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**The Church and Poverty Reduction: The Case
of The Hope Empowerment Scheme of
Durban Christian Centre Church**

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The Hope Empowerment Scheme of
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Jude Emeka Icheku



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**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Development Studies,
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Declaration

This dissertation represents the original work of the author and has not been submitted in any other form to another university. Where use has been made of the work of other authors and sources, it has been accordingly acknowledged and referenced in the body of the dissertation.

The research for this dissertation was completed in the School of Development Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban. Research was undertaken under the supervision of Professor Brij Maharaj.

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ABSTRACT

In recent times, the church has been involved in various development programmes. Church based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have emerged in response to development needs especially in the developing countries. Among the issues engaging the attention of the church, the problems of HIV/AIDS and poverty seem to be most prominent. In South Africa, the activities of Christian organizations in response to these problems are evident. This study evaluated the role of the church in poverty reduction with special reference to the Help Our People Everywhere (HOPE) Empowerment Scheme of the Durban Christian Centre Church, in KwaZulu-Natal. It examined the poverty reduction programme of the church and explored how Christian theology has shaped the church's response to the problem of poverty and associated problems.

The study was based on primary information obtained from interviews with the managers and beneficiaries of the projects of the Empowerment Scheme. Qualitative analysis was used to gauge the extent to which the projects of the scheme have improved the well-being of the beneficiaries.

Significant improvement in the well-being of the respondents was found. First, there was a restoration of self-esteem, confidence to achieve success despite odds, and hope for a prosperous future. Second, and more measurable, there was an improvement in the incomes of the beneficiaries. Although the scheme showed promises of a sustainable progress in poverty reduction, there were a number of challenges and shortcomings particularly with funding of the projects and the reach or coverage of the scheme's activities.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

In recent years, the poor are not only among us as the Bible says (Deuteronomy, 15:11; John 12:8), but the incidence and depth of poverty is increasing. If the global trend of 30 per cent of the world's population living in poverty continues, by the year 2015, the number of people living in poverty will rise to 1.9 billion (Reed and Rosa 1997:2).

Reduction of poverty is a duty any responsible government owes its population. Poverty reduction is, however, not the responsibility of the state alone. Civil society, and the church in particular, feels there is a need to join the state in fighting poverty. South Africa is a country where the question of poverty reduction has assumed a great importance (Ndungane, 2003). The degree of poverty in South Africa is a cause for serious concern. As at 2003, about 50 per cent of the population of South Africa was considered to be living below the poverty line (UNDP, 2003:70), while the gap between the poor and the rich was among the largest in the world. This situation had a great impact on living standards, economic growth and the levels of crime and social stability (Pillay, 2000:viii).

Poverty derives from several sources. In South Africa specifically, the apartheid regime institutionalised a process of state driven underdevelopment that dispossessed and excluded the majority of South Africans and simultaneously denied them the opportunities to develop assets, such as land and livestock, through limiting access to markets, infrastructure and education. Hence apartheid, through its institutions produced poverty and extreme inequality (May, 2000:2).

To address the problem of poverty and to advance economic development has become a major preoccupation of the present democratic regime. Since the advent of democratic rule in 1994, gradual but far reaching changes have been taking place, especially with regard to economically empowering those that were formally disadvantaged. However, the efforts to reduce poverty must be pursued within the context of current neo-liberal globalisation processes. Neo-liberalism demands that the state plays an increasingly

minimal role in terms of the provision of social services and relinquishing them to the dictates of market forces.

Although globalisation brings about economic growth, this has not been pro-poor. Hence, in this era of globalisation, the rich get richer while the poor get poorer. The failure of the current globalisation process to usher in a period of improved well-being for the poor has increased the space for the proliferation of civil society organisations which are positioning themselves to contribute to addressing development problems and poverty in particular (Habib, n.d.:3; Habib and Kotze 2002:6). As an important part of the civil society, there seems to be a renewed concern in the church about the problem of poverty and a greater conviction of the need to fight it. Hence, the church is gradually and increasingly assuming a more significant role in the fight against poverty. The participation of the church in finding solutions to poverty is not novel. What might be new is the new vigour and tactics adopted by the church in the war against poverty in recent years, which coincide with era of globalisation (Habib and Kotze, 2002:6).

This study examines the role of the church in KwaZulu-Natal as an important part of civil society, in reducing poverty within the context of globalisation. This study will more specifically centre on the activities of the Durban Christian Centre Church through its Help Our People Everywhere (HOPE) Empowerment Scheme. The activities of this Scheme are geared towards helping the poor members of neighbouring communities, particularly those living with HIV/AIDS.

1.2 Purpose of Study

The main purpose of this study is to analyse the role of the church in KwaZulu-Natal in addressing the problem of poverty, with specific reference to the Durban Christian Centre Church. For example, what projects and programmes is the church undertaking in terms of human development, education, skills training, and job location for the trained. What impacts are such projects and programmes having in reducing poverty?

More specifically, the objectives of this study are to:

- i. Critically review theoretical and conceptual debates relating to poverty alleviation and the role of the church

- ii. Assess the response of the Durban Christian Centre to the problem of poverty
- iii. Investigate the problems and difficulties faced by the HOPE Empowerment Scheme in its role in reducing poverty
- iv. Make recommendations to the HOPE Empowerment Scheme that will enhance its effectiveness in fighting poverty.

1.3 Research Questions

The following questions will be examined in this study.

- i. What projects and programmes does the church have to fight poverty among its membership?
- ii. How many people have benefited from such projects and programmes?
- iii. What impacts did such projects and programmes have in reducing poverty?
- iv. Are these programmes sustainable?

1.4 Methodology

(i) Research Approach

The case study approach was adopted in this study. The focus of this case study is the Durban Christian Centre Church, and more specifically its HOPE Empowerment Scheme. A case study approach focuses on a particular case of a phenomenon with the aim of explaining the general (Denscombe, 1998:32). The choice of DCC is significant in that its programme is aimed at equipping its beneficiaries for life-time employment rather than just palliative philanthropic measures. While the membership of the church cuts across all ethnic, gender and age groups, there is a preponderance of blacks in the church.

The advantage of a case study methodology is that it provides a significant amount of descriptive as well as explanatory information about the “why” and “what” of a research subject (Brink, 1996:116). Babbie and Mouton (2001:283) note that “case studies have great potential for theory development”. It also allows for flexibility of

sources and methods of data collection. Being a case study, generalization from the result of the study could be questioned. The population for this study is not representative either of the all the churches in KwaZulu-Natal or the beneficiaries of the Empowerment scheme.

(ii) Sampling Method

A convenience sampling method was adopted in this study. This was related to the issue of confidentiality of the beneficiaries' HIV/AIDS status. According to Denscombe (1998:17), convenience sampling "is built upon selections which suits the convenience of the researcher and which are first to hand." Denscombe argues that "where there is scope for choice between two or more equally valid possibilities for inclusion in the sample, the researcher should choose the most convenient." However, convenience sampling method has some serious disadvantages. Certain elements might be over-represented or under-represented, making generalization based on such samples very risky (Brink, 1996:140).

The population for this study are the managers and beneficiaries of the HOPE Empowerment Scheme. Twelve personal interviews and one focus group interview were conducted. The personal interviews covered the Co-ordinator of the HOPE Foundation, Pastor Vusi Dube; the Co-ordinator of the HOPE Empowerment Scheme, Ms. Mbeh Mdlalose (two interviews); the Trainer (Manager) at Lamontville Training Centre, Mrs. Sindi Sibiya, and Pastor Philip Laurent, who succeeded Pastor Dube as the Co-ordinator of the Foundation. The other seven personal interviews were with eight of the beneficiaries of the scheme, two of them being interviewed at the same time. Finally, a focus group discussion with seven other beneficiaries was conducted. The decision to run a group interview was informed by the author's financial situation and the availability of the respondents. In all four officials of the scheme and fifteen beneficiaries were interviewed.

For reasons of confidentiality of the beneficiaries' HIV/AIDS status, the respondents interviewed were chosen by the co-ordinator of the Empowerment Scheme. A list of people to be interviewed was given to the author who then contacted them for interview. However, as the researcher could not reach all the beneficiaries on the list, he solicited the help of those he was able to reach to link him to some other

beneficiaries that were not included in the list. The research aim and focus were explained to the participants who demonstrated willingness to be interviewed. Appointments were made for formal interviews at their convenience. In general all participants were willing to be interviewed. It should be noted that no question was asked about the respondents' HIV/AIDS status.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework will be a combination of Amartya Sen's capability approach to development and the theory of social capital. The work of Nobel Prize-winner Amartya Sen, Development As Freedom, helped to further the understanding of development by focusing on people as being the ends rather than the means of growth. According to Sen (1994:4):

Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive state (Sen, 1999:4).

It is the view of Sen that the lack of "substantive freedoms" sometimes relates directly to economic poverty, which deprives people of freedom to sufficiently feed, clothe, shelter, provide adequate sanitation for themselves and obtain treatment for illnesses. Further, imposed restrictions on political and civil liberties by authoritarian regimes violate the freedom to participate in the social, political and economic life of the community. Sen came to the conclusion that

What people can positively achieve is influenced by economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers, and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education, and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives (Sen, 1999: 5).

The meaning of freedom may be subjective but as Moorehead (2000:8) has observed, "most human conception of freedom is that all people are of equal inherent value and that freedom for one can be no more important than freedom for another." This belief, for Moorehead (2000:8) is grounded in the concept of "ubuntu – people are people

through other”. The concept of ubuntu manifests in various forms, and social scientists refer to it as social capital.

The concept of social capital has been a vigorously contested one (Harris, 2002). But as Miyakawa (nd:1) defines it, social capital refers to “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” or what Harris (2002:2) calls the “the familiar everyday notion that it is not what you know (that counts) – it’s who you know.” It refers to “those resources inherent in social relations which facilitate collective action.”¹ Social capital theory, Riemer (nd:2) has noted, “analyses the production, investment and returns of the value or resources embedded in social structures and networks rather than in individuals.” Being a member of a group that might provide support in time of need is an element of social capital.

This capabilities approach examines the factors that shape the ability of people to realise their full potential over time, especially in terms of benefiting from economic growth. Although growth is necessary, it is not sufficient for poverty alleviation. It is linked to, and mutually reinforces human development. Hence, equipping its members to survive in a globalizing world would be of great importance to the agenda of the church. The expansion of livelihood capabilities becomes pivotal to the approach adopted by the church. “Sen’s analysis describes the relationship of people to the resources they have and the commodities they need when meeting their basic sustenance requirements” (May, 2000:8). The church provides the necessary linkages and social networks that may be relevant in the fight against poverty.

This project is divided into five chapters. Following the introduction, chapter two deals with the meaning and measurement of poverty, and the related problems in South Africa and in KwaZulu-Natal in particular. It also discusses the phenomenon of globalization and its effects in poor countries. Chapter three examines the scriptural or theological response of the church to poverty. Chapter four focuses on the HOPE Empowerment Scheme, which is the response of the Durban Christian Centre Church to poverty. Finally, evaluation, the recommendations and conclusions are presented in chapter five.

¹ See <http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/pa765/socialcapital.htm>.

