

**THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN  
CHURCH IN THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA (ELCRN) TO POVERTY  
RELIEF IN THE USAKOS CIRCUIT, WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON  
THE OTJIMBINGWE RURAL COMMUNITY.**

**BY:**

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**December, 2001**

**Under the supervision of Dr. Steven M. de Gruchy**

## DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own original work except where acknowledge otherwise.

Signed: .....

December, 2001

As supervisor, I have agreed that this thesis may be submitted.

Dr. S. M. de Gruchy

.....

December, 2001

## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation examines the contribution that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) can make to poverty alleviation at local community level, through research in the Otjimbingwe rural community two hundred kilometers north-west of Windhoek, the capital of Namibia. It is clear from the historical background and current situation that the impact of poverty is severe on the lives of indigenous people. The question posed by the research is: How can the Church contribute to poverty alleviation in a rural community such as Otjimbingwe?

To answer this question, this thesis analyses the real life situation that the people of Otjimbingwe experience daily. It further looks at the coping strategies of the people. The thesis identifies the capacities, skills and assets that the Church can develop and build on in its poverty alleviation process.

The study argues that the Church has a vital contribution to play as both an 'insider' and an 'outsider' to the community at Otjimbingwe. It then suggests some strategies that the Church can utilize to ensure maximum participation of the local people and to mobilize and encourage co-operation of all concerned individuals and organizations in the process of development.

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Petrina and Simon †Khariseb, who enabled me in the midst of poverty to have a sound education.

## **ACRONYMNS**

<b>CBO</b>	<b>Community Based Organisation</b>
<b>CSO</b>	<b>Central Statistics Office</b>
<b>ELCRN</b>	<b>Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia</b>
<b>GDP</b>	<b>Gross Domestic Product</b>
<b>GNP</b>	<b>Gross National Product</b>
<b>HDI</b>	<b>Human Development Index</b>
<b>HDR</b>	<b>Human Development Report</b>
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	<b>Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrom</b>
<b>HPI</b>	<b>Human Poverty Index</b>
<b>ILO</b>	<b>International Labour Organisation</b>
<b>IMF</b>	<b>International Monetary Fund</b>
<b>MOHSS</b>	<b>Ministry of Health and Social Services</b>
<b>NEPRU</b>	<b>Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organisation</b>
<b>NHIES</b>	<b>National Household Income and Expenditure Survey</b>
<b>N\$</b>	<b>Namibian Dollar</b>
<b>RMS</b>	<b>Rhenish Missionary Society</b>
<b>SADC</b>	<b>Southern African Development Community</b>
<b>SME</b>	<b>Small and Micro Enterprises</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>
<b>UNDP</b>	<b>United Nations Development Programme</b>
<b>UNESCO</b>	<b>United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation</b>
<b>WTO</b>	<b>World Trade Organisation</b>

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## **1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The Church in a poor community has no option but to face and deal with poverty. An elevated unemployment rate in any community results in poverty. A community characterized by poverty is unable to grow due to the following social factors: illiteracy, hunger, crime, alcoholism and drug abuse, and HIV/AIDS, which is the deadly epidemic that very strongly threatens the younger generation. The Church in its ministry, especially the local pastors serving the rural communities and urban areas with ever expanding shanty towns, is faced with this immense problem. I would be wrong to say that the pastors are lazy, but the problem is the lack of knowledge and proper training regarding the church's involvement in the development process of most pastors in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN). Therefore, this study will address the question: Why should, and specifically, how should the ELCRN be involved in the process of development that is aimed at job creation? This question challenges the church today to break down the spiritual wall that prevents it from being involved in the real life situation of the poor: socially, politically and economically. It also challenges the ethical stand of the church with regard to its perception about being involved in business. This study involves a search for sustainable and marketable ways that the church can employ to be involved in community-based development, so that it may more effectively address the problem of poverty.

Ten years ago, Namibia became independent from the colonial rule of South Africa's Apartheid Regime. All Namibians who suffered oppression from white supremacy celebrated Independence in 1990 and were excited. However, after ten years of independence, the gap between the poor and the rich has increased. Although there have been some reasonable and positive economic changes, the question remains, "Who benefits from what?" Definitely, not the poor. Since the independence of Namibia, millions of Namibian Dollars (N\$) have been pumped in from international humanitarian organizations for poverty alleviation programmes and several international NGO's have arrived in the

country to help fight poverty, to create more job opportunities, and to assure sustainable development to the advantage and well-being of all Namibians. However, the unemployment rate has escalated more than ever before. The question is “What went wrong?” This study will address this problem and look at what positive role the church can play in the process of development to enable poor people to be involved in that process.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) is the second largest Lutheran Church in Namibia, with an estimated membership of more than 250 000, and it is the hardest hit by poverty. About eighty-five percent of its congregations, situated in rural and urban areas, are not financially self-reliant. The reason is simply that there are very few job opportunities. The formal economic sector provides only limited opportunities. The question is, “What is ELCRN’s plan of action with regard to poverty eradication in rural communities?” Currently, there is no direct answer to that question. According to my experience, the ELCRN’s first priority is the financial self-reliance of the church, based on the current income generating projects run by the church. These income generating projects are mostly aimed at running the administration of the ELCRN and paying salaries to its co-workers. Thus, this study will address this problem to challenge the church to re-evaluate its prophetic role in order to put the first last, as Robert Chambers states in his book titled: *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the first last* (1997).

## **1.2 Purpose of the Research**

The aim of this dissertation is to focus on the contribution that the Church can make to poverty alleviation on local community level. I chose to focus at the Usakos Circuit of the ELCRN, with special reference to the Otjimbingwe rural community, looking at what sustainable and viable poverty alleviation strategies could serve as a way of benefiting the rural community.

Furthermore, the study looks at what projects the church could promote and facilitate that will generate local income, and benefit the local community, projects which the local community is willing to spend money on and which, at the same time, will attract outside

spending. During my research at Otjimbingwe in December 2000/January 2001, I was impressed by the active role the women play in this community. In fact, they run current projects. Therefore, this study also focuses on women and community development at Otjimbingwe.

### **1.3 Motivation**

What motivated me to do this research is the consequences of poverty that have claimed a number of human lives in our society. As already noted, the gap between the rich and poor grows rapidly and the Church is, in my opinion, not really involved. What is the task of the Church in such a situation? Through the Church, God calls us to take care of the environment, which is the primary source of human dignity, and to take care of all people so that everyone may enjoy peace, equity, freedom, sustainable development, social development and good governance. There can be no doubt that the Church becomes a vital partner in solving the problem.

## **2. CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Background to Namibia**

In this chapter I will not discuss the entire historical background of Namibia but rather concentrate on the historical aspects that concern this thesis. Nelson Mandela points out that “the past is a rich resource on which we can draw in order to make decisions for the future. The purpose of studying history is not to deride human action, nor to weep over it, but to understand it – and then to learn from it as we contemplate our future” (Crwys-Williams 1997: 35). I will give particular emphasis to the arrival of Europeans, especially the German settlers, traders and missionaries, to trace the roots of poverty in Namibia today. In Chapter Three I will look at the concept of poverty in detail. I will further note that the colonization that was started by the Germans was further accelerated by the South African Regime. This historical background on the colonization of Namibia will help us to understand why we are faced with extreme poverty today in our urban and rural communities in our country. I believe that to conscientize the people about their historical background will encourage them to actively participate in the process of development.

The humiliating and dehumanizing work done by the oppressors and colonizers – in order to conquer and impose their objectives of making others their possession – reduced people to the status of things (Freire 1993: 119). They separated indigenous people to break their unification in order to further the process of colonisation and exploitation. This process further dominated the consciousness of the people, which made people strangers in their own communities and land (1993: 123).

#### ***2.1.1 Geographic Location***

The country is huge, sparsely populated and situated along the south Atlantic coast of Africa between 17 and 29 degrees south of the Equator. Namibia’s surface area is 825 418 square kilometres (Namibia 2001). Namibia is bordered by Botswana and Zimbabwe in the

east, Angola and Zambia in the north and South Africa in the south. Except for the far Northern region, the climate is hot and dry, the rainfall sparse and unpredictable, much of the country is desert. The Namib Desert stretches along the entire west coast of the country, while the Kalahari Desert runs along its southeastern border with Botswana (Namibia in a Nutshell 2001).

Namibia is divided into 13 regions, namely the Omaheke, Otjizondjupa, Erongo and Khomas Regions in the central areas, Hardap and Karas Regions in the south, and the Caprivi, Kavango, Kunene, Omusati, Ohangwena, Oshana and Odhokoto Regions in the north. The exact location of my study is the Erongo Region, in the western part of Namibia.

### ***2.1.2 Colonization***

Nelson Mandela describes 'colonialism' in these terms: "Through force, fraud and violence, the people of North, East, West, Central and Southern Africa were relieved of their political and economic power and forced to pay allegiance to foreign monarchs. The resistance of the black man to white colonial intrusion was crushed by the gun" (Crwys-Williams 1997: 14). Walter Rodney argues that colonialism was not merely a system of exploitation, but one whose essential purpose was to repatriate the profits to the so-called 'mother country' (1972:162). Germany colonized Namibia from 1885 to 1915 when most of the productive land was divided between white farmers. This clearly demonstrates that the exploitation and deprivation of indigenous people, their land and resources, started during this period and still continues today.

The German colonial power quashed all opposition in Namibia through the genocidal war waged against the Nama and the Herero between 1904 – 07. Only a fraction of the population survived. The Germans confiscated all fertile agricultural land within a so-called police-zone. Namibians became increasingly marginalized and their lives were subject to a deluge of alien legislation. When the colonizers needed manpower they introduced an exploitative migrant labour system, which particularly affected Ovambo men. (Church of Sweden Aid 2001)

Clearly, poverty was the product of colonialism. Before the arrival of the colonizers, indigenous people had sufficient food. Knappert acknowledges that the indigenous people bred cattle and practiced traditional forms of agriculture before the arrival of white people (1981: 86), suggesting that the indigenous people had the capacity to practise farming and agriculture to maintain themselves.

However, the arrival of the German traders, missionaries and settlers violated the rights and freedoms of the indigenous people. They lost their land, resources and human dignity. Serfontein notes that from the time of the arrival of the Germans in the Territory, the Namas and the Hereros were systematically deprived of their grazing grounds and reduced to the status of labourers (1976: 13).

### ***2.1.3 Population***

Namibia's current estimated population is 1.8 million, with a present growth rate of 3.19 percent (Pauch-Borchardt 2000: 1). This growth rate obviously has a great impact on the unemployment and poverty rates. According to the Population Census done in 1991, forty-three percent of the population is youth under the age 15 years and 3,6 percent is over 65 years (Namibia in a Nutshell 2001). Namibia is still mainly a rural society, despite rapid increasing urbanisation. The relatively small population is extraordinarily diverse in language and culture. Since 1990, English is the official language, though only about 7% to 10% of the population speak it as their first language. The former apartheid language, Afrikaans, is common and spoken by most of the population and about 60% of the white population, while German is spoken by about 32% only of the whites. The indigenous languages are Oshivambo 50%, Herero 14%, Damara>Nama 20% (The World Factbook 2000 – Namibia)

### ***2.1.4 Socio-economic condition***

Namibian economic development must be looked at in a global economic context. The Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU) reports in its most recent publication

that the global economy found its way out of the crisis originating in East Asia more rapidly than was expected (NEPRU 2000: 1). It illustrates how the global economic system is controlled by the West, especially the United State of America (USA), European Union (EU) and Japan. They do not only control the global economy but also make huge profits, while the East Asian and African economies face rapid decline. NEPRU points out that, “the gap between successful reformers opening up and others marred by crisis and civil unrest will widen still further” (2000: 1).

Economic growth in Namibia is usually expressed through growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which growth rate in 1999 was 3.7% (NEPRU 2000: 32). GDP is the total value of all final goods and services produced within a country in a specific period – usually one year. It can be measured in the following ways:

- The production method (value added),
- The expenditure method (final goods and services),
- The income method. (Mohr *et al* 1995: 91)

International organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the World Bank apply the GDP method to measure economic growth and poverty in the developing countries. However, this method only reflects the aggregate economic growth of the country and not the distribution of that growth. It ignores the rapid growth of poverty experienced by thousands and millions of poor people. Jürgen Pauk-Borchardt rightly argues that the problem in applying the GDP as the sole indicator of economic development is that several aspects of an economy remain hidden. Furthermore, activities with an economic value like domestic labour, subsistence production, non-monetary exchange and informal activity are not included, although they are especially vital in the Namibian context (2000:16). Furthermore, the exploitation of limited national resources of Namibia by foreign companies, especially from the West but also South Africa, is not regarded as a problem but rather considered to be a major contributor to local economic growth.



The main contributors to Namibian economic growth are agriculture, the fishing industry, the mining sector, the manufacturing sector and the tourism sector. This study will concentrate on the agricultural and tourism sectors because the future development process at Otjimbingwe will most likely be based on these two pillars.

The **agricultural sector**, made up of both farming and gardening, continues to play an important role in the economy directly and indirectly because the manufacturing sector depends on its input. However, the sector is still characterised by the heritage of colonialism and apartheid in denying blacks the right to buy land. Since independence from South Africa in 1990, only about 35,000 Namibians have been resettled on communal farmland. There are about 243,000 communal farmers – subsistence farmers who cultivate small plots of land – still waiting for land, and to resettle them the government needs N\$900 million to buy 9,5 million hectares (The Namibian 2001, August 28). The black farmers are mainly subsistence oriented while the white farmers practise commercial farming and animal husbandry. Four thousand and forty-five white commercial farmers hold 36.5 million hectares with an average farm size of 8,620 hectares while 2,2 million hectares of communal land have to nurture 243,000 families, who are mostly affected by the rapid population growth (Pauch-Bouchardt 2000: 18 and The Namibian 2001 August 28).

The economic growth rate of the agricultural sector is measured by the GDP method. As we indicated earlier, this method only shows the total profit made by the white commercial farmers per year. According to NEPRU the agricultural sector contribution to GDP in 1998 stood at 5.9% (2000: 2). It provides the main source of livelihood and employment for 70% of the population (NEPRU 2000: 3). Commercial farming in the Erongo region is found around the rural centers of Omaruru, Karibib and Usakos, while communal farmland is situated in the semi-arid previous Damara homeland and another extremely overgrazed enclave around Otjimbingwe. An estimated 20% of the economically active population is employed in the agricultural sector. The region's livestock is estimated at 60,000 cattle, 45,000 sheep and 130,000 goats (Pauck-Bouchardt 2000: 18).

**The Tourism sector** is seen as one of the pillars of the Namibian economy with a high potential for jobs and income generation. Despite its high potential, it is hard to justify a situation where only a few individuals who own the land make huge profits while the majority of the citizens suffer from hunger and poverty. As a result, community-based tourism in Namibia has won an increasing degree of interest (NEPRU 2000: 25). The Namibia Community Based Tourism Association (NACOBTA) – a non-governmental organisation - plays an important role in helping rural communities with business plans and training to constitute community-based tourism facilities. It extended grants and loans of about N\$120,000 in 1999 to these communities (NEPRU 2000: 25). However, most of the profits in tourism are still generated by the formal sector, rather than community-based tourism (CBT). On the other hand, the CBT projects have begun to play an important role as sources of income in the rural areas (Pauck-Bouchardt 2000: 23). The Ministry of Tourism estimated the possible local income for 1995 in the former Damaraland around Spitzkoppe and Brandberg at N\$1,990,313 (mainly in the areas of wildlife and wilderness viewing) of which presently only a third was realised.

Despite some positive economic changes and improvements since independence, such as the development of clean water supplies and other services in certain parts in rural areas, many people in Namibia are still very poor. Because the country's best agricultural land is mostly owned by a handful of white commercial farmers, thousands of poor indigenous farmers struggle to grow enough to eat or to farm in drier and less productive areas. The Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, Benhard Esau, very recently delivered a Heroes' Day speech on behalf of the President, Sam Nujoma, in which he said that "Namibia's struggle was about land and it was difficult to justify a situation where a few individuals hold excess land while the majority of the citizens suffer from hunger and poverty" (The Namibian 2001 August 28).

#### ***2.1.5 Poverty in Namibia***

When talking about poverty in Namibia, it is important to understand what causes poverty in Namibia. This will help, first, the poor to understand why they have to experience

absolute poverty every day of their lives. Absolute poverty is a situation in which people live without any basic needs like clean water, nutritious food, health care and decent housing. Secondly, it will also help the Church and its partners (government, NGO's and CBO's) to determine how they should respond in the fight to eradicate poverty. As indicated earlier, the measurement used at national and international levels to measure poverty, namely *per capita* GDP, conceals the true extent of poverty in Namibia. It is sound to echo at this stage the words of Pixley and Boff when explaining poverty today:

Poverty today is not simply backwardness in the sense of a lack of material development. Poverty today is mainly the result of a contradictory development, in which the rich become steadily richer, at the expense of the poor who are steadily poorer. Poverty today is endogenous: it is internal to the system and a natural product of it. This is why poverty today means oppression and dependence in social terms, and injustice and social sin in ethical terms. (1989: 6)

Another indicator that is used to measure poverty in Namibia is the Human Poverty Index (HPI), which is still new in the Namibian context. The HPI measures that part of the population deprived of certain standards of living. It measures deprivation in the same three aspects of human development as the HDI (longevity, knowledge and standard of living). The difference between HDI and HPI is that whereas HPI indicates what additional development is still required in order to eradicate poverty, the HDI measures progress in development. Many people working in development consider this a better indicator of economic development because it looks at the distribution of the benefits of the economy.

