimal standard of living in order to meet basic consumption needs and in order to meet the income necessary to satisfy them".[20] People are said to be poor when they do not posses the basic essentials of life. In a similar way, Nurnberger notes that absolute poverty is a situation where income does not meet the basic essentials of the individuals.[21] Townsend supports this

[17] Sen, A. *Development as freedom*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1999). pg. 87
[18] Sen, *Development as freedom*. pg. 14ff
[19] http://www.worldbank.org-poverty/mission/up.l.html 3/08/2006
[20] Marcus, T. et al. *Sociology of Development in South Africa*. Department of Social Science. Unpublished text (University of Natal). pg. 12
[21] Nurnberger, K. *Prosperity. Poverty and Pollution: Managing the approaching crisis*, (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publication, 1999). pg. 61

view.[22] Poverty exists where people are living below the national poverty line, and they cannot meet their daily needs. Thus poverty should be seen in the light of people who are constantly in need of the basic amenities that are essential to life. Many people live in extreme difficulties in the rural areas because they can barely sustain themselves. As a result, they only live one day at a time because the future is unknown. The situation affects them psychologically, socially and spiritually. A majority of those who suffer from poverty withdraw themselves from others while others adopt a paranoid attitude to life and to the situation they find themselves in.

Some people end up questioning the love God has for His people because of poverty induced sufferings. This leads us to the work of Bryant Myers who examines the subject of poverty from two perspectives. The first one is that the *nature* of poverty is fundamentally relational, and the second is that the *causes* of poverty are fundamentally spiritually.[23] A reflection on Myers' views that poverty is relational is significant for a better understanding of this definition.

Firstly, the traditional view that sees poverty as a "deficit" is tenuous in a sense. It sees the poor as people lacking sufficient food to eat, shelter or safe drinking water. It also perceives the poor as those whose land is poor; for whom irrigation is not possible because there is no water, roads are inadequate, and who lack schools for their children. The assumption then is that when the things that are lacking are provided, then poverty will disappear. The traditional view of poverty as "deficit"

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[22] Townsend, P. (ed) *The Concept of Poverty*, (Heinemann: London, 1970). pg. 48
[23] Myers, B.L. *Walking with the poor: Principles and practices of transformational development*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1999). pg. 86

sometimes goes beyond material lack.[24] The lack of education and training is also included as contributing to poverty. This view assumes that:

> Poor people may not understand nutrition, the need to boil water, the importance of child spacing, how to read the instructions on a packet of improved seeds. They don't know about sustainable agriculture, running small business, the importance of saving money.[25]

This concept of poverty believes that the solution lies in the encouragement of programmes that encapsulate education and training. However, limiting the definition of poverty to this is misleading because it makes the outsiders see themselves as people of superior ability who can take care of the helpless poor.[26] Such a view denies them as people made in the image of God. It makes the poor to feel as if only the developers possess gifts and talents and they, have none.[27]

Myers seeks to develop a holistic understanding of poverty when he points out that the nature of poverty is fundamentally relational. In other words, poverty is the result of unsuccessful relationships. It is the end of relationships that do not work, that are unjust, that are not enjoyable. With respect to the above definition, poverty is the lack of shalom in all its meanings. Embedded in the definitions provided, is the idea of relationships that are broken, dysfunctional or oppressive. The underlying point here is that poverty is based on relationships that lack shalom, work against well-being, work against life and life abundant. This understanding of poverty agrees with the biblical narrative.[28] The practice of sin affects all aspects of relationships in which human beings exist. It begins within ourselves, the community, followed by those we refer as other, with the environment, and with God. Myers' idea of poor people as

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[24] Myers. *Walking with the Poor.* pg. 65

[25] Myers. *Walking with the Poor.* pg. 66

[26] Taylor, M. *Not Angels but Agencies: The Ecumenical Response to Poverty,* (Geneva: SCM Press, LTD, 1995). pg. 78

[27] Myers. *Walking with the poor,* pg. 66

[28] Myers. *Walking with the Poor,* pg. 86ff

ignorant of who they are and the reason why they were put on earth is the heart of poverty as relational. As such, Myers observes that:

> When people believe they are less than human, without brains, strength, and person-hood to contribute to their own well-being or that of others, their understanding of who they are is marred. Similarly when the poor do not believe that they have anything to contribute to, or that they cannot be productive, their understanding of their vocations, the poor cannot play their proper relational role in the world...[29]

I suggest that the poor should not be blamed for their poverty. The belief that the poor are sub-humans who lack the ability to contribute to their own well being and to society is an internalized conviction formulated by existing systems in which they exist. The relationships in which they find themselves are characterised by exploitation, exclusion and injustice. To survive this, the poor are made to believe and accept their condition as the order of nature.

Secondly, Myers describes the *causes* of poverty as fundamentally spiritual. The argument on this aspect of poverty is that any theoretical concept of poverty must have a response. From a Christian perspective, the biblical text provides us with an answer. Sin is the cause of division and injustice in our relationships: It stands between human beings and God. It causes us to separate inside ourselves into competing and conflicting voices. It divides us within society, one group rich and the other poor. It causes us to exclude and demonize the other. Sin is the reason why people abuse the earth. It works against human life and the practice of *shalom*. It is the foundation of oppression, exclusion and injustice – and these all lead to poverty.

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[29] Myers. *Walking with the poor*, pg. 88

When we put God completely out of our understanding of who we are, we mistreat others. Poor people are marginalized when relationships become deceptive and dominating, because people no longer love God and their neighbours, and the ultimate cause is sin. The fact here is that if a powerful theology on sin is not provided, an articulate and comprehensive understanding of poverty will be impossible. If sin is the underlying cause of poverty then there is good and bad news. The good news is that the only way out of sin is through Christ. The bad news is that if this news is rejected those who do so will remain in bondage of self-imposed limitations.[30] In summary, Myers notices the causes of poverty as residing in the poor and non-poor. That is, human beings are sinners and if sin is the cause of poverty then the solution is through Christ, the saviour of sinners. But if this solution is rejected, the problem of poverty remains.

Myers' concept of poverty is greatly enriching and so is his definition which informs my understanding of poverty in this thesis. Myers concludes that the nature of poverty is fundamentally relational and its cause is fundamentally spiritual. It is on the ground of these factors that Myers develops his holistic understanding of poverty. The holistic understanding of poverty provides insights to us because the view that sees sin as cause of poverty must be seen from two sides, those who inflict poverty on the poor due to broken relationships with God and their fellow humans, and the poor themselves who break their relationship with God (insofar as they accept their condition fatalistically). The biblical tradition indicates that the people who are poor and defenceless have nobody to turn to but God because He has care for those who are victimized by injustice and poverty. However, the poor can also be forced to turn

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[30] Myers. *Walking with the poor*, pg. 88

away from God because of bitterness and lack of hope. On the other hand, rich people can also turn to God if they do not rely on themselves and their wealth. Therefore, both rich and poor have a responsibility to turn away from sin and turn to God and get connected to Him. In so doing, both rich and poor will love one another and see each other in terms of Michael Taylor's understanding "...that we are all donors and recipients at the same time",[31] in his focus on Christian development organizations working among the poor in the Third World countries.

Whilst Myers notes the causes of poverty as spiritual, its nature is rooted in unjust and exploitative relationships. The experience of poverty is described by the MDGs and the World Bank as a situation where people do not have the wherewithal to live a decent life. Having gained a perspective on the meaning of poverty, we can now turn to an overview of the current political and socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe.

2.2. The Current Political and Socio-Economic Crisis in Zimbabwe

The political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe are worsening at an alarming rate. According to the International Crisis Group:

> The policies, corruption and repressive governance of President Robert Mugabe and his ruling ZANU-PF party are directly responsible for the severe economic slide, growing public discontent and international isolation of the country. In April 2006, inflation officially topped 1,000 per cent, helped by the decision to print $230 million worth of Zimbabwean currency to pay international debts and sustain operations. Unemployment is over 85 per cent, poverty over 90 per cent, and foreign reserves are almost depleted. Over four million persons are in desperate need of food. HIV/AIDS and malnutrition kill thousands every month. The government-sponsored the 2005 "Operation *Murambatsvina*" to clear urban slums forcibly deprived more than 18 per cent of the population of homes or livelihoods and badly damaged the informal sector, the lifeline for many urban poor.[32]

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[31] Taylor. *Not Angels but Agencies, pg. 79ff*
[32] https://www.crisisgroup.org accessed 10/02/07

The International Crisis Group further points out that flawed parliamentary elections in March 2005 and low voter turnout for the newly-created Senate elections in November 2005 entrenched ZANU-PF's grip on political power and patronage.[33] Internal divisions over participation in the Senate elections caused the split of the opposition MDC party into separate factions in late 2005, thereby fragmenting the chief source of opposition to Mugabe and ZANU-PF. The International Crisis Group concludes by highlighting that with the potential departure of Mugabe in 2010 looming, the chaotic political climate becomes exacerbated by the manoeuvring of members of the opposition and ZANU-PF seeking maximum benefits from the impending transition".[34]

Given the national political and economic situation, it should not surprise us that poverty in Chipinge, as in most rural areas, is very high. Only a small part of Chipinge is urban, and poverty is more prevalent in the rural areas due to the lack of productive capacity, capital and the severe effects of drought, floods and exhausted agricultural soils. Many people cannot fend for themselves and their families. They can hardly have three meals a day, as a result, the majority of the region's young and old people lack nutritious food. Those suffering from chronic disease such as AIDS are in a hopeless situation due to the unavailability of medicine and other health facilities.[35]

Most parts of the Chipinge community are found in the lowveld which receives low rainfall and is always dry and hot. However, a small number of people live on the highveld of Chipinge, which is cooler and receives better rainfall than the lowveld. It

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[33] https://www.crisisgroup.org accessed 10/02/07
[34] https://www.crisisgroup.org accessed 10/02/07
[35] Mukumbira, R. "Zimbabwe: Poverty on the increase" *in Africa News: Views and News on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation in Africa,* October 2000. pg. 1ff

is important to note that some people in the region are still illiterate and cannot speak English, which is the official language of politics and economics. In some parts, the roads are badly eroded and it takes long hours of travel to get to a bus station. Approximately 53% of households in Chipinge are reported to have no toilet facilities while more than 30% get their water from unprotected sources.[36]

Women in Zimbabwe form 60% of farmers in communal areas but they receive insufficient support at family and national level.[37] The rate of unemployment is very high. Some families fail to send their children to school because they cannot afford to pay the fees needed for the education of their children. A majority of the people do not have enough to buy basic commodities such as food, clothes and shelter. It is important to note that poverty is increasing in commensuration with the deteriorating economy, thus limiting the capacity of government to alleviate poverty.

Sen argues that while improving the well-being of women is important, enhancing their agency is just as critical. He writes:

> The changing agency of women is one of the major mediators of economic and social change and its determination as well as consequences is closely related to many of the central features of the development process .... Nothing, arguably, is as important today in the political economy of development as an adequate recognition of political, economic and social participation and leadership of women.[38]

The above statement asserts that gender equality among men and women plays an important role in development and reducing poverty. Sen believes that though different societies are busy with development, the role and contribution of women is

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[36] Central Statistical Office, *Poverty in Zimbabwe*, (Harare, CSO, 2004). pg. 8
[37] Zimbabwe Newspaper. Herald: *Assessment on Poverty*. (Harare: Government Printers, 2002). pg. 7
[38] Sen, *Development as freedom*, pg. 202ff

crucial, and therefore to deal with poverty it is vital that the lives of women are improved.[39] This is an important aspect of poverty in Zimbabwe and Chipinge, where we find that women bear the brunt of poverty, and yet are expected to be the ones who help families cope with food, HIV/AIDS, and caring for children and orphans.

2.3. The Causes of Poverty in Chipinge

In this section we will examine the causes of poverty in Chipinge, Zimbabwe. There are various causes of poverty in Chipinge but the major ones are the colonial legacy, the liberation struggle, economic structural adjustment policy, drought, poor government policies, HIV/AIDS and political instability.

2.3.1. Colonial legacy

According to the Central Statistical Office (CSO), "Poverty in Zimbabwe is closely linked to the country's colonial history".[40] The pre-independence social, economic and political climate tended to bestow economic and political benefits on the settlers, as opposed to local people. Local people were settled on small portions of infertile land whilst the settlers occupied vast tracts of fertile land. Local people were also denied equal education and employment opportunities, and race determined one's salary to the extent that whites got more than blacks for the same job. These policies introduced great inequalities and perpetuated poverty among the local people of Zimbabwe. The Chipinge region is no exception to this.

Poverty in the Chipinge region was worsened by the unequal distribution of land during the colonial rule. It is held that local people were moved to dry areas while the

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[39] Sen, *Development as freedom*, pg. 106
[40] Central Statistical Office, *Poverty in Zimbabwe*. pg. 1

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settlers' plantations took over the most productive areas of the region to establish tea, coffee and forestry. As a result they had no option but to find other alternatives to make ends meet.

2.3.2. The liberation struggle

The CSO report further note that the prolonged liberation struggle from the mid-1960s, which led to independence in 1980, left a big dent on the Zimbabwean nation.[41] The war had adverse effects on the entire population and the resulting economic hardships were felt severely in rural areas. Many people were killed and maimed in Chipinge region because it is close to Mozambique where the war of liberation was launched from the 1970s, and the fact that the region was widely used as a base for the guerrilla warfare. As a result, many people's houses, shops and other properties were burnt down, and livestock was taken or destroyed by the colonial soldiers during the war. People had to rebuild their homes and other business properties after independence, and some have never managed to recoup their losses or rebuild their livelihoods.