Chapter Two

Poverty in an Era of Globalization

2.1 Introduction

In the last two decades, the incidence of poverty has assumed an alarming proportion. This situation has been exacerbated by the current globalization process, which has forced governments to retreat from the provision of social services, and to abandon the provision of these poverty-cushioning services to the dictates of market forces. This chapter explores the debates around the process of globalization, its effects on economic growth and employment. It also examines the meanings and measurement of poverty. The problem of poverty as it relates to South Africa and the province of KwaZulu-Natal in particular is also discussed.

2.2 What is Globalization?

There is a lot of confusion about the definition of globalization which has become an all pervasive force in the post-Cold War world order (Amin and Thrift, 1994:1). This confusion has led to globalization being variously conceived as “a myth, a rhetorical device, a phenomenon, an ideology, a reality, an orthodoxy, and a rationality” (Kacowicz, 2001:6). Kacowicz describes globalization as “a short form for a cluster of inter-related economic, ideological, technological, and cultural changes” (Kacowicz, 2001:6). Similarly, Held *et al* (2000:54) state that globalization refers to those spatio-temporal processes of change which underpin a transformation in the organization of human affairs by linking together and expanding human activity across regions and continents.

This takes place through the internationalisation of production, greatly increased mobility of capital and dominated by seemingly uncontrollable market forces, with transnational corporations that owe no allegiance to any nation-state, and locate wherever on the globe market advantage dictates, as it its principal economic actor and agents (Hirst and Thompson, 2000:68).

Despite this seemingly clear understanding of the idea of globalization, a precise definition of the term globalization is elusive. However, it is usually taken to mean an increase in economic, financial, environmental and social/cultural integration between

and within countries, manifested through an increased elimination or reduction of barriers to international movement of commodities, labour, capital, and technology (Round and Whalley, 2002:1; Morrissey and Filatotchev, 2000:1; Khan, 1998:103, and Agenor, 2002:3), thus linking distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped and affected by events occurring many miles away on any part of our planet (Giddens, 2000:92, and Beck, 2000:102).

In an economically hegemonic and more sinister sense, globalization refers to the new forms taken by the process of accumulation in the world of triadic (USA, Japan and the EU) capitalism (Amoroso, 1998:52). Barnett (1992, cited in Kirkbride et al, 2001) has similarly observed that:

It takes the form of integration of business activities across, geographical and organizational boundaries. It confers the freedom to conceive, design, buy, produce, distribute, and sell products and services in a manner which offers maximum benefit to the firm without regard to the consequences of individual geographic locations or organizational units.

This has resulted in the world economy becoming an increasingly integrated unit. As Modelski (2000:52) has noted, globalization in most cases, was a process of incorporation where external governments, societies, individuals that proved adept and adaptable enough were co-opted into a Western-centered world politics. The great majority were either dominated, controlled, ignored or isolated.

Globalisation is not a new phenomenon; it has ebbed and flowed over the past century. Kaplinsky (2000:118) notes that there are many, though imperfect, measures of globalisation, but one indication of growing integration is the significantly increasing proportion of goods and services that is traded, and a simultaneous increase in the level of absolute poverty which has remained stubbornly high with about 1.2 billion people living below \$1 per day in 1985 purchasing parity prices.

Several factors enhanced the process of globalization at the end of the twenty century than at any other period. These include the gradual jettisoning of the post-World War II import-substitution industrialization (ISI) regime, the collapse of the socialist

system, and the revolution in information technology (IT) (Khan, 1998:104; 1998b:136, and Robins, 2000:195).

2.3 Effects of Globalization

There are, undoubtedly, significant potential benefits as well as risks associated with globalization. The growing integration of the global economy has provided an opportunity for substantial economic growth. This is reflected not only in improved availability of better quality and increasingly differentiated raw materials and final products, but also in higher incomes. On the other hand, globalisation has increased cases of poverty and inequality within and between countries, regions, towns, groups, households, and individuals (Cruz (2003:2), Kohler (2003:1-2), Agenor (2002:5), World Bank (nd:1), Thoburn and Jones (2002:1), Kaplinsky (2000:117) and Wangwe and Musonda (1998:150).

In agreement with this view, Kacowicz (2001:4) argues that “although globalization has brought opportunities for growth and development to both rich and poor countries, not everyone has been able to take advantage of the new opportunities”. Many countries have also been increasingly marginalized and rendered unable to reduce poverty and inequality over the last two decades. The International Chamber of Commerce (2003) notes that “more than 40 percent of Africans live on less than a dollar a day, a rate that has been steadily increasing in the continent as a whole since the 1970s”.

2.4 Globalization, Growth and Poverty

May (2003:2) considers economic growth “to have taken place if the total value of goods and services exchanged or purchased in an economy increases over some agreed time frame”. This growth, May asserts, is associated among others, with transformations such as the “accumulation of physical and human capital, shifts in the structure of economic production from agriculture to industry, and to services, and lessening reliance on natural resources.” May further asserts that in many developing countries, growth most directly assists the poor through job creation especially in the labour intensive sectors of the economy such as agriculture, construction and textile (May, 2003:3).

The argument that integration into a globalizing world economy enhances growth, improves the distribution of income and helps reduce poverty is based on the theory of trade. This theory states that integration leads to greater efficiency and higher output by allocating resources to areas of comparative advantage, and the abandonment of ISI which focused on producing for domestic market leads to a faster increase in employment and wages, thereby reducing poverty (Khan, 1998:111).

Watkins (2002:2) rejects the argument that globalization works for the poor. In many developing countries, globalization is exacerbating inequalities and income gaps based on access to markets, productive assets, and education are widening, acting as a brake on poverty-reduction efforts. Hence contrary to the expectation that greater integration into the world economy would lead to growth in employment, there appears to have been a sharp reduction. Khan notes that globalization has not allowed South Asia's progress towards poverty reduction to continue at its previous pace. Indeed it has often slowed down or temporarily reversed. This has been due to structural inequality being aggravated by the reforms packages that were adopted in the pursuit of global integration (Khan, 1998:120,122).

Similarly, Sender (1999) notes that some sub-Saharan African countries branded "core adjusters" in 1993 because they most successfully followed the World Bank policy advice "failed to grow as fast as other less compliant African countries". In the same vein, the World Bank (World Bank 2002:4) acknowledges that the poorest countries still have difficulty borrowing on international capital markets.

2.5 Globalization and Labour

Organised labour seems to be the worse affected by the current process of globalization. Labour markets have not become truly global, except for a small but growing segment of professionals and scientists (Castells, 2000:259). Furthermore, the economic bargaining power of organized labour has declined, as "the tendency of globalization would be to favour management at the expense of even strongly organized labour, and, therefore, public policies sympathetic to the former rather than the latter" (Hirst and Thompson, 2000:73). Hence, capital is remunerated to the

detriment of labour “and thus moving wealth from the bottom of society to the top” (George, 1999:6).

As new challenges emerge, the governments of developing countries are completely incapacitated in terms of managing their economies within the confines of the conditionality that must be met to participate in the globalization process. Strange (2000:148) observes that governments have lost control over national economies. The most obvious fall-out of this is that it has become exceedingly difficult for governments to provide social insurance (Rodrik, 2000:324). Hence, citizens will have to do without the kind of public services and redistributive arrangements characteristic of national “Industrial Welfare States” (Gerny, 2000:133,134).

Beck (2000:99) notes that “the downward pressure on the welfare state, then, results not only from a combination of dwindling resources and rocketing expenditure, but also from the fact that it lacks the means to satisfy demands upon it at a time when the gulf between rich and poor is growing ever wider”. In order to attract investment that will create employment, governments are thus forced into a ‘beauty contest’ of offering increasing incentives for MNCs to locate in their country (Perraton *et al*, 2000:296).

Moreover, the volatility of the international financial market and its attendant “potential for massive capital flight acts as the ultimate discipline on governments as revenue shortfall reflects the declining ability of government to tax increasingly mobile capital” (Garrett, 2000:310). This situation is made even worse by the hypocrisy of the advanced countries who chose only to encourage those aspects of globalization that are beneficial to them (New York Times, 2003:1). All these factors have put the economies of poor countries in precarious situations and exacerbate the problem of poverty. The following sections focus on different aspects of poverty.

2.6 Meaning of Poverty

Poverty is not a concept that lends itself to easy definition. It is a multi-dimensional concept with many meanings and facets. It is composed of a variety of collective and individual experiences with temporal changes in its structure (Silungwe, 2001:1).

Poverty is neither purely an economic nor social problem, but one with “economic, social, political, cultural and demographic dimensions. It is a condition as well as a process, a cause and an effect, an involuntary rather a voluntary affliction” (Silungwe, 2001:2-3). Hence, there is no one generally accepted definition of poverty. Bruwer (1996:7) notes that it is very difficult to define poverty because it is not easy for someone who is not poor to understand poverty. As Chambers (1995:1) observed, “many of the people who write about poverty only study the phenomenon but have never really gone through the experience of being poor themselves.” The result of such academic study is an attempt to describe or explain a mixture of the multitude of other people’s experiences, which may not fully capture the experiences of the poor people.

The word “poor” according to Kosa (1969:1) “denotes an ancient concept for expressing social differences between man and man”. The term “poor” he notes, is usually taken as a synonym of “needy” and “poverty is a relative term that reflects judgement made on the basis of standards prevailing in the community”. Thus, the poor are those who by the prevailing standards, are found to be deficient in means of subsistence and privileges of life and on that basis are needy. Human societies have lingual devices for segregating the poor in their midst or what Bill (1973:1) referred to as shorthand ways by which the affluent explain the existence of the poor. To be poor may not mean owning nothing but rather it means owning less. Kosa (1969) argues that the poor owned less and as such produced less because material possessions, particularly the means of production such as land and work, implements were unequally distributed. The possession of one of these means enhances the acquisition of others, while the lack of them limits the ability to acquire others (Reardon and Vosti, 1995:1497).

While recognising that poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, May (2001:25) notes that “the material dimensions of poverty expressed in monetary values is too important an aspect of poverty to be neglected”. He asserts that because there is a lack of consensus for a measurement approach for the various forms of deprivation, a commonly adopted approach “is ultimately grounded on the notion of some minimum threshold below which the poor are categorised”.

Kosa (1969:2) agrees that there are some tangible, visible and observable criteria upon which we base our objective judgement of the reality of poverty. Material resources featured prominently:

The possession of means and privileges is visible and even conspicuous. The unequal distribution of worldly goods can be assessed and expressed without any special knowledge. A reasonably adequate judgement of the other person can be formed without a personal acquaintance, and those who are familiar with their community can safely place their fellow citizens along the wealth-poverty line (Kosa, 1969:4).

Basically poverty is used in two main senses. A common notion is that poverty is “a broad, blanket word used to refer to the whole spectrum of deprivation and ill-being; in its second usage, poverty has a narrow technical definition...as low income, as it is reported, recorded and analysed, or often as low consumption, which is easier to measure” (Chambers, 1995:6). The World Bank (1990:14) states that “people counted as poor when their measured standard of living (usually income or consumption) is below a minimum acceptable level – known as the poverty line.” Most studies on poverty tend to adopt the second notion of poverty. In what Kanbur and Squire (1999:3) refer to as “normal usage”, poverty is “the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions.” The significance of money is stressed by Duncan (2003:1) who notes that without cash, one cannot afford basic food items not to mention doing things that can help one overcome poverty such as making a vegetable garden or looking for employment.