Although the GDP *per capita* has gradually increased since the independence of Namibia in 1990, the country remains one of the most unequal societies in the world. The reason is that the distribution of the benefits of that growth remains limited. According to the Human Development Report (HDR) of 1997, Namibia ranks as 83<sup>rd</sup> out of 175 countries in terms of *per capita* GDP. In 1996 it ranked 79<sup>th</sup>. The Human Development Index (HDI) of 1997, ranks Namibia 118<sup>th</sup>, two places below its position in 1996 (HDR 1997: 8). This explicitly indicates that there are striking inequalities between its ranking by income and its ranking by the HDI index. The HDI measures the standard achievement of a country in basic human capabilities. It shows whether people lead a long and healthy life, are educated and

knowledgeable and enjoy a good standard of living. It measures the real impact of development on people, rather than applying the GDP, which is mainly based on financial profit making (Ellwood 1998: 128). It further is applied to measure the total living condition of all people in a country, based on three aspects of human development: longevity, knowledge and standard of living. These three aspects are described as follows:

The factor of longevity is represented by the percentage of people expected to die before age 40, and the knowledge factor is represented by the percentage of illiterate adults. The standard of living factor includes three variables: the percentage of people without access to health services, the percentage of people without access to safe water, and the percentage of underweight children under five. (Kaul 1999:54)

Namibia is considered to be a 'middle income' country. This is due to the fact that the economy of the country is controlled by a small minority of mainly white Namibians with education and health standards equivalent to any industrialised country. On the other hand, the majority of Namibians, mainly black, do not have equal access to proper education and health facilities. For example, the richest 10% of the society receive 65% of income, while the remaining 90% share amongst themselves only 35% of national income (HDR 1997: 9).

If poverty is defined and measured only in narrow economic terms, Namibia performs relatively well internationally, being classified in the World Development Report as a 'lower-middle-income country'. However, if social and health indicators such as infant mortality and life expectancy are taken into consideration, this satisfactory picture is seriously undermined. (Adkisson 1995: 23)

The main cause for today's inequalities that the Namibian people are faced with is the country's colonial and apartheid past (HDR 1997: 8). Independent Namibia inherited one of the most dualistic economies in the world, where 5% of the population (white minority) controlled 72% of GDP and 70% of the population depended on agriculture for livelihood, yet agriculture contributes only 10% of the total value to the GDP (Adkisson 1995: 15, 17). In this system, the indigenous people did not have equal opportunities to education and health, and, furthermore, they also lost their land, culture and human dignity.

Consequently, today in an independent and democratic Namibia, differences in human development and poverty are experienced and visible on a regional level, among language and ethnic groups, between male and female and at rural and urban levels. On the **regional level** there are certain regions that are deemed to be richer than the others, mainly because of each region's potential resources and growth. For example **table 1.1** below and **map 1** found on the next page, which are based on HDI and HPI indicators, show how the dualistic feature of Namibia's economy is reflected in levels of poverty in the regions (Namibia HDR 1997: 12). It is clear that the regional inequalities within Namibian society in *per capita* income are very striking and shocking. The table below illustrates the huge contrast between wealth and absolute poverty in the conditions of living between different regions. With the second best HPI and HDI percentage, the Erongo Region had the second highest level of household income in Namibia.

**Table 1.1: Human Poverty Indices – for Regions in Namibia**

<b>Dimension of Poverty:</b>	Non-survival 40 yrs	Illite- racy	Underw- Children	No Water Supply	No Health Service	Living Standard (3a,b,c)	Poor House- holds	<b>Human Poverty Index I</b>	<b>Human Poverty Index II</b>
<b>Region</b>	1	2	3a	3b	3c	3	4	5	6
Ohangwena	15.8	48	19.8	72.0	64	51.9	9.9	43.9	40.0
Omaheke	21.1	51	14.4	2.0	89	35.1	25.1	39.5	36.9
Kunene	15.9	55	5.4	26.0	47	24.5	11.3	39.7	36.2
Okavango	22.7	44	20.6	54.0	38	36.9	19.6	36.8	34.0
Oshikoto	17.7	38	14.6	53.0	68	44.2	9.0	37.1	33.7
Omusati	13.1	30	10.7	85.0	38	44.6	9.0	34.0	30.9
Oshana	16.5	28	15.7	45.0	54	37.6	5.5	30.2	27.4
Caprivi	28.4	23	12.8	52.0	42	34.6	7.0	29.9	27.2
Otjozondjupa	18.2	39	12.0	2.0	52	23.0	10.8	29.4	26.8
Hardap	19.6	27	9.8	2.0	43	18.3	4.7	22.3	20.3
Karas	18.9	17	19.9	3.0	43	23.0	4.1	19.5	17.7
<b>Erongo</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>14.4</b>
Khomas	10.1	12	22.0	1.0	17	13.3	1.1	12.0	10.9
<b>NAMIBIA</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>41.0</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>31.7</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>26.9</b>

*All the figures expressed as percentages. Details on the computation formula are included in Technical note in Part C.*

*Sources: 1: UNDP calculations based on Coale-Demeny function and parameters supplied by CSO 2: CSO, 1991 Census, represented as population over 15, and less than 4 years of schooling 3a: MOHSS, HIS for 1996*

*3b: CSO, 1991 Census, 3c & 4: CSO, Living Conditions in Namibia, data from NHIES 1993 1993/94*

*5 HPI 1 is calculated based on columns 1-3. 6 HPI 2 is calculated based on columns 1-4*



## HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX – NAMIBIA: ECONOMIC REVIEW AND PROSPECTS 1999 / 2000



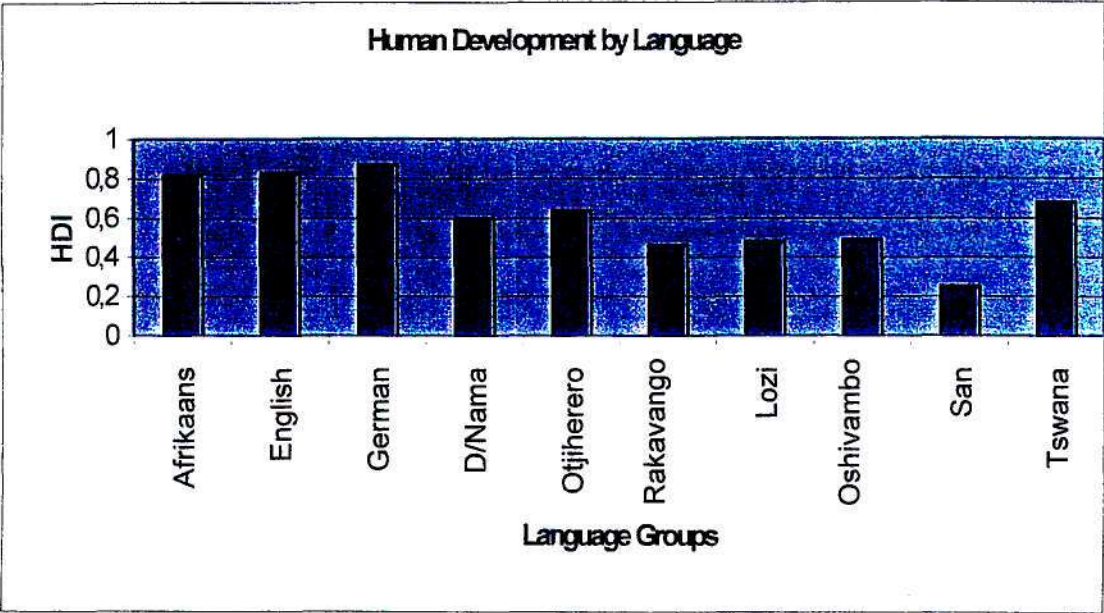
Although these tables are based on the 1991 census, which was the first census after the independence of Namibia, the poverty situation in many regions has remained the same and, in some regions, is worse than before. However, there are a very limited number of regions in which the GDP has improved but not people's living conditions. Since independence, the Namibian government has tried its best to improve health and education services, as that was considered to be a most effective way to reduce poverty at regional level. Despite this fact, many regions lack these services today. For example, in Erongo region, which is considered as the second best in terms of its health and education services, Otjimbingwe has only one clinic, which is too small to meet the needs of the entire community.

There are differences in human development and poverty by language group. There are over eleven language groups, mainly regionally distributed. Afrikaans, English and German speaking groups are the most privileged with regard to education, health and income. The indigenous language groups are most deprived, as a result of the legacy of colonialism and apartheid. Nevertheless, since the independence of Namibia, the Namibian Constitution guarantees all language groups equality and freedom from discrimination: "(1) All persons shall be equal before the law. (2) No person may be discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status" (The Constitution of Namibia: Article 10). Today, the government, that is, mainly, Oshiwambo speaking, mainly enhances the lives of the Oshiwambo speaking groups in terms of poverty reduction programmes. It is a fact that this particular group was severely deprived during the apartheid era. Yet, the government should treat all language groups equally according to its Constitution.

Today, the government's poverty reduction and human development programmes have very limited impact for those of minority language groups such as San, Otjiherero, Damara and Nama. For example, mainly Otjiherero and Damara speaking groups live at Otjimbingwe, and at present there are no definite development or poverty eradication programmes aimed at this rural community. During my research there, many people expressed their disappointment with the present government. #Neib said that the poverty

situation at Otjimbingwe is today worse than what it was prior to independence in 1990 (#Neib 2001). **Figure 1.2** below indicates human development by language group. It is evident that there are huge differences between different language groups. The figure shows that Afrikaans, English and German language speaking groups are the most advantaged in terms of education, health and income. In contrast, the indigenous language groups are relatively marginalized. It is very clear that the most disadvantaged and deprived is the San speaking group.

**Figure 1.2**

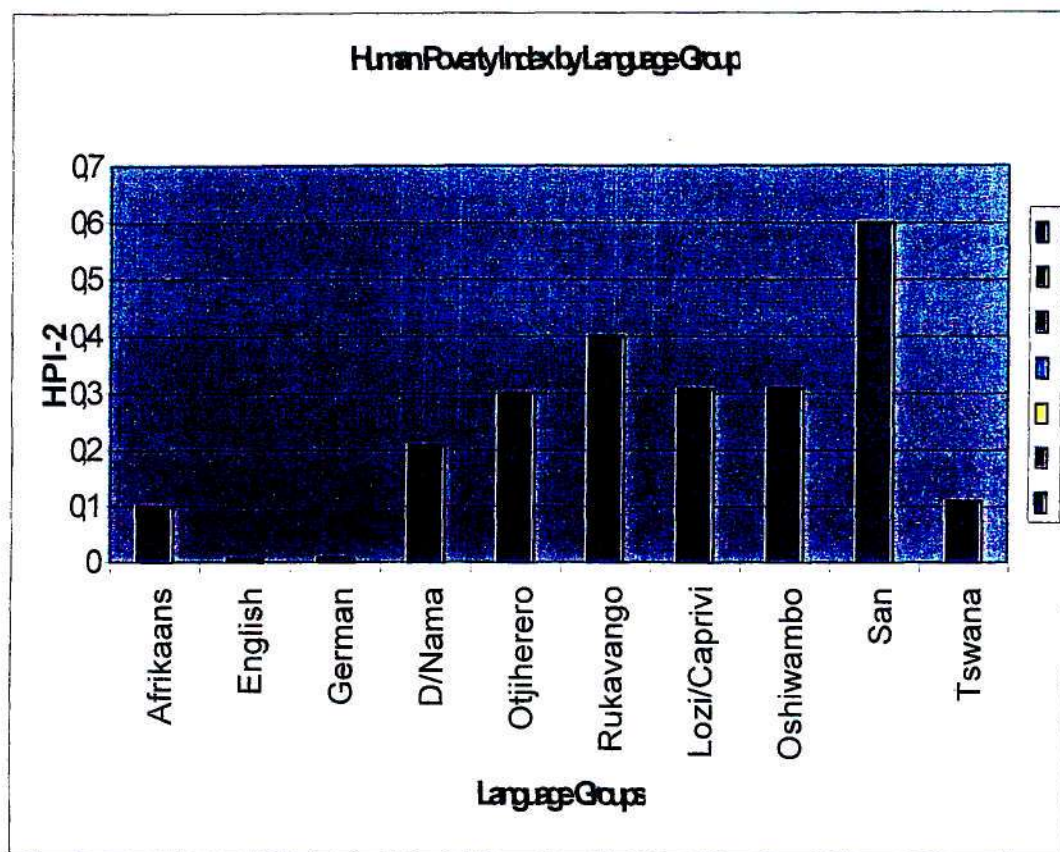


Source: CSO, Census 1991. HDI by Language Group is **not** updated by school enrolment data for 1996.

*Source: Namibia: Human Development report 1997*



Figure 1.3:



Source: Namibia: HDR 1997

Figure 1.3 above shows the HPI by language group. It gives a similar picture to the HDI by language group, that is, the huge differences in living conditions along ethnic lines. It is also clear that Afrikaans, English and German speaking groups are slightly affected by poverty, while the indigenous language groups Damara/Nama, Otjiherero, Rukavango, Lozi/Caprivi, Oshiwambo, Tswana and San are severely affected by poverty. The most severely deprived group is the San.



The 1997 Namibia HDR introduces the Human Poverty Index (HPI) – (see **map 2** above) as a support to the HDI. According to this map, Erongo and Khomas regions are considered to be the most wealthy with only 15% of the poor, while the regions Omaheke, Kunene and Ohangwena are considered to be the poorest with 35% poverty.

The 1997 Human Development Report shows that there are still huge differences between females and males based on the HDI and HPI (HDR 1997: 21). Since the independence of Namibia in 1990, the churches and the government have strongly encouraged the empowerment and equal treatment of women at all levels and in all structures in Namibian society. The Namibian government has gone to the extent of establishing the Ministry of Women's Affairs in the Office of the President very recently, which should be complimented.

However, women still remain disadvantaged in comparison to men. We have to note that the basic priorities of the Human Development model

are the concepts of equality of opportunity and empowerment of all people to participate in, and benefit from the development process. This entails that women and men should have, among other things, equal access to basic services, opportunities for decision-making, equal reward for work and the elimination of discrimination based on gender. (HDR 1997: 21)

Despite this fact, women still experience discrimination, inequality, and abuse on church, community and government levels. They are most affected by poverty and are still discriminated against in the process of development. According to the World Bank World Development Indicators report of 2000, Namibia's **female population** in 1998 was 50.2 percent. The female population is the percentage of the total population that is female. This report makes a comparison mainly between 1970 and 1998 to indicate the differences between females and males in the following aspects: labour force participation, adult illiteracy, primary enrolment, life expectancy at birth and child mortality rate. (World Bank 2001).

It is clear from the report that there are more women in Namibia than men. However, fewer women are employed than men because from 1970 to 1998 the employment playing field has not been leveled and has not improved. In other aspects, especially education, the chances of women have really improved, when the 1970 figures are compared to those in 1998.

Having looked at the historical background of Namibia and the root causes of poverty in Namibia, let us now look at life in Otjimbingwe in the next chapter.

### 3. CHAPTER THREE: LIFE IN OTJIMBINGWE

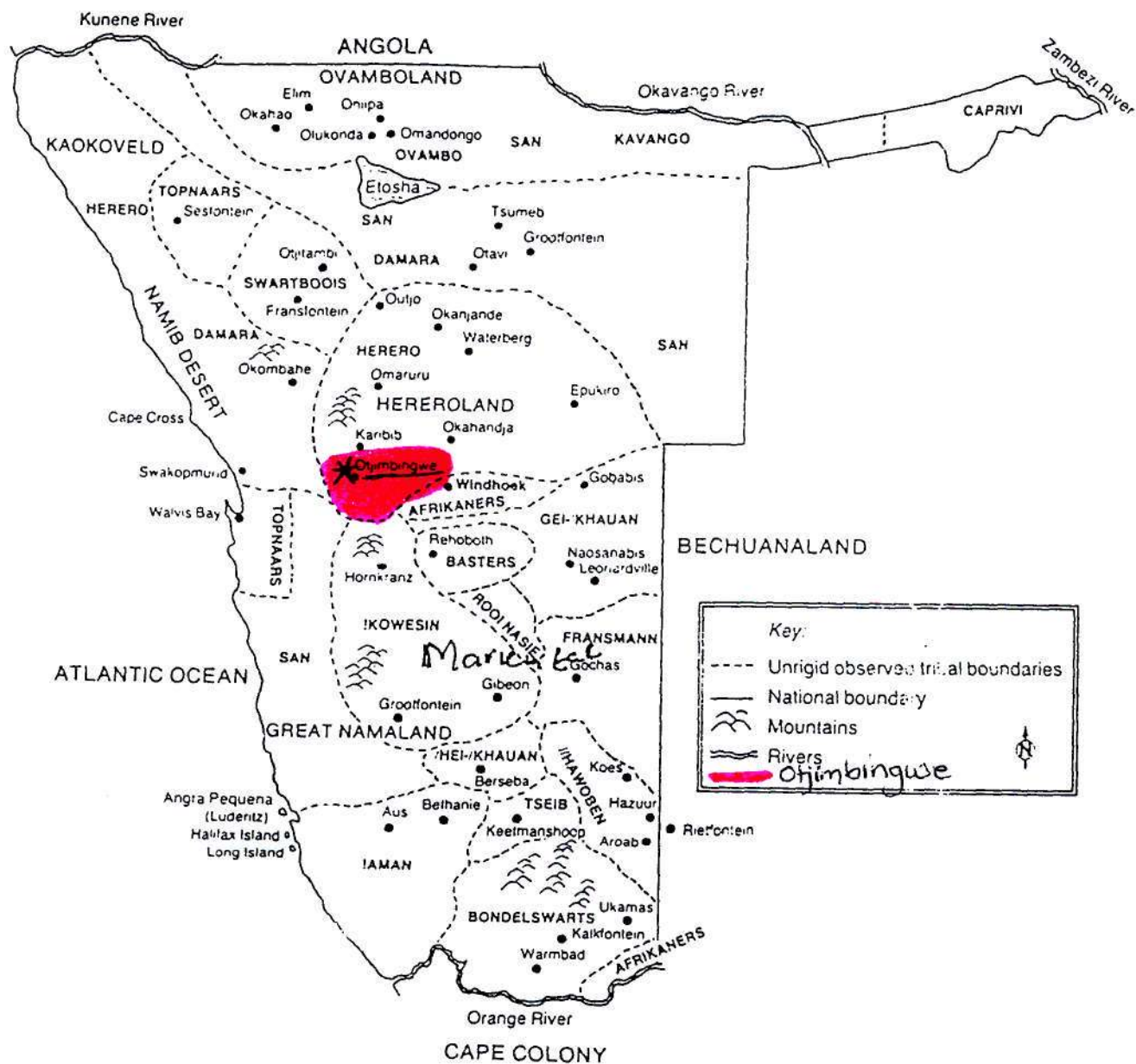
The Otjimbingwe rural community in the Usakos Circuit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) lies in the picturesque environs of the Khomas Hochland, on the banks of the Swakop river (Namibia Tour 2001). Otjimbingwe is situated halfway between Windhoek and Swakopmund in a semi-arid area close to the Namib Desert in the Erongo Region. According to its early historical background, Otjimbingwe is known as the key 19<sup>th</sup> century settlement, the center of all trading and missionary activities (Andersson 1989: 310). It was regarded as an important cultural center, as it was a place where different peoples, such as Damara, Herero, Nama and Europeans (Germans and British) met. Until 1890, Otjimbingwe was the colonial headquarters of the German administration (Pack Safari Namibia 2001).