2.3.3. The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP)

A decade after independence, Zimbabwe embarked on an Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) that was aimed at promoting economic growth, liberalizing trade and removing foreign exchange restrictions.[42] The ESAP policies placed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB), "destroyed the preliminary conditions for development, that is growth of the local and regional markets, and channelled any existing capital to the world market where it is useless to

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[41] Central Statistical Office, *Poverty in Zimbabwe*. pg. 3
[42] Central Statistical Office, *Poverty in Zimbabwe*. pg. 3

Zimbabwe as a nation".[43] The programme consists of measures designed to increase

exports to earn foreign currency and limit imports. This obliged the government to:

> Spend less on health, education and social services, so that people must
> pay for them or go without, devalue the national currency, lowering export
> earnings and increasing cost, cut back on food subsidies-so prices of
> essentials can soar, cut jobs and wages for workers in government jobs
> and industries, encourage privatisation of public industries, including sale
> to foreign investors, promote export-led farming instead of the growing of
> staple food, raising local food prices.[44]

The programme subjected many people to undue hardships. The measures forced the

public enterprises to run budget deficits and led to the reorganization of government-

owned institutions, following the IMF and World Bank directives. This gave rise to

the liquidation of the public assets through privatization and a high rate of inflation as

the economy decline. The aim was to reduce the workforce both in the government

and private sectors. Those who lost their jobs went back to their villages. The measure

contributed greatly to increases in unemployment and the high inflation rate in

Zimbabwe.

This should remind us that the main objective of the ESAP was to stabilize the world

financial markets and to protect the economic growth of the First World countries.

According to Nurnberger, "The austerity measure imposed by the structural

adjustment programme (ESAP) of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund

(IMF) are at least partially meant to increase prospects that the international banks

could recover their bad loans".[45] The issue of SAP was more of the creditors

protecting their own interest than helping the poor to improve on their living

conditions. It is a case of selfish interest at the expense of people's lives.

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[43] http://www.jubileeplus.org/databank/profiles/zimbabwe.html 22/01/07
[44] http://www.jubileeplus.org/databank/profiles/zimbabwe.html 22/01/07
[45] Nurnberger. *Prosperity, Poverty and Pollution,* pg. 128

2.3.4. Drought

Unfortunately during the programme's implementation the country suffered the most severe droughts especially in 1992. The severe droughts had a major impact on the entire economy of Zimbabwe and its impact on agriculture earnings is still being felt to this day. Furthermore, the drought had a particularly long-term impact on rural societies in that they suffered huge stock deaths thus affecting their economies. The drought and the region's political affiliation with the opposition political parties have been met with a limited government assistance thus worsening the poverty situation in Chipinge.

2.3.5. Poor Government Policies

The introduction of the farm occupation and land redistribution programme in 2000 played a huge role in reducing the entire nation's food production capacity. Also, the imposition of sanctions by the European Union on the ruling ZANU PF officials affected the entire nation. The macro-economic policies and loss of democracy in Zimbabwe played a pivotal role in instigating poverty in the country. All these factors have left the Chipinge region more vulnerable to poverty.

According to Rodrick Mukumbira, more people in Zimbabwe are becoming destitute, due to the ever-mounting economic hardships, unemployment, and reduced spending on social services by the cash-trapped government and the autocratic rule by President Robert Mugabe.[46] However, Mukumbira holds that the causes of poverty vary as one moves from urban to rural areas:

> In the urban areas the major issues are unemployment and the low salaries and wages received by workers, which can no longer keep pace with high

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[46] Mukumbira, R. "Zimbabwe: Poverty on the Increase". pg. 4ff

inflation rates, thus affecting the living standards of most of the urbanites. In the rural areas, poverty is more prevalent because people lack the productive capacity and capital, and feel the severe effects of drought, floods and exhausted agricultural soils.[47]

As a result, many rural people are unable to fend for themselves and their families and the situation is more critically for those people suffering from chronic diseases such as AIDS.

2.3.6. HIV/AIDS

Marvellous Mhloyi makes it clear that chronic poverty in Chipinge fuels the spread of HIV/AIDS.[48] In turn HIV/AIDS is undermining the ability of the country, communities, households and individuals, to adopt and sustain preventive behaviour. As a result, many people cannot cope with the impact and the pervasive problems associated with HIV/AIDS. Mhloyi further note that it is the same HIV infected person who is poor and thus needs not only counselling and care, but also requires food handouts, health and other forms of support. The local people thus need to be trained, equipped with skills and get employment in order to break the vicious cycle of poverty, and possible future infections. Therefore, HIV/AIDS is exacerbating poverty as it largely affects the most productive members of the community, and the most affected sector is agriculture, which is the mainstay of rural households. Mhloyi argues that:

> HIV continues to spread rapidly and the existence of widespread poverty contributes significantly to the spread of the virus. The lack of access to clean water, nutritious food and adequate health care compromises the immune system and hastens the spread of HIV. HIV/AIDS also worsens poverty, particularly through its devastating impact on those economically

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[47] Mukumbira, R. "Zimbabwe: Poverty on the Increase" pg. 6-7
[48] Mhloyi, M.M *"Humanitarian Crisis in Zimbabwe"*, (Harare, University of Zimbabwe, 2004). pg. 8

active. So, in any consideration of poverty eradication, the close relationship between poverty and HIV/AIDS needs to be borne in mind.[49]

Mhloyi point out that HIV/AIDS related illnesses and deaths are also worsening the levels of poverty in the Chipinge region.[50] The disease strikes those in prime of the working lives, and a combination of the loss of income and the cost of caring for the sick affects many households, rendering them destitute. This is a crisis that calls for national action in Zimbabwe.

2.3.7. Political instability

Robert Mugabe has been the country's only ruler and has dominated the country's political system since independence. The World Factbook holds that:

> His chaotic land redistribution campaign, which began in 2000, caused an exodus of white farmers, crippled the economy, and ushered in widespread shortages of basic commodities. Ignoring international condemnation, Mugabe rigged the 2002 presidential election to ensure his re-election. Opposition and labour strikes in 2003 were unsuccessful in pressuring Mugabe to retire early; security forces continued their brutal repression of regime opponents. The ruling ZANU-PF party used fraud and intimidation to win a two-thirds majority in the March 2005 parliamentary election, allowing it to amend the constitution at will and recreate the Senate, which had been abolished in the late 1980s.[51]

The political climate, coupled with the weak economy in the country promises a bleak future for the people of Zimbabwe. The people from Chipinge are known for their solidarity towards supporting their ethnic based political party, *ZANU Ndonga,* which was formed by the late Rev. Dr. Ndabaningi Sithole. As a result, the ZANU PF dominated government ignores the Chipinge people when it comes to development.

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[49] The following three books are helpful in giving an overview of the AIDS pandemic. The first concerns South Africa, the second the world and the third faith communities: Alan Whiteside and Clem Sunter, *AIDS: The Challenge for South Africa* (Cape Town: Human &Rousseau and Tafelberg, 2000); Alan Whiteside and Tony Barnett, *AIDS in the twenty-first century: Disease and globalization* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Isabel Apawo Phiri, Beverly Haddad and Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphalilele), *African women, HIV/AIDS and faith communities* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2003).

[50] Mhloyi. *"Humanitarian Crisis in Zimbabwe",* pg. 10

[51] http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/zi.html. accessed 10/02/07

As we noted in our discussion about poverty, Myers argued that poverty is fundamentally relational and its causes are fundamentally spiritual. We have seen that the situation of poverty in Chipinge reflects Myers point. Issues such as the colonial legacy, the liberation struggle, economic structural adjustment policy, poor government policies, HIV/AIDS and political instability all have to do with bad relationships between people. Taking into consideration of the above, the question of unjust and bad relationships lies at the heart of the causes of poverty. This in turn reminds us how deep seated the causes of poverty are, what Myers calls sin.

2.4. The Impact of Poverty in Chipinge

Seven key issues are examined in order to evaluate the impact of poverty in Chipinge. These are the high crime rate, low education, health hazards, and high death rate in the business sector, environmental degradation, gender imbalances and a high inflation rate.

2.4.1. High crime rate

The links between poverty, unemployment and crime are never in doubt. Life is a continuous process of livelihood strategies and people engage in different activities to sustain themselves. Some people participate in violent crime, prostitution, murderous cult groups and armed robbery. The issue of armed robbery, for instance is no longer news because it is an on-going event in Chipinge. Most of the criminals are youths and young adults who are unemployed. The upsurge is related to the country's weak economy. Theft now goes hand in hand with murder. Crime is common in Chipinge rural areas because when young adults and youths engage in criminal activities and

are dislodged in the city centres, they withdraw to the villages. Since there is less security in the rural areas, they will start to terrorize the poor in the vicinity.[52]

2.4.2. Low standards of education

At the time of writing, education in Zimbabwe is for the rich. Low-income earners can no longer afford to fund the education of their children. The very few who can, often stop half way because of the financial commitments, hardships and teachers' strikes. Industrial action is an option available for the teachers to be paid their monthly salaries. To this end the children spend most of their time at home or roaming the streets.

Most of the public schools these days are ill-equipped and poorly sponsored. The government does not pay attention to the education sector and those parents who insist on their children acquiring basic education are forced to pay dearly for it. On this, the Jubilee 2000 Coalition stated that:

> As schools are forced to charge fees, fewer people are able to send their children, and education is mainly available only to the better off. Further development is impaired as education attainment falls. In Sub-Saharan Africa the damage to education is particularly significant; the percentage of 6-11 year olds enrolled at school has fallen from nearly 60% in 1980 to less than 50% in 1990.[53]

The education sector is in crisis due to the payment of low staff salaries, the lack of equipment and shortage of funds. There is a high illiteracy rate in Chipinge and this means the education is dying. The crisis in the education sector means that in the near future, more people will be illiterate.

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[52] Zimbabwe Newspaper. Herald: *Assessment on Poverty*, pg. 10
[53] http://www.urc.org.uk/c&s/jubilee 2000/j2000.htm

2.4.3. Health hazards

Mhloyi expressed that the government is financially stressed to deal with the "humanitarian" problems that beset the country.[54] The CSO reported that when cholera resurfaced in Chipinge, the World Health Organization (WHO), at the request of Ministry of Health and Child Welfare (MHCW), responded through the procurement of drugs and supplies; distribution, and provision of diagnostic equipment, and the provision of training, health education and material development.[55] It should be noted that these health problems are accentuated by the limited access to clean water supplies and basic sanitation.

In the past, the mission hospitals in Chipinge had a good health system, but at present, there are no funds to maintain the system. As a result, rural communities are facing numerous health problems:

> Accompanying this, there is high mortality and maternal death rate in Chipinge. Due to poverty, people cannot afford to go to the hospital for treatment. The resulting malnutrition makes them prone to different infections and diseases. The funding of health care has fallen in Zimbabwe since 1980s. Today people pay heavily for their health care in the country. Those who cannot afford it, go without.[56]

The situation has deteriorated to the extent that the poor and low-income earners seek help from the informal health sector and traditional healers, or simply rely on home remedies. Some of the diseases thought to have been eradicated have staged a comeback. They have re-appeared because people can no longer afford to pay for medical costs. The worst hit are the poor people, hence the workforce is reduced.

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[54] Mhloyi. *"Humanitarian Crisis in Zimbabwe"*, pg. 13-15
[55] Central Statistical Office, *Poverty in Zimbabwe*, pg. 8
[56] http://www.urc.org.uk/c&s/jubilee 2000/j2000.htm accessed on 10/01/07

2.4.4. High death rate in the business sector

Given that HIV/AIDS largely affects the most productive and reproductive members of society, business suffers the direct and indirect effects of the disease:

> HIV/AIDS becomes a concern for which the business world should incorporate in their business planning programmes. HIV/AIDS depresses the level of production in various ministries or organizations while at the same time increases operating costs, with a consequent reduction in profits.[57]

This situation arises from a number of reasons. First, as workers get sick, they spend a lot of time absent from work. Even when the workers are at work, they are bound to perform below their maximum capacity due to their reduced physical strength, and the consequent psychological stress that such workers usually suffer from. The adverse effects are in two ways: firstly, the loss of experienced workers impacts negatively on the quality of staff and consequent output. Secondly, the company loses time recruiting new employees and training them. In these circumstances companies are forced to train more people than available posts in order to compensate for potential losses due to HIV/AIDS; this increases training costs. In addition, management will have to deal with HIV/AIDS related problems such as, workers attending funerals of spouses and children and colleagues. While colleagues get sick, lose family members and die; work mates are also affected, which will ultimately affect productivity. Other economic repercussions exist as noted here:

> External to the business, the death of workers and ordinary people means a loss of potential consumers of goods and services. As a result there will be a reduced demand for goods and services produced, and increasing operating costs, which leads to declining profits and a consequent decline in reinvestments. As businesses dwindle, workers get retrenched and then the unemployed eventually fail to support themselves and their families.[58]

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[57] UNAIDS, "*United Nations Strategic Framework on HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe*" (Geneva, 2002). pg. 9
[58] Mhloyi. "*Humanitarian Crisis in Zimbabwe*", pg. 18

2.4.5. Environmental degradation

Poverty often has a detrimental effect on the environment. This can be seen in a number of areas. For example, the need for firewood by poor people may lead to widespread deforestation. Inadequate sanitation may lead people to pollute water sources, and farming a piece of land too intensively will lead to soil degradation. Some of the human activities that may lead to significant damage to the natural environment in Chipinge include: burning of bushes, overgrazing, shifting cultivation, substandard irrigation, over-use and wrong use of pesticides and other chemicals. Also poor management of mineral resources and other raw materials can cause damage to the environment.

2.4.6. Gender imbalances

Gender is also a significant factor in approaching development and poverty alleviation. Beverly Haddad has correctly expressed the view that "development as theory and practice is a gender issue and all our analysis needs to be undertaken from the standpoint that unequal power relations exist between men and women".[59] Zimbabwean society is strongly patriarchal, with high levels of discrimination against women. On the whole this has caused women to be poorer than men. Compared to men, women generally have lower levels of education, share a great responsibility in child rearing, and have greater obstacles accessing employment. In order to alleviate poverty, gender considerations need to be taken seriously. Poverty affects women most since they are left at home to take care of all the household responsibilities without enough resources. This situation avails them for public abuse by men.