A classic definition of poverty sees it as “the inability to attain a minimal standard of living measured in terms of basic consumption needs or the income required for satisfying them...characterized by the failure of individuals, households or entire communities to command sufficient resources to satisfy their basic needs” (May, 2001:25). For Lipton and Ravallion (1997:2553) poverty exists when an individual or group falls short of a reasonable minimum level of economic welfare either in some absolute sense or by the standard of a specific society.

Running short of material, social, and emotional resources is typical of the state of poverty. It means less food, clothing, and heating than average income can afford

(Oppenheim and Harker, 1996, cited in Silungwe, 2001:2). More than that, poverty is disabling and works in a self-perpetuating manner. Oppenheim and Harker (1996) observe that poverty takes away the tools with which to build one's future – one's life chances. Townsend (1979, cited in Blackburn, 1991:9) states that poverty exists if individuals, families and groups "lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved, in the society to which they belong." Similarly Rowntree (1941, cited in Blackburn, 1991:9) states that "families are said to be in poverty when their incomes are insufficient to obtain the minimum necessities for the maintenance of physical efficiency". In this case, poverty is not only disabling but also threatening to physical existence. This is made clearer when the states of the poor people degenerate into hunger and malnutrition. The European Economic Community (cited in Blackburn, 1991:9) defines poverty in terms of exclusion. It states that persons are victims of poverty when their "resources are so small as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life" of the country in which they live.

Poverty manifests variously in conditions such as

lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods; hunger and malnutrition, ill-health, lack or limited access to education and basic services, increased morbidity and mortality arising from illness, homelessness and inadequate housing, unsafe environment, and social discrimination and exclusion. It manifests in a lack of or limited participation in decision making in civil, social and cultural life
(World Summit for Social Development 1995, cited in Silungwe, 2001:2).

The above list of manifestations of poverty transcends monetary or economic dimensions. For instance, Silungwe (2001:1) notes that in most developing countries, there is a correlation between insufficient basic health services, school enrolment, gender discrimination, lack of opportunities to access credit facilities on the one hand, and poverty on the other. He asserts that regardless of how poverty is defined, its features will include hunger, poor shelter, inadequate clothing, ill-health and illiteracy.

Poverty according to May (2001:26) is perceived differently at various levels of experience. At the individual level, poverty is said to involve:

- Lack of or insecure income
- Lack of or poor quality basic necessities like food, clothing, etc.
- Lack of household assets.
- Lack of productive assets, such as utensils or land.
- Inability to maintain good health and wellbeing.
- Dependency and helplessness.
- Anti-social behaviour.

At the household level poverty is perceived as:

- Inability to provide for the children and family.
- Lack of support networks.
- Excessive dependence on outsiders.

At the level of community poverty comprises:

- Lack of infrastructure and remoteness.
- Instability and disunity (May, 2001:26).

These experiences show that poverty is not only about the money and resources necessary to stay alive and healthy, but also about social roles and relationships. As Blackburn (1991:10) argues that poverty hinders people in their roles and relationships because incomes determine access to amenities, life styles, choices and access to the power structure.

2.7 Measurement of Poverty

There are a number of approaches to the measurement of poverty, some of which are examined in this section.

Monetary Approach identifies poverty as a short fall in consumption or income measured from some poverty line (Ruggeri-Laderchi *et al*, 2003:7). The commonly used money-metric measure of poverty is the \$1 per day poverty line.

Basic Needs Approach takes the income approach a step further. It defines poverty as the deprivation of requirements, mainly material for meeting basic human

needs whether privately earned incomes (wages or salaries) or publicly provided social services. It is concerned about “access to such necessities as food, shelter, schooling, health services, portable water and sanitation facilities, employment opportunities, and even touches on opportunities for community participation” (Lok-Dessallien, 2001:11).

Capability Approach views the essence of development as the expansion of human capabilities rather than the maximization of utility or its proxy, money income (Ruggeri-Laderchi, et al 2003:14). Instead of monetary income as a measure of well-being, the capability approach focuses on indicators of freedom to live a valued life. The capability approach defines poverty as “deprivation...or failure to achieve certain minimal or basic capabilities, where basic capabilities are the ability to satisfy certain important functionings up to certain minimally adequate levels” (Ruggeri-Laderchi et al, 2003:14). Well-being, on the other hand, is seen as the freedom of individuals to realize their human potential. This emphasis on the individual’s quality of life implies a shift from monetary to non-monetary indicators for evaluating well-being or deprivation (Ruggeri-Laderchi et al, 2003:14).

Lok-Dessallien (2001:11) notes that “this approach defines the phenomenon of poverty as the absence of basic human capabilities to function at a minimally acceptable level within a society. It places emphasis on abilities and opportunities of people to “enjoy long, healthy lives, to be literate and to participate freely in their society.” Rakodi (1995:415) argues that the household member’s current capabilities and the future of their posterity are influenced by their access to education and training, the household’s ability to live in a healthy environment with good sanitation and health care.

Poverty has also been measured in terms of the **Social Exclusion Approach**. The European Union (EU) defines social exclusion (SE) as a “process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live” (Ruggeri-Laderchi et al, 2003:20).

Conventional poverty estimates have been criticised for being externally imposed and not taking into account the views of poor people themselves. Jitsuchon (2001:6) highlights the definition and measurement of poverty as seen by the poor themselves. The poor tend to emphasise factors that are close to their every day lives, and which are easy to understand, as defining characteristics of poverty. Of these factors, some stand out as the most frequent: “not enough food to eat, low income, no land for agriculture, indebtedness, illness, poor general health or disability”(Jitsuchon,2001:6).

The views of academics do not differ greatly from that of the poor “as they defined poverty in terms of income, assets, indebtedness, basic needs, health and education” (Jitsuchon’ 2001:6). What are added by academics, according to Jitsuchon, are factors that can potentially explain why the poor remain poor. Most of them involve “the attributes of the social, economic and political structures, such as social acceptance and respect, social capital and income”. Thus, Jitsuchon (2001:8) notes that academics and experts focused more on causes of poverty and in so doing, emphasize structural causes.

Composite Measures of Poverty combine the various measures of deprivation discussed above to form a composite measure of poverty. Many of these composite indicators are based on the Human Development Index (HDI) introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Kanbur and Squire (1991:10) note that the UNDP has played a leading role in defining poverty in terms of human development by introducing the Human Development Index and Human Poverty Index (HPI). Both indexes focus on three aspects of human deprivation (or wellbeing) – longevity, literacy and living standard. In the Human Poverty Index,

longevity is measured by the percentage of people who die before the age 40, literacy by the percentage of adults who are literate, and living standard by a combination of the percentage of population with access to health services, the percentage of the population with access to safe water and the percentage of malnourished children under five (Kanbur and Squire, 1991:10).

Conversely, the HDI measures “longevity by life expectancy at birth, literacy by the weighted average of adult literacy and gross enrolment ratios, and standard of living

by purchasing Power parity of income equivalent in US dollar” (May, 2001:39). As proxy indicators for human well-being or deprivation the HDI and HPI are useful tools for analysis since they are measurable and verifiable across countries and time. The value of HDI range from 0 to 1. The value of HDI will be high in societies where life expectancy, literacy and income are high. Judging by these measures, countries’ HDI achievements will be high if the values of these indicators are high (UNDP, 2000:53).

2.8 Categories of Poverty

Poverty has also been categorized into **relative and absolute poverty** as well as **chronic and transitory** poverty. May (2001:26) says that absolute poverty or deprivation is “the inability to attain minimal standard of consumption to meet basic physiological criteria ... most directly expressed as not having enough to eat or as hunger or malnutrition”. In this sense, according to May (2001:26), “the poor are materially deprived to the extent that their survival is at stake”. Lok-Dessallien (2001:2) defines it as “subsistence below minimum socially acceptable living conditions, usually based on nutritional requirements and other essential goods”. These needs as Rowntree (cited in Silungwe, 2001:41) notes include “food, clothing, housing, lighting and utensils for cooking and washing, all purchased at the lowest prices and in quantities necessary for physical subsistence only.” This means that in absolute poverty, “poverty line has fixed purchasing power” (Ravallion, 2003:4).

Absolute poverty as a concept has come under criticism not only on the methods of its application but also in its practical relevance (Silungwe, 2001:44). Further,

The critics of the absolute concept argue that measuring poverty in terms of subsistence minimum requirements underscores the fact that needs vary both between and within societies and that a definition of poverty must be related to the standards of a particular society at a particular time. Hence, the point at which the dividing line which separates the poor from other members of the society is drawn will vary according to how affluent that society is (Silungwe, 2001:44).

On the other hand, in a relative sense poverty refers to these resources in comparison to what other individuals in the society own. The relevance of relative poverty is that it “compares the lowest segment of a population with upper segments, usually measured

in income quintiles or deciles” (Lok-Dessallien, 2001:2), and seems to convey more accurately the experience of predicament by the poor (May, 2001:26).

Transient poverty is experienced for only a short period while chronic poverty is experienced over a long period (Lipton and Ravallion, 1997:2621). The chronically poor are those who are most likely to continue in poverty if there is no outside assistance, and are also likely to be most difficult to assist (Aliber, 2003:473). Chronic poverty as conceived by Aliber “is transmitted from one generation to the next, meaning that children from poor households are likely to become poor adults whose children will in turn risk remaining in poverty”. Aliber(2003:476-479) identifies certain groups of people as chronically poor. These include “the rural poor, female-headed households, people with disabilities, the elderly, retrenched farm workers, cross-border migrants, the street homeless, AIDS orphans and households with AIDS suffers”. Hulme and Shepherd (2003:405) however, link chronic poverty to a period of five years. For them, “a (capability) deprivation for a period of five years or more amounts to chronic poverty”.

2.9 Dimensions of Poverty

Narayan *et al* (2000:2) identify several interlocking dimensions of poor people’s experiences. These themes have further been unpacked as isolation, physical weakness, vulnerability, seasonality, powerlessness, humiliation and social exclusion. According to Chambers (1995:19), poor people can become peripheral and cut-off geographically in rural areas from communication and information and lacking access to social services and markets, as well as social and economic support. Physical weakness takes the form of disability, sickness and pain. For many people, the body is the major resource, hence to have a household member who is unable to contribute to household livelihood but needs care due to physical weakness or sickness is a common cause of income poverty and deprivation (Chambers, 1995: 19). May and Norton (1997:101) have observed that ill-health is often caused by arduous work.

Vulnerability means not lack or want, but exposure and defencelessness. It has two sides: the external side of exposure to shocks, stress and risks; and the internal side of defencelessness, meaning a lack of means to cope without damaging loss. May

(2001:29) has noted that “unemployment, missing markets, and production and price shocks may conspire to increase the vulnerability of particular individuals, depending on their asset bundle and their capacity to mobilize the resources at their disposal to withstand crises and shocks.”

Seasonality is another characteristic of poverty. Chambers (1995:21) observes that many factors that affect the poor adversely such as shortage of food and money, indebtedness, hard agricultural work, sickness, diminished access to services among others often coincide during rains. For example, in South Africa, seasonality reaches a crisis point in January/February when income is low and school fees are due (May and Norton, 1997:111). Powerlessness relates to the physical weakness, economic vulnerability and lack of influence of the poor, which subject them to the power and exploitation of others (Chambers, 1995:21). Powerlessness can also be related to gender power relations (May and Norton, 1997:101). Humiliation is both an effect as well as a cause of poverty. An effect in the sense that humiliation follows from the fact of the poor’s powerlessness and deprivation. A cause in the sense that possible abuse and insults and humiliation hinder the self-respecting poor from accessing any welfare facilities or borrowing, from especially private individuals (Chambers, 1995:21). A direct consequence of humiliation is the exclusion of the poor. Exclusion has economic as well as social dimensions and is seen to involve the absence of social ties to family, the community and, generally, to the society in which an individual is a member (May, 2001:28), and the inability to secure basic social rights to education, healthcare and employment among others (Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997: 415).