This chapter attempts to give an overview of the living conditions of the people in the Otjimbingwe rural community. This is done through interviews and by presenting a community profile. The chapter further focuses on what impact poverty has on the lives of the community and how they cope in this situation. Finally, we will look at what development initiatives are in place or underway to better the lives of the people.

Interviews are important because people share their real life stories. People talk about their everyday lives and the struggle of survival. They tell their pain, frustrations, hopelessness, experiences and desperations. For example, Deline Gertze tells that she has to collect empty bottles and dry bones to survive. The clothes she was wearing at that moment, her poor home and the immediate surroundings underline her frustration and her story. Therefore, interviews do not just serve as pure statistics but illustrate people's real feelings and depth of poverty. The interviewer is sometimes in a very vulnerable position because what is told is so striking and very often the interviewees express their feelings and real experiences with the aim of seeing solutions. Therefore, it is proper to present the interviews first, before the 'technical detail' of Otjimbingwe, so that we can get a feeling of the real experience of life in Otjimbingwe. Before presenting the interviews, **maps 3, 4 and 5** will

indicate where exactly to locate Otjimbingwe in Namibia and the region and to have an idea about the map of Otjimbingwe as it is proposed and accepted by the Erongo Regional Council.

# MAP OF NAMIBIA

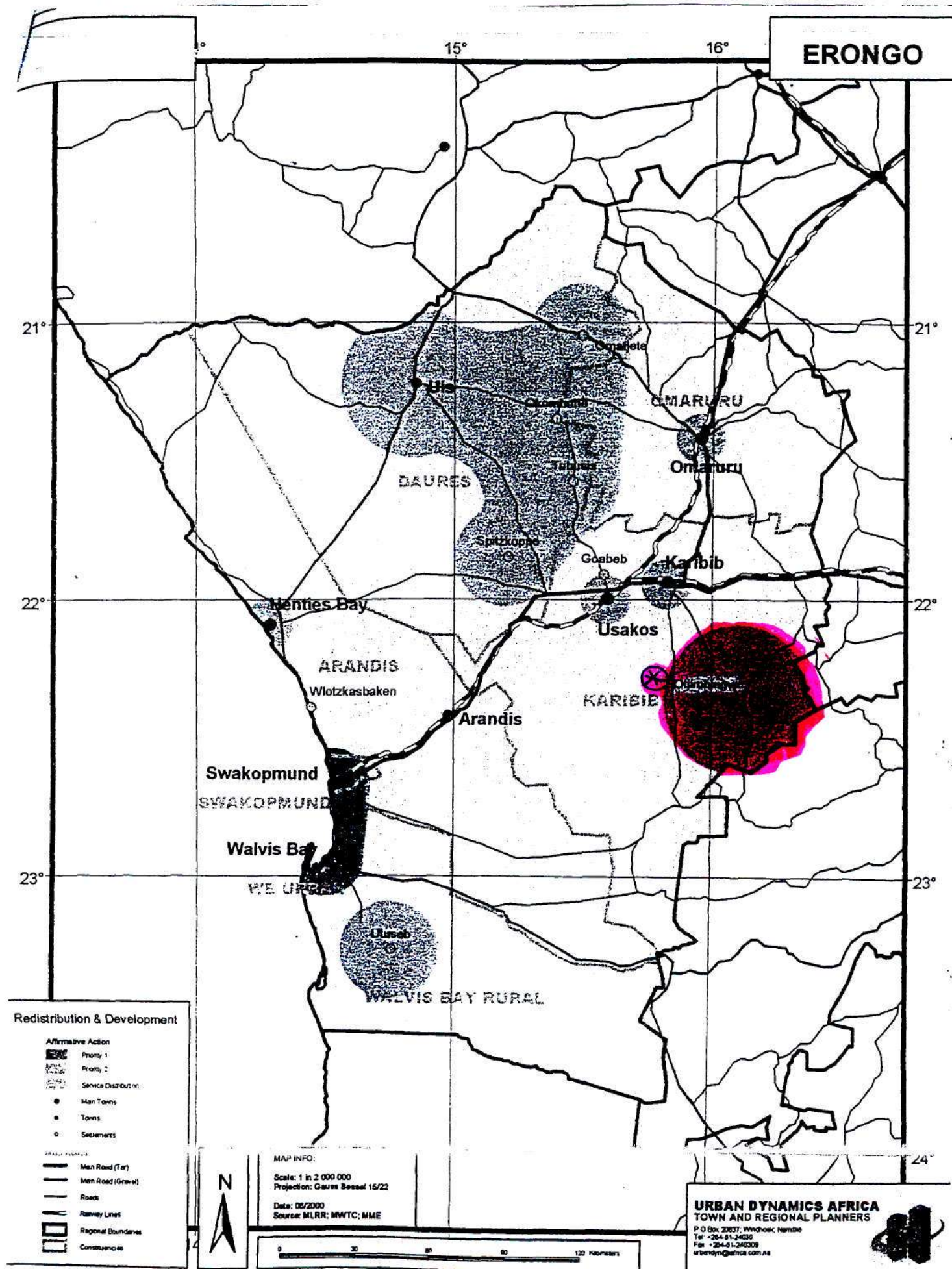


## NAMIBIA

Map of Namibia Source: Nambala, S, 1994. History of the Church in Namibia.



# MAP OF ERONGO REGION



Source: Erongo Regional Office, Swakopmund





### **3.1 Interviews**

On the 6 January 2001, very early in the morning at six o'clock, I left Walvis Bay for Otjimbingwe, a distance of three hundred kilometers. From Karibib I had to travel on a gravel road for sixty kilometers to reach Otjimbingwe. When looking at the side mirrors of my car only a white cloud of dust was evident – clearly illustrating the dryness of the whole area. Before I came into Otjimbingwe, I was confronted by the silent voices of the thirsty soil, dry trees and grass along the road. I saw many lean and bony cows and donkeys, some lying and some standing, as if they did not have a choice but to wait for the day to perish due to severe drought. These animals, the trees, grass and the dry soil were, in fact, my first interviewees that told me about the severe poverty at Otjimbingwe. At about nine o'clock in the morning, I reached my destination and went directly to the place of the Headman. That is how the interview process started. The interviews took place in the indigenous languages Damara/Nama, which is my mother tongue, Otjiherero and Afrikaans. The following interviews have been translated into English.

#### **(i) Mr. Bethiël Haraseb (Headman of the Damara speaking group at Otjimbingwe)**

Place: Otjimbingwe

Date: 6 January 2001

Language: Damara/Nama

**Interviewer:** What is the population of Otjimbingwe?

**Headman Haraseb:** It is about four to five thousand people. Most of the inhabitants went to surrounding commercial farms and towns like Karibib, Usakos, Okahandja, Windhoek, Arandis, Swakopmund and Walvis Bay to look for jobs.

**Interviewer:** What is the unemployment rate currently?

**Headman Haraseb:** There are many people without jobs because there are no job

opportunities here. More than 90% of the youngsters are without work and, therefore, are forced to be involved in crime such as stealing livestock, while alcohol abuse and teenage pregnancies are some of the social problems caused by poverty.

**Interviewer:** What strategies do you use to fight poverty?

**Headman Haraseb:** We had several meetings with the Regional Council's representatives and some community members in order to bring development to our community. The Council is in the process of declaring Otjimbingwe a municipal area to attract investors for job creation. But this will be a long process and it will take many years before something drastic will happen.

**Interviewer:** Do all the people know about these meetings and are they giving their cooperation? Are they happy about this issue of the proclamation of Otjimbingwe as a settlement?

**Headman Haraseb:** Not all people come to meetings and to get cooperation from the people is always a problem. We try our best to get people to meetings but only a few come. On the question whether the people are happy: that's a burning issue. People are happy to hear that the proclamation of Otjimbingwe will create jobs, but do not agree with paying for municipal services like water and electricity and sewerage removal. Their complaint, which is understandable, is where they are supposed to get the money to pay for these services, because paying for these services has started already, even before there are any jobs created.

**Interviewer:** Are you aware of any development projects initiated by the community?

**Headman Haraseb:** Yes, there are small projects, which are run by women – a bakery project, a sewing project and a gardening project. All these projects generate a little income for those women who initiated the projects. The projects might be valuable for community upliftment, but local support is not promising.

**Interviewer:** What kind of projects would you prefer which could meet the needs of this community?

**Headman Haraseb:** We are currently negotiating for a tourism project to attract tourists from abroad, as Otjimbingwe has historical monuments, which mark the colonial occupation of Germany in the 1880's. Many tourists could come to see these monuments. This could be our first project.

**Interviewer:** How far is the church involved in the fight against poverty?

**Headman Haraseb:** The churches here are very quiet and are, in fact, currently not involved in any projects. I remember that, in 1997, the Lutheran church gave ten goats per household, which was a very welcome step. However, the time the goats were given to the people was very bad – it was during the drought, therefore many people lost their goats due to a shortage of water and grass. I would appreciate it if the churches could take a leading role in this process, because the people here listen to what the pastors say.

**(ii) Cloudius #Neib (Retired Teacher)**

Place: Otjimbingwe

Date: 06 January 2001

Language: Damara/Nama

**Interviewer:** How long have you lived at Otjimbingwe?

**Cloudius #Neib:** I have lived here now for twenty seven years.

**Interviewer:** What is the unemployment rate in this place?

**Cloudius #Neib:** About 99% are unemployed. There are no steps taken so far toward eradicating poverty. People are extremely poor. There are people who go to bed, or who do

not even have a bed, without having anything in their stomachs.

**Interviewer:** What is the traditional council and the government doing to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants?

**Cloudius #Neib:** I am a member of the traditional council. Several meetings have taken place between the local council, the regional council and the community members. But so far nothing in reality has happened. We talk too much but are doing nothing. That is what dims the hope of many people and why people do not want to attend meetings anymore.

**Interviewer:** Do you know of any existing projects?

**Cloudius #Neib:** Yes, I know of three projects – sewing, baking and gardening. The women are very active and very hard workers. All the projects are run by them. Despite the hard work of the women, the local community does not support the projects. The bakery project could make good income, but they lack equipment and facilities.

**Interviewer:** What type of project do you think will be suitable for this community?

**Cloudius #Neib:** I think the gardening project should be upgraded and improved because most of our people have skills in how to cultivate crops, although they lack proper education. They have also got farming skills but need more training and encouragement. Another project, I think, which will be profitable is a timber project, mainly to produce cheap coffins, because every weekend we bury more than one young person, mainly due to HIV/AIDS related deaths. This will also enable the poor families of deceased persons to get cheap coffins and will even save them the trip to one of the surrounding towns to buy an expensive coffin.

**Interviewer:** Is the church involved in the community development process?

**Cloudius #Neib:** In the past the Lutheran church gave goats to certain households. What the other churches are doing, I do not know. But to be honest, I only know the church

**Cloudius #Neib:** In the past the Lutheran church gave goats to certain households. What the other churches are doing, I do not know. But to be honest, I only know the church inside the church building but, outside, we do not hear or see the church. I think it is high time that the church should be associated with the poor and fight for their well-being and rights.

**(iii) Deline Gertze (unemployed)**

Place: Otjimbingwe

Date: 06 January 2001

Language: Damara>Nama

**Interviewer:** How long have you lived here?

**Deline Gertze:** I was born here and I am approaching 50 years.

**Interviewer:** Do you have children and how do you earn a living?

**Deline Gertze:** I have 3 children who are dependent on me. It is hard to get food for the children because I am a single parent. I have to collect empty wine and cooldrink bottles in order to sell them at the bottle store to get a few cents for survival. That's my everyday life.

**Interviewer:** What is the unemployment rate?

**Deline Gertze:** What you see and hear from me is what you will hear and see from my neighbours. There are no job opportunities. Life is hard and terrible here.

**Interviewer:** Are you aware of any projects for the creation of jobs by the government?

**Deline Gertze:** I stopped going to community meetings a long time ago, because we discuss issues but in the end take no action. I am aware of the Regional Council's plan to make this village a municipal area so that we can pay them for services. We do not have

money to pay, therefore, I and many others do not support the council's plan. We already started paying for these services, even before the plan was agreed upon by the people or was implemented. The projects I know of are the bakery, sewing and gardening projects. But all these projects do not have the necessary equipment.

**Interviewer:** What is the church's involvement? Do you think that the church can help people start small-scale businesses?

**Deline Gertze:** The Lutheran church, to which I belong as a member, in 1997 gave some community members goats. People were very excited about that. But since then, I do not know of any project that is supported by the church. I think the church should be involved in the creation of jobs for the people, if not, where do we get money to give to the church?

**(iv) Mr. Deodat van Wyk (Chief Clerk, Erongo Regional Council)**

Place: Regional Office, Swakopmund

Date: 02 January 2001

Language: Afrikaans

**Interviewer:** What is the population of Otjimbingwe?

**Deodat Van Wyk:** ± 1 200 in town and ± 6000 in total.

**Interviewer:** What is the literacy rate?

**Deodat van Wyk:** ± 40%

**Interviewer:** What is the employment rate?

**Deodat van Wyk:** ± 10%

**Interviewer:** What strategies do you employ to eradicate poverty in this area?

**Deodat van Wyk:** The Regional Council is in the process of proclaiming Otjimbingwe as a settlement, according to the Regional Council's Act 22 of 1992 section 31, to attract investors. The Council provides micro loans through the Erongo Development Fund to enable self-sustainability.

**Interviewer:** Are there any projects in the pipeline initiated by the Regional Council?

**Deodat van Wyk:** The Council plans the following projects for the Otjimbingwe community: the proclamation of Otjimbingwe, the extension and upgrading of the water network, the extension of the sewerage and electricity network, food for work projects (FFW), cash for work projects (CFW) and the build-together housing programme.

**Interviewer:** Who runs and owns the projects?

**Deodat van Wyk:** The Council runs the capital projects and forces contractors to employ local people; the FFW and CFW are run and owned by the community.

**Interviewer:** How do you ensure community participation in the process of development?

**Deodat van Wyk:** The community committee includes community leaders, regional representatives and school principals. The community with the Regional Council is involved in identifying projects at the very first phase of development.

**Interviewer:** How will the community benefit from the government projects implemented in this area?

**Deodat van Wyk:** In the short term, through employment of the local labour force, and in the long term, investors create job opportunities, which will uplift living standards.

**Interviewer:** What urgent needs are there to be tackled?



**Deodat van Wyk:** Urgent needs that need attention are job creation, housing and community projects.

**Interviewer:** Are there any other NGO's or community-based organizations you are in partnership with in this community?

**Deodat van Wyk:** None at the moment but some are planned for the future. Decentralization will enable most people.

**Interviewer:** How is your relationship with the church regarding development projects in this area?

**Deodat van Wyk:** Church leaders are represented on the community committee.

**Interviewer:** How do you involve the local leaders/traditional leaders and what role do they play in community development?

**Deodat van Wyk:** Local leaders and traditional leaders are involved in the identification and recommendation of some projects.

**(v) Rev. Petrus Diergaardt (then Bishop of the ELCRN)**

Place: ELCRN Head Office, Windhoek

Date: 15 January 2001

Language: Afrikaans

**Interviewer:** How is the ELCRN involved in the process of eradicating poverty?

**Bishop Diergaardt:** Poverty in Namibia is rapidly escalating rather than decreasing. The ELCRN mostly serves communities threatened by poverty. The Church does not have a definite strategy or plan, because the ELCRN itself is dependent on outside funding. We do

**Interviewer:** What is the unemployment rate at Otjimbingwe?

**Bishop Diergaardt:** To be honest, I do not have any information in that regard. What I know is that our pastor there hardly gets a salary.

**Interviewer:** How is the ELCRN involved at Otjimbingwe in the fight against poverty?

**Bishop Diergaardt:** I remember that in 1997, through the project office, we were involved in a re-stocking programme, where we gave goats to suffering households at Otjimbingwe, Spitzkoppe and Okombahe. Since then, the ELCRN has not been involved in any community development project.

### ***3.1.1 Findings of the interviews***

All the interviewees agreed that the unemployment rate is very high, although there is a slight difference in percentage. It is also clear that there is no definite plan of action in creating jobs for the people. The worrying factor is that the Regional Council continues to execute their plan to proclaim Otjimbingwe a settlement, despite the opposing voices of the people. I think the idea of the Regional Council is not bad, but proper consultation with the people is needed, because the concern of the people that they will not be in a position to pay municipal services needs to be addressed properly. It seems that the Regional Council wants to impose their strategies on the people without having the consensus of all people.