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[59]Beverly Haddad, "Theologizing development: A Gendered analysis of poverty, survival and faith", 5-19 (*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 110, 2001), pg. 6. Other works by Haddad, most helpful in this respect, include *African women's theologies of survival: Intersecting faith, feminisms and development* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Natal, 2000); and "Gender, development and faith: The Church and women's struggle to survive", 427-450 (*Missionalia* 31:2, 2003).

2.4.7. High inflation rate

The World Factbook points out that "the government of Zimbabwe faces a wide variety of difficult economic problems as it struggles with an unsustainable fiscal deficit, an overvalued exchange rate, soaring inflation, and bare shelves".[60] The World Factbook further notes that:

> Its 1998-2002 involvement in the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo drained hundreds of millions of dollars from the economy. The government's land reform program, characterized by chaos and violence, has badly damaged the commercial farming sector, the traditional source of exports and foreign exchange and the provider of 400,000 jobs, turning Zimbabwe into a net importer of food products. Badly needed support from the IMF has been suspended because of the government's arrears on past loans, which it began repaying in 2005. The official annual inflation rate rose from 32% in 1998, to 133% in 2004, 585% in 2005, and approached 1000% in 2006, although private sector estimates put the figure much higher. Meanwhile, the official exchange rate fell from approximately 1 (devalued) Zimbabwean dollar per US dollar in 2003 to 250 per US dollar in August 2006.[61]

We have now noted the causes of poverty in Chipinge, and have explored the impact of poverty upon the people in seven areas, namely, the high crime rate, low education, health hazards, and high death rate in the business sector, environmental degradation, gender imbalances and a high inflation rate. Given the role and place of the Church in Chipinge, we now turn to the challenge that this situation poses for the people of God.

2.5. Poverty as a Challenge to the Church

The need to eradicate poverty has been recognized in a number of recent international gatherings. These include the United Nation's Millennium Summit (UNMS) (2000) or

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[60] http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/zi.html accessed 10/02/07
[61] http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/zi.html accessed 10/02/07

the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) (2002). At the close of the

WSSD in 2002, world leaders concluded that:

> Eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world
> today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development,
> particularly for developing countries. Although each country has the
> primary responsibility for its own sustainable development and poverty
> eradication and the role of national policies and development strategies
> cannot be over emphasized, concerted and concrete measures are
> required at all levels to enable developing countries to achieve their
> sustainable development goals as related to the internationally agreed
> poverty-related targets and goals, including those contained in Agenda
> 21, the relevant outcomes of the United Nations Conferences (UNC) and
> the United Nations Millennium Declaration (UNMD)...[62]

During this International Conference, poverty eradication was considered as a major

need for the lives of millions on the planet. It is a major problem that also affects the

Church. The call to participate in developmental works comes from the people in the

Church. Most of the poor people who are struggling to survive are right in the Church

and this is true particularly for the Church leaders who work in poor countries.[63]

Therefore, the Church has a role to play in trying to solve this problem, because it has

a prophetic concern about justice and development, and the economic and political

life of the nations of the world.[64] In the same line of thought Julius Nyerere asserts

that:

> I am suggesting that, unless we participate actively in the rebellion against those
> social structures and economic organizations which condemn people to poverty,
> humiliation and degradation, then the Church, will become irrelevant to people
> and the Christian religion will degenerate into a set of superstitions accepted by
> the fearful.[65]

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches, which represents all denominations in the

country, acknowledged that it has "somehow been watching passively as poverty

[62] Key Commitments set out in the Johannesburg plan of implementation. For full text visit the official
website: http://www.johannesburgsummit.org (Johannesburg: 2002). pg. 2
[63] http://www.hs.unp.ac.za/theology/article01.htm.2001. 22/11/2006
[64] http://www.hs.unp.ac.za/theology/article01.htm.2002 . 22/11/2006
[65] Nyerere. J.K. *Freedom and Development* (Dar Es Salaam: Oxford University Press. 1973). pg. 215

worsened leaving children begging on the streets".[66] Although the Church has not

done much in its attempts to "change specific government policies and institutions at

local, national and global level,"[67] it has initiated a number of relief services and

community development projects. However, changing specific government policies

and institutions at local, national and global level is very crucial in order to lessen the

severe economic and socio-political hardships, which perpetuate hunger in Chipinge

and the entire country of Zimbabwe.

There are theological reasons why the Church has to be involved in the struggle

against poverty. Many scholars have made a strong case for this, and this thesis takes

this as established.[68] Here, the Church is called to participate in God's work of

Shalom. Shalom, which is part of the Christian gospel is not only limited to 'spiritual'

salvation. Shalom fosters spiritual renewal and salvation, health and wholeness,

development and the strengthening of relationships, among other aspects.[69] The

Biblical understanding of shalom, as presented by the biblical scholars Philip Nel,[70]

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[66] HCB WR, Newsdesk. "Zimbabwe Churches Apologises for Inaction Amid Increasing Poverty", posted by the *Newsdesk* on Friday, July 18 2003. http://www.hcjb.org/displayarticle 586.html 04/08/2006. "We have been witness to and buried our people who have starved to death due to food shortages......while we have continued to pray, we have not been moved to action. We apologise to the people of Zimbabwe for not having done enough at the time when the nation looked at us for guidance".

[67] Korten, D. *Getting to the 21st Century* (Connectcut: Kumarian Press, 1990). pg. 120

[68] Useful information is found in the following works; Koegelenberg, R. (ed), on *Church and Development: An Interrdisciplinary Approach, Perspective from Southern Africa and Europe*, (Cape Town: EFSA, 1992) James, M.M. on *The Church as a Non Governmental Orgainization. In: Koegelenberg, R (ed).* (Cape Town: EFSA, 1992), Cochrane, J.R, and De Gruchy, J.W. and Petersen, R. on *In Word and Deed: Towards a Practical Theology for Social Transformation,* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications), Oladipo, J. on "The role of the Church in poverty alleviation", (Oxford: Regnum Books), Jones, J.D. on *Poverty and human conditions*, (New York: Edwin Methen), Steve De Gruchy on *"Ten Theological these on mission and development"*, John De Gruchy on 'Christian Community' In: Villa-Vicencio, C (eds.) *Doing Theology in context: South African Perspectives*, (Cape Town: David Philip), David Bosch on *Transforming Mission, paradigm shift in Theology of Mission*, (New York: Orbis Books).

[69] Gerhard von Rad, "Shalom in the Old Testament", In: G. Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994). pg. 402-406

[70] Philip Nel, "Shalom", In: W.A. van Geneven (ed.), *The New Internationl Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegisis*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977). pg. 130-135.

and Gerhard von Rad[71] is more than the absence of conflict. Shalom is not only limited to spiritual salvation, but is about everything that makes our highest good. Shalom is a state of completeness and wholeness in which people, either individually or collectively experience health, prosperity, and security, oneness with nature and the environment and spiritual salvation. Shalom is the transforming power at work in and through individuals and the community for spiritual salvation, physical well-being, completeness and wholeness and healing among other aspects. "You shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in" (Isaiah 58:12b).

Bruce Bradshaw defines shalom as the expression of harmony intended by God for all creation which provides an excellent foundation for understanding Christian development practice.[72] Biblical shalom transcends the normal definition of 'peace' to include a comprehensive, holistic approach which goes beyond spiritual salvation. It views the physical and the spiritual realms equally and fosters on all life's discipline; economy, political, health, environment and education.

As we noted in our discussion on the definition of poverty in section 2.1 above, the poor are not merely those whose incomes are lower, but also include those who have been marginalized by the powerful and the rich. D.J.Jones in his book *Poverty and the Human Condition: A Philosophical Inquiry*, argues that poor people's suffering is not a "passive absence of good, but an active presence of evil."[73] The current situation in Chipinge therefore calls for the Church to seek lasting solutions to the problem and

[71] Von Rad, "*Shalom in the Old Testament*", pg. 402ff
[72] Bruce Bradshaw, *Bridging the Gap*. (Monrovia, California: MARC, 1993). pg. 19
[73] Jones, J D. *Poverty and the Human Condition: A Philosophical Inquiry*. (New York: Edwin Methen, 1990). pg. 103

not just rely on temporary measures that merely offer "humanitarian assistance"[74] to the people.

This leads to the question at the heart of this thesis, which is *how* the church should be involved in the struggle against poverty? In answer to this question – although not specifically focused on the Church - David Korten has suggested a typology of four development 'generations' that describe how people can and have responded to poverty:

> Generation One: Relief and Welfare, this approach aims at an immediate alleviation of the suffering;
>
> Generation Two: Small-Scale, Self-Reliant Local Development, which rose as a result of questions about the validity of generation one strategy. It therefore focuses its energies on the developing capacities of the people to better their own needs through self-reliant location action by NGOs;
>
> Generation Three: Sustainable System Development which resulted from frustrations with the limitations in generation two. This generation seeks to change specific policies and institutions. Generation three is grounded on the assumption that local inertia is sustained by structures that centralise control of resources, keeps essential services from reaching the poor and maintains systems of corruption and exploitation;
>
> Generation Four: People's Movements. This generation's strategy is tied to what Isagari R Serrano calls the "Alternative Development Paradigm.[75]

In light of the causes and effects of poverty that we have described in this chapter, each of these generations has a particular contribution to make. While recognising the need for a multi-pronged approach, this thesis focuses on the local Churches' capacities, initiatives and assets and where the Church can make a difference in Chipinge, in other words at the level that Korten calls the second generation. This does not stop the Church from participating in wider responses through membership

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[74] Korten. *Getting to the 21st Century*, pg.115
[75] Korten, D. *Getting to the 21st Century*, pg. 115ff

of the ZCC or opposition to injustice and political corruption, but seeks to engage ordinary members and Churches on a day to day basis to help people rise out of poverty.

A helpful way of understanding this day to day process of ordinary people responding to poverty is captured by the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF).[76] This is an approach that acknowledges the freedom of people "to make choices between different strategies available to them and empowers them in the process of identifying and addressing livelihood strategies".[77] The framework starts from an understanding and analysis of the resources and strategies that people are already using to achieve their livelihood goals. Thus, at the core of the approach lies an analysis of different types of assets, or an 'asset portfolio' upon which individuals can draw to build their livelihoods. These have been labelled as social, human, financial, physical and natural assets. "A household is said to have a sustainable livelihood when it can cope with and recover from shocks and stresses and can maintain its capabilities, assets and existing livelihood activities without undermining the natural resource base".[78] This approach provides an integrative framework drawing on traditions and value systems of structures and processes that impact on people's struggles to improve their livelihoods.

The SLF recognises and seeks to understand that those who are poor are the best agents of their own development, and draws from their existing 'asset portfolio'. In

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[76] Useful information on this approach is provided in the following works: Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway, *Sustainable rural Livelihoods: Practical concepts for the 21st century.* (Institute of Development Studies Discusion Paper 296; University of Sussex, Brighton: IDS Publications, 1992). Mark Burtler and Ran Greenstein, *Sustainable Livelihoods: Towards a research agenda for the church land programme.* (Johannesburg: Agency for social Enquiry, 1999)
[77] Butler and Greenstein, *Sustainable Livelihoods*, pg. 296ff
[78] Butler and Greenstein, *Sustainable Livelihoods.* pg. 296ff

this way the framework reflects closely the asset-based approach to development expressed in the work of Kretzmann and McKnight discussed in the next chapter.[79]

In summary, then, it has been noted that there are many ways that the Church can respond to poverty, as suggested by Korten's four generations. This thesis particularly seeks to explore what it is that the Church can do at the local level, and so is focusing generally on the second generation, although not discounting the importance of the Church working in other areas. The SLF helps us note that it is important to work with the 'asset portfolio', that poor people have ownership of and access to, otherwise they will always be reliant on outside assistance.

This line of thinking has brought us to Asset Based Community Development. In answer to the question on *how* the local church can work with ordinary people against poverty, I am therefore persuaded that the approach to development identified by John Kretzmann and John McKnight based on successful local community building initiatives against poverty across the USA, and articulated in their book, *Building Communities from the Inside Out,* needs to be taken seriously by the Church in Southern Africa.[80] This text is foundational to my work because it suggests the possibility that the Church might be a community asset. A review of ABCD will constitute the focus of the next chapter.

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[79] Kretzmann, J & McKnight, J. *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding And Mobilizing a Community's Assets.* (Chicago: ACTA Publications, 1993)
[80] Kretzmann & McKnight. *Building Community from the Inside Out.*

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the broad concept of poverty, and then the causes and effects of poverty in Zimbabwe, and specifically the Chipinge region. Whilst much of this serves to motivate and challenge the Church to be involved at a broad theoretical and theological level, there has not been much done to propose practical options for those who want to respond to the challenges on poverty. Chapter three explores the ABCD approach in depth and draws its theological understanding for the Church.

CHAPTER THREE: ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

One of the approaches for practical engagement that has been suggested by John Kretzmann and John McKnight is Asset Based Community Development. This approach argues that "one cannot build a community on what people do not have" and it recognizes that local assets are absolutely necessary, though usually not sufficient, for local development. As a result, community builders should identify, capture and align these assets for the benefit of the community.[81] The Church is identified as one of the key community assets by Kretzmann and McKnight[82] However, the Church does not usually think of itself as a community asset, yet it is precisely what it is for when considering the Christian concept on the 'salt of the earth', then the resources, networks, and presence of the Church in a community should be to the benefit of the community.

3.1. The Philosophy of Asset Based Community Development

Kretzmann and Mcknight of the Institute of Policy Research at the North Western University, Illinois, are credited for identifying the tenets of the ABCD model.