2.10 Causes of Poverty

Poverty cannot be attributed to one cause, rather it must be seen as the product of a broad range of factors. A major cause of poverty today is unemployment (Blackburn, 1991:20-21). For Blackburn, the risk of unemployment is related to race. He states that “unemployment levels are higher among black people. This is caused by individual and institutional racism which reduces the employment prospect of black people regardless of their qualifications and level of skills”.

Although **sex** in itself is not representative of a deprivation category, the female's acquisitive freedom is greatly limited because the important income yielding activities are pre-empted by the males. Relating unemployment to gender, Blackburn (1991:17, 21) states that unemployment among women has increased more rapidly than among men in recent decades. Furthermore, women's poorer access to the labour market and well paid jobs, coupled with children costs, put many of them in a disadvantaged position. The situation is even worse for black women who "face the dual oppression of sexism and racism".

Field (1982:100) and Blackburn (1991:22-23) agree that **low wages** are the biggest and most important causes of household poverty. Like the definition of poverty, there is no consensus on the definition of low wage. Blackburn notes that there are several definitions, which are all based on the idea of 'decency threshold' below which wages are classified as low. A clearer understanding of what a low paid job is could be gleaned from its conceptualisation by John (1976) as "work which barely produces enough to keep body and soul together". Blackburn (1991:19) notes that while many people move between unemployment and low paid jobs, "black and minority ethnic groups have a greater-than-average likelihood of being on low income". He argues that discrimination reduces access to employment and well paid jobs, forcing a high proportion of these groups to rely on subsistence level social security benefits (Blackburn, 1991:23).

Taxation vitally affects the income of the poor. Field (1982:97) notes that with every addition to the amount of tax charged by the government comes a more intolerable burden on the poor. Blackburn (1991:25) also suggests that indirect taxation like VAT may also affect the poor disproportionately.

Another important cause of poverty is the **structure of the family**. A growing proportion of the poor can be found among single parent headed households (Blackburn, 1991:17). Ken and Silburn (1970, cited in Blackburn, 1991:17) identify two elements here, which cause poverty either alone or in combination. The first is where the breadwinner's wage is very small, perhaps too small to support the smallest family. The second occurs when the numbers of dependents in the household stretch the income beyond its capacity. It is their opinion that both elements combine in the

case of a large family trying to live on a very meagre income. The influence of family structure on income is further compounded by gender and race inequality.

Disability and ill-health are two other causes of poverty in the family. According to Blackburn, there exists a disproportionate risk of poverty among families with disabled persons. He argues that there is a close link between disability and low income:

Disability creates extra needs: the need for extra heating, special food, transport, special aids, equipment and additional clothing. These extra needs incur costs which are above the costs incurred by families which have no people with disabilities. Yet many families of people with disabilities do not have income to cover these extra costs adequately (Blackburn, 1991:24).

Not only are the poor more prone to ill-health and premature death, but poverty has been recognised to be caused by poor health and disability. The case of HIV/AIDS and its impact on the livelihood of individuals and the economy of countries cannot be over emphasized.

The **psychological** factors of poverty relate to the disabling mindset of its victims. Bruwer (1996:7) clearly pictures the overwhelming and imprisoning power of poverty, noting that the impression one sometimes gets is that the poor accept their poverty with resignation. He contends that “poverty acts like a whirlpool drawing people down; instead of improving the situation, their every action reinforces a negative flow into an ever deteriorating spiral, almost impossible to stop”, casting the poor person into a helpless spell from which he/she needs some special help to be freed. May and Norton (1997:102) have linked the emotional stress produced by the struggle, uncertainty and extreme living conditions of the poor to their resignation that little will change.

The poverty producing factors discussed above are interlinked and pose differing limitations to different categories of people. Hence, solutions to poverty should take cognisance of the varying conditions and needs of the poor people.

2.11 Poverty: A Global Snapshot

Lipton and Ravallion (1997: 2584) observe both conceptual and practical problems with international comparison of poverty statistics. They argue that comparisons across countries with varying poverty lines do not have clear meanings. An important question raised is: “whose poverty line should be used?” Poverty lines appropriate to the poorest countries have been popular choices in past analysis (Lipton and Ravallion, 1997:2583). An equally aching concern is the conversion of currencies for which the official exchange rate may prove an unreliable instrument in comparing poverty across countries. By facilitating the construction of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) exchange rate, the United Nations has brought tremendous help in cross country analysis of poverty (Lipton and Ravallion, 1997:2583).

The global picture of poverty is indeed staggering. Chambers (1995:2) notes that “the number of people conventionally defined as living in absolute poverty is often quoted as being over one billion, between one person in five and one in four. This figure was an increase from an estimated 800 million ten years ago.” Poverty, suffering and deprivation according to Chambers seem to be taking a more regional structure, concentrating more in countries with least improved conditions, as in many sub-Saharan African countries; or in regions within countries as with the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh (Chambers, 1995:4). Recent estimates show that the level of real consumption of a fifth of the developing world population in the mid 1980s was less than India’s poverty line of about \$23 per month in US prices (adjusted for cost-of-living differences between countries). This situation became worse with a more generous poverty line of \$31 per month as the head count index of poverty increases to about one in three (Lipton and Ravallion, 1997:2584).

2.12 Poverty: A South African Picture

South Africa is a middle-income country like Botswana, Brazil, Malaysia and Mauritius (May, 2000), and is considered to have a medium human development ranking, comparing well with other countries. “The estimated HDI value of 0.697 for 1998 placed South Africa at 103 in the HDI ranking” (UNDP, 2000:53).

Despite South Africa's relative wealth as the country's per capita Gross Domestic Product indicates, the majority of South African households experience either outright poverty, or continued vulnerability to becoming poor (May and Norton, 1997:95). Mainly affected are the Africans and, to a lesser degree, coloured people (Terreblanche, 2002:382). Based on a poverty line of R352 per month, it was found that in 1998, 61 percent of Africans, 38 percent of Coloured, 5 percent of Indians and 1 percent of Whites were poor (Aliber, 2003:475). The UNDP shows that the absolute rate of poverty in South Africa is 45 percent. This can be disaggregated "into 3,126,000 households or more than 18 million citizens" living below R353 poverty line. The figure rises above 50 percent in mainly rural provinces (UNDP, 2000:55). UNDP shows that

- 10 million people live in ultra-poor households earning less than R193,77 per month, per adult
- 72 percent of poor people live in rural areas
- 71 percent of people in rural areas fall below poverty line
- three in five children live in poor households (UNDP, 2000:56).

This situation continues to worsen. It was found that

the mean household income of the poorest 40 percent of African households (equal to 50 percent of the African population) declined by 42 percent from 1975 to 1991, and by a further 21 percent from 1991 to 1996. The mean household income of the next 20 percent of Africans declined by 26 percent and 4 percent respectively over these two periods. The household income of 60 percent of Africans (almost 70 percent of African population) was therefore considerably lower in 1996 than in 1975 (Terreblanche, 2002:390).

Although, as is common with many countries, this failure to meet essential basic needs stems from many sources. However, in South Africa, the apartheid system which thrived on the denial of access to equal opportunities for all racial groups impacted significantly on poverty (Hirschowitz and Orkin, 1997). May and Norton (1997) state that one aspect of this system was a process of active dispossession whereby the black majority were stripped of their economic assets like land and livestock, while

simultaneously, they were denied markets, infrastructure and education, and other opportunities to develop these assets and "... as such, apartheid and the legislation through which it was implemented, operated to both produce poverty and to compress social and economic class" (May and Norton, 1997:95).

A nationwide participatory study recently completed in South Africa shows a surprising consistency in how poverty is viewed. Social isolation, malnourishment, crowded home, the use of basic energy sources, unemployment, and fragmented households were common. Extreme poverty is represented by "continuous ill health, arduous and often hazardous work for virtually no income, no power to influence change, and high levels of anxiety and stress" (UNDP, 2000:56).

2.13 Poverty in KwaZulu-Natal

Poverty in South Africa varies across its nine provinces (Leibbrandt and Woolard, 1999:48). Aliber (2003:475) states that the poorest provinces by most measures are those encompassing the most populous former homeland areas, namely KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Eastern Cape. Diakonia (2001/2002:14) shows that KwaZulu-Natal with a population of just over nine million, is the most populous of all the provinces, with some of the worst socio-economic ills in South Africa. In 2001, official unemployment was about 37 percent while more than half of the province's population live in poverty. "At R10,592 per year, personal disposable income per capita in KwaZulu-Natal is way below the national bench mark" (Diakonia, *ibid*, 14).

A study carried out by Roberts (2001:7) shows that the headcount ratio or incidence of poverty in the province between 1993 and 1998 has increased from approximately 34 percent to 42 percent. The proportion of those living in extreme poverty is shown to have increased from 5 percent to 9 percent during the same period. Geographically, there is a concentration of poverty in the rural areas than urban and metropolitan areas. Roberts' study shows that "the incidence of poverty among rural households in the province has considerably increased since 1993, whereas urban households show a moderate increase and metropolitan households a slight reduction. However, the depth of poverty for all three categories has arisen" (Roberts, 2001:8). Roberts (*ibid*:10) further reveals that over two third of the poor households in KwaZulu-Natal are

persistently or chronically poor while the remaining poor households in 1993 have managed to exit poverty by 1998. In other words, chronically poor households now constitute a greater proportion of the poor than do transitory poor households.

To compound the situation of the poor in the province, the delivery of social services has not been problem free. The number of houses provided is diminishing while household sizes are increasing due to unemployment. When delivered at all, the services are unevenly provided. For example, “while some municipalities have implemented the free basic water supply, others have still to do so” (Diakonia, *ibid*:3). Rural communities are even worse off. Lacking infrastructure, rural communities might have to do without their free supply for years. As at 2000, “53% of the people are established to be living in poverty, 19% urban houses and 66% rural houses were without electricity” (Diakonia, *ibid*:3). This is a brief picture of the poverty situation in KwaZulu-Natal.

The poverty situation in South Africa is not by any means made bearable by the current globalization process. As Stiglitz (2003:1) has observed, globalization can be a positive force. However, he notes that the countries that have benefited the most were those (like China and Malaysia) that took their own destiny in their hands and recognised the developmental role of government, rather than rely on a self-regulating market. How did the South African government respond to poverty?

2.14 Macro Economic Responses of the State

The African National Congress (ANC) entered the transition period in the early 1990s with a state-led, people oriented Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) aimed at alleviating the legacy of poverty and inequality (Habib and Padayachee, 2000:245).

Although it conceived a leading role for the state in directing and regulating the market, the RDP reflected subtle shifts from earlier ANC policy orientation as great importance was placed on foreign investment and a more outward oriented growth strategy to development. Hence “the tariff structure was to be simplified, and tariffs

were to be reduced with minimal disruption to employment” (Habib and Padayachee, 2000:251).

Most significant of these shifts was the independence accorded to the Reserve Bank, even though it did recommend that the Bank not only include representatives of trade unions and civil society but also to account to parliament. Despite these concessions, the RDP was not fully implemented due to pressure from both domestic and international capital (Habib and Padayachee, 2000:251).