It is also clear from the interviews that the church is not really as involved as the people want. They want the church to be an example and take a leading role in the process of development. They want to see the church as part and parcel of the development process. The interview with the Bishop clearly illustrates that the Church does not have a definite strategy in the process of reducing poverty at Otjimbingwe.

### 3.2 Otjimbingwe Community Profile

Headman Bethuel Haraseb of the Damara-speaking people noted that the population of Otjimbingwe is about 4000 to 5000 people (Haraseb 2001). Most of them are Damara and Herero. Damara are 60% and Hereros 40% (Jurgen Pauck-Borchardt 2000: 87). These people earn their living mainly from small livestock husbandry and gardening. However, in 1924, Otjimbingwe was declared a nature reserve. This move by the colonial administration restricted people's abilities to be self-reliant. Pauck-Borchardt is correct when he argues that the Apartheid policies played a major role in the commercial recession of Otjimbingwe. He further notes that the white resident representative of the colonial administration was regularly able to apply restrictions to local informal businesses, and the surrounding hostile white commercial farming community led to a further reduction of the reserve area (2000: 87). Another important factor for disintegration and overuse of the very limited reserve area for so many people was the building of dams in surrounding commercial farm areas and, in particular, the construction of the Swakoppoort dam, resulting in the drying up of the Swakop river. This river was a very important resource for the people of Otjimbingwe. The indigenous people used to grow grain in the riverbed, but cannot do so any longer due to the dams.

The **education** level of the people of Otjimbingwe is very low. The elderly and many women are illiterate. It is hard to find any source that indicates the literacy rate of the people in Otjimbingwe. The Erongo Region census indicator, which covers the whole region, Otjimbingwe included, was the only information available during my research. The total population size of Erongo Region is estimated at 55 470. The women in the region number 26 531, slightly less than men, who number 28 939. The level of education in the region is not impressive, although it seems that more people in the region can read and write. This can be derived from the following figures: Education 15 years and above: Never been to school 18%, currently at school 12%, left school 70%, with some education from Primary school 39%, Secondary school 54% and Tertiary 7% (Erongo Region Census Indicators 1991). This picture could have changed positively by now, but could also have worsened, due to deteriorating poverty conditions in the region, especially at Otjimbingwe.

At Otjimbingwe there are Primary and Secondary schools. The young ones have more opportunities to go to school. Despite this fact, there are many children and teenagers who do not attend school, and some who drop out of school very early. Research suggests that the following reasons lead to this problem: the main reason is that the parents cannot afford to pay school fees, the boys drop out of school to look for jobs and most of the girls drop out of school due to teenage pregnancies. All these reasons are the result of the increasing poverty in the area. Lwilla echoed the same sentiments during his research in the rural Makete district in Tanzania in 1999. He notes that

the children of the poor families hardly acquire tertiary education and skills. Through no fault of their own, the home environment is in many instances an inadequate preparation for public schools. Equally discouraging is the fact that schools attended by children from the poor families have incompetent teachers, poor buildings and very limited learning material, such as text books, desks and stationery. (1999: 17, 18)

The impact of illiteracy on the local farmers at Otjimbingwe is that they have difficulties in counting their stock or showing the right size of their plot (Pauck-Bochardt 2000: 87). Clearly these people need skills and training to enhance their indigenous knowledge in farming and gardening to meet the current challenges.

**Health services at Otjimbingwe** is a pressing issue. There is one government clinic at Otjimbingwe, which cannot appropriately serve the health needs of about 5000 inhabitants. The **picture** below shows how small the clinic is. The medical doctor comes once a week from another town, Usakos. For emergencies, there is only one ambulance for transportation of patients to the next hospital at Usakos about hundred kilometers away. This has an impact on the people of Otjimbingwe, especially women and children who live under conditions such as hunger, a lack of nutritious food, a lack of income and a lack of transport. HIV/AIDS is the major threat to the area. Some people live far from the main centre of the village. People have to pay cash for clinic services. One of my interviewees said that she together with her family collects bottles to earn her living. This brings us to the problem of unemployment in this area.

*Picture 1*



*Otjimbingwe Clinic*

**Unemployment** in the whole Erongo Region is rated as 24% from the labour force of 64%. The official employment rate is 76%. However, I strongly doubt the high and positive picture of the employment rate in Erongo Region when looking at the poverty stricken situation at Otjimbingwe. For example, a retired teacher in the area, Kloudius #Neib, noted that the unemployment rate is very high, about 99% (#Neib 2001). In contrast, Deodat van Wyk notes that the employment rate is about ten percent and that about sixty percent of those farming are self-employed (Van Wyk 2001).

Despite these differences, the question remains: How do people earn a living in a situation with a high unemployment rate? The only people on whom many family members rely are the pensioners and those who left Otjimbingwe and work in towns and on surrounding farms to support their families. The pensioner's monthly grant is N\$ 200,00 (two hundred Namibian dollars), a very small amount.

There are also other factors outside this area that contribute negatively to the lives of the people of Otjimbingwe and which will have an impact on any future development projects and programmes in the area. Pauck-Bochardt rightly says that "internal and external factors, in particular the interdependence between business, agriculture and family, thus result in an atmosphere of lethargy and low business spirit" (2000:88). He further notes that the potential for ventures like the creation of community-based tourism projects, for example, camp sites and traditional villages in the Sesfontein area, is limited because of a lack of capital and experience in commercial business, but also because of the increasing impact of globalisation (2000: 90).

Nevertheless, the positive point to start with in any future development programme at Otjimbingwe is to know that the people of this area are poor but are experienced and skilled in farming. Pauck-Bochardt echoes this fact saying that their research "on the socio-economic development of the Damara in Otjimbingwe and Sesfontein indicates that indeed indigenous forms of entrepreneurship have existed already for a long time that can draw upon SME support strategies" (2000: 86).

The **religion** at Otjimbingwe consists of Lutherans in the majority, then Oruano Church and Roman Catholics in the minority. The Lutheran Church is strong, due to the role played by the missionaries since 1849. Already, on 25 July 1858, the missionary Rath had baptized the first household at Otjimbingwe. This day is considered as very significant in the history of Otjimbingwe and for the establishment of the Christian community (Baumann 1967: 67). Since then, the Rhenish Missionary Society built a mission house, a bible house, schools and a church building. Therefore, Otjimbingwe was known as a mission station. In 1963 the Paulinum Lutheran Theological Seminary was established, where many of the pastors in ELCRN were trained. Oruano is a traditional church of only Herero speaking people. The Herero people believe that their ancestors play a mediating role between them and their God. They believe very strongly in ancestral spirits. This is actually the practice in the Oruano church. The Roman Catholic Church does not have many members at Otjimbingwe. However, it is growing gradually. In 1990's they have built the first modern style church building, as you can see in one of the baking project pictures on page 51.

### **3.3 The impact of poverty on Otjimbingwe**

We noted earlier that poverty was caused mainly by colonialism and apartheid. Colonialism and apartheid had the effect that the indigenous people of Africa lost their farmlands. This land dispossession by Europeans in Africa caused poverty, the impact of which still continues and is clearly visible today, especially in the rural areas and in shanty towns. The most visible impact of poverty is the income disparity between the poor and the rich. Chambers expresses the impact of poverty today as follows: "more people than ever before are wealthy beyond any reasonable need for a good life, and more are poor and vulnerable below any conceivable definition of decency" (1997: 1). In other words, there are now more very poor and vulnerable people in the world than ever before.

The impact of poverty on the Otjimbingwe rural community has devastating consequences for the community and its environment. We noted in the community profile that about 5000 people live in the area. Although I did not find the exact size of the entire area, according to

my observation the population is gradually increasing. The following effects are clearly visible and have a negative impact on the whole of Otjimbingwe:

- Soil fertility is poor and will continue to deteriorate unless farming methods change. This is mostly due to the lack of skills of the farming community, although they acquire the capacity to make a difference. Therefore, I tend to agree with Sano that “the poor and marginalized are not always the main exploiters of the environment, but they do remain important victims of it due to their limited coping capabilities” (Publicaciones 2001).
- Exploitation of trees is evident, as many people cannot afford or do not have access to electricity, so the demand for firewood increases. This can result in deforestation, which actually causes erosion and reduces the chances of rain at Otjimbingwe. There are many people who said that they received satisfactory rains in the past almost every year, but today they experience more droughts.
- Grass is overgrazed and eroded: as a result, many local farmers have lost their livestock.
- Malnutrition and diseases are common due to lack of income and nutritious food.
- Young people drop out of school and migrate to surrounding centers and towns where they remain unemployed.
- The family unit suffers, as most of the fathers and young men migrate to look for jobs, and as a result, women carry even heavier responsibilities.

Having analysed the negative impact of poverty on the life of the Otjimbingwe rural community, the following question needs to be asked “How do these people cope in the midst of absolute poverty?” Definitely there must be some livelihood strategies and assets that the people have used to keep themselves alive. To investigate what survival strategies the people use and to find out what assets are available, Kretzmann’s ‘asset based’ method, which is similar to, and supplements the ‘sustainable livelihoods framework’ of Butler and Greenstein, will be suitable in the Otjimbingwe context.

The ‘asset-based’ method is based on the capacities and assets that are available in a local community. The assets and capacities in the local community refer to people, things,



organizations and institutions that can be integrated and combined to ensure maximum participation of the deprived in the process of building the community from the inside out. The assets and capacities are the people, schools, church buildings and centers, public institutions, community-based organizations and parks (Kretzmann 1993: 345). The identification of these assets and capacities can enable the local people to build a community. In chapter six we will focus on more steps proposed by Kretzmann, which the church might employ in the process of community development.

The assets and capacities at Otjimbingwe can easily be identified because there are not many to identify. For example, it should be noted that each community member has a certain gift or talent that can be applied to ensure a good functioning community. The assets in Otjimbingwe are, mainly, the ELCRN's centers like Paulinum (former theological seminary), the Old Bible School center and the school hostel. The buildings can be used in the process of building the community. There are also two schools, a clinic, and the government agricultural center. The asset-based method can be integrated with the sustainable livelihoods framework. This is a people-centred approach to development. It analyses people's livelihoods and how these have been changing over time, ensures the full participation of the local people and respects their views, gifts and talents (Butler 1999: 44). This model, further aims to support people in achieving their own livelihood goals.

The sustainable livelihoods framework offers a checklist of critical and interrelated issues. The framework aims to "help stakeholders with different perspectives to engage in structured and coherent debate about the factors that affect livelihood, their relative importance and the ways in which they interact" (Butler 1999: 47).

### **3.4 How do people cope?**

First, the community set-up of the Otjimbingwe rural community has played a very important role in keeping the people together, despite the heavy impact of poverty they encounter. This community set-up is strongly grounded in the concept of the 'extended family link'. In my mother tongue, Damara/Nama, we use the term *khoen-khoe* or, in old

form *khoin-khoi*, which expresses the importance of the continuous and close bond of the 'extended family' concept. The term *khoe-khoe* literally means 'people's people', which clearly demonstrates that a person becomes a person through other people. According to Damara, Nama and Herero cultures, the first-born son in a family is responsible for the well-being of the close and extended family. When he marries, he is not actually married to the wife only but marries the wife's family, which further unites the two big families. These families have to share whatever they have with one another. This is the main reason why the powers of colonialism did not totally destroy the poor at Otjimbingwe. Those who earn a little income support those without any income.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the family setup is understood as a form of home. Zephania Kameeta notes the following when describing what a 'home' is: "Now 'home' is mother, father, children, grandmother, grandfather, aunt, uncle. And that's why an African usually will not ask: 'How is your family?' He or she will ask: 'How is home?' So home lives in a house and a home without a house is a home without integrity" (Balch 1991: 77).

Secondly, the existing assets keep the people alive, despite the **vulnerability context** they find themselves in. The people practise farming, gardening, collection of bottles and dry bones, and migrant labour and some qualify for pensions. The vulnerability context is mainly caused by external forces, that is, environmental impacts and the global economic and political systems. Through the interviews and the Otjimbingwe Community Profile, we have learned that the prolonged drought and the impact of the colonial and apartheid past on Otjimbingwe, and Namibia as a whole, have left deep scars and an uncontrolled legacy.

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<sup>1</sup> Taking my own example, I am the first-born in my family and my parents are both illiterate and without work. My father used to work but he cannot work anymore due sickness. My younger brother completed his matric in 1989 but cannot find a job. My younger sister is currently at school intending to complete her school career this year. All of them expect me to help and support their basic needs. As a student, it is difficult to fulfill their wants. My family hardly understands this. When I have food on the table to eat, I ask deep in myself whether they have something to eat at that specific moment. Thus, I have to cut something from my bursary, which is for a specific purpose, to send some funds for them. I prefer to suffer together with them. This is closely linked to the following saying: 'An injury to one is an injury to all', which we used to express in our liberation struggle against the apartheid regime in Namibia. This really and clearly demonstrates that the real power of the oppressed and the poor lies in a united community of believers to crush poverty.

However, the people of Otjimbingwe survived by means of **animal husbandry**, which is one of the traditional ways in which the local people earn their living. People at Otjimbingwe farm mostly with goats and cattle. They practise farming mainly for hand-to-mouth purposes. They also exchange livestock for cash in order to buy basic necessities like maize-meal, sugar, tea, and coffee. Both the Damara and the Herero keep cattle for milk and meat. However, the people lack the skills and methods of modern farming. After animal husbandry, **gardening** was and is considered to be the second traditional way that keeps the people alive. Each household tries to have a garden, where they mainly plant maize, tomatoes, onions, carrots, pumpkins and watermelons. This is done to feed the family and the neighbours. Neighbours support each other through sharing food and what they have at their disposal. What they produce from farming or gardening is only enough for 'hand-to-mouth' existence and nothing is left for gaining some extra income. However, due to water shortages and the lack of rain, many people cannot practise crop production. Certainly, the soil of Otjimbingwe is still fertile and is adequate for gardening, as many people have expressed.

The third way, besides animal husbandry and gardening, that provides for many families is the **pensions of the senior citizens**. A person who reaches the age of sixty years can apply for a senior citizen's pension, which is presently two hundred Namibian dollars a very small amount. There are households at Otjimbingwe which are totally dependent on this amount. In most households, the senior citizens have to take care of the grandchildren and even pay for their school fees, because the single mother is unemployed and also dependent on the same pension.

Fourthly, most people who do not own livestock or who do not earn a living from either of the ways mentioned above, **collect bottles and dry bones**. There is one local bottle store, where people sell the empty cooldrink and wine bottles. There are also others who collect dry bones and sell them in Karibib.

Finally, **migrant labour** has both a negative and a positive impact: it is positive, because the outside income comes to Otjimbingwe, which is a very positive aspect in the process of

development. The family of a migrant worker gains from that. It is negative, because the strong young members of the community are leaving the place and that weakens the human resources of the area. It has also a negative impact on community life in the long run, because those migrants who do not find employment, due to their frustrations, join gangster groups which finally results in crime, alcoholism, drug abuse and prostitution. There are a number of reasons why mostly the young people are migrating, namely, the lack of employment opportunities, the prolonged drought that badly affects the traditional ways of earning a living (animal husbandry and gardening), the lack of social activities and the lack of recreational facilities. People migrate to surrounding commercial farms (mostly owned by white farmers) and bigger towns. A very limited number of migrants are lucky enough to find employment; many remain unemployed and later end up on the streets.

#### *3.4.1 What constraints exist?*

The main constraint the people are facing is the lack of **human capital**, which is the skills, knowledge, ability to work and good health (Butler 1999:50) the people lack to improve the traditional business practices, farming and gardening. The people lack, also, sufficient **social capital**, the resources that are available and that can be pulled together to ensure sustainable livelihood growth. There is limited social capital available, which we identified already in 3.3 above. There is more cohesion and cooperation necessary among the existing social capital. The further lack of sufficient **natural capital** constrains the coping strategies of the people. Natural capital mainly refers to environmental resources like good rains, enough safe water, the fertility of the soil, domestic as well as wild animals and minerals. We have already learned earlier that Otjimbingwe is faced with a prolonged drought, which results in the shortage of enough safe water. The natural capital that can be found at Otjimbingwe is the domestic animals. The next constraint is the **physical capital**, that is, the infrastructure (good roads, affordable transport, decent housing, adequate water supply, affordable electricity, access to information and necessary tools and equipment for productive functioning). The final constraint is the **financial capital** that disables many efforts by the community members. Without the necessary cash and without banking facilities and credit facilities for the poor, the development process will not be successful.

Butler argues that “financial capital is the most versatile of the various asset-types” (1999:53).

### ***3.4.2 Identified Groups and their interrelations***

At Otjimbingwe, women are the more active group in community upliftment programmes, while at the same time, they are the more disadvantaged group. Women play a more vital role at Otjimbingwe if compared to men. There are different groups women have formed at the church, as well as at the community level. For example, in the local Lutheran church there are two women’s groups: the Genesis Women’s League (age group 45 and above) and the Genesis Young Women’s League (age group 35 to 45). These women discuss many issues that they experience in every day life, church related issues, home related issues, social, political and economic issues. These women support one another in trouble and share whatever they have with one another.

Many women who belong to the women’s leagues are the ones to be found at the community level. They have joined their efforts and the limited financial capital they have and have initiated projects in order to feed their families. Many women involved in the projects are either single mothers or married women who, in most cases, are heading their households. One may ask then, “Where are the men?”