> This model draws on appreciative inquiry; the recognition of social capital; participatory approaches to development, which are based on principles of empowerment and ownership; collaborative economic development models that place priority on making the best use of a community resource base; and efforts to strengthen civil society by engaging people as citizens rather than clients.[83]

Assets may be persons, physical structures, natural resources, institutions, businesses or informal organizations such as cultural groups and social clubs. The ABCD model involves the community in making an "inventory of assets and capacity building

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[81] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.*

[82] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, pg. 143-160

[83] http://www.etc.org/eve/docgen.asp?tbl=tia&ID=170 19/08/2006

relationships, developing a vision of the future, and leveraging internal and external resources to support actions to achieve it".[84] The model advocates that developmental initiatives start with what the community has and then build on that success.[85] It is characterized by a community-driven approach, as opposed to being driven by external agencies. The model "appreciates and mobilizes individuals, community talents, skills, resources, values and assets among other things."[86] According to Kretzmann and McKnight, "all the historic evidence indicates that significant community development takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources".[87] The Church and cultural groups also form part of these vital community assets and resources.[88] Kretzmann and McKnight further notes that:

> The ABCD theory rests on the principle that the recognition of strengths, gifts, talents and assets of individuals and communities inspires positive action for change in individuals and community. It focuses on uncovering the merits of all community members, encouraging a spirit of egalitarianism, even in societies that are hierarchical in structure and differentiated by culture, educational background and gender.[89]

Furthermore, the model emphasizes the involvement and participation of community members in the development process and is characterized by participatory and dialogical engagement.

> One of the central themes of the ABCD approach to development is the relocation of the power that would otherwise be held by external development agencies, to the communities. Power and control is the focus of the mainstream development approaches, which not only marginalize the

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[84] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg, 3
[85] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 5
[86] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 5ff
[87] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 3
[88] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg 7ff
[89] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 1-4

poor, but also perpetuates dependency. As such, the ABCD approach to development shifts power and control from external agencies to the community itself. The ABCD approach to development allows the community members to own their own destiny and to be architects of their own developmental destiny.[90]

3.2. A Theoretical Framework of ABCD

An asset-based approach focuses attention on "the productive, social and locational assets of households (or individuals), with the understanding that the quantity, quality and productivity of their portifolio of assets determine the potential for long-term improvement of community development".[91] Kretzmann and McKnight have collected many stories of successful initiatives on building communities that "present the role played by particular individuals in catalyzing the development process in their communities, and the strong base of their social networks that are mobilized to enhance the process".[92] The catalysts may be community leaders, owing to their formal education or influential ideas received from outside. The approach recognizes the potential within the community, as well as the potential from: "sons and daughters" living elsewhere, and opportunities available through linkages with external institutions. As noted by Kretzmann and McKnight, complete and united community participation fosters development:

> Communities depend firstly on citizen participation and their investment in local problem solving capacities; secondly, on their taking responsibility; and thirdly, on their working together to create better local conditions which can, in turn, enhance a sense of togetherness and increased opportunities for personal growth. Kretzmann and McKnight further notes that, much of contemporary citizen participation practice is built on principles that focus upon building relationships, involving people in a process, and full utilization of existing strengths, assets and capacities of community members.[93]

[90] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 1ff
[91] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 1ff
[92] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 1
[93] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 1-4

The basic tenet of the ABCD approach is that, although there are both capacities and deficiencies in every community, a development process can be driven by communities as they identify and mobilize their existing (but often unrecognized) assets, thereby responding to and creating local opportunities.[94] Kretzmann and McKnight argue that:

> Such unrealized resources include not only personal attributes and skills, but also the relationships between people that fuel local associations and informal networks. Through mobilizing these social assets and formal institutions, a process of community development can be sustained and scaled up, because local associations have been recognized as the driving force, the means by which community assets can be identified and then connected to one another in ways that multiply their power and effectiveness.[95]

The approach helps communities not only to recognize and map their assets, but also seeks to build relationships among them, which strengthens the community's own capacity to enhance its well-being. It is important to note that individuals (both employed and unemployed) have "strengths and capacities, and uncovering these is a key to taking action pro-actively".[96] Going beyond the dominant picture of a needy person can encourage these individuals to act progressively in building healthy families and communities.[97]

> Again, ABCD stresses the key role played by formal and informal associations, networks and extended families at the community level, and by the social relationships that connect local initiatives to external windows of opportunity. In this way, all types of assets are taken into consideration. Particular importance is attached to identifying, strengthening, and mobilizing what others have called "social capital" located in this associational base because this is the key to accessing the other assets needed for community development. It is normally in this

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[94] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 5-8
[95] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 99ff
[96] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg.110ff
[97] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 117ff

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context that people's skills are tapped, their problems are shared, and their vision extended. The role played by associations is often ignored by development professionals, including service providers, who see them in terms of isolated individuals and large institutions.[98]

Formal institutions are another asset in the community.[99] These institutions make up the most visible and formal part of a community fabric. These institutions often serve the interests of outsiders, and it is important that these institutions are reformed so that they see themselves as key players in local development. Amongst the local institutions identified by Kretzmann and McKnight are the local religious institutions, and Churches which form part of these institutions.[100] The task of the community builders is to establish relationships between these institutions, and the individuals and associations in the community.

To sum up this theory, an asset-based process offers a set of principles and practices for communities to drive their own development by maximizing their assets and establishing strategic linkages.[101] This process offers a "new capacity-oriented option for communities that are in danger of being paralyzed by the "deficit mind-set" and "seeks the paradigm shift of building relationships between and amongst individuals, associations and institutions for the good of the community".[102]

This approach provides the basis for Christians to perceive the Church as a community asset. "The Church brings diverse and potent webs of gifts and assets which include personnel, space and facilities, materials and equipment, expertise, rituals and symbols, moral authority, and it even has the capacity to hire residents of

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[98] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 118ff
[99] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 119
[100] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 115 and 145
[101] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 115ff
[102] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 115ff

the community for their ongoing programmes and activities".[103] The approach, which seems to echo the Christian perspective, affords one an astounding variety of creative ways to promote community-building. It signifies that the process recognizes the God-given potential and vocation of each person in the congregation.[104]

Although the approach is internally-focused, external resources are necessary. However, they will only be effective if the local people are themselves inventing and mobilizing their own resources, and are able to set the development agenda for outsiders. Thus, this simple community-building path is: asset-based, internally-focused, and relationship driven.[105] The approach seems to present convincing evidence that when communities focus on their assets rather than their needs, they can often: "integrate marginalized citizens into productive community life, strengthen their infrastructure, create new business opportunities and improve local health and service delivery".[106] Below are some characteristics of the ABCD model which makes it a viable model in the battle against poverty in Chipinge.

3.3. Five Characteristics of ABCD

The five characteristics of ABCD are: asset-based, community-focused, insider-led, bottom-up approach and relationship-driven. The following section will discuss these characteristics in detail.

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[103] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 117ff
[104] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 118
[105] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 9ff
[106] Kretzmann & McKnight, "Mapping Community Capacity" in Meredith Minkler (ed.). *Community Organizing and Community Building for Health,* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997). pg. 169-172

3.3.1. Asset-based

The asset-based approach to development focuses on the assets and resources within the community. Instead of believing and assuming that community members are poor and helpless, an inventory of the assets and resources that the community have is made so that these assets can be used to alleviate poverty. This helps the community to realize its own capacity, strength, assets and resources within itself.

3.3.2. Capacity-focused

The ABCD approach focuses on the capacity, talents, skills and gifts within a community.[107] Kretzmann and McKnight further note that, "instead of going into the community to identify what they are lacking in order to provide assistance, one goes into a community to identify what gifts they have so that one can help the community utilize these resources and assets. The community's capacity to help itself is valued and recognized".[108] This is the hardest and less utilized form of development in most communities. Community members need to be valued for who they are and what they have. This type of development also puts value on people since there is recognition that they have something to offer to the community. The focus is on respecting people and valuing everyone for who they are.

3.3.3. Insider-led

One of the strengths of the ABCD approach is that it is internally-focussed and the beneficiaries of the project are involved in the process of development.[109] "This self-conscious internal focus is not intended to reduce neither the role of external forces in helping the poor communities nor the need to attract additional resources to these

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[107] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*. pg. 5
[108] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*. pg. 5ff
[109] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Community from the Inside Out*. pg. 9

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communities".[110] It is important to note this for the benefit of the community. At the moment, the community has been excluded by the Church and therefore local people may not know how to run certain projects when the external practitioner moves to another place. The problem that results from this approach is that of dependence on the external practitioner for community building and problem solving even though they may have the capacity. So once the external practitioner is transferred to another place, the project will also die and people will continue to suffer from poverty. But once the project is insider-led, the community would own it and would be more committed to seeing that the project succeeds.

3.3.4. Bottom-up approach

The ABCD approach advocates change from below where the community members themselves and people at the grassroots level are encouraged to lead and take charge in the development practice.[111] The ABCD model values the initiatives of community members at the grassroots level in solving and seeking solution in the problems facing the community.[112] For this reason, the ABCD model is said to advocate and foster a bottom-up approach to community development. When the Church runs its projects with a limited involvement of the community, the crisis remains. Once the community is involved, the chance of finding solutions becomes greater.

3.3.5. Relationship-driven

The ABCD model values the building and rebuilding of relationships.[113] This helps to promote the networking of many community members' different gifts, talents, skills

[110] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Community from the Inside Out*. pg. 9
[111] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*. pg. 8
[112] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*. pg. 8
[113] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*. pg. 9

and capacity as possible. As such, an inventory of the capacity of individual community members and key assets and resources within the community becomes useful in building relationships.[114] These partnerships help development facilitators to link up individual community members, organization, associations, cultural groups and other institutions in community building.[115]

Relationships within the neighbourhood are an important characteristic of the ABCD model and, understood from this point of view; it becomes an African friendly model since it values people and their relationships with neighbours. The ABCD model provides an opportunity to practice the philosophy of *ubuntu*. The haves are encouraged to share with the have-nots and the have-nots need to also be encouraged to do likewise. Resources and assets should not be limited to the material and physical but include the 'spiritual' talents, gifts and skills, which the have-nots have.

3.4. ABCD Approach and other Approaches

The ABCD model is against a need-driven approach to community development and to development practice in general.[116] The need-driven approach focuses on the needs and deficiencies of the people.[117] It is outside-led, meaning it is led by outsiders or external agencies. Community members are therefore defined as clients, poor, needy, sick, disabled, orphaned, victims who are incapable of taking charge of their lives and so on. The community is therefore perceived as troubled and problematic. As a result, community members internalize the fact that they are helpless and in need. For this reason, community problems and development practices are driven and addressed

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[114] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities Form the Inside Out*. pg..3
[115] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities From the Inside Out*. pg. .9
[116] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Community from the Inside Out*. pg. 1-4
[117] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Community from the Inside Out*. pg. 1

through deficiency-oriented policies. The outsider or external agency who may have very little knowledge about the community, hardly consults, propose, develop or implement strategies and ways of meeting community problems.

This is the approach that dominates most attempts geared at reducing poverty. In most cases, stakeholders and partnerships seem to be imposing their own agendas and strategies, and efficiency-oriented policies and solutions in the battle against poverty. There is very little or no consultation at all with local and community members. Indigenous resources, cultural beliefs, values, norms and practices among other things are ignored, discarded and taken for granted. As we have argued earlier, in consideration of Meyers, that the nature of poverty is fundamentally relational, then the question of relationships is important when it comes to overcoming poverty. Needs based approaches reinforce the very relationship imbalances that characterise poverty in the first place.

According to Tsitso Monaheng, community development seeks to promote human development, the empowerment of communities and the strengthening of the community's capacity for self-sustaining development and self-directing.[118] This, therefore, means that in community development, community members' needs should be met. Their lives should be improved and they must be helped to find strategies of sustaining them with minimal outside help. While outside help is important, there is a need for the citizens of Chipinge to take responsibility and be deeply involved in seeking solutions in the war against poverty. The ABCD is a tool which can enable

[118] Monaheng, T. "Community Development and Empowerment" in De Beer, F and Swanepoel, H. *Introduction to Development Studies*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). pg. 125

the citizens of Chipinge to involve themselves and be in the fore-front in fighting against poverty.

Community-building has emerged as an alternative to the service-based approach at addressing developmental problems and needs in local communities.[119] Service-based approaches have the tendency to undermine the residents' ability to solve local problems. Service-based approaches view communities as problem areas that serve as sites for services delivered by qualified professionals, and they view residents as passive consumers or clients of poor commodities.[120]

The community-building approach views neighbourhoods as dynamic environments with a diverse array of assets that can be mobilized, and with community residents as partners who can be engaged in an ongoing process of problem solving.[121] Service provision remains vital, but a key premise of community-building is that direct actions by local residents, with the strategic support of institutions may yield a more cost-effective and sustainable impact on poverty and quality life.

3.5. ABCD in the Context of Poverty in Chipinge

As I noted earlier in this thesis, the United Church of Christ is running several development projects in Chipinge and many local people are well skilled in different fields. Kretzmann and McKnight identify skills, talents and gifts as useful and viable resources and as assets for the community. The focus however is on, "the assets that the community has that can be used for community building and problem solving

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[119] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*. pg. 6ff

[120] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*. pg. 6ff

[121] Kretzmann & McKnight, Building *Communities from the Inside Out*. pg. 6-8

while outside help is needed to strengthen the efforts of a community that is already very involved in development using the assets that are available locally".[122]

Kretzmann and McKnight emphasize that the ABCD approach is strongly rooted on the neighborhood tradition of community organization, community economic development and community planning.[123] This approach to community development is aligned with the way the first community of believers lived and shared their possessions, and is therefore a vehicle towards humanization. As argued by Freire, "humanization is a vocation that we are called to,"[124] therefore, the ABCD approach is once again the best alternative, which the Church can use to alleviate poverty in the Chipinge community.

The Church, together with other stakeholders and partnerships, therefore, needs to foster and subscribe to the resources, assets, strengths and capacity within the Chipinge communities in order to eradicate poverty. Assets such as schools, hospitals, cultural values, beliefs, farmers, teachers, nurses, carpenters, women movements, men movements and youth movements need to be incorporated in reducing poverty.