The motivation to attract foreign investment and deal with unemployment led to the introduction in 1996, of a less popular macroeconomic policy called the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy which is premised on the neo-liberal economic logic: the Washington consensus (May, 2003; Epstein, 2002).

In pursuit of this reform package, the dual exchange rate system (the Financial Rand) was eliminated by the government and the foreign exchange control system was relaxed while the central bank followed by adopting an “Inflation Targeting Framework” as recommended by the IMF and others” (Epstein, 2002:3).

GEAR differs significantly from the RDP. Valodia (2001:879) notes that “whereas the RDP envisaged an integrated and unified labour market, the emphasis of GEAR is on a more flexible labour market, and by implication, the development of a dual labour market, one with high minimum standards and relatively good wages, and the other with low standards and no minimum wage.”

The GEAR policy document provided comfort to the market. However, noble targets were also established in it. The measures proposed formed the government’s strategy for the achievement of growth, employment and redistribution. These include sustained economic growth of 6% per annum and the creation of 400,000 jobs per annum by the year 2000. It was anticipated that 1.1 million jobs would be created in terms of the GEAR programme (Osborn, 1997:26).

GEAR has been criticised particularly by the organized labour movement, for achieving the very opposite of its objective. Osborn (1997:26) asserts that “all the

basic policy aspects of the strategy are either deflationary, destructive of the fabric of industry, worsens the competitiveness of industry, or strengthens the technological trends towards greater capital intensity.”

Liberalization, for example, opens domestic industry to external competition, leading to either the demise of local producers or loss of jobs and minimal real wage increases. Fiscal deficit reduction within the confines of a tax revenues ceiling, has to be achieved via the reduction of civil service establishments. The suppression of inflation, with the attendant high real interest rates is inimical to the development or survival of small and medium enterprises (Osborn, 1997).

2.15 Job Losses Under Gear

It has become obvious that Gear has failed to deliver on promised employment, rather, jobs were lost. In 1996, about 33,000 jobs in manufacturing were lost. Mining and building/construction fell by 24,000 and 17,000, respectively. This trend continues in the agricultural sector. On the other hand, there was a compensating increase of 7,000 jobs in the finance, insurance and real estate sector, and of 18,000 in the community and other services sector (Osborn, 1997:27). This is a growth without jobs. This trend essentially emerged as the economy became more capital intensive. In order to remain cost competitive in the face of international competition, more labour intensive industries have to shed off some jobs (Osborn, 1997:29).

GEAR policy has yielded mixed results, at best. As Epstein has noted:

The policy succeeded in reducing inflation; the budget deficit fell; the current account deficit fell; and real interest rates rose. But real growth of GDP has stagnated; investment as a share of GDP is low by international standards; foreign inflows of foreign direct investment are modest at best; and the Rand fluctuated tremendously and declined precipitously in the last year. Most problematic of all, employment growth fell. Poverty rates are high and unemployment rates stand at over 40%... Despite all the efforts by the government to play by the rule of neo-liberal regime, the investors stayed away, and most of the South African population has failed to achieve the economic gains they expected from GEAR.... Of course, there are success stories, but they appear to be more the exception than the rule, and often, when one looks more closely at these cases, the policies they

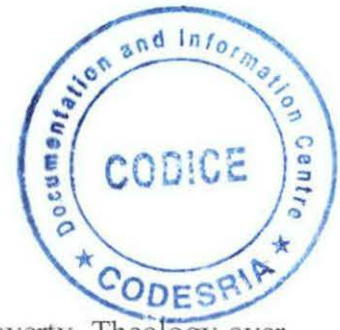
have implemented have a heavy dose of non-consensus elements thrown into them (Epstein, 2002:3)

2.16 Conclusion

Poverty is a global problem but it is most pronounced in the developing countries particularly the sub-Saharan African countries. In South Africa, poverty has no human face, and however it is defined, it is frightening. This case is further compounded by the current liberal macro-economic strategy adopted by the government of South Africa in an effort to share in the benefit of a rapidly globalizing world economy. Stiglitz has stressed that globalization does not work for many of the world's poor. The West, he notes "acting through the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization – has seriously mismanaged the process of privatisation, liberalization and stabilization, and by following its advice, many Third World countries and former communist states are actually worse off now than they were before" (Cruz, 2003:1). Despite all the contradictions of the globalization process, it is the view of the author that it is here to stay for a long time to come. The contestation around the process has not been to dismantle it but to find ways in which the poor can benefit from it. The next chapter will look at the response of the church over the years to the problem of poverty and how that impacted on the South African situation.

Chapter Three

Church's Response to Poverty



3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the church's theological response to poverty. Theology over the years has influenced and shaped the beliefs and activities of the church. It is a coherent presentation of the revelations of God's word and purposes as understood by the community of believers. Different theologies have risen to prominence and also waned in the face of opposition or challenges from new and emerging interpretations of the scriptures, thus, giving rise to varying opinions and practices concerning issues like oppression and poverty. In recent decades, radical interpretations of the scriptures have given rise to radical theologies, which suggest radical remedies for oppression and poverty.

This chapter is divided into ten sections. Section two, deals with early church teachings and practices in relation to the problems of the poor. Section three focuses on the relevance of theology to the contextual reality of the believers. The evolution and goals of liberation theology are discussed in section four while section five focuses on liberation theology in South Africa. Section six looks at the role of the church in addressing poverty in the new and democratic South Africa. The question of whether the church has the capacity to fight poverty is considered in section seven while section eight focuses on suggestions by theologians on how to mobilize believers for this fight. The strategies adopted by the church in KwaZulu-Natal in the war against poverty are examined in section nine. This is followed by the conclusion in section ten.

3.2 Early Theology

Right from its inception the Church has always responded to issues of oppression, deprivation and poverty. The Bible is replete with instances of where the church mobilized its resources to address questions of oppression and neglect, hunger and poverty. This has been made possible because the Church's teaching on such issues is very clear. From the Old Testament to the New Testament, the Bible has clearly stated what should be the (believers) community's beliefs and practises in relation to such matters (Deuteronomy, 15: 7-11; I John, 3: 16-17; Luke, 3: 11). The church was not

only a spiritual organization but also recognized its temporal significance in ministering to the nourishment of the physical body. A special arm was created in the administration of the church under the leadership of Stephen to oversee the feeding of the members and to address the burning issue of the Hellenic women who complained of neglect in the administration of the commonly owned resources (Acts, 6: 1-6). The church was able to address these problems because it practised common ownership of property or the right to common use of private property (Pope Paul II, 1981:45; Acts, 4: 32-35). This practice is based on the belief that all members of the human race are of one origin and equal before God, hence it was imperative for the rich to give to the poor until equality is achieved (2 Corinthians 8:9-15). However, with the passage of time, biblical teachings began to deviate from this basic doctrine as the church began to be used as an instrument to legitimise the different and divergent, even the most inhumane social, economic and political regimes (Rhodes, 1991:1).

Issues of poverty have engaged the interest of (particularly the Catholic) church for many centuries. For example, each Pope of the Roman Catholic Church has published an Encyclical which outlined the social agenda of the church under that Pope (Pope Paul II, 1981:10). Some of these Encyclicals have taken very critical positions about the social, economic and even political situations of their eras. Pope Leo XIII in his *Rerum Novarum* published in 1891, states that:

If the worker is compelled to accept harsher terms, or is induced to do so by fear of worse hardships, and these have to be accepted because they are imposed by a master or employer, this is submission to force and therefore repugnant to justice (Bettenson, 1967, 276).

Two centuries after the encyclical, workers seem to be facing situations that are very close to that described by the Pope.

The concern for the working conditions and fair wages did not end with Pope Leo. Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno* published in 1931, Pope Jean XXIII in *Mater Et Magistra* published in 1961, Pope Paul VI in *Gaudium Et Spes* published in 1965 and *Populorum Progressio* published in 1967, reiterated the need for a just wage and this is extended further with the suggestion that wage earners should be given a share of

some sort in ownership, management, or profits. This will reduce the confrontation between workers and employers. Concern was also shown about the state of inequality between and within nations which was described as scandalous (Marist Brothers, 1986; Bettenson, 1967:278).

The church recognized its responsibility to the worse off in the society. It especially holds the rich responsible for the well-being of the poor. John Paul II in *Laborem Exercens* (1981) specifically placed the blame for the woes of the poor countries at the doorsteps of the rich developed countries and their economic agencies, the multinational corporations. He declares thus:

The highly industrialized countries, and even more the businesses that direct on a large scale the means of industrial production (the companies referred to as multinational or transnational), fix the highest possible prices for their products, while trying at the same time to fix the lowest prices for raw materials or semi – manufactured goods. This is one of the causes of an ever increasing disposition between national incomes (Pope Paul II, 1981:54).

The above views and positions expressed the major perspectives of the church theology during the various eras. One noticeable feature of these theologies was the gradual shift from issues of pure religiosity to those of social, political and material concerns. This was particularly evident in the 1960s when Pope Paul VI released two Encyclicals within a period of two years. In the 1960s, the emphasis in theology changed from a purely academic approach towards a more practical one, which was more flexible and accommodating in terms of diversity (Dwane, 1989:19). This shift reflects the spirit of the era in the developing countries, especially in Latin America, where the more dignified and ceremonial theologies of the Encyclicals gave way to a more radical theology of liberation.

3.3 Theology and its Context

Theology according to Dwane (1989:7) “is a reasoned discourse, the purpose of which is to articulate coherently and intelligibly what the community believes about God, His revelation, and His purpose in creating the world.” The relevance of any theology is dependent upon its applicability to the economic, social and political condition and

needs of the community of believers. These needs and conditions of the community form the context of the theology. This perception has led to some theologies being labelled contextual theologies.

According to the Institute for Contextual Theology (1985: 4), all theologies, even the most abstract, in a sense, are 'contextual', having been thought out in one context or another. The problem with abstract and irrelevant theologies is that they were thought out in an isolated and irrelevant context. Many of our received theologies evolved in the isolated contexts of the monastery or the world of academics such as the seminaries and universities, in the ecclesiastical and clerical circles, or in the context of Western culture and liberal capitalism. These were usually written in the context of the comfort and complacency of the privileged.

However, some theologies are particularly branded contextual theology because of their awareness of their contexts. For example, liberation theology was thought out in the context of oppression and suffering of the poor people of the Third World countries. Indeed, it is not only aware of, but actually takes that context as its starting point. This awareness that theology originates from a context became clearer when the poor and oppressed, of all nations, races and classes, who were not living in the same context as the white Western theologians began to reflect on the Bible. This revolution began with the Third World theologians of Latin America and black theologians in North America (ICT, 1985:4).

According to Kaufmann (2001:17), "contextual theology by its very nature is a theology of the people. It is not an academic theology or a book theology, but a theology written in the flesh and blood of ordinary people". Black theology, Liberation theology, Feminist theology, Political theology and Cultural theology are all contextual theologies because of their conscious attempts to proceed from within the experiences of a particular form of oppression. (ICT, 1985:5). The next section focuses on liberation theology because of its relevance in South Africa.