With regard to this question, one of the interviewees said that the men are blind to the problems they experience. The men are there, but they will mostly be found drunk. The men do not have any support group at Otjimbingwe. However, in most of the committees at the church as well as the community level, men are in leadership positions. Men dominate the headmanship and dominate their councils, the church leadership and the parish councils. In the case of the local Lutheran church, however, the current leader is a female pastor, who was on leave during my research there. Most of the government’s regional representatives at Otjimbingwe are male. Despite these challenges facing the Otjimbingwe community, there are some initiatives, started mostly by the women of the community, and some plans for development underway from the Regional Council.

### **3.5 Development Initiatives**

#### ***3.5.1 ELCRN Initiatives***

The Otjimbingwe community gained from the goats project that was run by the ELCRN. It was a project whereby the church bought hundreds of goats during the 1997 drought and gave ten goats each to more disadvantaged households in the Otjimbingwe, Spitzkoppe and Okombahe areas. Bishop Petrus Diergaardt acknowledges that the ELCRN was involved only in that project and that, since 1997, the church has not been involved in any project to improve the living conditions of the people (Diergaardt 2001). Presently, the ELCRN is not involved in, and does not fund any project at Otjimbingwe.

Any project initiated and controlled by the local people has positive benefits for the local people and the churches. If the people's living conditions are improved and developed through sustainable projects where they are themselves in charge, this will also positively contribute to any church in the community.

#### ***3.5.2 Regional Council***

Presently, the Government, through its Erongo Regional Council's development arm, does have a development plan for the Otjimbingwe Rural community. The vision statement of the Erongo Regional Council is:

It is the vision of the Erongo Region that development in the Region takes place in such a manner as to facilitate the diversification of economic activities in an effort to create employment and wealth in the region, while distributing resources, facilities and services more evenly throughout the region and among its inhabitants. Furthermore, development must bring about the sustainable utilization of its natural resources and contribute towards the alleviation of poverty. (Erongo Regional Council Development Plan Final Draft 2000: 3, 4)

The project plan for the Otjimbingwe rural community is basically concerned with the municipal infrastructure, which is considered to improve further development of other sectors, through the Council. The projects submitted are as follows:

- Upgrading, extension and implementation of Water Network & Water prepayment meters,
- Designing and construction of roads/streets,
- Upgrading, extension and implementation of a sewerage network,
- Extension of electricity network
- Planning and surveying of plots (Letter on Capital Projects 2001/2002: Erongo Region 2000).

The Chief Clerk of the Erongo Regional Council, Van Wyk, who supervises the settlement areas, Otjimbingwe included, notes concerning the strategies which the government is employing to eradicate poverty in this area: “The Regional Council is in the process of proclaiming Otjimbingwe as a Settlement (Regional Council’s Act 22 of 1992 Section 31) to attract investors. The Council provides micro loans to enable self-sustainability through the Erongo Development Fund” (Van Wyk 2001). He further argues that the following projects are priorities for development in the Otjimbingwe community:

- Proclamation of Otjimbingwe as a Settlement
- Extension and upgrading of the water network
- Extension of the sewerage network and electricity
- Food for work projects
- Cash for work projects
- Build – Together Housing Programme

These are long term projects, which are not yet in operation. Currently, there are no sustainable projects facilitated by the Council, which have direct involvement in, and enhancement of the people’s living conditions. However, one of the interviewees, Deline Gertze, who is a very popular community member, complained that they have started paying for water and electricity without any jobs created by the council (Gertze 2001). Many of the members of the community I talked to expressed the concern that they are unemployed and do not know where to get money to pay the municipality for these services. In fact, what the ordinary person says, who experiences daily hunger and poverty, differs from what the Regional Council’s representatives say. I tend to agree with the

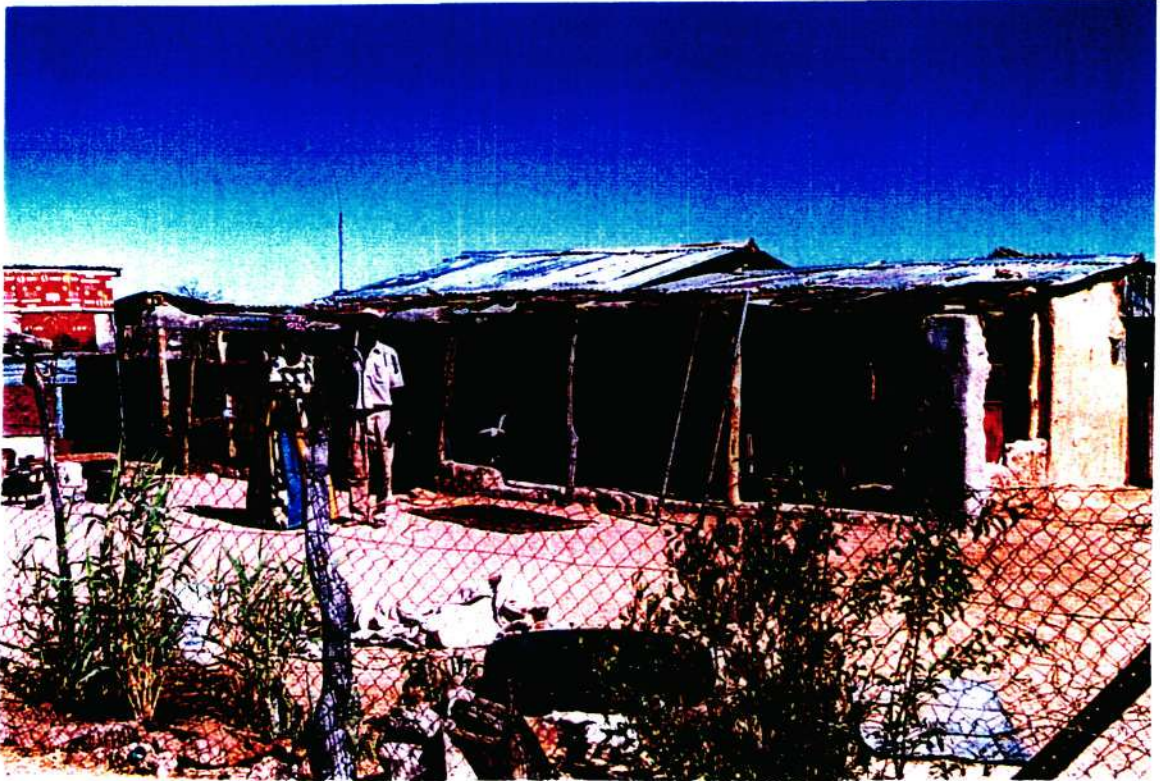
ordinary members of the community, because I lived there for four years during my theological training at Paulinum Theological Seminary. What they have experienced is what I have also observed. **Picture 2 below and picture 3 on the next page illustrate the poor living conditions the majority of the inhabitants of Otjimbingwe experience.**

*Picture 2*





*Picture 3*



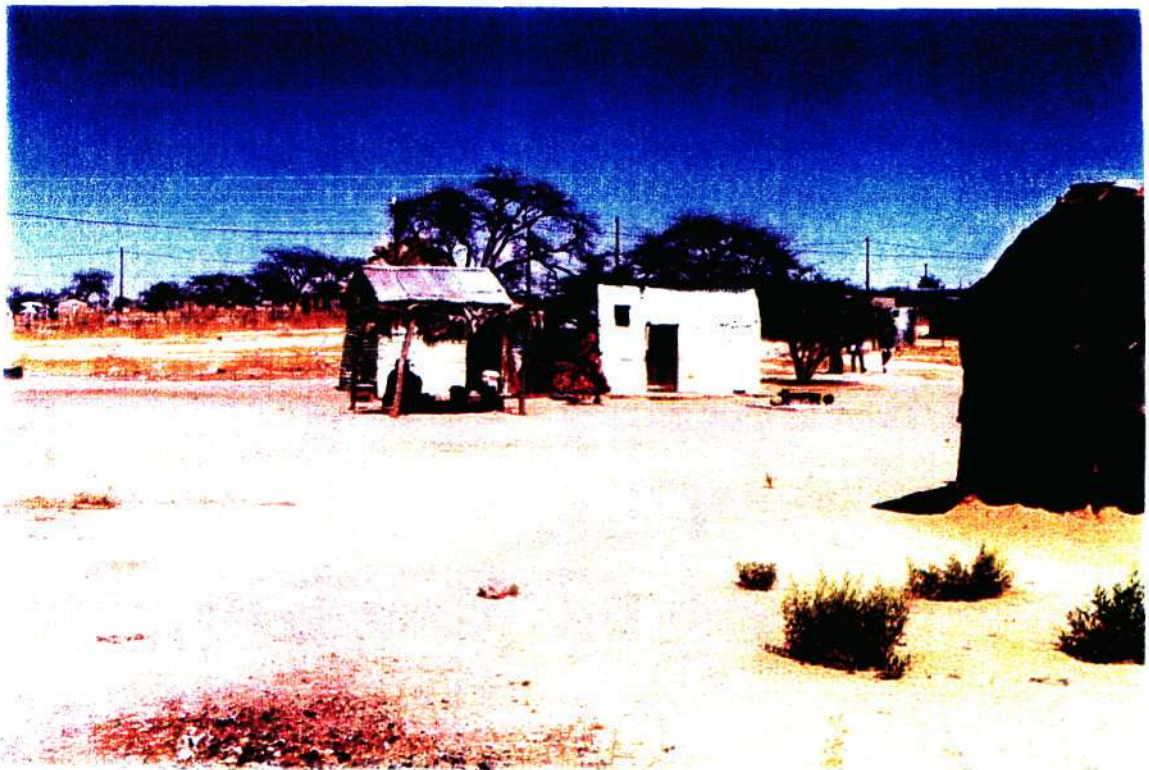
### *3.5.3 Local projects important to address the real needs of the Otjimbingwe rural community.*

Despite the above contradictions, there are a few existing projects run by the women of the community. To date there are three projects, which have been initiated by these women: the bakery project, the sewing project and the gardening project. The last two projects are not really as marketable as the first one, the bakery project.

***(a) Bakery Project***

The project was started on 3 December 1996 by a group of eight women, only five of whom are still actively involved. The leader of the project is Godfriedine Muruko, who can be seen in **picture 4** below at her home. The leader described how the project came into being. They collected money themselves and bought baking pans, as shown in the next pictures below. They have not had any outside funding to date. The little profit of about N\$600,00 to N\$900,00 (six to nine hundred Namibian Dollars) they make per month, they share among themselves, because that is the only job they have. They operate the project under very difficult circumstances: they do not have their own place and are presently hiring the building belonging to the 'Boerevereniging'; they do not have any bread flour mixing facilities; they do not have an oven and all the necessities for baking. This may have a negative impact on their business. Since 1996, they have not had any training or assistance from any organization or from the churches.

***Picture 4: Godfriedine Muruko coming out of her home.***





*In the following pictures 5 and 6 below the baking pans and the loaves of bread can be seen. It is also very visible from picture 6 that they lack necessary equipment.*



*Project leader Muruko in the center with Menesia (right) and Elfriede (left) with freshly baked loaves of bread in her hands.*

*Pictures 7&8 below show that the women have to use the self-made brick-oven outside, even in the very hot sun, or when it is raining.*





Despite these problems the women are excited and very proud about their progress so far. They say that more people are looking for bread every day and that they always run out of bread. They only manage to bake 30 to 40 loaves of bread per day and there are more than eighty to a hundred people looking for bread every day (see picture 5 above for the way the bread is prepared). This is a good sign that this project is promising and that there is a market for it. The price for one loaf of bread is N\$4,50 (four dollars and fifty cents).

#### ***(b) Sewing project***

This project was started in 1998 by a group of ten people, eight women and two men. The leader is Naomi Kariposira. She says the major problem is that the local people do not support the project. They have to go out to nearby towns like Karibib, Usakos, Okahandja, and Swakopmund to sell their products. The leader informed me that they did have training from time to time and that her team is very happy and working together in good spirits. I think this is not a bad project, but it needs more popularity among the people and people need to be mobilized to support local projects. The project staff also need to know what type of clothes and products the local community wants. For example, there are mainly Herero and Damara speaking women in Otjimbingwe, who love to wear their traditional dresses, but I did not see a single traditional dress being produced by the project.

*Picture 9 below illustrates some of the sewing products produced by women in this particular area. In the picture is the project leader, Kariposira in her Herero traditional outfit.*



### ***(c) Gardening Project***

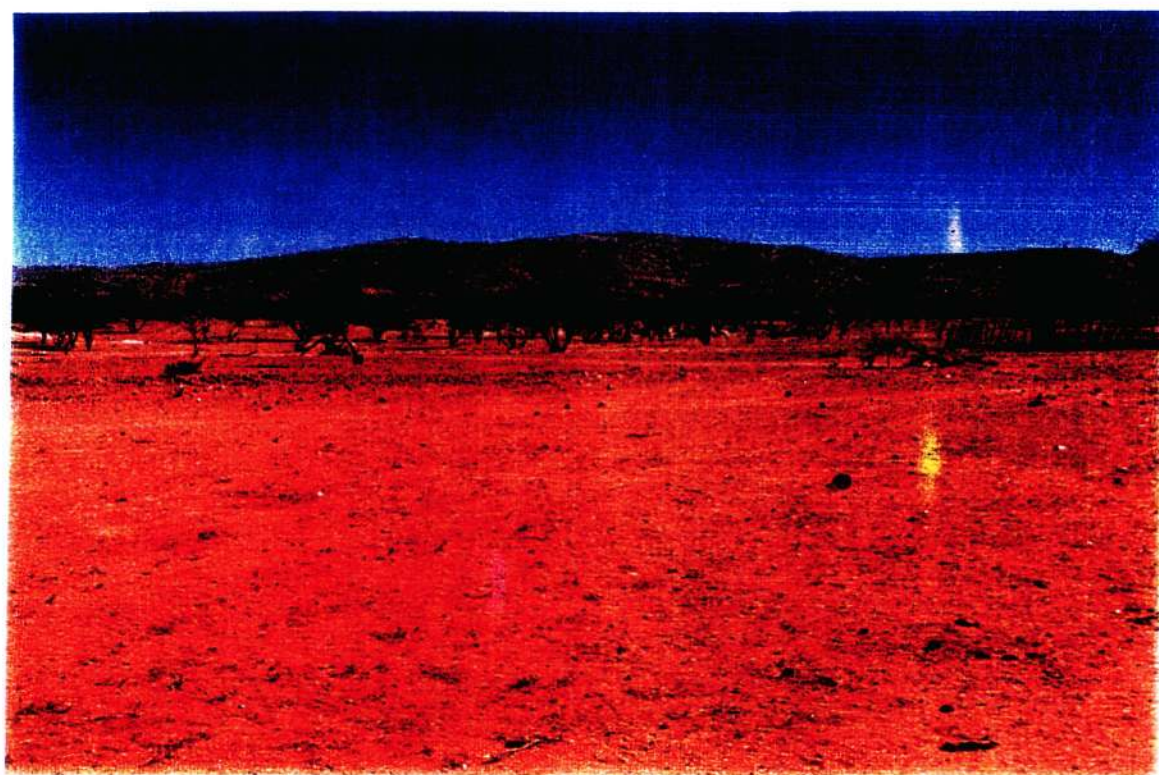
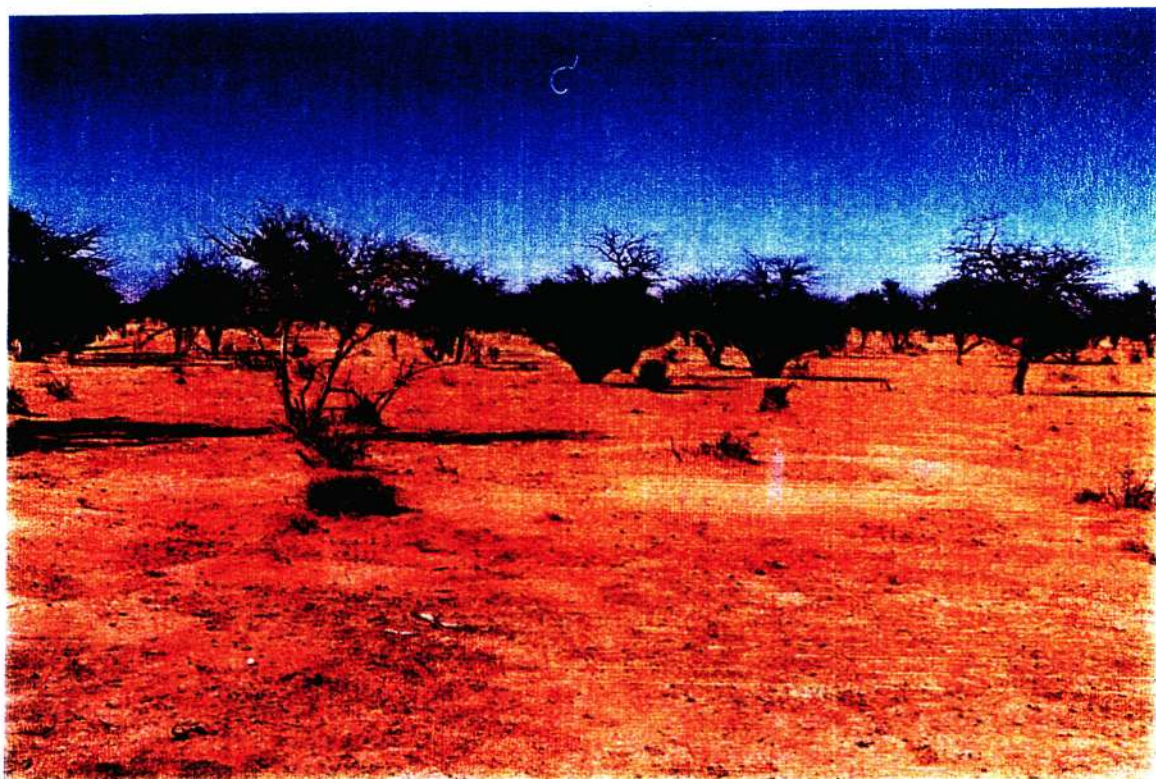
A group of six to eight women runs this project. Due the lack of rain and shortage of water, however, this project cannot progress. The pictures below clearly illustrate that Otjimbingwe is very dry and one of the women says that they are expecting rain only in March. However, there is lots of underground water at Otjimbingwe. There are more boreholes needed to support such projects. This project also is not bad, but needs evaluation and support from community organizations like the schools, churches and the government.