One of the examples of the Church's use of the assets in the Chipinge community has been the engagement of its own members who live in big cities, especially those with expertise in agriculture so that they can influence local development. Most developmental projects run by the Church revolve around agriculture, since Chipinge region is agro-based. These members can be utilized to teach the local community on how to start and run agricultural projects. This can reduce the cost of hiring experts

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[122] Kretzmann, & Mcknight, *Building Communities From the Inside Out* pg.5
[123] Kretzmann, & McKnight, *Building Community From the Inside Out*. pg. 7
[124] Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (London: Penguin Books, 1970).

from other sectors who normally charge exorbitant prizes. The Church however has not looked for other assets within the community that could be used to run current projects. These non-considered assets include associations, organizations and institutions around the community. These assets could be incorporated into the running of current projects. Professionals and non-professionals can be utilized for the benefit of the Chipinge community.

3.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, the philosophy of the ABCD model and its theoretical framework were considered. The characteristics of ABCD and comparison to other approaches were examined. The involvement and participation of community members to build on what they have rather than what they do not have was encouraged and emphasised throughout the argument. A common vision, such as affirmation of humanity and the vocation of the poor, their role in the struggle for humanization, the gifts they bring to this struggle, and the role of the non-poor outsider in affirming this humanity, role and gifts were also discussed. Testing the theory or the ABCD model will be the main focus on the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: TESTING ABCD WITH THE UCC IN CHIPINGE

We have seen how ABCD presents a challenge to the Church's participation in development. Now in this chapter we will test this theory by exploring the key assets that are in fact available to the Church in Chipinge. This is the heart of the research undertaken in this thesis. This chapter will therefore, cover the process that was undertaken, and the results of the survey. It will then tabulate and analyse the data to see what it says about the theory. This survey was done by the author and the purpose was to identify the assets of the United Church of Christ and its alignment to the Chipinge community. It is hoped that the results of this survey will help the UCC in responding to issues of poverty within the Chipinge community.

4.1. A Survey Report on the UCC Assets

The compiling of this inventory through a rapid key-informant survey took place on the 12th of April 2006. I attended the Eastern Conference Annual General Meeting which comprises of all the UCC ministers in Chipinge and the UCC President. Each Church was required to give a report of its activities through a pastor or deacon. After each report, the delegates were allowed to ask questions and discuss the report.

The purpose of my visit and objective to undertake the research survey was done with the permission of the Superintendent and President of the UCC. I then proceed with the inventory. Each minister was given an option to withdraw, but all were very keen to participate. I submitted the questionnaires to all ministers who were present. The response was very positive and encouraging. Some pastors asked for a copy of my report once I was done with my writing and I will do so. The inventory questions are attached as an appendix at the end of this thesis.

4.2. Data Report

Figure 4.2.1. Name and size of membership in each Congregation

Name of Congregation	Beacon/Emerald	Chikore	Chiredzi	Devule	Gwenzi	Hortculture	Makoho	Mwacheta	Musani	Mt-Selinda	Mutema	Nyanyadzi	Pfidza	Rufumiso	Southdown	Tuzuka	Zamchiya	TOTAL
Membership size	102	280	61	175	240	78	68	106	111	420	229	40	311	245	222	136	124	2948
Pastor	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	17
Urban	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	1
Mission	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	6
Gov Ass Areas	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	4

The answers from the survey above indicate that the membership from each congregation is large with an average number of 170 members. The total number of membership in all churches in Chipinge is 2 948. The total number of pastors is seventeen including evangelists and ministerial candidates. One Church is in an urban area and 6 Churches are at mission stations. Four Churches are located in the government assisted areas due to the presence of a tea plantation. The other six are in the rural areas. I have added the answers for the type and location of Church from my own knowledge since I have worked extensively in this area. The overall indication of all the assets owned by the UCC in Chipinge will be shown in my last table, figure 4.2.8.

Figure 4.2.2. Spiritual networks

SPIRITUAL NETWORKS	Beacon/Emerald	Chikore	Chiredzi	Devule	Gwenzi	Hortculture	Makoho	Mwacheta	Musani	Mt-Selinda	Mutema	Nyanyadzi	Pfidza	Rufumiso	Southdown	Tuzuka	Zamchiya	TOTAL
Praise Worship	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	17
Choir	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	9
Women Fellowship	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	17
Men Fellowship	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	17
Youth Fellowship	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	17
HIV/AIDS	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	17
Evangelism Group	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	16
Bible Study	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	7

Figure 4.2.2 above, shows that most Churches in Chipinge have at least 7 spiritual networks which include womens fellowship, mens fellowship, evangelism group, praise worship, youth fellowship, HIV/AIDS programmes and Bible study. As noted above, only few Churches have a choir. However, it is important to note that the community has its own spiritual networks which are explained in the next paragraph.

4.2.2.1. Traditional spiritual networks

The other traditional and cultural spiritual networks which are not indicated on the inventory survey include traditional healers (*n'anga*, herbalists, and witch doctors), chiefs, herdsmen and women, and cultural groups such as people initiated at the same period (*muchongoyo, mandhlozi, zvipundha*). Again, this is from my own knowledge as one who has lived and worked in the area. The cultural groups and dancers act as support groups that entertain people during special community occasions. Some of these dancers are invited on big occasions to perform which helps them earn a living. The Church can relate to these members of society in community development. These

cultural groups should be given a place to participate without boundaries in the community despite the fact that they might have a different belief system from the Church.

Figure 4.2.3. Professionals

PROFESSIONALS	Beacon/Emerald	Chikore	Chiredzi	Devule	Gwenzi	Hortculture	Makoho	Mwacheta	Musani	Mt-Selinda	Mutema	Nyanyadzi	Pfidza	Rufumiso	Southdown	Tuzuka	Zamchiya	TOTAL
Accountants	1	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	17
Clerical Staff	3	5	4	3	10	0	0	0	0	10	30	0	6	0	21	0	0	88
Bricklayers	4	3	0	11	15	0	0	3	6	7	10	5	10	5	7	6	3	95
Drivers	1	5	5	3	7	7	1	2	4	2	3	3	7	5	3	2	0	60
Shop Owners	7	3	2	6	4	2	2	3	10	5	11	3	10	4	5	7	4	88
Headmasters	4	4	2	5	4	3	3	1	2	4	4	2	6	3	7	3	3	60
Carpenters	6	2	2	1	1	1	9	5	5	4	15	3	10	3	14	5	6	92
Nurses	4	5	2	3	5	3	0	0	2	15	4	2	0	2	6	1	3	57
Teachers	22	20	8	23	40	10	3	6	15	76	50	7	28	10	50	10	15	433
Soldiers	3	2	2	0	1	0	2	3	5	0	10	2	4	2	2	3	0	41
Plumbers	3	2	2	2	10	0	0	1	3	3	4	3	2	1	16	0	0	52
Farmers	56	4	0	121	171	20	43	70	50	100	120	25	150	18	100	100	74	1322
Managers	2	4	3	0	5	3	0	0	0	3	4	2	5	2	6	0	0	39
Theologians	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	17
Policeman	1	2	1	0	3	2	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	2	6	0	0	20
Electricians	2	3	1	0	2	3	0	3	2	4	1	2	3	2	4	0	0	32

The Churches in Chipinge indicated that they have quite a significant number of professionals ranging from teachers, farmers, headmasters, shop owners, carpenters, bricklayers, drivers and managers, as shown on figure 4.2.3 above. These professionals can be utilized by the Church to achieve development and eradicate poverty in Chipinge. The different gifts that exist among these professionals are of great importance and the Church can make use of these people.

Some of the professionals include doctors, administrators, accountants, nurses, pastors/priests, soldiers, counsellors and psychologists. Most of these professionals

are available in the UCC and can be utilized effectively in the fight against poverty in the Chipinge region. The Church needs to identify these professionals and seek their expertise in developing the region. The Church may not realize the potential within these professionals. The ABCD approach calls this 'gifts or talents' within the region.

4.2.3.1. Non-professionals

It is easy to note the assets enshrined in professionals such as doctor, nurse, or teacher, but it is much more difficult to see the assets of an unemployed, disabled person or pensioner. Yet it is essential to look beyond the dominant image of a needy person and to seek ways to encourage the use of gifts such as music, art, crafts, driving, child-care, sharing, counselling, teaching, mentoring, and inspiring others that people have. Professionals are in-house trained community members. And these include project leaders, community leaders, untrained evangelists, community based caregivers for people with chronic diseases and youth/peer counsellors. These people are sometimes ignored usually because of their high levels of illiteracy, yet their involvement might make a big difference in the community's development. However, this section is not indicated in the inventory survey so as to avoid confusion from the respondents. This was a possible weakness in the questionnaire.

Figure 4.2.4. Physical assets

PHYSICAL ASSETS	Beacon/Emerald	Chikore	Chiredzi	Devule	Gwenzi	Hortculture	Makoho	Mwacheta	Musani	Mt-Selinda	Mutema	Nyanyadzi	Pfidza	Rufumiso	Southdown	Tuzuka	Zamchiya	TOTAL
Land	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	17
Church Building	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	11
Borehole	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	7
Parsonage	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	5
Grinding mill	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	1
Generator	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	1
Electricity	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	5
Vehicle	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	0
Bicycle	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	2
Telephone	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	4
Mission Schools	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	6
Hospitals	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	2
Clinics	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	3

Figure 4.2.4 above indicates that the Church in Chipinge has quite a range of physical assets such as land, Church buildings, parsonages, a grinding mill, boreholes, generators, access to electricity, bicycle, telephone, mission schools, hospitals and clinics. All these valuable resources can be utilized to generate more income and reduce poverty in the Chipinge region. The UCC on its own is an asset to the community. Other denominations in the local community can also be utilized to serve the people. The ABCD approach to community development sees these assets as valuable resources to development.

Figure 4.2.5. Income generating projects

INCOME GENERATING PROJECTS	Beacon/Emerald	Chikore	Chiredzi	Devule	Gwenzi	Hortculture	Makoho	Mwacheta	Musani	Mt-Selinda	Mutema	Nyanyadzi	Pfidza	Rufumiso	Southdown	Tuzuka	Zamchiya	TOTAL
Tea Plantation	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	2
Tithing	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	17
Craft	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	14
Sewing	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	3
Gardening	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	5
Orchard	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	4
Poultry	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	1
Heifer Project	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	1

Figure 4.2.5 indicate that some Churches have income generating projects such as tithing, sewing, craft, orchard, gardening, poultry, heifer project and tea plantation. These projects can be used as source of income that can be used to run the day to day activities of the Church. At the same time, the community around these Churches can also benefit once fully utilized these resources. The income generating project that seems to bring most income to the Church is tithing. All the Churches above indicated that tithing is taking place at their Churches. Some Churches are engaged in crafting as a source of income. Other projects are taking place in various Churches at a minimal base but viable.

Figure 4.2.6. Network organizations

NETWORK ORGANIZATIONS	Beacon/Emerald	Chikore	Chiredzi	Devule	Gwenzi	Hortculture	Makoho	Mwacheta	Musani	Mt-Selinda	Mutema	Nyanyadzi	Pfidza	Rufumiso	Southdown	Tuzuka	Zamchiya	TOTAL
Christian Care	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	15
WHO	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	16
Plan Intern	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	15
ZCC	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	17
World Vision	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	15

The above Figure 4.2.6 indicates that quite a number of Churches in Chipinge are well connected to other organizations such as Christian Care, World Health Organization, World Vision, Plan International and Zimbabwe Council of Churches. These important networks are themselves an asset and can be tapped in order to develop and thus reduce poverty in Chipinge. For example, Plan international has helped in the construction of Church school buildings. World Vision is involved in the child supplementary feeding schemes at various schools and the World Health Organization has helped supply medication to some of the Church hospitals and clinics. Therefore, these organizational networks play a pivotal role in helping the Church to fight poverty in Chipinge.

Figure 4.2.7. Civic responsibilities

CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY	Beacon/Emerald	Chikore	Chiredzi	Devule	Gwenzi	Hortculture	Makoho	Mwacheta	Musani	Mt-Selinda	Mutema	Nyanyadzi	Pfidza	Rufumiso	Southdown	Tuzuka	Zamchiya	TOTAL
School Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	16
Politicians	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	5
Hospital chaplain	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	5
Clinic chaplain	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	17
School chaplain	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	16
City Council	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	1
Traditional auth	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	2

Figure 4.2.7 shows that pastors in the Chipinge community are involved in civic duties in school councils, politics, and city councils, and as chaplains in schools, hospitals and clinics. The Churches in Chipinge indicates that they have the potential to make a difference in their communities once they are introduced to other approaches such as the Asset Based Community Development. Civic responsibility is another way in which the Church contributes and relates meaningfully with the society. The relationship with civic society reminds the Church of its vocation as the salt of the earth. For example, the Church is called to visit the sick, run funerals, lead devotions at community meetings, conduct weddings and lead music at political party meetings. Its civic responsibility involves both the pastor and the laity.

Figure 4.2.8. Overall chart

Name of Congregation	Beacon/Emerald	Chikore	Chiredzi	Devule	Gwenzi	Hortculture	Makoho	Mwacheta	Musani	Mt-Selinda	Mutema	Nyanyadzi	Pfidza	Rufumiso	Southdown	Tuzuka	Zamchiya	TOTAL
Membership size	102	280	61	175	240	78	68	106	111	420	229	40	311	245	222	136	124	2948
Spiritual networks	7	8	6	7	6	7	6	7	7	8	7	5	8	8	8	6	6	117
Professionals	104	62	42	187	356	52	63	95	104	139	267	59	242	58	216	188	109	2343
Physical assets	4	9	2	3	4	5	2	3	2	9	6	1	3	5	2	1	2	63
Inc Gen Projects	2	3	1	5	2	2	2	2	4	3	5	2	3	1	3	4	3	47
Network Organ	3	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	6	4	3	5	4	5	5	76
Civic Responsibility	2	2	3	2	4	2	2	2	3	3	3	0	2	2	3	2	2	39

The overall chart above reflects the total number of all the assets surveyed in this inventory of the United Church of Christ in Chipinge. Assets surveyed are membership size of each congregation, spiritual networks, professionals, and physical assets, income generating projects, network organizations and civic responsibilities of each Church. The total numbers of these assets are given on the table. This reflection will function as a mirror for the data analysis in the next section.