3.4 Liberation Theology

The Latin American theology of liberation is a conscious revolutionary attempt to challenge conditions of poverty, powerlessness, domination and total cultural, economic, political and psychological dependence upon the developed nations of North America and Europe, and the experience of struggling for liberation from this dependence (ICT, 1985:5). Germond (1987:215) argues that Latin American liberation theology provides the clearest contemporary attempt to establish a Christian praxis and theology which are fully cognisant of their context of revolution and violence.

Liberation theology is predominantly Roman Catholic, although there are notable Protestant liberation theologians. It is associated with the activities of catholic theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez, Segundo Galilea, Juan Luis Segundo, and Lucia Gera, among others. The foremost protestant liberation theologian is Jose Minguez Bonino. Others include Emilo Castro, Julio de Santa Ana, Rubem Alves among others (Boff and Boff, nd:1). This Catholic-Protestant divide constitutes one element of the diversity within liberation theology (Germond, 1987:216).

Another point of diversity within the theology of liberation has its roots in the ideas of university students and elements of the middle class in the 1960s who were engaged in scholarly debate with their European and North American peers. Yet another point of diversity emerges from the activities of the believers grappling with the meaning of faith in terms of resistance to oppression (Germond, 1987: 217).

Liberation theology is based on the premise that all theology is biased and thus reflects the economic and social classes of the progenitors. Accordingly, Rhodes (1991:3) asserts that:

The traditional theology predominant in North America and Europe is said to perpetuate the interests of white, North American/European, capitalist males... supports and legitimates a political and economic system – democratic capitalism - which is responsible for exploiting and impoverishing the Third World.

The central goal of liberation theology, according to Levine (nd:1), has been to make religion and the church relevant by making them catalysts of change. This it seeks to

achieve by empowering ordinary people and promoting social movements by “changing assumptions about power and changing power itself in ways that make better life possible for the mass of the people” (Levine, nd:1). Liberation theology arose out of the crisis of popular revolution in the 1960s against untenable poverty, exploitation and alienation which characterized the lives of greater proportions of the people of Latin America (Germond, 1987:215).

According to Bishop Tutu (1979:163) “liberation theology more than any other kind of theology issues out of the crucible of human suffering and anguish.” It is the product of the despondent cry of people to God. By justifying God and the ways of God, it seeks to inspire the downtrodden to do something about their condition. For Bishop Tutu, liberation theology seriously emphasizes the socio-political reality of people as elements, which to a large extent, determines the quality of both secular and religious life. Therefore, the dichotomy between the secular and the religious is dismissed. This is in recognition that spiritual poverty is, to some extent, the function of economic poverty (Meyer, nd:2). Tutu further asserts that liberation theology

speaks out of and into a specific situation, in this case, the situation of political oppression and injustice, of social and economic exploitation of a specific group of believers. It seeks to make sense of their suffering in relation to what God has done, is doing and will do (Tutu, 1979:165).

Liberation theology recognizes as a legitimate Christian option the use of violence in serving the ends and interests of the oppressed in creating a just and humane society (Germond, 1987:215, 216). It arose out of a recognition and critical questioning of people’s common origin and the contradictions in the actions of human beings vis-à-vis the belief in a common humanity. These contradictions manifest in the division of humankind into the privileged and the deprived. Anxiety, insecurity and fear of change characterize the privileged while helplessness, frustration and even cynicism and despair mark the lives of the deprived (Dwane, 1989:8). Another manifestation of this contradiction is the moulding and solidification of certain assumptions and prejudices by each group against the other thereby segregating themselves. The rich tend to think the poor as lazy, degenerate and inferior, while the poor see the rich as greedy, callous, and exploitative (Dwane, 1989:8).

As one of the foremost liberation theologians in South Africa, Albert Nolan in a work with Richard Broderick observed that the human world is structured in such a way that some people are on top and others are down. This structure “may be the social hierarchy of classes within a society or the rich and the poor or male or female or white and black or the First World and the Third world. The dynamics of this structure generally, is that the top dominates and oppresses the bottom” (Nolan and Broderick, 1987:57). Thus we have a common humanity divided into a group of “oppressors” and another group of “oppressed”.

Liberation theologians basically recognize that there is only one humanity because God created man and woman in His image. “It implies that both the oppressors and the oppressed are of the same species, and members of the one and only human family. The oppressed can and must stand up to the oppressor and look him in the face with nothing to fear” (Dwane, 1989:9). All human beings are God’s chosen elites, companions and co-workers; none of them can legitimately deny another God given rights and privileges, nor arrogate to oneself what belongs to all. In the same vein, no government can function without the consent of the governed (Dwane, 1989:10). Theologians grappled with human suffering occasioned by organised oppression, exploitation, emasculation and dehumanization of people created in the image of God. This is the genesis of all liberation theology and black theology, which is a theology of liberation in Africa” (Tutu, 1979:163).

3.5 Liberation Theology in South Africa

We can only understand liberation theology in South Africa, or in the Third world within the framework of the new political consciousness in which it developed. People became conscious of the dynamics of their political, social and economic situation which led to the posing of questions that had not been asked before (Boesak, 1979:169). As elsewhere, there were radical changes in the black community as people became aware of themselves as human beings with dignity and worth whose “humanity is not a favour bestowed upon them by some benevolent people of somewhat liberal persuasion, but a gift from God who has affirmed it in Jesus the Christ” (Dwane, 1989:11).

There was an awareness of the inalienable right of the people to benefits accruing from their collectively owned resources whether natural or relational. However, there was an inhibition on their ability to enjoy these rights as a result of the prevailing social structure in human society. The awareness of these rights and the countervailing structural inhibitions results in a (sometimes violent) clash between the oppressed and the mainstream or entrenched system.

The tide of liberation theology with its attendant anger, frustration, expectation and violence began to rise in the 1980s (Balcomb, 1993:17) and became part of the people's struggle for liberation as "it tried to help victims of oppression to assert their humanity and so look the other chap in the eye and speak face to face without shuffling the feet and apologizing for their black existence" (Tutu, 1979: 168).

Beyond psychological emancipation, theology has a more significant role to play in addressing the economic bondage of the poor, which is a result of the structural imperfection of human society. According to Dwane, God has delivered the world from the bondage of sin and has given us the liberty to become His sons and to exercise the rights of being sons. This liberation covers all spectra of human life and environment. Theology therefore cannot escape investigating all these aspects. (Dwane, 1989:14-15). Liberation theology provides a systematic explanation of God's redemptive work through Christ as it relates to all ramifications of human life. It is therefore an attempt to fully draw out "the implications of the biblical statement that God is the father of the fatherless, the husband of the widow, and the one who sets at liberty those who are captives" (Dwane, 1989:58).

Liberation theology has not gone unchallenged. Opposition, both active and subtle, have trailed the theology of liberation. Active opposition has taken the form of vocal criticism and persecution of the proponents of liberation theology. One such opposition issues from a theological camp that seems to take a neutral position on the theological divide. A presidential address delivered at the opening of the Anglican Provincial Synod in November 1979, stated among others that:

The theology of liberation and black power are ...forged in the context of a disenfranchised and deprived black majority seeking divine sanction for black freedom and

majority rule. There are positive features in liberation theology but in the final analysis it ends up simply as an expression of one human power which replaces another. It may be called a theology of liberation but it is not a Gospel of liberation ... The theology of Apartheid and liberation are essentially two sides of the same coin. The common factor in a theology of Apartheid and liberation is essentially that they grow out of fear of oppression in the future on the one hand, and experience of oppression in the present on the other. Therefore what is gospel to one is doom to another in human terms. This is so because both these theologies really come out of a struggle for political power (Dwane, 1989:55).

Such opposition became a stumbling block in the church's fight against oppression, injustice and poverty. Balcomb emphasized that the reason why the church could not bring itself to engage in the struggle against apartheid was about a theology whose exponents attempted to adopt a politically neutral position during a period of South African history when it was impossible to be neutral (Balcomb, 1993: 14).

As Cheol-Yi Ho (2002:31,72) has noted, most of the churches in South Africa did not address the challenge of poverty adequately since 1948 due to ideological influences. The English speaking churches were torn between Afrikaner and African interests, while there existed comfortable relationships between white members of the hierarchies, government officials and leading capitalists.

Briand (2001:viii) has observed that although apartheid no longer exists 25 years after the advent of liberation theology in South Africa, full democracy is yet to be achieved. The whole African continent as well as the rest of the world yearns for justice. The church has a divine responsibility to be a vehicle through which justice would be rendered to those whom justice has been denied. Whether active or neutral, the church will always be faced with the ever present condition of the poor which is the product of their past. Hence, the church as Numberger (1993:7) notes, must move in the direction of transformation.

Liberation theologians, until recently, have said no to all forms of oppression. However, the task of the church must include a thoughtful and creative openness to options for political and social change (Villa-Vicencio, 1992:1). A recent trend in

liberation theology is more receptive to political and economic reconstruction within the framework of capitalism rather than a violent shift to socialism, a solution offered by first generation liberation thinkers to the problem of the poor (Smith, nd:1). This has given rise to the theology of reconstruction, which is

essentially a remedial and compensatory theology. It has a special responsibility to put right past wrongs and old abuses. This makes affirmative action a central ingredient to a constructive nation – building process, requiring that topics to be dealt with in the present study be assessed and promoted with a view to showing a priority concern for those marginalized by past discriminatory laws and practices. In the South African situation, this requires affirmative action regarding blacks and also women (Villa-Vicencio, 1992:1).

3.6 The Church in The New South Africa

One major cause of poverty in South Africa was the apartheid policy. Apartheid was sanctioned with the Bible (Cheol–Yi Ho, 2002:1). It does seem that the problem of poverty will require a solution deriving from the bible. Tsele (1998, cited in Cheol–Yi Ho 2002:9) suggests five ways in which the church can contribute towards the eradication of poverty in South Africa:

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

There is much that the church in South Africa can do to eradicate poverty by furthering the struggle for structural change and social justice (Sheena,1984). Two essential and mutually reinforcing tasks must be attended to by the church. These are channelling the voices of the poor towards appropriate public policy formulation and implementation, and secondly, involvement in effective implementation of poverty eradication programmes. (Samsou et al, 1998, cited in Cheol – Yi Ho, 2002:9,10).

Government has never been short of ideas or policies about how to solve public problems, but more often, they lack the will to carry through such policies. For example, Fitzpatrick (1994:35) notes that the RDP was aimed at creating a labour-absorbing economy with the capacity to create jobs that will ultimately lead to full employment. It also aimed at poverty reduction through redistribution and meeting of basic needs.

The RDP, according to Fitzpatrick (1994), takes the view that neither economic growth by itself or redistribution on its own will resolve the serious crisis facing South Africa. Therefore, the government needs to adopt an integrated approach to reconstruction and development. "This will involve the promotion of a more equitable pattern of growth, an equitable distribution of assets, services and access to markets and the maintenance of macro-economic stability" (Fitzpatrick, 1994:35). It should not be over emphasized that the democratic government in South Africa abandoned a more pro-poor RDP for a profit-oriented GEAR programme with a strong neo-liberal tendency.

Archbishop Ndungane (2003:38) re-echoed the position of Pope Paul II that the profit mechanism alone cannot "put food in the bellies of millions of mothers, fathers, children, grandparents, workers – the millions who hunger and starve, here on the African continent, in Latin America and Asia." He emphasized that the first step to addressing poverty is to recognize that poverty requires a holistic approach. Many churches, according to him, have 'development desks', and have a vision that goes beyond relief work to address the root causes of poverty. While stressing the need for urgent attention to soup kitchens and feeding schemes by which the poor will be able to survive, he also reiterated the "need for a long term view which will inextricably bind human development with economic growth with sharing of resources" (Ndungane, 2003:41). Sheena (1984) argues that feeding schemes and emergency aid are not the solutions to the problem but are enormously important in keeping people alive until long term solutions arrive.