### ***3.5.4 Traditional income generating activities***

These are farming with livestock and crop production. Most of the local people, about 60%, earn their living from animal husbandry, mostly with goats, sheep and cattle. A very small percentage of people earn a living from crop production. But the bottom line is that these traditional business practices are well-known to the people. However, the major problem of drought and the new complicated methods of animal husbandry and crop production prevent the small-scale breeders and crop producers from fully participating in this sector. **Pictures 10 and 11 on the next page** clearly illustrate the impact of drought on the farming areas in Otjimbingwe.



*Pictures 10 and 11 below illustrate the impact of drought mainly on the farming areas.*



#### **4. CHAPTER FOUR: THE CHURCH, POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT**

Since the independence of Namibia in 1990 the government and concerned NGO's have been addressing the problems of development and unemployment. While the Church in Namibia is faced with a huge problem of poverty that is escalating due to the high unemployment rate, at the same time the Church is trapped between its spiritual role and its role to be involved at the social, political and economic levels. In the past, the Church has considered its role in fighting poverty to be giving relief aid and being a charitable organization. The Church considered development as the sole task of the government and the non-governmental organizations. The church regards itself as not being involved in development projects like dispensaries, boreholes, small businesses, trade schools or agriculture. In other words, the church tends to focus on pastoral work only and to leave development in the hands of the Government, NGOs and community-based organizations (CBO).

However, there is a growing concern among Christians today that the Church should be concerned and involved in the process of uplifting the living conditions of the poor. The question is how can it improve the living conditions of the marginalized? What approach is the church going to take to ensure maximum participation of the poor? Traditionally, the church's approach was to make the people "objects" of development by giving them food, clothes and blankets, without involving or consulting the people about what they want and how it should be done. Brenda M. K. Nsanzya rightly notes two problems that arise in the "helping the poor" approach, namely, that "firstly, it creates a dependency syndrome, as people come to rely entirely on the church to do things for them as they wait patiently for the food parcels and clothes. Secondly, it is not sustainable, in that the church does not have enough resources to provide on a long term basis" (2000: 1).

Having said that, I think the Church will have the right approach to the poor once it understands its mission and why the people are poor.



#### **4.1 The Theology of Development**

The questions which needs to be answered is “Where is God in the process of development and is He the cause of poverty?” Scripture is very clear that God is not the cause of poverty but that human beings are responsible for that. So God cares about the humiliating situation the poor find themselves in. Nowhere in Scripture do we read that God created some poor and some rich.

In Genesis chapter one, we read that God the Creator created the world. He further created human beings in his own image and likeness. He created them male and female (Gen. 1: 24-27). He told us to increase and multiply, to cultivate the earth and to develop it. In other words, God made us responsible for creation and he gave us a divine task to be co-creators and developers over the world (Gen. 1: 28-29). Everybody, whether black or white, European, Asian or African, whether poor or rich, woman or man, is called to do development work, which indicates that we accept God’s call to participate with Him in the continuation of His creative work.

From the beginning of the creation, God was actively involved in developing the world. He is still today actively involved in the development process by making male and female equally responsible for taking care of creation and further developing it for the well-being of all people. God is actively involved in the process of development by giving people skills, knowledge, resources and assets. God’s presence and involvement in the day-to-day-business of human beings is revealed in His love for us. His love for us and especially, for marginalized women, children and men, drives God to come down to the poor living conditions and to live among us through His only Son, Jesus Christ (John 3:16).

Jesus was born among the poor in Galilee, during the time when the poor where exploited by the rich and those who were in power, the elite. In other words, the political, social and economic situation excluded the poor from all basic necessities (Lwilla 1999: 110). Jesus’ involvement in opposing this exploitative structure and the rulers of His time made Him their enemy. Luke’s Gospel throughout sides Jesus with the poor, from His birth to His

death. To John the Baptist's messengers He said the following: "The blind see again, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the Good News is proclaimed to the poor" (Lk. 2: 22). The people Jesus mentioned in this text are all people who are vulnerable today, people who are discriminated against at all levels in our society. Jesus in this text clearly shows that He takes their side and opposes those structures, leaders and individuals that cause poverty and enrich themselves at the expense of the vulnerable and the poor.

Jesus further very strongly emphasized His mission and role in the process of uplifting the lives of the vulnerable and the poor, by echoing the very same words of the prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament (Isa. 61:1f), found in Luke's Gospel:

The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, and to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.

Having looked at Jesus' role in the process of uplifting the living conditions of the poor and the vulnerable, the church today is seriously challenged to reread the Bible in order to hear, see and find God among the dispossessed. God the Creator of the cosmos is definitely concerned about everything He has created and has the responsibility to maintain it. Accordingly, the church is under the mandate of God's mission to proclaim the gospel of Christ to all people. However, the church should not only focus on the preaching of the Word but should be practically involved in the everyday life of the people. Verkuyl is correct in saying that the "all-embracing mandate includes the *missio politica oecumenica*" (1978: 395). The church has a prophetic and kingly mission over everything God created, that is, the integrity of creation. The church is to be concerned about the development of the whole person, that is, the social, political, spiritual and economic life of a person. Magesa argues that "'development' means 'liberation'. Any action that gives them more control over their own affairs, is an action for development...Any action that reduces their say in determining their own affairs is not development..." (1989: 117). Amartya Sen sees development as freedom, where people will be free from poverty, hunger and deprivation, a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy (2000: 3)

When talking about the church, what do we mean? An ordinary person often associates the church with a pastor or the bishop. In other words, a person regards the pastor or the bishop as the church. The reason may be that all decisions taken come from the pastor or the bishop without any consultation with the people on the ground. This clearly reflects the top-down approach which many mainline churches have practiced for millennia. The specific meaning of the term 'church' depends on the context in which it is being used. The term can refer to a local Christian community, a Christian agent or catalyst for action, an ecumenical body, church leaders, God's community on earth, or a bureaucratic institution. However, I agree with John W. de Gruchy that the term 'church' also has a bad historical background, due to its patriarchal and colonial history. He argues: "For some people, 'church' has a very negative connotation: an authoritarian, patriarchal and conservative institution which cramps the Spirit of Christian freedom, joy and witness; an instrument of colonialism; or a legitimator of apartheid" (John de Gruchy 1994: 125). To overcome this kind of view, Pixley and Boff argue that the poor in the church should become agents of the option for the poor and protagonists in their own process of liberation through pastors working for and with them, arousing their consciousness of their own dignity and encouraging them to take a constructive part in society. In this way, the poor begin to opt consciously for their own rights and their own future—which is the future of all—instead of opting in an alienated manner for their own oppressors and their projects (1989: 136).

My use of the term "church" in this paper will be based on the understanding of Pixley and Boff. I therefore, will mainly refer to the local Christian community of Otjimbingwe which believes in, and worships God. As indicated in Acts 2: 44-45, the early Christian community practised their faith in God by sharing of possessions. It was this life as a community, in which all members participated equally, that characterized the first Christian churches (de Gruchy 1994: 127). Therefore, my approach will be based on this understanding of 'church', when focusing on the role played by the church to stamp out poverty from its midst. I see the church as the Christian community, with its leaders as facilitators, who aim at a common goal where every member of the community will equally participate in its development.

We are aware of the fact that the church in the past was involved in improving people's lives. The Church was more involved as an institution, where the bishops and pastors acted as agents for the people. They planned, decided and implemented things or even projects without input from the people. In other words, the Church functioned in '*top-down*' direction and so prevented people from partaking in the process of development and, therefore, prevented the '*bottom-up*' direction. Steve de Gruchy describes these two directions in which development can and does happen as follows: 'Top-down', decisions and direction are provided from people other than the beneficiaries, whereas in 'bottom-up' direction the beneficiaries themselves take responsibility for their own development. 'Top down' usually focuses on goals, whereas 'bottom up' has a focus on process; 'top down' deals with things, whereas 'bottom up' deals with people (Theology and Development 2001).

In the past, for example, the ELCRN was involved in programmes and projects to enhance people's lives, but it was done 'top-down', in an authoritarian style, on behalf of the people and was done without their involvement, thus forcing people to accept and support initiatives from outside. The ELCRN was more of a charity and a humanitarian channel used by outsiders. Therefore, I agree with de Gruchy that the church stands in a strange relationship to the tension between 'outsider' and 'insider', because it is both. Consequently, there is a great need for the church, particularly the ELCRN, to revisit and restructure its structure and 'top down' approach to secure effective empowerment of people in the process of development.

#### **4.2 Poverty and the poor**

The term *poverty* is a very important word in the process of development. Today everybody knows the nature, causes and the consequences of poverty. Millions of people, many from Southern Africa, are dying of hunger. Women and children are the worst affected. A poor person or a person living in poor living conditions cannot enjoy her or his full humanity. This does not imply that poor human beings are created with lesser dignity than those who enjoy more than their full humanity. Robert Chambers argues that the term "poor" has its

common and wide meaning. This goes beyond its use as the adjective for poverty to include the broader sense of being deprived, in a bad condition, and lacking basic needs (1997: xv). The World Development Report 2000/2001 states the characteristics of the poor as follows:

Poor people live without fundamental freedoms of actions and choice that the better-off take for granted. They then lack adequate food and shelter, education and health, deprivations that keep them from leading the kind of life that everyone values. They also face extreme vulnerability to ill health, economic dislocation, and natural disasters. And they are often exposed to ill treatment by institutions of the state and society and are powerless to influence key decisions affecting their lives. These are all dimensions of poverty. (World Development Report 2000/2001: 1)

Nsanzya argues that the poor are the marginalized who are (still) excluded from the dominant economic system. They are deprived of the basic needs of life, below or just at subsistence level. They lack enough food, and shelter, cannot afford to send their children to school and have limited or no access to resources (2000: 6, 7). Robert Chambers looks at the poor in the form of a 'household', to emphasize and illustrate the entire impact of poverty on the whole family, a 'cluster of disadvantages', not just affecting one individual (1983: 103, 104).

#### **4.2.1 Causes of Poverty**

As we noted earlier, poverty is frequently associated with laziness, immorality, ignorance, and criminality. On the other hand, some religions and churches understand poverty as a virtue and even welcome it (Collins 1996: 32). There are four ways of looking at the causes of poverty, namely the conservative, liberal, blame-the-poor, and liberation views (Lwilla 1999: 18).

The *conservative view* argues that actually God created the poor. This was, and is still today, how former colonial and white churches understood and blessed poverty. Even many poor people accepted this conservative view and so accepted poverty as a result of their sin. The impact of this attitude is very visible in many mainline churches today. As a result, many clergies focus only on the spiritual well-being of the people.

According to the *liberal view*, the poor are deprived of development opportunities. This leads to underdevelopment. The liberal view is a counter approach to that of the conservative view. It is based on the western understanding of development, which is mainly directed at profit making. For them, human life does not matter so much. On the contrary, the liberalists consider development as a process to uplift and restore the human dignity of the poor.

The third way of looking at the causes of poverty is to blame the poor. Here the poor are regarded as responsible for being poor. They are labeled as lazy, unskilled and ignorant. They are accused of drinking, stealing, criminality and of having many children. The blame expressed often reflects actually what does happen in poor communities. However, what becomes clear when we try to understand wealth and poverty from the perspective of the poor, is that it is the context, not their character, which is mainly responsible for what people get in life.

Many revolutionaries, liberation theologians and feminists follow *the liberation approach*. They deny very strongly that poverty is natural. They also deny that God or the poor are responsible for poverty, but see poverty as created by other human beings.

This study is based on the liberation view of the causes of poverty. We regard the apartheid and colonial systems as the main causes of poverty in the Otjimbingwe rural community. Under colonialism, many indigenous people of Otjimbingwe lost much of their farmland. This land dispossession started the poverty that has continued to the present day. Human beings who brought colonialism to Africa, Namibia and Otjimbingwe, are the very ones who have caused poverty and its deadly consequences today. Therefore those who brought and caused poverty in Namibia should be held accountable for eradicating poverty and restoring the wealth they illegally owned and removed. According to the World Development Report 2000/2001, poverty is regarded as “the result of economic, political, and social processes that interact with each other and frequently reinforce each other in ways that exacerbate the deprivation in which the poor people live. Meager asserts, “inaccessible markets, and scarce job opportunities lock people in material poverty”

(2000/2001: 1).

#### ***4.2.2 Consequences of poverty***

The consequences of poverty are so wide and many that I will only mention the very common ones in our communities. The unemployment that escalates poverty has many consequences, namely, crime, the rape of women and children, the abuse of women and children, alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, the escalating number of suicides, teenage pregnancies, the high rate of school drop-outs and the ever increasing cases of HIV/AIDS. These are the consequences of poverty that destroy the social and moral life of any community.

#### ***4.2.3 Experiences of Poverty***

Having looked at the causes of poverty and its consequences, it will be good to focus on the experiences of the poor, that is, how they consider themselves and how the non-poor view them in the society. First, the poor experience that the non-poor – those who are in most cases the rich and the middle class - see them as objects, abstracts, nothing, lazy, drunkards, beggars, thieves and people who do not have anything to earn a living. Myers notes the attitude of the non-poor towards the poor as follows:

The world tends to view the poor as a group that is helpless; thus, we give ourselves permission to play god in the lives of the poor. The poor become nameless, and this invites us to treat them as objects of our compassion, as a thing to which we can do what we believe is best. We the non-poor, take it upon ourselves to name them—homeless, destitute, indigenous, working poor, and so on. (1999: 57, 58)

The negative attitude and behaviour of the non-poor towards the poor and the marginalized have severe psychological and mental effects on the poor. The poor lack confidence in themselves and so accept that they cannot change or do something about their poor situation. They feel powerless and meaningless. They have low self-esteem and lack courage, because they feel trapped and find themselves in the middle of nowhere. The poor feel lonely and ignored. Many poor people view themselves as people who cannot make a

difference in society. They regard themselves as non-important and think that they can only rely on the help of the rich and the dominant. For example, the farm workers on the commercial farms consider their employers (farmers) as very important in their entire life, while at the same time facing hunger and exploitation from the same employers.

Paulo Freire describes the experience of poverty in terms of dehumanization. He argues that one cannot understand humanization apart from dehumanization. Injustice, exploitation, oppression and the violence of the oppressor mark dehumanization, according to Freire. It is a distortion of the vocation of becoming fully human, and is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that produces violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed (1993: 26).

Dehumanizing poverty destroys all the good qualities of an entire social body and its environment. Unfortunately, today the world's leading and dominating systems and structures create more opportunities for dehumanization than humanization. Today, the major threats to human dignity and the effects of the ever-increasing poverty rate in Africa are capitalism, globalization, neo-liberalism and the so-called Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) for development to eradicate poverty in Africa by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organisation (WTO) and World Bank.

Dehumanizing poverty is against all forms of human freedom and liberty. It discriminates, separates, colonizes, oppresses, dominates, tortures and creates illnesses. Its powers consist of deadly unfreedoms. It is the source of unemployment and injustice; it is selfish; it is authoritarian; it is patriarchal; and its final result is a widening of the gap between the poor and rich, south and north, developed and underdeveloped, white and black and men and women to finally reach its aim, poverty.



#### ***4.2.4 Scriptures and Poverty***

Poverty is the state of being without material possessions or wealth. The Bible indicates that poverty is contrary to God's intention for His people, and that those who are poor and impoverished are to be treated with respect, with special attention and care. The plight of those in need calls for a caring action of which Jesus Christ is the great example (Luke 4: 18-21) and to which the early church (Acts 2: 44-47) was faithful.

There are many examples of the causes of poverty in Scripture, for example, the idea that human sin causes poverty (Gen. 17-19). The following causes of poverty are mentioned in the Bible:

- Divine punishment (Deut. 28: 47-48; Is. 3: 1; Amos. 4: 6; 5: 11)
- Idleness (Prov. 6: 10-11)
- Discrimination (Prov. 6: 26; Lk. 15 :14)
- Lack of discipline (Prov. 13: 18; 21: 5)
- Empty and quick promises (Prov. 22: 26-27)
- Debt (Mt. 18: 23-25)
- Oppression (Judg. 6:6; Job 20: 19; Is. 1: 7)
- Famine (Gen. 45: 11; 47: 20-21)
- Misfortune (Job 1: 13-21)

It is clear that God cannot be blamed for poverty, but that human beings are responsible. It is, also, clear in Scripture that poverty affects all people, good and bad, rich and poor, righteous and unrighteous, men and women, young and old, black and white (Deut. 8: 7-9; Ps. 34: 9-10; 37: 25). Even Jesus Christ was poor (Mt. 8: 20).

Scriptures also indicate the results of poverty in the lives of people and the environment they live in. Poverty results in devastation (Prov.10: 15), in humiliation (Prov.13: 18; Lk. 16: 3), in unhappiness (Prov.31: 7), in crime (Prov. 6: 30; 30: 8-9), and in ungodliness (Ps. 119: 17; Mk. 12: 44).

Finally, Scriptures clearly show how to treat the poor in the community. What should the attitudes be towards the poor? The poor should not be mistreated (Deut. 15: 7-8); they are not to be treated unfairly (Ex. 23: 6; Lev. 25: 34-37); their rights should be protected and assured (Deut. 14: 28-29; Lev. 19: 9-10); they are to be cared for (Ps. 82: 3-4; Lk. 3:11); and they are to be uplifted (Deut. 15: 9-11; Acts 10:2; Lk. 19: 8). It is very explicit that God is concerned about the poor and that He sides with the poor (Ps. 35: 10; 68: 10; Deut. 15: 4-5).