It is important to recognise that some of the Church assets were not included on the inventory-survey. These include livestock (cattle, goats, sheep, pigs, chicken and so on), the richness of individuals or family values (*unhu, ubuntu*), vegetable gardens, natural resources (such as perennial rivers which can be used for irrigation), the land, fruits (such as guavas, mangos, oranges and bananas) and self run projects. Some of these fruits grow in the bush and no one takes care of them. The Church can mobilize the local people to create orchards and grow these fruits for both home consumption and commercial purposes.

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4.3. Data Analysis

As indicated on the inventory survey above, the Church has many resources and assets that may not be available to other community organizations. Some of the Church resources include Church buildings, schools, hospital facilities, individuals, organizations and projects. The Church plays a vital role in the Chipinge community because it reaches large numbers of the people during the best and worst times. Significant life events, such as births, marriages, and deaths, centre around the Church. The Church can therefore significantly help the whole community, which also includes the poor. Churches are widely available to individuals of different socio-economic status. The accessibility of the Church enables it to reach individuals who are poor and unrepresented. The Church is embodied and at work in various homes, in the lives of Christians, and in the corporate expressions of the Church locally, nationally and internationally. Christians believe in the priesthood of all believers, and so all are called to speak the word and to serve their neighbour in all of their daily relationships and activities. This means that the asset-based frame-work can be used as Christians minister in today's world.

The whole region of Chipinge is well known for being agro-based (*ndimo*). Some of the best-educated people in Zimbabwe come from this region with some holding very powerful positions in the government. People in Chipinge may not realize the assets in their community. The Church has a lot of advantageous resources to bring social transformation to the people more than any other institution or organization. Therefore, this analysis focuses on the membership of the 17 congregations in respect of their spiritual networks, professionals, physical assets, projects, relationships and

civic responsibilities. The major task, however, is how to utilize these assets in order to eradicate poverty in Chipinge. The following section will elaborate on this.

4.3.1. Data application

A close observation of the data presented above shows that there are different gifts, skills and people's capabilities in the Church. Individuals in the Church and the Chipinge community are endowed with different assets for growth. Kretzmann and McKnight argue that using these assets is the best approach to community development. For proper utilization, an inventory of the assets must be taken and mobilized following some of these steps for maximum result.

The steps include mapping out the viable assets, both human and non-human, within the locality. Information must be obtained concerning what the people and community have with them. This will create good working relationships with all in the community and will hopefully lead to economic development. This economic growth will now make the people economically viable with what they have and enable them to map out development programmes for themselves. Based on the above, the community will be in a better position to utilize and implement their mapped out projects, bearing in mind that every institution will work in good relationship with one another for the welfare of the whole.

Each community is a unique living entity and can initiate programmes that will be of benefit to itself. Kretzmann and McKnight argue that every community consists of individuals and institutions in a particular geographical location. It has a common historical background, characteristics and objectives in life that can make a difference

in the community. The Church in Chipinge can boast many assets with which to build their future. An inventory survey of the Church assets unveiled a vast array of individual talents and productive skills, of which only a few are currently utilized or mobilized in community building. The inventory will enable the Church leaders to know what they have and those who feel marginalized will be integrated in the whole system. It is important to recognize the abilities and capabilities of every individual, even those who are considered useless or unhelpful. When this is done, people will feel recognized and play active roles in the community. Every individual needs recognition, regardless of his or her social status in the community.

Other than individuals, both professional and non-professionals, there are some formal institutions that are located within the Chipinge community that make up the asset base such as schools, hospitals, clinics, Church buildings and parsonages. These can be used for community building, where people have set objectives and understand each other as partners in the development of the community. The Church and its members can contribute to the well-being of the poor through provision of some basic facilities.[125] This will contribute to reducing poverty in Chipinge. There are abundant resources that can be utilized in poverty alleviation by the Church in the Chipinge community. According to Kretzmann and McKnight:

> As a matter of fact, many Churches and synagogues have already begun to utilize their resources within the community in extremely creative and innovative ways and thus have become centres for interactions between individuals, groups, associations and institutions. In other words, at the present time many contemporary religious leaders have come to

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[125] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities From the Inside Out*. While their basic purpose is the spiritual care of their members, they have demonstrated incredible capacity to undertake community work of every kind. The church in order to fulfill its role must demonstrate its preaching with concrete things that affect the lives of the common people in the rural community. Faith without work is dead likewise preaching that does not address the problem of the poor is not true Gospel. pg. 143-145.

understand that they cannot continue to develop vital links to the development and improvement of that community.[126]

The Church assets need to be utilized in such a way that they will assist in the alleviation of poverty amongst the poor people in Chipinge. Community development is a matter of social planning and social action. Social action planning is that of a professionally controlled, top-down planning approach, used by many professionals in their way to bring change in our communities. Social action, also known as community organizing, is at the opposite end of the process. Here the people have the primary role of organizing themselves around key issues that affect them. Community development therefore involves partnership with knowledgeable and committed people who believe that they can or are involved in planning, empowering and building their own community.

Both Nyerere, and Kretzmann and McKnight, though not professional theologians, knew and understood what it means to be created in the image of God and that people are agents of their own development. People in Chipinge have the abilities and capabilities that can enable them to reclaim their full humanity that has been marred by poverty. By utilizing what they have judiciously people can go a long way to changing their situation.

Nyerere, in *Freedom and Development*, stressed the importance of people's ability to realise their own capabilities, instead of depending on external aid. People of all ages have all they need in order to overcome their problems. With self-confidence and self-reliance they can face odds and emerge victorious. To achieve this, people should stop looking for external help and rather trust in their own ability.

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[126] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Community from the Inside Out*. pg. 143

In the *Ujamaa* village's programme, Nyerere demonstrated that no matter how impoverished people are, they have the resources to sustain themselves. This can only be possible when people develop self-confidence in themselves and in what they can achieve. In a similar manner, Kretzmann and McKnight argue that every community has the assets that can enable them to reclaim their self-worth. Once these assets and facilities are utilized to the fullest, the situation will never be the same again. To achieve this, people must know what they have in the community. The inventory of the Church and the community will enable the UCC leaders to know exactly where to start. People should be reminded that what they have could sustain them, if properly utilized.

The Church is the centre for socio-economic and cultural activities in Zimbabwe. Most people try to identify with the Church in Chipinge and the local community regards the Church as the centre of attraction and a sign for development. The Church farms where some Churches such as Mt Selinda, Beacon, Emerald, Chikore and Pfidza are located today were given for the development of the community. To take this forward, there is need to examine the steps suggested by Kretzmann and McKnight in working towards community mobilization through ABCD, and how the Church in Chipinge could be involved in this.

4.4. Steps Towards Community Mobilization

Kreztmann and McKnight suggest some strategies towards mobilizing a whole community and the UCC and other Church communities can adopt and utilise these strategies. These steps are as follows:

Mapping completely the capacities and assets of individuals, citizens' associations and local institutions, building relationships among local assets for mutually beneficial problem solving within the community, mobilizing the community's assets fully for economic development and information sharing purposes, convening as broadly representative a group as possible for the purposes of building a community vision and plan, leveraging activities, investments and resources from outside the community to support asset-based, locally defined development.[127]

4.4.1. Mapping assets.

The first thing that the UCC should work on is mapping the capacities of the people in the region. These are individuals, associations, institutions and organizations that surround the Chipinge neighbourhood. Many poor people come from this community and therefore it is important to see to it that this community is involved in the fight against poverty. Despite the extreme poverty in Chipinge the community still has some assets and resources that can be used by the Church for community building rather than relying heavily on external resources and assets. Therefore, the UCC can look at the Chipinge region as a community that has assets that can be utilized to empower local people and reduce poverty. The whole idea is to use local skills within the Church community rather than relying on outside resources.

4.4.2. Mobilizing for economic development

Once the UCC gets as much support from the Church community as possible, it will give them an opportunity to strengthen the economy of the community using their own available resources. Furthermore, as the Church involves the community in the utilization of their resources, it will also benefit since the people will consequently support local congregations. The main idea is to ensure that the neighbourhood provides more for itself and decrease imports.[128] The challenge for the UCC would be to see if the local Church could stand on their own once the external agencies withdraw their assistance.

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[127] Kretzmann & McKnight. *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 345
[128] Kretzmann & McKnight. *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 350

4.4.3. Mobilizing the community to develop a vision and plan

This is a step that requires the UCC to ask some hard questions like; what is the significance of being the salt of the earth in the Chipinge community? What is the vision of the Church within the next decade? Currently, the UCC has a vision of eradicating poverty in the Chipinge region within the next few years. This entails looking at ways to improve on how the Church has been operating in the struggle to eradicate poverty. This is what Kretzmann and McKnight refer to as having a vision, and strategizing on how the vision becomes a reality.[129]

The planning can be combined with problem solving[130] to ensure that the community realise results from their involvement in community development. As people get involved in solving their problems they feel that they own the projects and will be less dependent on outside help. The UCC can utilize this opportunity to actualize the vision of its future involvement in community development.

4.4.4. Seeking outside resources

When the UCC has inventoried the capacities of local individuals, associations and institutions and formed partnerships to solve problems within the community, then outside resources may be sought to strengthen what already exists. In other words, the UCC may use the resources within the community and still be lacking financially to cover their budget fully; this then will be the appropriate time to seek outside help. The help can be within the country or outside, such as government assistance, NGOs and external organizations.

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[129] Kretzmann & McKnight. *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 151
[130] Kretzmann & McKnight. *Building Communities from the Inside Out.* pg. 152

4.5. Conclusion

This inventory should help the Churches in Chipinge community to realize and understand what they already have that could be used for development purposes. Therefore, since the survey has indicated that the UCC in Chipinge does have assets at its disposal, then it is appropriate from a practical point of view to think of the UCC in Chipinge as a community asset in the struggle against poverty. The inventory survey concluded with some possible strategies that the UCC can apply in response to the plight of poverty in Chipinge. However, the Church needs more than just practical evidence and chapter five focuses on the second part of the research question.

CHAPTER FIVE 'ON BEING THE SALT OF THE EARTH'

In the previous chapter it has been indicated that the UCC in Chipinge does have assets at its disposal, and it is appropriate from a practical point of view to think of the UCC in Chipinge as a community asset in the struggle against poverty. However, the Church needs more than just practical evidence. This section will answer the next part of the question; Is it possible to think of the Church as a community asset from a theological point of view? This chapter evaluates this argument and makes this case using the metaphor taken from Matthew 5:13, where the people of God are called to be 'the salt of the earth' who would draw others together into a living relationship with God.

5.1. God and the *Missio Dei*

The *missio Dei* is a Latin phrase which means "the mission of God". The missio Dei is God's plan for worldwide redemption. The concept of mission and redemption began in the Old Testament where God made himself known as a God who reaches out to redeem his people. Mission has been part of the nature and heart of the triune God. The mission that God had revealed in the Old Testament has continued in the New Testament; first in the incarnation of Christ and secondly in the continuing mission of the Holy Spirit. God is a missionary God and His mission is holistic. According to John De Gruchy, "mission begins with God, and is God's mission in and to the world".[131] Mission is the total task which God has set for the salvation of the world because mission arises from God's love and concern for the entire world in all its dimensions.[132] God's redemptive concern for the world has to do with every aspect

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[131] De Gruchy, J.W. "Christian Community" in Villa-Vicencio, C and De Gruchy, J.W (ed.) *Doing Theology in Context: South African Perspective,* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1994). pg. 133
[132] De Gruchy. "Christian Community, pg. 133

of life, whether personal, social or environmental. Part of the missio Dei is the struggle for justice and liberation. In the missio Dei, there is need for forgiveness, reconciliation and the healing of mind and body. The search for meaning, the awakening and sustaining of faith, hope, and love, and the renewal of the earth, are all part of the missio Dei. David Bosch contends that:

> To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love. Mission has its origin in the heart of God. This is the deepest source of mission. It is important to penetrate deeper still, there is mission because God loves people. God identifies with the poor to such an extent that their rights become the rights of God himself. God is both the creator and judge of all humanity. Mission is primarily and ultimately the work of the Triune God, creator, redeemer, and sanctifier, for the sake of the world.[133]

The Bible makes clear that the missio Dei is about shalom, harmony and reconciliation among all God's creation and restoration of relationships. In our context of poverty and injustice, the dignity and peace of human beings created in the image of God needs to be restored, and unless there is transformation of creation there cannot be shalom. As discussed in chapter two, poverty is a complex phenomenon. In providing a holistic understanding of poverty, Myers argues that poverty is fundamentally relational, and at heart fundamentally spiritual–a broken relationship with God, what is called sin. Both rich and poor should be aware of the consequences of sin, which results from a broken relationship with God, one's neighbour, the universe and oneself. Therefore an authentic relationships with God can lead to good relationship with the rest. The missio Dei then, in seeking to address sin and broken relationships is strongly linked to eradicating poverty.