In an attempt to address poverty, the influential Church Leaders' Forum of South Africa some years ago established an Ecumenical commission on poverty. Some of its tasks include:

- to raise awareness of the issue of poverty in our congregations and among people
- to study the issue and raise questions about what needs to be done;
- to encourage initiatives, projects and funds
- to stimulate giving among our people in terms of caring for each other
- to encourage a culture of compassion, giving and caring (Ndungane, 2003:41).

But the Church needs to go beyond just talking about poverty. One practical but temporary measure has been suggested by the Methodist Bishop, Mvume Dandala that churches adopt a programme of sacrificing a meal a week so that everyone has a meal a day (Ndungane, 2003:41).

3.7 Church's Capacity to Effect Changes

An important question with regard to poverty reduction is whether the church has the capacity to effect any change. The church worldwide or nationally, is a big family with enormous resources. The experiences of Archbishop Ndungane give an insight into the kind of network and resources open to the church:

Between London and Cape Town, I had a short spell as an assistant chaplain at Saint George's Church in Paris. That was another very exciting cross-cultural ministry in Paris – business people, the diplomatic corps, students and ordinary residents. Saint George's had an international flavour as people who joined us in worship every Sunday came from various parts of the world (Ndungane, 2003:15)

He saw the Anglican community with its 70 million worldwide membership as a close knit family where an offence to one was an offence to all (Ndungane, 2003:17). It is his belief that churches were in a far stronger position to lobby various stakeholders to take part in the fight against poverty. Further, the Anglican Church is in the process of establishing contact with leading captains of business and industry, many of whom are members of the church, to pursue this vision (Ndungane, 2003: 42). More than that, he is convinced that the church has “people of tremendous calibre in business, and among the ranks of government, committed Christians and others who have heard the rallying call to address poverty; and who will be prepared to take the necessary action to eradicate it” (Ndungane, 2003:43).

The church capacity is further boosted by the changes that have been made possible by the process of globalization. It is now easier, quicker and faster to communicate with others (Finn, nd:90). This means that it is now easier for the church to engage and mobilize Christians all over the world to participate in church programmes to reduce poverty.

3.8 What The Church Can Do?

Nash (nd:4) has raised a pertinent question. How can the poor be mobilized and equipped to actively be involved in the development process? This becomes more important as many churches are dominated by a privileged minority. The church could be invaluable in bringing people together and building a community. But how can people be motivated to believe in themselves and in the possibility of change considering that they are members of churches comprising poor, hungry believers and rich, well-fed (or over-fed) members (Nash, 1984:11). As Dwane (1989:8) has observed, the rich tend to regard the poor as lazy, degenerate and inferior. On the other hand, the poor see the rich as greedy, callous and exploitative. These two categories of believers belong to and worship the same God. The poor may think that the exploitation of the rich is sanctioned by God. These prejudices arose because the believers tend to distinguish between religious devotion and economic activities. Both should be the different sides of the same coin and guided by the word of God.

As Kistner (1984: 47) has suggested, Christians need not separate their worship and confession of Christ from the concern for political and economic justice, as if the one is “religious” and the other “secular”. Wilson (1984) laments the church’s loss of relevance in many respects. This is because the church has ceased to think, its members do not use their wealth generously and responsibly, they do not share enough with the needy. Wilson (1984) tasks church members who are academics to apply their skills to devising poor oriented structures of redistribution of wealth to replace the current structure put in place by the state.

3.9 Church Poverty Reduction Strategies in KwaZulu-Natal

Since 1994, the church in South Africa has come up with some strategies to tackle the problem of poverty. In the province of KwaZulu-Natal, the churches are coming together to address a number of social political and economic problems. One such partnership is the Diakonia Council of Churches headquartered in Durban. It is the belief of this council that the church can significantly contribute to solving these problems. Working with its member churches and organisations, the council pursues this goal “through prayer, consultation, facilitation, training, networking, providing resources and models – animating church groups and individuals to be active in their own communities as well as regionally” (Diakonia, 2003:4). To maximize impact, the council works with formal church leadership, including church women and youth leaders, key influential people in Christian organisations, and independent and indigenous church leaders.

The council focuses on cross-cutting issues as human rights, gender, racism and xenophobia, and environmental justice. Particular attention has been given to the root causes of social injustice, building local, national and international church links, establishing church-based community resource centres, and linking churches with civil society organisations, among others (Diakonia, 2003). Priority issues tackled include economic justice where the centre assists member churches and organisations to become economically literate, to learn how to influence economic policy and to lobby for a more just economic system. Secondly, the council pursues economic empowerment by promoting efforts to help unemployed people find jobs or create work by assisting churches to develop model projects in selected communities, and helping churches in other areas to develop a response to the needs of the poor (Diakonia, 2003).

Community members were trained in the hope that they would find jobs. There was a shift of emphasis later to giving skills to people so that they can avail themselves of economic opportunities in their communities and begin their own businesses (Diakonia, 2004:1). Church members were trained in baking, gardening, poultry-keeping and fence making (Diakonia, 2004b:5). Economic Empowerment Rallies were organised where participants from different projects network with and learn from

one another. During such rallies, people are given information about assistance available from various agencies and also taught how to make business cards and pamphlets (Diakonia, 2003b:6). The most common project in all the churches is vegetable gardening which can be found in many communities (Diakonia, 2004b:6; 2003:1). Community Resource Centres help members of the community access grants and pensions and work closely with district offices of the Department of Social Welfare (Diakonia, 2004:5).

3.10 Conclusion

The church right from its inception has not been silent on issues of oppression, poverty and hunger. However, the response of the church has been limited to short emergency reactions like feeding schemes or radical theological doctrines. In recent times, the church seems to be heeding Kistner's advice to not separate worship from political and economic justice concerns. The tactics are also changing from just feeding schemes that left the poor barely alive without any equipment for profitable economic activities, to various empowerment programmes that make for a more sustainable livelihood. The following chapter examines one such project, the HOPE Empowerment Scheme as a contribution of the Durban Christian Centre Church to poverty reduction.

Chapter Four

The HOPE Empowerment Scheme

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the activities of the HOPE Empowerment Scheme. The chapter is divided into seven sections. Section two of the chapter presents a brief history and the conceptual foundation of the scheme. This section also discusses the types of skills provided by the scheme, its geographical coverage and the means and manner of publicizing its projects.

Section three focuses on the beneficiaries of the scheme while the impacts of the scheme are discussed in section four. Here the focus is on the scheme's job creation capacity as well as the spiritual and emotional impacts. Section five deals with the sustainability of the scheme, and examines support facilities provided for beneficiaries as well as collaborations and synergies forged by the scheme. Section six highlights the problems and challenges faced by the scheme. This is followed by the conclusion in section seven.

4.2 A Brief History

The Help Our People Everywhere (HOPE) Empowerment Scheme (referred to in this thesis as the Empowerment scheme) was one of the many arms of the Help Our People Everywhere (HOPE) Foundation (referred to in this thesis as the Foundation). The Foundation was the brainchild of Pastor Fred Robert, the founder of the Durban Christian Centre Church (referred to in this thesis as the church).

The history of the Durban Christian Centre according to Pastor Philip Laurent (Interview 4, 4/2/2005) dated back to 1978, when he opened a house of prayer where people of all nations, denominations and cultures could meet to worship God. It was affiliated to an international body called the Christian International Fellowship which has over three hundred member churches not only in South Africa but throughout the world, with representative offices in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and Africa. It has sister churches all over South Africa particularly in Gauteng, Western Cape, Eastern Cape, and Free State. These sister churches also belong to the Christian International Fellowship.

The DCC started with a handful of people and had grown to such an extent that its congregations extend across the Durban metro and even beyond it. The church had more than twenty thousand members with outreaches in Kwamashu, Umlazi, Wentworth, Phoenix, Chastworth, Hillcrest and Pietermaritzburg. There were two main branches in Durban city: the Berea Road Church and the headquarters of the church in Mayville. The headquarter church was built four years ago (2001) and had a number of facilities including a Bible School, an International Christian Academy School and many other ministries (Interview 4, 4/2/2005).

The HOPE foundation was established in 2001 as an outreach programme of the Durban Christian Centre Church and was registered as a Non Profit Organisation with the Registration number NPO 017- 196. As one of the programmes put in place by the church in pursuit of a broad vision to not only reach out to the communities but also to help in any way it can, the foundation provides free community services by qualified Volunteer Teachers, Social Workers, Lawyers, Entrepreneurs, Trainers, Counsellors, Doctors and Nursing staff. The Foundation incorporated a number of schemes through which it reached out to the communities. These included the HOPE Clinic, HOPE Feeding Scheme, and the Empowerment Scheme (Durban Christian Centre, nd).

The Empowerment Scheme was just one of the many branches of the Foundation. It ran several activities such as income generation projects for People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWAHAs), life skills and gender awareness programmes, business skills training, advice and counselling, job placement, adult literacy and domestic worker training and placement.

The scheme had a training centre at Lamontville, a township in the outskirts of the south of Durban where people are being given skills in textile work. This training centre started with machines provided by the church was formally located upstairs at the Berea Road church (Interview 4, 4/2/2005). Initially, it was managed by Margaret Lewis. It was later transferred to Lamontville branch of the DCC church in 2004 after Lewis had moved to Australia (Interview 2b, 8/2/2005). The vacated space in Berea Road is now being used as the children's church on Sundays and by the HOPE Clinic for the training of HIV/AIDS counsellors on weekdays. The relocation of the training

centre was motivated by two factors. First there was concern about the security of the machines and other materials that were being used for training as well as the safety of the children who used the hall for worship on Sunday. Secondly, the Injilongqoba Empowering Organisation which was initiated by a member of the church (Interview 3, 18/10/2004) was based in Lamontville. This organisation which was absorbed into the HOPE Empowerment Scheme (Interview 2, 10/6/2004) provided the majority of the beneficiaries training at the centre. The decision to transfer the training facility to Lamontville was also informed by the need to take the project to where there was greater demand and in the process create space for the training on HIV/AIDS counselling by the HOPE Clinic in Berea Road (Interview 2b, 8/2/2005).

4.2.1 The Conceptual Foundation

The Scheme was founded on some biblical principles and a belief that “the church is important in making changes in the community, in the society and as children of God need to be seen helping people wherever they need help” (Interview 2, 10/6/2004). This help was based on the belief that as an institution born out of love, the church should follow the example shown in the bible and manifest love to the benefit of all humankind. Buttressing this view, the manager of the Lamontville Training Centre added:

From the bible we read that God so love the world so God decided to give His Son Jesus. We cannot do nothing without love; so as a church, it is because of what we have read from the Bible and we try to live it now....we are not supposed only to read but also for us to live what we have read. So we are living out love to the community (Interview 3, 18/10/2004).

The vision of the Foundation of which the Empowerment Scheme was an arm, was born out of the desire to be relevant to the community in other ways apart from “feeding the souls.” In the words of the Co-ordinator of the Empowerment Scheme, the focus

is not just on the spiritual part and as we know that Jesus was not only feeding the people spiritually, but he was also looking at their physical needs, so even as a church, our target is to touch

every area of the life of our community (Interview 2, 10/6/2004).