The God of the Exodus account is a God who heard the cries wrung from the slaves by the slave-drivers of Pharaoh and so came down to set them free and lead them to a land flowing with milk and honey ... So the Exodus account clearly shows that justice means taking sides with the oppressed. The Yahweh of the Exodus takes the part of the oppressed. (Bixley & Boff 1989: 20)

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ shows compassion for the poor and sides clearly with them (Lk. 4: 18-19; Mt. 15:32). As a result, the attitude of the first Christians towards poverty involved a caring and sharing community of believers (Acts 2: 44-45; 4: 32-35). Those who care for the poor will be rewarded (Ps. 41: 1; Mk. 9:41; Mt. 19: 21; 25: 34-36).

Scripture further expresses the need for the poor to actively participate in the fight against poverty (Ex. 23: 11; Lev. 19: 10; 23: 22; Deut. 23: 25; 1Tim. 4: 11; Acts 20: 34). Scripture also calls on the affluent to share resources and improve the lives of the poor (Acts 10: 4; Mt. 25: 34-40; Ps. 82: 3; Is. 10: 1-2). Finally, Scripture urges the church to be involved in the plight of the poor and facilitate projects and development programmes that will eradicate poverty (Gal. 2: 10; Acts 24: 17; Rom. 15: 26; 1Tit. 5: 16).

#### **4.3 What can the Church do?**

Having looked at Scripture and poverty, the church is challenged to take concrete action in fighting poverty. We are aware that the church in the past played a significant role, especially in education and health care. For example, the Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Anglican Churches through their mission programmes built schools and hospitals, some of

which can be found even today in Namibia. These schools and hospitals played a vital role in the lives of many deprived people during the colonial and apartheid eras. Despite this role, the church did not do much on the question of poverty and its causes and consequences. It is true that the church today shows a feeling of compassion towards the poor. The feeling of compassion means that the church does relief and charity work by providing food, clothes, blankets and shelter to the poor. The other compassionate role of the church is in preaching about poverty, delivering strong public statements, issuing declarations, signing petitions, publishing books and writing statements in the newspapers to show its strong standpoint in campaigning against poverty.

Despite these attempts, the church so far has not really taken concrete practical action in the process of community development. It should be noted that community development is beyond the church's traditional role of charity work and preaching about poverty. The point is that community development is about uplifting the living conditions of the people. It enhances and uplifts the lives of previously marginalized human beings who live in a specific community in a country. In other words, we talk about human development, which is the process of enlarging people's choices and raising levels of well-being. It is a holistic, integrated process in which economic and political forces continually interact with one another in dynamic and diverse ways to improve the lives of, and opportunities available to, the poorest people. It is about achieving an overall improvement in the quality of life for all people, giving priority to those who are the poorest and most excluded from mainstream society (Taylor 2000: 4, 5). For example, if people lack water and food, then it means that water and food should be provided; if people do not have places to sleep in, then that should be provided; and if people do not have employment, then jobs should be created. There are all sorts of challenges, which compel the church to be practical in its approach and action. But why should the church do this?

It should be noted that the church in all its strategies for action should do this in the interest of the people. Therefore, the church should act as the facilitator to ensure maximum participation of the people in their own development process, to that extent that the people become subjects of their upliftment. This means that the church should work *in* and *with*

the people. It is only when the bottom-up approach is employed in community development that people take part actively in decision-making and implementation processes (Chambers 1992: 39).

Deriving from what we said above, the church that is marked by its top-down institutional structure should first work on its structure to break down those barriers that hinder, first, the leaders from coming down to the real situation the people find themselves in and, secondly, the poor people from actively taking part in the process of community development.

Furthermore, the church has to create jobs through motivating and facilitating sustainable projects towards establishing small business development in the informal sectors. Nsanzya notes that “self-employment is often the only way open to improve their living conditions, and many Churches are trying to assist the poor to start their own businesses, on however small a scale. Conventional wisdom argues that small businesses represent a meaningful response to such conditions” (2000: 8).

In chapter three we noted the existing projects initiated by the community women and that there are traditional business practices people earn their living from. It is obvious that all members who are running the projects need project management skills and training. The good thing is that the projects still continue, despite some major weaknesses. The reason actually is that the projects have been initiated by the people and are controlled by them. Their willingness and enthusiasm shows that these projects will progress in the future. I think before introducing any new projects to this community, the existing projects, like the three above and the traditional income generating ways, which will be dealt with below, need to be upgraded and supported. Therefore, the churches and the government should support these projects. The traditional business practices, farming and gardening, should be mobilized and upgraded.

We are aware that to link church and business might evoke some critique, because the church is considered to be a spiritual entity. Despite this, the church has to look at ways and means to create self-employment opportunities that will help people to regain their human

dignity. It is evident that the private and public sectors, which ought to create more employment today, in fact create more unemployment through retrenchments, due to restructuring of assets, better known as privatization, the change of ownership from government to the Private Sector. The government, whose obligation and priority is to create more jobs, is in fact, the agent of privatisation. Therefore, the church has to be involved in creating jobs in partnership with other concerned community-based organisations, the government and the NGO's.

The next chapter will deal with a specific church, the ELCRN, its historical background and what concrete role it can play in uplifting people's living conditions.

## **5. CHAPTER FIVE: THE ELCRN - WHAT CAN BE DONE?**

### **5.1 Background to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN)**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) grew out of the Rhenish Mission Society which arrived in 1842 and so participated in a very gruesome and cruel history, in which colonialism and Christian mission went hand in hand. As Katjivivi has put it, "Colonialism prepared for Christianity, a fact that reveals the dialectical relationship that existed between Christianity and colonialism. Christianity was and is still the official ideology of the colonial and capitalist system" (1989: 30).

Although the church was involved in the very colonialism that brought poverty to Africa, it is itself heavily affected by poverty today. Bruwer writes: "There was a time when the Church made no secret of its identification with the powerful and rich"(1996: 57). The same sentiments can be said about the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN). It was the church that blessed apartheid and colonialism in Namibia. Otjimbingwe itself was the battleground where the German missionaries fought against the indigenous people. It was the venue where some colonial and apartheid policies were made.

Today, the ELCRN has to eat its own fruits! Most of the members of the Otjimbingwe community belong to the ELCRN. This indicates that the church, which is the community of believers, is also poor. This is also the general picture of the entire ELCRN in Namibia. It is the church of the poor. The impact of poverty on the ELCRN is severe. More than half of the members of the ELCRN are unemployed and lack proper education. As a result, since 1957 ninety percent of its budget comes from the former missionary partners. Many clergy are underpaid. Due to the impact of poverty the ELCRN has had to sell some valuable assets like farms, in order to find ways to become a financially self-reliant church. It is unclear whether this approach of the ELCRN, which is mainly directed at becoming financially self-sufficient, will be effective. It is more likely that the ELCRN will be financially self-sufficient only when it properly addresses the issue of the poverty of its

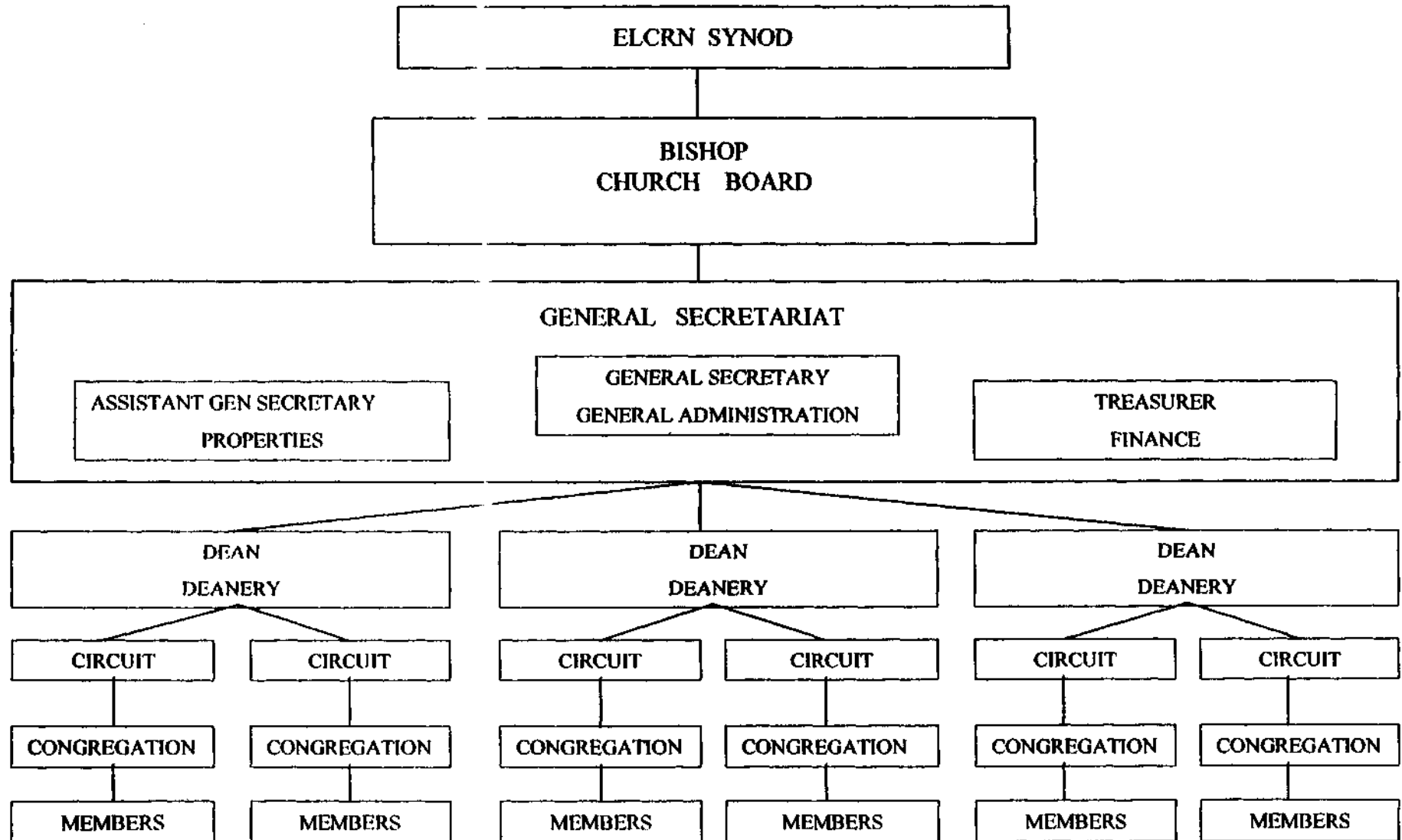
members. ELCRN will be financially self-sufficient only when its unemployed members also become self-reliant.

### ***5.1.1 Structure***

The ELCRN has a top-down, authoritarian and male dominated administrative structure. The organogram is found on the next page. With 'authoritarian male dominated' I mean that men occupy the most prominent positions, although the ELCRN was the first church denomination in the history of Namibia which ordained women as pastors in the late 1970s. For example, currently the chairperson of the synod, ten of the eleven members of the Church Board, the three deans, and the six chairpersons of the six circuits are all men. Other institutions and committees are also mainly headed by men. The irony is that the women are more actively involved at the congregational and community levels or at grass root level.

I think the administrative structure in itself is not bad if it functions smoothly from both directions, bottom-top-bottom. Unfortunately, the ELCRN's structure mostly functions from top to bottom. The bottom-up access is very limited and not really effective, although on most of the structural levels the bottom level, the Congregation, is represented, except on the Church Board, the Administrative Board and the Circuit Management. I am of the opinion that such a male dominated structure will not effectively serve to facilitate income generating projects. Currently, the top decides, for example, what projects the people need, often without the people's input. Therefore, there is an urgent need to look at the current structure of the ELCRN in order to meet the needs of the poor.

# ELCRN ORGANOGRAM





### ***5.2.2 Usakos Circuit***

This circuit is situated in the Erongo Region in the western part of Namibia. The Erongo Region, according to Regional Development and Poverty Indices by Region, ranked second in 1997 out of 13 regions (HDR 1997: 16). The reason might be its resources like fish, tourism, gold and uranium. However, there are communities experiencing absolute poverty, namely, Otjimbingwe, Okombahe, Karibib, Usakos, Utuseb, Uis and Spitzkoppe. In fact, these communities do not benefit from these resources, although a very limited number of people from these areas do find jobs in relation to these resources.

Usakos Circuit is one of the six circuits into which the ELCRN is divided. There are three deans, each heading two circuits. The circuit consists of ten congregations. More than half of these congregation members encounter hardship and poverty. The ELCRN has placed a pastor in each of all the circuit towns and in the rural areas. These pastors very often complain about the absolute poverty people are faced with, but up to now there has been no definite plan of action to eradicate poverty in these rural communities.

### ***5.2.3 Financial Situation***

The current financial situation of the ELCRN, in fact, reflects the general financial state of its members in urban and rural areas. It is imperative to analyse the current financial situation of the ELCRN in order to help determine whether the church has enough funds to facilitate income generation and job creation projects in poor rural communities.

The ELCRN is not yet financially self-sufficient. About 80% to 90% of its budget still comes from overseas partners, particularly from the German partners. The reason the German partner churches are today major contributors to the ELCRN budget, lies in its missionary history. This same sentiment is also rightly expressed by the ELCRN's treasurer: "To understand the ELCRN's financial situation today, it is imperative to look briefly into her financial past and not merely from its declared autonomy in 1957. The history of financial obligations dates as far back as 1842, when the Rhenish Mission

Society arrived." (Geiseb in Isaak 2000:57). The remaining 10% to 15% comes from the local parishes and sources. This is a very worrying factor and a very challenging issue to deal with. The church leaders since the independence of the ELCRN in 1957 made some attempts to encourage local members of the church to be committed to increase their financial contribution. Very recently, the ELCRN has launched a book entitled *The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* in which the five year plan of the church is put forward. According to this book, the ELCRN has a number of implementation strategies for its financial self-reliance:

- (a) That the Church Board provide the required support to enable its Treasurer and Administrative Board to devise ways in which to lead the ELCRN to financial self-sufficiency.
- (b) That at least 80% of the ELCRN's budget be locally funded, while only the remaining 20% be derived from ecumenical partners and donor agencies. (Isaak 2000:139)

My problem with this implementation strategy is that it concentrates on administrative financial self-reliance without looking at any empowerment strategies for community financial self-reliance. As far as I remember, the treasurer of the ELCRN reiterates almost every year the financial self-reliance goal: "That in respect of the total revenue generated or received from local sources, the ELCRN meet the recommended target of 80% by December 2004" (Isaak 2000: 139). This means that the financial support of the overseas partners will be reduced to 20%. However, the question which needs long term practical solution is: How will this recommended target of 80% of the budget be locally generated?

The following major attempts were made to drive the ELCRN on its way to financial self-sufficiency :

- Stewardship training workshops were organized at circuit and congregational levels to encourage and mobilize the pastors and the parish members.
- The treasurer of ELCRN often issued circulars to all the congregations in which he urged each member of the ELCRN to sign a stop-order with a respective bank and that money could be transferred to the ELCRN account each month. The church

sold nearly all its farms and some plots. As a result, the Capital Fund Trust was established in 1994 (Isaak 2000 : 72). The church's guests houses and certain centers were renovated and upgraded as income generation projects and as a result, the ELCRN Business Trust was established in 1999 (Isaak 2000: 73).

- Very recently, the ELCRN signed a consultancy agreement with Africa Institutional Management Services (AIMS) "to initiate and raise additional income (funds) for salary increments of Pastors serving the ELCRN... The creation of the said income would predominantly depend on the number of the overall Congregation membership of the ELCRN... Therefore, it must be well understood that all Congregation members will have an ongoing obligation to either contribute monthly or annually..." (ELCRN Finansiële Verslag 2001: 99)

The treasurer, Gotthy Geiseb, considered in the recent financial report during the Nineteenth Ordinary Synod taking place from 25<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> August 2001 at Tsumeb, that the ELCRN Capital Fund and ELCRN Business Fund will be the main sources of local income for the church in the future. However, the members of the ELCRN, especially those who live in the rural areas, are still faced with absolute poverty. David Gertze, the ELCRN Business Trust manager, makes the following well-analysed statement:

The Church in Namibia cannot exist without well-developed and financially supported systems. Thus, the ELCRN is a Church of and for-

- primarily those most in need
- those at the bottom of the social and economic scale, and
- those who have been deprived of basic opportunities for education and self-development.

Roughly 70% of our members live in rural areas; many of them work on farms (usually those owned by the minority white population). These members live in areas lacking basic requirements for nurturing and sustaining a normal life. They are totally dependent on their livestock, which existence barely provides for the basic needs of their families.

Many people living in communal areas or working on farms have been moving to the towns and cities in the hope of finding a job. However, many of them end up on the streets, without employment. Generally, the financial contribution that people in the above categories are able to make is practically non-existent. For this

reason, a large proportion of our rural congregations face serious financial problems. (Gertze in Isaak 2000 : 75)

In fact, the problem is that the above attempts made by the church are mainly aimed at administrative and salary self-reliance. Community empowerment and human resource development seems not to be a priority for the ELCRN leadership. As a result, I believe that the church failed in the past and will further fail in their attempts, if people are not the priority. Also, Geiseb, realizes that the ELCRN will not be financially self-reliant if the ELCRN members are not empowered :

The future focus, therefore, is on empowering the ELCRN's membership, as long as we can financially afford it, with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to participate in and contribute to the mission of the greater Church body in a meaningful way, and to take responsibility for determining a positive future. In this regard the ELCRN, within the confines of the limited financial resources at our disposal, will be re-examining our engagement and commitment as regards the building of sustainable communities, where a dignified, abundant life is a reality for all our people..., to ensure the social upliftment of our congregations and communities. (Geiseb in Isaak 2000 : 61)

## **5.2 ELCRN run projects in Usakos Circuit and, in particular, in the Otjimbingwe rural community.**

The ELCRN has an existing project office from where projects are planned and implemented. Development work of the ELCRN Project Office includes human resource development, courses for kindergarten co-workers and support of small and micro enterprises. The ELCRN considers the small income generating projects, or micro enterprises, as an effective way to help people to generate their own income. However, there is not much emphasis on that at the circuit and congregation levels, and even among the pastors.