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[133] Bosch, D. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm shifts in Theology and Mission*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1991). pg. 392

When Jesus came back from the desert after being tempted by Satan, he went to his home town to begin his public ministry. He began his ministry by declaring the following manifesto, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, He has sent me to preach the good news to the poor, proclaiming freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight to the blind, releasing the oppressed and proclaiming the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:19). When Jesus spoke these words He referred to the Jubilee year (Lev.25). In this millennium Christians and Churches all over the world should strive to uphold the spirit of the Jubilee at all levels so as to help society to revert to equality and equal opportunities for all.[134] Jesus' manifesto suggests a kingdom of peace, justice and shalom in the world and the Church is called to follow the model of Jesus Christ. According to Bakare:

> The biblical text provides us with an understanding that the major causes of poverty in Israel's context were oppression and injustice. The Old Testament perspective shows that every family had land at the beginning of Israel's existence in Canaan. The land was primarily used for farming to sustain a family and for family tombs. At this point in the time of Israel's history, nobody was really poor. Those who did not have were helped by those who had. In short, early Israel was a poverty free society. Unfortunately, with the birth of the monarchy, things changed. As a response to poverty, God sent Prophets to protest against the structural system that kept ordinary people in poverty. Unfortunately, this practice continued into the New Testament. During the New Testament period the Roman Empire ruled the world, and Israel was controlled by Rome. This meant that Israel had to pay tribute to Rome and tribute was paid through taxes generated from poor peasants. This political situation caused poor Israelite peasants to sink deeper into poverty. It was in this context that the early Church found herself. As a response to poverty, the early Church employed a different approach. Unlike the prophets in the Old Testament who used politics, the early Church used almsgiving and the biblical text says that they succeeded....[135]

The *missio Dei* also concerns creation and the environment. According to Attfield:

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[134] Maduka, J.O. *"Strategies for local Anglican Churches to alleviate rural poverty in Igboland, Nigeria"*, (Unpublished thesis, Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2002). pg. 32ff
[135] Bakare, S.M. *My Right to Land, in the Bible and in Zimbabwe: A theology of land for Zimbabwe*, (Harare, Zimbabwe Council of Churches, 1993). pg. 40ff

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> People have a responsibility before God to care for and enhance the beauty of and fruitfulness of the earth: this responsibility is seen in the discharge of the power and the skills entrusted by God to their hands. It is assumed, then, that humans have been endowed with considerable power over the earth and their fellow creatures, power which can be used for good....[136]

Peterson is of the view that humanity is called to safeguard the earth as stewards.[137] The earth and the things on the earth are the Lord's (Psalm 24:1). He has a purpose for everything He created. The civic responsibility of humanity is to maintain a balance on earth, for God is aware of human needs and has provided for each and everyone. The earth has more than enough for humanity, but the problem is human injustice emanating from greed. This affects all and this is one of the reasons why there is poverty, even when human beings live in the midst of plenty.

The missio Dei therefore is a challenge that requires humanity to return to earth in humility and create a good relationship with it. The relationship should be void of exploitation and oppression, with the proper utilization of available resources. As we shall see in the third section below, the content of God's mission is characterised as shalom. It is imperative that humanity must work hard in such a way that it can meet its needs and reclaim the depreciation that is going on in this world, of which the poor suffer the most. Humans are called to be co-labourers with God. In the beginning Adam and Eve were stewards in the Garden of Eden.[138] Cain was called to practice agriculture, while Abel was to care for the animals. David was called to be a shepherd, before becoming the King of Israel.[139] Jesus Christ learned carpentry in

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[136] Attfield, R. *The Ethics of Environmental Concern*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991). pg. 22

[137] Peterson, A. *Being Human: Ethics, Environment and our Peace in the world*, (London: UCP, 2001). pg. 13

[138] Gen. 2:15. Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it

[139] 1Samuel. 16:11. Are these all sons you have? "There is still the youngest, Jesse answered, but he is tending the sheep"

Joseph's workshop. Even the Holy Family had a humble way of supporting itself.[140]

Some of the Apostles were fishermen,[141] while some were tent and cloth makers.[142]

Men and women in the Bible contributed greatly towards community development

and used their diverse talents in their service to God and humanity as part of the

missio Dei. Therefore, God calls for human participation, through the utilization of

their potential and capabilities, in the struggle against poverty in the world.

5.2. The Church and the *Missio Dei*

The Church as the people of God is called to participate in the missio Dei. This gives

the Church its special character and finds its reason of being in responding to the

missio Dei. John De Gruchy argues that "liberation theology calls the Church to

identify itself with the poor in order to make itself available to God for the realization

of God's liberatory purposes in history".[143] This is because the nature of the Church

has to do with its participation in the missio Dei. Karl Barth argues that mission is not

in the first place something that the Church does but rather something that God

does.[144] David Bosch argues:

> Mission is not a fringe activity of a strongly established Church, a pious
> cause that may be attended to when the home fires are first brightly
> burning.... Missionary activity is not so much the work of the Church as
> simply the Church at work. It is a duty which pertains to the whole
> Church. Since God is a missionary God, God's people are a missionary
> people. The question why still mission? Evokes a further question, why
> still Church? It has become impossible to talk about the Church without at

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[140] Matthew. 13:15. The Holy Family was that of the carpenters. The members engaged themselves in work to sustain the family. Through that they were able to meet their daily needs. People ought to be engaged by self or others.
[141] Matthew. 9:9. As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the water for they were fishermen.
[142] Acts. 9:39b. All the widows stood around him crying and showing the robes and clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.
[143] CharlesVilla-Vicencio, "Liberation Theology" in De Gruchy, J.W and Villa-Vicencio, C (ed.) *Doing Theology in Context: South African Perspective,* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1994). pg. 192
[144] Bosch, D. *Transforming Mission* pg. 373, 389

the same time talking about mission. One can no longer talk about Church and mission, only about the mission of the Church.[145]

De Gruchy holds that from this perspective, then a contemporary ecclesiology needs to be grounded in the fact that the Church exists by virtue of its participation in the missio Dei. De Gruchy further notes that when the Church fails to participate in God's mission, it ceases to be the Church. He argues that:

> Participation in the missio Dei gives to the Church its particular character in the world, for the testimony of the scripture is that since the dawn of time God has been at work transforming chaos into creation and confusion into community. The Church itself is a sign of this community which God is seeking to create. That is why the Christians of the early Church were accused of turning the world upside down because of the way that they transformed the society around them (Acts 17:6).[146]

David Bosch argues that in this new image, mission is not primarily an activity of the Church, but an attribute of God. Bosch further notes that, "It is not the Church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit through the Father that includes the Church".[147] Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the Church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. The missio Dei is God's activity, which embraces both the Church and the world, and in which the Church may be privileged to participate.

At the same time the Church cannot become a channel and instrument in the world unless it has a creative life of its own in the fellowship of the spirit.[148] As Berkhof puts it, the Church can only participate in the missio Dei if her being-in-the-world is a being-different-to-the world.[149] Through the reality of its covenantal and sacramental

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[145] Bosch, D. *Transforming Mission.* pg. 372
[146] De Gruchy. "Christian Community pg. 134ff
[147] Bosch, D. *Transforming Mission.* pg. 390
[148] Bosch, D. *Transforming Mission.* pg. 390
[149] De Gruchy. "Christian Community. pg. 134

life, the Church becomes a sign of what the triune missionary God is doing in the world.[150] Bonhoeffer's theology of community as the heart of the Church, teaches us more about ecclesiology. He asserts that "Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ....We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ.[151]

For some Christians the missio Dei is seen as exclusively spiritual, that is, "prayer and evangelism" as a means of contributing to the building of a futuristic shalom. They view the physical work that is, "work in the fields of ecology, economics, and politics" as optional.[152] By implication, to fight poverty is not viewed as a Church responsibility. This implies that Church assets should be first and foremost directed towards prayer and evangelism work. Whatever remains then may be used for "social, cultural, ecological, economic and political activities".[153] So the poor are a peripheral matter.

Therefore, it seems foundational and timely that the Church revisits its social doctrine. It needs to remove from its theology the yeast of "Greek philosophy and Enlightenment rationalism".[154] which creates such a spiritual-physical dualistic mindset. The Church needs adhere to the view that both the spiritual and physical works are in unison in the missio Dei, which is "spiritual work" in itself because it is God's shalom. In this sense, the Church can become more committed to ministering

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[150] De Gruchy. "Christian Community, pg. 134
[151] Bonhoeffer, D. *Life together*. Translated by John W. Doberstein. (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1954). pg. 10
[152] De Gruchy, S. *"Ten* theological theses on mission and development", (Plenary address: Micah Africa Regional Conference, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, 2004). pg. 4
[153] De Gruchy, "Ten theological theses", pg. 5
[154] De Gruchy. "Ten theological theses" pg.4

the poor and it will have a more fertile theological platform to work from and use its resources to their full potential.

The Church should therefore understand its place in the community as well as the broadness of God's mission so that it will have the privilege of manifesting God's love to the community in an integrated way rather than just focusing on 'spiritual' needs. The mission of the Church should enable local Churches to serve as instruments that will transform the communities around them. As God's vehicle of accomplishing this transformation, the Church should therefore be the community in which Christians come together so that God's will and kingdom might manifest on earth as it is in heaven. This is not to emphasize building up the institutional Church; rather it is transforming local Churches to realize their mission in places like Chipinge.

Steve De Gruchy contends that the participation of the Church in the missio Dei "here on earth is shaped by faith in the final manifestation of the reign of God. Our prayer life, our worship, our sacraments are thus a vital way in which we bear witness to the ultimate in the midst of the penultimate".[155] Bonhoeffer and De Gruchy agree that the mission of the Church needs to prepare a way for the Lord which is a concrete intervention in the visible world, the penultimate.[156] In this way, the Church should be involved in caring for the sick, alleviating poverty, and reducing unemployment and environmental degradation. The Church should meet the physical needs of humanity at the point of need. It is through the mission that the Church is called to serve and prepare humanity for the kingdom of God. Jesus came to bring abundant life to humanity through meeting the physical and spiritual needs of people.

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[155] De Gruchy. "Ten Theological theses", pg. 35
[156] Bonhoeffer, D. *Ethics*, (London: SCM Press Ltd 1995). pg. 96

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The ideal of stewardship can be realized when the Church engages and proclaims the kingdom of God through the work of shalom[157] and the incarnation of Christ-God. It is in the incarnation of Christ that the ultimate flows in the human history on earth and the ultimate God is seen as one who intervenes with the human affairs in all aspects of life. God of the ultimate brings the divine activity to the penultimate through Christ's love and redemption. Therefore, the mission of the Church is a manifestation of the kingdom of God through the proclamation of the word and meeting the needs of humanity at the point of need.

The Church exists to participate in the mission of God, a mission we have characterised as the work of shalom. There is need to find ways to encourage the Church to allow the community to participate and make use of the available resources for sustainable development. The UCC has for a number of years, been relying heavily on foreign donor agencies to achieve community development yet the ABCD model and a missiological understanding of the Church argues that the Church in Chipinge itself should use itself and its resources in the struggle against poverty before engaging any outside ones.

5.3. The Church as a Vehicle for Shalom

It has been argued thus far that the missio Dei is God's work in the world, and that the work of shalom is at the heart of it. The second section has noted that the Church finds its mission in response to the *missio Dei*. This means that the Church needs to

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[157] Nolan. A. *Jesus before Christianity: Gospel of Liberation*, (Darton: Longman and Todd, 1980). pg. 21

understand itself as a vehicle for shalom. The view to be explored in this section provides a solid foundation for understanding the work of the Church in Chipinge.

Nicholas Walterstorff writes that "Shalom is human being dwelling at peace in all his or her relationships; with God, with self, with fellows, and with nature".[158] Shalom at its highest level is the enjoyment of one's relationships. Jesus came to save humanity from the social injustices experienced by humanity. Jesus showed love and care to the people. Walterstorff further points out that, "In shalom, each person enjoys justice, and his or her rights, to dwell in shalom is to enjoy living before God, in one's physical surroundings, living with one's fellows and to enjoy life with oneself".[159]

Walterstorff contends that shalom incorporates harmonious relationships to God and delight in his service. It incorporates right harmonious relationships to other human beings and delight in the human community. Shalom incorporates right, harmonious relationships to nature and delight in our physical surroundings. Walterstorff further notes that "justice is indispensable to shalom because shalom is more than an ethical community because it is the responsible community in which God's laws for the multifaceted existence of his creatures are obeyed".[160]

Looking at his disciples, Jesus said, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied." (Luke 4:16-21). Walterstorff expressed that it is against "God's will that there be a society in which some are poor; in his perfected kingdom there will be none at all".[161] It is even

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[158] Nicholas Walterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983). pg. 76
[159] Walterstorff, *Until Justice*, pg. 76
[160] Walterstorff, *Until Justice*, pg. 77
[161] Walterstorff, *Until Justice*, pg.76ff

more against God's will that there be a society in which some are poor while others are rich. God is committed to shalom and Jesus came to bring shalom. In shalom there is no poverty. "Shalom is both God's cause in the world and our human calling".[162] God is at work through the lives of the poor, and as such there should be equal distribution of wealth and the Church has an obligation to fulfil this task.

The coming of Jesus is a manifestation of God's desire to restoring shalom. God has a particular concern for those who suffer in the absence of shalom, those whom we call the poor. As a vehicle for shalom, the Church is called to get involved in building peace and justice in the community, working against poverty, and building up relationships and community. According to Steve De Gruchy, the missio Dei is the work of shalom which is about creating and sustaining shalom and restoring it when it is absent.[163] The Israelite prophets were great reformers and according to them social crimes became religious sins. The covenant with Yahweh had to find social expression in moral action. Perry Yoder sums it up: "Biblical peace is squarely against injustice and oppression. Shalom demands a transforming of unjust social and economic orders. It is a vision of what ought to be and a call to transform society".[164] Peace is for all and not for a particular section, group or class. Therefore, the Church as a vehicle for shalom is called to salt the earth through participating in the missio Dei.

5.4. On Being the Salt of the Earth.

From a theological perspective the Church is called to be involved in the community. A good metaphor for this is being 'the salt of the earth', and this calls the people of

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[162] Walterstorff, *Until Justice*, pg. 76ff
[163] De Gruchy, S. *"Ten Theological theses"*, pg.1
[164] Perry, Y. *Shalom*. (Great Britain: Hodder and Stoughton Publishers, 1987). pg. 5-9

God – the Church – to be an asset in the struggle for shalom and against poverty. This enables the Church to be understood as a community asset, in the way that ABCD suggests. The UCC can and must understand itself as the salt of the earth because (i) this is what God is calling it to be in the furtherance of the missio Dei, and (ii) it does in fact have a strong 'asset portfolio' which can contribute to the struggle against poverty in Chipinge. It is possible that a community which affirms every individual as a true image of God can exist in Chipinge. Being the salt of the earth to the community is another way of articulating some of the key ideas about the Church that are at the heart of contemporary *ecclesiology* and *missiology*. Here we are reminded of the ground breaking idea of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, which emerged in the struggle against Nazism and anti-Semitism in Germany, that the "Church is only the Church when it exists for others".[165] In South Africa a similar idea emerged in the struggle against apartheid in such documents as the *Kairos Document* which challenged the Church to contribute towards a wider struggle. These ideas are rooted in much contemporary reflection on the role of the Church in the wider mission of God.

Being the salt of the earth requires the Church to help alleviate poverty by allowing creativity and creating an inclusive environment and space within which all people participate in building a human-centred society based on ABCD approach. As noted in chapter three, Kreztmann and Mcknight point out that one cannot build a community on what people do not have. At the centre of the asset based approach to community development is the idea that every individual is an active player and co-developer in the development of their community and the growth of their own being. Every being is therefore called to contribute to the transformation and the naming of

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[165] The phrase is mentioned by Bonhoeffer in Letters and Papers from Prison (London: SCM, 1980)

the world around them. As such, the responsibility of humanity as co-creators is realised. I am because I participate, and since I participate therefore I am.[166] As opposed to *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am), to be in the asset approach, is to participate. A sense of belonging, of being a part of a family is similarly advocated by this approach. A creative, enabling and inclusive environment and space within which all people can participate in building a human-centred society or community is the main goal to be achieved.

Based on the asset based approach, the Church is recognized as an asset and a resource in the community.[167] The Church has a compassionate role to play in the community, especially to the poor and needy, other than just being a mere asset. The Church is called to do this by way of translating the biblical message to action. The biblical faith's solidarity with the poor is evident in the frame of life of the people of the God of Israel, in the biblical laws of righteousness, in the prophets and psalms and in the New Testament.[168] As clearly argued by De Gruchy, "Jesus makes what other parts of scripture testify, that God has a particular concern for those who suffer in the absence of shalom, those whom we call the poor".[169] Therefore, it is not just commendable to but is biblically responsible for a Christian to be concerned and involved in poverty eradication efforts.

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[166] Kobia, S. "In search of a Participatory and Inclusive Society" in Koegelenberg, R (ed.) *The Constructive and Development Programme: The Role of the Church and Society and NGOs.* (Cape Town: EFSA, 1995). pg. 257
[167] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities.* pg. .9
[168] Cochrane J, et al. *In the Word and Deed. Towards a Practical Theology of Social Transformation. A framework for reflection and Training.* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1991), pg. 63
[169] De Gruchy "Ten Theological Theses" pg. 5ff

The Church as a community asset and being the salt of the earth has a role to bring complete social transformation to its people. Julius Nyerere states (in the sexist language of the time) that:

> In order for the Church to fulfil its vocation of bringing men to God, it must seek that men can have dignity in their lives and in their work. Furthermore, it must itself become a force of social justice and it must also work with other forces of social justice, whenever they are and whatever they are called. The Church must also recognize that men can only progress and can only grow in dignity by working for themselves and working together for their common good. The Church cannot uplift a man, it can only help to provide the conditions and opportunity for him to co-operate with his fellows to uplift himself.[170]

In the above assertion Nyerere is advocating that the Church should be involved in all development practices and initiatives. Community members should take responsibility of their own lives, growth and development. And this is one of the fundamentals of the ABCD model. How then does the Church nurture the agency of the poor people (in particular, Chipinge)? There is a need for the Church to recognize and acknowledge that the poor people are also made in the image of God, and that they too have a vocation. God dwells in the poor in as much as He or She dwells in the rich or non-poor.[171] And God is concerned about their situation for which nobody can change the fundamental facts about them.[172]

Therefore, being the salt of the earth calls on the Church to transform society, to journey with people towards a new way of being, and towards growth and development. In order for the Church to realize this humanizing mission, it should use participatory approaches in the development process. Development approaches that involve the community and affirm its readily available resources will contribute

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[170] Nyerere, J K. "The Church and Society", in *Freedom and Development*. pg.219
[171] De Gruchy, S. "Of Agency, Assets and Appreciation: Theological themes for Social development" in *The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Vol. 117. 2003, pg. 20-39.
[172] De Gruchy, "Of Agency, Assets and Appreciation". pg. 20-39.

greatly to the Church's attempts at reducing poverty. The Church can help eradicate poverty in the Chipinge region and facilitate sustainable livelihoods by tapping-in the community's abilities, talents assets and strengths. Community development practice in Chipinge needs to be applied with justice and love. The need to emphasize equal power relations should be based on justice and love. Both justice and love need to be applied to the powerless, to those who need to be empowered as well as those who wield oppressive power and perpetuate injustice.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that it is appropriate theologically to think of the Church as a community asset in the struggle against poverty. The theological understanding of God's mission and the Church's mission as a vehicle for shalom has been explored. It can be concluded that being the salt of the earth requires the Church to take faith into action through utilizing the God given gifts which are available in the Chipinge community. The resources of men and women need to be given equal footing and recognition in the battle to fight poverty. The Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach has been found to be the suitable approach that the UCC can adopt to eradicate poverty in Chipinge because it is inclusive and supports the idea that the Church is an asset in any given community. Therefore, the UCC can fulfil its mission of being the salt of the earth through participating in the struggle against poverty in Chipinge.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

We are now at a position where we can summarise this research, and bring the work in this thesis to a conclusion.

6.1. Summary of the thesis.

The key research problem investigated in this study focused on whether it is appropriate theologically and practically to think of the United Church of Christ in Chipinge as a community asset in the struggle against poverty. In an attempt to address this question; a number of other key questions were asked and explored. These questions include: to what extent is poverty a significant element in the socio-economic context of Chipinge? On what theological grounds should the UCC in Chipinge concern itself with the struggle against poverty? Can the Church understand itself as a community asset in the struggle against poverty in Chipinge, and if it is a community asset, what is the 'asset portfolio' it can actually contribute? These assisted in testing the hypothesis that the Church can and must understand itself as a 'community asset'; whose 'asset portfolio' can contribute to the struggle against poverty in Chipinge.

The first chapter gave a general introduction and background to the thesis, the research process, introduced the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe and specifically in Chipinge and its current development work. It was noted in this chapter that the United Church of Christ, as the dominant Church in Chipinge, perceives itself as a liberator of the poor people but has not done enough to realize this. Therefore, the situation of poverty in Chipinge constitutes a major challenge to the UCC.

The concept of poverty in general and its impact in Zimbabwe and particularly in the Chipinge region was discussed in chapter two. The causes of poverty in Zimbabwe, and Chipinge were identified as follows: the colonial legacy, liberation struggle, political instability, poor government, drought, economic structural adjustment programme and HIV/AIDS. These causes are closely linked with the following: high crime rate, low education turnout, high unemployment rate, high inflation, environmental degradation, gender imbalances and a high mortality rate. The effects of poverty in Chipinge pose a great challenge to the UCC and serve to motivate the Church to get involved at a broad theoretical and practical level. It has been pointed out that the Church has not done much when it comes to proposing practical options for those who want to respond to poverty.

Chapter three explored and proposed the Asset Based Community Development as one of the approaches for practical engagement. This approach argues that "you cannot build a community on what people do not have", with the recognition that local assets are absolutely necessary although they might not be sufficient for local development. The involvement and participation of community members in building on what they have rather than what they do not have is encouraged and emphasised throughout the argument. The task for community builders is to identify, capture and align these assets for the benefit of the community.[173] One of the key institutions that Kretzmann and McKnight identify as an asset in the community is the Church.[174] The Church, however, does not usually think of itself as a community asset. However, if it views itself this way, then it will become the 'salt of the earth', and as a result its resources, networks, and presence will be to the benefit of the community. A

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[173] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities, pg. 140ff*
[174] Kretzmann & McKnight, *Building Communities,* pg. 143-160

common vision, such as the affirmation of humanity and the vocation of the poor, their role in the struggle for humanization, the gifts they bring to this struggle, and the role of the non-poor outsider in affirming this humanity, role and gifts was discussed.

The main focus on chapter four was testing the ABCD theory. The objective of the test was to evaluate whether the Church had assets that could be used in the struggle against poverty. The theory was tested through a rapid key-informant survey and the results were tabulated and analysed. This survey was done by the author and the purpose was to identify the assets of the United Church of Christ and its alignment to the Chipinge community. The results of this survey would help the UCC in responding to issues of poverty within the Chipinge community. The inventory should help the Churches in Chipinge community to realize what they have already which could be used for development purposes. Therefore, since it has been indicated that the UCC in Chipinge does have assets at its disposal, then it is appropriate from a practical point of view to think of the UCC in Chipinge as a community asset in the struggle against poverty. The inventory survey concluded with some possible strategies that the UCC can apply in response to the plight of poverty in Chipinge. However, the Church needs more than just practical evidence and chapter five focused on the second part of the research question.

In chapter five we focused on the question; Is it possible to think of the Church as a community asset from a theological point of view? The discussion argued that it is appropriate, theologically, to think of the Church as a community asset in the struggle against poverty in Chipinge. The metaphor that was used in the discussion is taken from Matthew 5:13, where the people of God are called to be 'the salt of the earth'

who would draw others together into a living relationship with God. The theological understanding of God's mission and the Church's mission as a vehicle for shalom were also explored. It was concluded that being the salt of the earth requires the Church to take faith into action through utilizing the God given gifts which are available in the Church and Chipinge community. The resources of men and women need to be given equal footing and recognition in the battle to fight poverty and development process. The Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) was found as a suitable approach that the UCC can adopt to eradicate poverty in Chipinge because it is inclusive and supports the idea that the Church is an asset in any given community. Therefore, the UCC can fulfil its mission of being the salt of the earth through participating in the struggle against poverty in Chipinge.

6.2. Conclusion.

This study has responded to the research question: Is it appropriate practically and theologically to think of the United Church of Christ in Chipinge as a community asset in the struggle against poverty? Poverty has been raised as the major challenge to the people of Chipinge and the United Church of Christ has an important role to play since it is the dominant Church in the region. Within this scope, various concepts regarding the Church as a community asset were discussed basing on the philosophy of the Asset Based Community Development model. At the same time, an inventory survey was taken to investigate whether the UCC has the required assets to assist in eradicating poverty in Chipinge. The survey indicated that the UCC has a range of asset portfolio that can be utilized to eradicate poverty in the region.

It was noted from this study that the nature of poverty is fundamentally relational. In other words, poverty results from bad relationships. Relationships that are not enjoyable, not for life, unsuccessful, are a result of the lack of shalom in all its meanings. We also learned that the causes of poverty are fundamentally spiritual. In other words, sin is the cause of division and injustice in any relationship. It stands between human beings and God. It causes division between people and leads them into competing and conflicting voices. It divides us within society, one group rich and the other poor. It causes exclusion and demonizes others. Having seen that poverty means many things to many people; the study proceeded to develop an appropriate framework for the United Church of Christ in its development ministry among the poor to direct her into effective development ministry.

Finally, it was argued that the Church's involvement in development is not an option but a mandate from God as part of its holistic ministry to humanity; that is being the salt of the earth. From a theological perspective, the Church can and must understand itself as a 'community asset'; and it does indeed have a strong 'asset portfolio' it can contribute to the struggle against poverty in Chipinge.

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APPENDIX: Asset Inventory Questionnaires for UCC, Chipinge

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey which seeks to identify the assets of the United Church of Christ and its alignment to the Chipinge community. Your help in responding to the following questions will be of great help. It is our hope that this will assist the UCC in responding to issues of poverty in the community. For further information speak to Rev. Jairos Hlatywayo.

The questionnaire was developed into eight major sections and each question has a particular focus. My supervisor Prof. Steve De Gruchy was of great help in mapping up and developing the questions. Questions asked in this survey were as follows:

1. **What is the name of your local Congregation?** _____

2. **How many members do you have?** _____

3. **What kind of spiritual networks do you have in your Congregation?**

   Choir _____   Praise worship _____

   Women Fellowship _____   Youth Fellowship _____

   Men Fellowship _____   HIV/AIDS programme _____

   Evangelism group _____   Bible Study _____

   Other (name them) _____

4. **Approximately, how many of these professionals are in your Congregation?**

   Teachers _____   Nurses _____

   Drivers _____   Farmers _____

   Soldiers _____   Managers _____

   Accountancies _____   Shop owners _____

   Clerical staff _____   Headmasters _____

   Plumbers _____   Electricians _____

   Bricklayers _____   Carpenters _____

Theologians_____ Policeman_____

Others (name them) _____

5. Please put a mark next to the following items, if they are to be found in your Congregation?

Parsonage _____	Church building _____	Hall _____
Land _____	Tractor_____	Vehicle _____
Bicycle _____	Motor bike _____	Electricity _____
Grinding mill. _____	Generator _____	Telephone ____
Computer _____	Plough _____	Fax Machine ___
Photo-copier _____	Borehole _____	Livestock _____

6. What kind of income generating projects do you have in your Congregation?

Heifer Project _____	Gardening _____
Tea Plantation _____	Orchard _____
Poultry _____	Tithing_____
Sewing _____	Craft _____
Other (name them) _____	_____

7. **Do you have working relationships with the following Organizations?**

Christian Care_____	World Health Organization _____
IMF Bank _____	Plan International _____
World Vision _____	Zimbabwe Council of Churches _____
UNICEF _____	United Nations _____

Zimbabwe National Traditional Association _____

Red Cross _____	Sports Groups _____

Other (name them) _____

8. Do you as ministers have any civic/ community responsibility?

School council _____ Chaplain in hospitals/clinics _____ City council_____ Workers Union _____ Politics _____

Traditional authorities_____ Other (name them)