Common projects for the ELCRN are building and renovating church buildings or parsonages, building or renovating new or old kindergartens or hostels, renovations of existing hostels and the purchase of cars. These are known as projects by many pastors and

members of the ELCRN. Very recently, in 1997, the ELCRN introduced the ELCRN Business Trust in order to meet its financial obligations. This business trust came into being as a result of the ELCRN's attempt to become financially self-reliant. The general manager, of the ELCRN Business Trust, Gertze stated the following at the 1999 ELCRN Synod when giving its background:

Based on the decision of the Project Meeting 1997, a feasibility study on income generating projects was conducted which was concentrated on the already existing institutional business activities of ELCRN, the guesthouses in Windhoek, Keetmanshoop and Swakopmund, as well as the Andreas Kukuri Conference Centre and Women's Centre, as well as the Tabitha Multi-Purpose Centre...The support of Small and Micro Enterprises (SME) at congregational level was regarded as a first priority in order to increase contributions of church members. But in the light of the current financial state of most African churches, institutional income generating activities are a necessity in order to complement member and outside contributions. (Unpublished ELCRN Synod Report 1999: 1)

From the above quote it is obvious that the ELCRN is facing a financial crisis, because the local members of the church cannot manage to contribute enough funds to meet its budget. However, the ELCRN has failed to analyse the primary cause as to why its members cannot contribute the needed funds to its budget. I agree in principle with the statement made above "The support of Small and Micro Enterprises at congregation level was regarded as a first priority in order to increase contributions of church members". I agree with the fact that the support of Small and Micro Businesses should be considered first priority at congregational level, but I do not agree with the purpose "in order to increase contributions of church members". This indicates that the emphasis is on the profit-making of the church and not on improving the living conditions of the members. I think that is where the problem lies. For example, the profit from the above five income generation projects of the ELCRN Business Trust will mostly contribute to the main budget of the ELCRN, which mostly covers the administrative costs and salaries of the pastors, staff, hostel and kindergarten co-workers.

There are also other income generating projects that the ELCRN has been involved in, for example, the construction of two bungalows in traditional style at the Spitzkoppe

Community Tourism Camp at the beginning of 1999, which was also the conclusion of the income generating programme. Within the programme, a wide range of mostly small-scale projects in different regions were funded in 1997 and 1998. For example, ten goats per household were given to people in rural communities who experienced extreme drought, and in some rural areas, like in and around Spitzkoppe, people were given ostriches for farming purposes.

## **6. CHAPTER SIX: STRATEGIES FOR THE CHURCH IN ITS POVERTY RELIEF PROGRAMME**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Having looked at the nature of the ELCRN and what role it has played so far in the lives of the people at Otjimbingwe in terms of the process of community development, it is clear that the ELCRN has not had much of a role, despite the little it has contributed. This chapter will deal with some strategies that may enable the church to play a meaningful role and at the same time ensure maximum participation of the local community in their own development through sustainable projects. The church should realize the abilities and gifts of the people and help them to develop their talents and gifts and put them to use. However, because of the importance of the participation of people in decisions about their own lives, it should be noted that this chapter does not want to be prescriptive but is proposing possible strategies that the church could apply in the process of alleviating poverty.

### **6.2 Church as Insider and Outsider**

The Church is both an insider and an outsider. This means that the Church has internal as well as external links that enable it to pursue its mission and task. Therefore, we will focus on the internal as well as the external strategies that the ELCRN can use to be involved in the process of development.

#### **6.2.1 Insider**

The Church is an “insider” to the people of Otjimbingwe because members of the church are also members of the community. It is, therefore, important for the Church to identify the capacities and skills of the community members, especially the poor and deprived because these people have gifts and talents that can make a valuable contribution to their upliftment.

Myers rightly notes that poor people have acquired skills, capabilities, resources and knowledge that have enabled them to survive for the past difficult years (1999: 141).

Through its internal strategies, the church should localize the development process. In other words, the capacities and skills of the local people and assets available in the community should be identified and encouraged to ensure people-centred development. Here, the church has to try and minimize the external financial, material and expert support that has in the past undermined the capacities and abilities of the local people and resulted in paternalism. Paternalism refers to any effort that makes the people dependent. For example, if the church becomes only a charity organization by giving out clothing, food, money and transport freely to people, then it practises paternalism, or if the development workers do the development work for the people and not with them, then that is undermining the people's capacity to work for themselves. The internal strategy of the church should focus on a conscientisation process to ensure that the marginalized and the deprived take part in their own development process.

### ***6.2.2 Outsider***

The Church, at the same time, is also an "outsider" to the people of Otjimbingwe because its leadership and structures lie outside the community. The church as an outsider should strengthen and encourage its links to the wider networks - the international church organizations, partner churches, donor agencies, NGO's and the Government. Chambers describes outsiders as "people concerned with rural development who are themselves neither rural nor poor" (1983: 2). Outsiders are relatively well-off, well-educated, and, mostly, urban based. Their children attend schools of a high academic standard.

The external strategy of the church should be aimed at conscientizing other outsiders in order that they realize that the manner in which they treat the insider, for example, to decide for the people what type of a project is needed or what the people should do and what they should not do, is not a suitable approach. This does not mean that the church does not want outside assistance, but that the church should no longer tolerate the dominating approach and attitude from outside that undermines the capacities and gifts of



the local people. The reality that the church faces is that it does not have sufficient funds to support the creation of small-scale businesses, which are initiated by the local people. Therefore, the church has also to rely on external assistance. This does not mean that the church must beg for money, but that the church should convince outside partners that they have an obligation and responsibility toward the development process in alleviating poverty. In the light of the political and economic history of Namibia, in which outsiders have benefitted so much at the expense of insiders, outside assistance is one way to redress the imbalances of the past.

### ***6.2.3 Planning projects***

Community development invariably takes place through projects. Projects have become the accepted way in which development efforts can be brought to ground level (De Beer and Swanepoel 1998: 49-50). Projects, as often understood and implemented by many outsiders, such as experts and development workers, were in the past exercised in a top-down manner. They were imposed on people, that is, the NGO's, the government and even the church decided for the people what type of projects they would need. As a result, many projects were not fruitful and ended up wasting millions of dollars.

People often do not understand the purpose of a project, nor do they understand the complicated nature, requirements and methods used to plan or implement a project.

A project is considered often as too formalized, too discrete and too well planned. Projects take away the incremental and experimental nature that makes up the learning process and helps build institutional capacity. In terms of their complexity, they are often managed badly and therefore do not reach their objectives. As well-defined sets of activities, they are misused to control instead of embodying uncertain development efforts. (Rondinelli in De Beer and Swanepoel 1998:50)

However, a project has also many advantages if it is well understood and aims to improve people's skills and dignity. A good project builds on and develops the capacities and gifts of the people. It builds on what is already known to the people and does not decide for and impose on the people outside ideas and what is not known to them.

When planning a project, it is vital to note that the project will meet the needs of the disadvantaged and improve their lives. It is no use to plan a project, which will cost a lot of money, but will not serve the needs of the poor people. It is, also, advisable to employ manageable, cheap and appropriate tools that the people understand and know before, so that they are not solely dependent on the help of experts. When planning a community project, all concerned institutions, organizations and sectors in the community must be consulted. A successful project in a community is one that is initiated by the local people, is people-centred and serves their needs. The Church, as both insider and outsider, is suitably placed to ensure that this actually happens.

Let us turn now to some of the strategies that the Church can utilize in assisting the community of Otjimbingwe in poverty alleviation.

### **6.3 Strategies for poverty alleviation.**

#### ***6.3.1 Conscientization and encouragement***

The people need to be conscientized about their historical past in order to restore their human dignity and identity. Miquez Bonino defines 'conscientization' as

the *passah*, or Passover—this passage or transition in which, within a historical praxis, the people become aware of the hope and power behind the symbols and stories of their traditional faith and begin to shape a new ethos, a new way of dwelling in the world and in its own history. It is then that 'the people' can indeed become the subjects of their own history. (1983: 106)

What enables people to become subjects of their own history and further enables them to actively take part in the process of developing their community. Freire notes that conscientization is possible through "problem-posing education" which "involves a constant unveiling of reality and strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality" (1993:62) . He strongly argues against the "banking concept of education" in which "knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves

knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (1993: 52). The Church could organize workshops and community meetings, where the people of Otjimbingwe would have the platform to talk about their past and to understand why they are where they are today. This will enable the local people to free themselves from the prison of “I cannot do anything”. These meetings should serve to encourage the people to be confident about who they are and to realise that they have skills and wisdom to bring change in the community. These gatherings should enable people to share what skills they have acquired and what they can contribute in uplifting their living conditions. Kretzmann asserts that “every single person has capacities, abilities and gifts. Each time a person uses his or her capacity, the community is stronger and the person more powerful” (1993: 13).

### **6.3.2 *Listening to the people - PRA***

The second strategy that may be suitable when planning a project in a rural community like Otjimbingwe, is the *Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)* method of Chambers. This method is people-centred and it ensures maximum participation of the local people in their own development process. This method was developed in protest against the two common methods of investigation, formal questionnaire surveys and rural development tourism (Chambers 1993:1). These techniques were mostly based on the knowledge of the outsiders, who did not show any sympathy and respect for the villagers, who did not have any contact with, and time for the insiders but who did research on them. Consequently, the reports and surveys done on behalf of the villagers did not reflect the real context and lives of the people. Thus, the alternative approach of PRA uses techniques that enable rural people to do their own investigations, to share their knowledge and teach outsiders, to do the analysis and presentations, to plan, and to own the outcome. To Chambers, PRA is about “start, stumble, self-correct, share”, this means to encourage and enable the marginalized to have a go. This includes critical self-awareness and embracing error, sitting down, listening and learning; not lecturing but “handing over the stick” to villagers, who become the main teachers and analysts; having confidence that “they can do it”; and an open-ended discovery (Chambers 1993: 2).

### ***6.3.3 Utilizing Church resources***

The ELCRN has many human and physical resources all over the country. In terms of human resources, each congregation has many skilled and gifted members with different talents and gifts. There are teachers, doctors, nurses, government officials, lawyers, farmers, welders, builders, and many more. Integrating these capacities and skills will certainly reduce financial cost, and can make a great difference to the poor.

With regard to physical resources, the ELCRN owns many buildings and centers that could be made available to poor people. There are church buildings, church halls for congregation use, institutional centers and conference centers where the poor can come to meet and discuss their issues. Currently, the church buildings, halls and centers are used for services and spiritual growth activities of the congregation. The conference centres serve mainly as income generating centers, with the aim of making the ELCRN financially self-reliant.

At Otjimbingwe, most buildings belong to the church, for example, the church hostel, the Bible house, a big complex besides the parsonage which was previously used for trading by the missionaries, and Paulinum, the former theological seminary with lots of houses, office blocks, and a dining and community hall. The Church also owns historical monuments, which marked the German versus Herero and Nama wars during the 1880's. The latter can be used to attract tourists to generate outside income.

### ***6.3.4 Strengthening the existing income-generating projects.***

With regard to the existing three small business initiatives, the bakery, sewing project and gardening project, the ELCRN could make a positive contribution by evaluating the human resources (skills and capacity) of the groups and contributing to further training and assessment. It could contribute to the tools and equipment and could help access financial capital.

Animal husbandry and gardening (crop production) are the two main traditional ways by which people at Otjimbingwe have earned their living for years, even before the above mentioned projects were established. Both these activities are as important as the three new projects. The local people are experienced and skilled in farming and gardening. However, these activities have only been used for subsistence. As we noted in chapter three, the prolonged drought and the lack of water threaten the further existence of these traditional ways of living. The Church could follow these steps to explore their viability as income generating activities, and to ensure the sustainability of the business practices, that is, to investigate the sustainability of farming and gardening, to investigate the soil fertility and possibilities of getting more clean affordable water, to motivate and mobilize the local farmers and crop producers to continue these small-scale businesses and to provide the necessary tools and equipment.

Furthermore, the church in partnership with concerned NGO's and the government, could investigate possible ways as to how to preserve the environment in order to solve the water and grazing problems. It is clear from the study at Otjimbingwe that the soil is fertile and that there is plenty of underground water. This problem can be solved by creating more boreholes and encouraging and teaching the local people about environmental awareness. For example, people can be taught to preserve the existing trees and to plant more trees in order to attract more rain to the area.

#### ***6.3.5 Identifying Markets***

There is a great need to identify markets that will support the local small-scale projects and businesses. This is a very important step that the church, in partnership with other concerned organizations, may investigate even before any project is started. Members of the church who have acquired this skill can be asked to help with surveying and observation. Nsanzya notes that once "the market in a given area is identified, this will help the church to ensure that the people receive training that will equip them to produce quality products appreciated by the targeted market" (2000:18).

### **6.3.6 Encouraging co-operation**

This is very important in community development. No organization or individual will manage to bring effective change in the process of community development in isolation. A community consists of individuals, families, groups, the private sector, organizations and the government. These are the “assets” of any community. Kretzmann, in his book entitled *Building Communities From The Inside Out*, argues that the local associations and institutions can play a vital role in community building, and the leaders of these different institutions can pull together whatever is available to build a community (1993:171, 172). All the partners in the community should be involved in rebuilding and building the community from the inside out. The Church, as both insider and outsider, could play the vital role of identifying and pulling together these institutions to ensure a good spirit and maximum community participation.

The Church should see the Government as the main partner in its attempts to eradicate poverty. In the case of Otjimbingwe, the church could co-operate with the planned job creation programme of the Erongo Regional Council through its local council. At the same time, the church has to alert the government not to impose their ideas and policies on the people, but to listen to the concerns of the people and respect their contributions and views. The church should do this in a spirit of co-operation.

### **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter looked at insider and outsider strategies which the church can apply and follow in its process to alleviate poverty. It is clear from the chapter that the church should focus on people-centred strategies to ensure that the poor people are part and parcel of their own development. It is also clear that the church should focus on local assets that are available in the community and build on that. Finally, the church should encourage inside and outside co-operation that is based on the capacities and gifts of the local people.

## **7. CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION**

In this study we began with the historical background of Namibia, in order to determine the root cause of poverty in Namibia. Without looking back at the historical past and realities of our country, it is hard to search for a lasting solution in the process of eradicating poverty. Development is about people who were previously oppressed and deprived of basic human needs and opportunities. Therefore, these people will only be actively involved in their own development once they know why they are what they are today.

Chapter two shows that poverty was caused and escalated due to colonialism during the German occupation of the, then, German South West Africa and during the apartheid period under South Africa's occupation of the then, South West Africa. Deriving from these historical facts, this study gives a detailed community profile of poverty in Otjimbingwe.

Chapter three tries to give an overview of the living conditions of the Otjimbingwe community. This is done through interviews and by sketching a community profile. Having done this, it is evident to me that poverty continued even after the independence of Namibia eleven years ago. The government, through its Regional Council, has plans in place to bring investment to the people with its main aim being to create jobs. However, it seems that a long-term plan will still take more years before it will bring fruit. On the other hand, the churches, especially the ELCRN, as the dominant denomination, has done very little in the past, and seems to have got stuck somewhere on the way. Yet, life goes on at Otjimbingwe. The community, especially the women, have not given up but have initiated the existing projects in order to survive poverty without any outside help. The local people continue to struggle for survival through the traditional ways of earning a living, despite the prolonged drought and the shortage of water. This shows that the local community is willing to fight poverty if they get the necessary equipment and skills.

The fourth chapter deals with the role of the church in the process of eradicating poverty. The chapter looks at the nature of the church and why it should be concerned about the



question of development. The chapter further looks at the causes of poverty, its consequences and experiences and why the church must be concerned about poverty. It is clear from the Scriptures that God did not cause poverty but that He is against poverty and its consequences. The Church, therefore, is compelled to take part in the process of development.

The fifth chapter looks at the ELCRN, its historical background, structure, the Usakos Circuit and its approach and initiatives in community development projects. The ELCRN is not very involved in community projects, although it is evident that it was involved in a number of development projects in the past. Many projects have not succeeded due to the church's failure in facilitating the projects. On the other hand, the church is searching for its own financial self-reliance through income-generating projects that will feed its budget. This is currently the priority of the ELCRN: to become financially self-reliant. However, the fact is that the church will not be financially self-reliant without empowering its members, who hardly have something to eat. This is a key theme throughout this study.

The sixth chapter proposes a number of strategies the church can use to ensure maximum participation of the local community in poverty relief. This chapter looks at insider and outsider strategies which the church can apply and follow in its process to alleviate poverty. It is clear that the church should focus on people-centred strategies to ensure that poor people are part and parcel of their own development. It is, also, clear that the church should focus on the local assets that are available in the community and develop and build on these. Finally, the church should encourage inside and outside co-operation that is based on the capacities and gifts of the local people.

The seventh chapter serves as the conclusion and suggests the possibility that further research is needed at Otjimbingwe.

## **7.1 Possibility for further research**

There is a great necessity for further research at Otjimbingwe because this study is the first of its kind done in this community. To secure an effective development process, further research on many levels remains important. The researcher views his contribution in the academic sphere as helpful to those who have the task of assisting of Otjimbingwe Community to combat poverty. The study will certainly benefit the project office of my Church, ELCRN, and the church as a whole.

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