Emphasising this point further, the Co-ordinator of the Foundation, Pastor Vusi Dube stated that the concept of the Foundation was formed around helping people. Sindi, the manager of the training centre at Lamontville explained that

it is there to help the community spiritually and physically. As we know some of the people are rejected outside, from parents, from their houses, from their children...so HOPE is there to comfort them, to counsel them, to supply whatever need that they need for that time(Interview 3, 18/10/2004).

The relationship between the Empowerment Scheme and the church was that of a branch out of many in a big tree. Although it might chart its own course and develop projects to actualise its set objectives, it was not independent of, but a part and parcel of the church. The Foundation's Co-ordinator noted that it was a programme that was integrated into, and operated under, the church, although it worked autonomously in terms of establishing relationships with other organisations and government (Interview 1, 8/9/2004).

The vision to economically empower its members was first conceived with the realization of the high level of poverty in the society and the need to help people in the church to grapple with this problem. This need came to the fore as the church began to pray for the unemployed in the church. It was discovered that there was a large number of people who were unemployed. Driven by this need, the leadership of the church started considering ways of impacting especially on the socio-economic life of the community. The result was the Empowerment Scheme.

The scheme drew from government as well as the business sector in a symbiotic relationship based on the church's reputation as a place to find trustworthy people. Job opportunities were brought to the knowledge of the scheme, which in turn sent people from the church to fill them. In part, the scheme worked as an employment agency but without the usual service charges paid to such an agency. This was done on a humanitarian basis. A pool of CVs of unemployed church members was kept from which people were recommended to apply for job opportunities. To keep them

informed on the outcomes of their applications a prayer meeting of the unemployed was held every Thursday during which they were “encouraged” spiritually and given some skills on job hunting. Such meetings might also have served to keep people up to date with development in the labour market and invariably keep them drawn to and attached to the church.

The Empowerment scheme was initially focused on the members of the church. However, participation was open to non-church members. The training centre at Lamontville had a number of trainees that were not church members but who were in any case members of the Christian faith. All the respondents interviewed in this study were Christians. This implied that so far only Christians had benefited from the Empowerment scheme to the exclusion of people of other faiths. “It was designed mainly to focus on alleviating poverty in the community by linking people to jobs, teaching them skills which will equip them for employment and also to see themselves as potential business people” (Interview 2, 10/6/2004). However, the broader Foundation also supported people from outside of the church. According to Pastor Dube, “most of the people who are covered by our programme are not church members. Our clinic, the outreach programme involves a lot of people who are not members of our church” (Interview 1, 8/9/2004).

4.2.2 Managers of the Scheme

Being driven by the vision of the church, the involvement and engagement of managers of the scheme was limited to people who were members of the church whose integrity and character could be vouched for by the institution. Most of the trainers were working on a voluntary basis. One important implication of this was that the scheme could be missing out in terms of drawing from the expertise and experiences of those who were not church members. To avoid this kind of situation, the coordinator assured that they involve only church members who were skilled in specific areas, as was the case with the HOPE Clinic. She argued that the person running the clinic was a qualified medical doctor. “She is a member of the church, and also in HOPE Empowerment we are using skilled people” (Interview 2, 10/6/2004). Although church members were used, “we try to balance the people we use, it is not just spiritual giants” but their skills and expertise were taken into consideration when

they were engaged. However, there was a gradual broadening of the pool of resources in this regard. "What we do is to invite organisations from outside to come and do a workshop. We have been in touch with an organisation that encourages people to start their own business" (Interview 2, 10/6/2004).

4.2.3 Types of Skills Training

The scheme "runs several projects including income generating projects for previously disadvantaged communities, life skills and gender awareness projects, ... job placement, adult literacy, domestic worker training and placement" (Interview 2, 10/6/2004). The strategy adopted by the scheme was multi-faceted. There was a combination of both formal and informal institutions in training the beneficiaries of the scheme. Beneficiaries were sent to a training centre or alternatively sent to prospective employers (Interview 4, 4/2/2005).

Depending on the kind of skills required, these projects took various forms, such as one day workshops and training programmes. Other training projects lasted up to eleven months. For example, domestic workers were given a full day training workshop. This workshop was handled by people from the Domestic Work Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) (Interview 2, 10/6/2004). Training in job hunting took about three days where they were taught CV writing, job hunting and how to face job interviews. The Human Resources Manager of Natal Port Authority as well as Spoornet's staff were used during this workshop (Interviews 2, 10/6/2004; and 5, 12/8/2004). The Scheme also involved the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) section of the Department of Education to provide basic life skills. Similar relationships existed with businesses. For example, workers of ABSA Bank were invited to address the trainees on banking issues. Life skills sessions were a one day workshop (Interview 1, 8/9/2004).

The most prominent of such skills acquisition projects was the training centre in Lamontville where some women were being trained in various skills including fashion designing, flower arrangement, tailoring and the production of some domestic products such as disinfectant, fabric conditioner (stay soft), scouring lotion (Handy Andy) scouring powder (vim), air freshener, floor polish, and soap, among others. The

training at this centre was handled by Sindi Sibiya, the centre manager and the minimum duration for this programme was eleven months (Interview 3, 18/10/2004). Some of the trainees were apprenticed to informal textile workers with whom they worked for an income as well. In this way the beneficiaries earn some income while being trained. For example, one of the respondents states that she worked for the person that was training her. "I am working with a lady. She is still teaching me" (Interview 7, 14/8/2004). This respondent was paid R1,500 a month by her trainer. There was a plan in the pipe-line to introduce courses in the field of construction which would include "plumbing, electrical work, brick laying, plastering and jobs associated with the construction industry" (Interview 4, 4/2/2005).

The beneficiaries of these training programmes came from a broad spectrum of backgrounds. Those who had education and qualifications received training mainly in job hunting and job placement. Some of them also acquired skills in other areas. For example, one of the respondents in this study had a Bachelor's degree. She chose to be trained in textile work because she was "interested in sewing" (Interview 7).

However, the targets of the projects were the unemployable people (Interview 4, 4/2/2005). Sixty percent of the respondents in this study had Matric and below, and no special skills. Even those who had worked before the HOPE Empowerment training, needed to be skilled to adapt to a different job or to improve their skills in their current employments. In terms of their status before the training, some of the beneficiaries were unemployable as they had neither education nor skills. Some of them had work experience even though they did not have much education.

After the training, there had been a change in the status of the beneficiaries. This study showed that the beneficiaries who acquired skills in textile work were not only employable, but were capable of training and employing others, given the resources. Although no certificates were issued to them at the end of the training programme, they were confident of their new skills. Certification would come with the accreditation of the training centre with SETA (Interview 4, 4/2/2004).

It was believed that as this church was training people that they would have to go out and empower their communities not only with the gospel but also bringing with them such training in skills that will equip the people to economically fend for themselves (Interview 2, 10/6/2004).

The participation of people in projects of this nature depended to a large extent on the awareness created about the project. In publicizing the scheme's activities and encouraging people to participate in the empowerment process, various means were used. These included the use of some newsletters as well as on-the-pulpit announcements. The church newsletters were used to publicise future workshops and vacancies in companies. In recent times the media was increasingly taking interest in the activities of the Foundation. For example, when the foundation organized a march tagged the abstinence walk in 2004, it was widely covered by the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) (Interview 1, 8/9/2004). Also, the activities of the HOPE Clinic were well covered by the media. However, most of the promotion of the empowerment scheme had been through word of mouth. Many people, according to Pastor Dube, "say they hear from other people and that is why they come." (Interview 1, 8/9/2004). For example, most of the trainees at the Lamontville training centre said that they heard about the scheme through word of mouth. But it did seem that the circulation of information about the scheme was limited to church members alone. Appendix 1 shows that the majority of respondents were members of the church. However, not all of the respondents knew about the programme directly from the church. Seven (47 percent) of the respondents got information about the scheme directly from the church. As one of the respondents claims, "I am a Christian at Durban Christian Centre, I knew about it through the church ...there is a job seekers service on Thursdays, and I used to attend that service and it was announced there" (Interview 5, 12/8/2004). Another said: "I came to the church and they announced in the church about the HOPE programme and I sent in my CV and they called me back and organised the workshop" (Interview 6, 12/8/2004). Yet another recounts a similar experience: "I went to church in Durban Christian Centre and I heard the announcement and I submitted my CV and they called me over for an interview and that's how it started" (Interview 10, 27/12/2004).

Seven (47 percent) respondents heard about the scheme from other people, particularly those directly involved in the scheme. Non-church members who got to know about the scheme did so through friends or family members who belonged to the church. For example, five respondents who were not members of the church knew about the scheme from members of the church. Arguably, the method of publicity must have, from the beginning, excluded some people, particularly non-members of the church from benefiting from the scheme. One respondent said that the manager of training centre at Lamontville told her of the scheme (Interview 12, 18/10/2004). Another respondent claims she “heard from a neighbour of mine who is in the programme who is a member of this church” (Interview 11, 13/12/2004). This method of inviting close friends and relatives invariably turned the selection process into that based on connection than on need, which in turn denied some people who perhaps would have wanted to participate from the opportunity to benefit from the scheme. The following section assesses the profile of the beneficiaries of the Scheme.

4.3 Beneficiaries Of the Scheme

According to the Coordinator, about a hundred people had benefited from the scheme since inception (Interview 2, 10/6/2004). The majority of these beneficiaries had passed through workshops to equip them for job hunting. Not many of them it appeared, were given training in skills for self-employment. This study covered fifteen of these beneficiaries (see appendix1). Those interviewed in this study were given training in skills because they were the ones that were most likely to establish their own businesses and be self-employed, and perhaps even provide jobs for others in the future. The background of the beneficiaries cuts across a broad spectrum in terms of educational attainment, church affiliation, previous work experience, previous income, marital status and gender. Although there were male beneficiaries, the respondents in this study were females. This was because only female beneficiaries could be reached during the period of study.

Of the fifteen respondents in this study, 10 (or 67 per cent) were members of the Durban Christian Centre. The remaining 5 (or 33 per cent) of the respondents were not members of the church. However, they all were Christians from other churches. There were neither Muslim nor Hindu respondents. This on the surface may suggest an

exclusion of people of other faiths. But the absence of people of other faiths in the Empowerment projects may not be a result of deliberate exclusion as they had benefited from other schemes of the Foundation. As Pastor Dube noted that many of the people who benefited from the foundation included people who were not Christians (Interview 1, 8/9/2004). The Feeding Scheme for example, caters for people particularly street kids, who have no relationship with the church.

The ages of the respondents ranged from 17 years to 39 years. Two respondents (13 percent) were teenagers between 17 and 19 years old. Eight respondents (54 percent) were aged between 20 and 29 years, while five respondents (33 percent) were between the ages of 30 and 39 years. It did appear that only those in their prime availed themselves of, and therefore, had benefited from the scheme, even though it was open to people of all age groups. It also suggests that majority of the unemployed in the church were people in the above age groups.

Their educational qualifications ranged from standard 9 to a bachelor's degree. Five respondents (33 percent) had below Matric qualifications. Four (27 percent) respondents had Matric, while five respondents (33 percent) had tertiary education certificates, diplomas and degrees. Respondents also comprised both married and single people. Three (20 percent) were married while twelve (80 percent) were single.

The dependency status of the respondents also varied in terms of the number of dependents they had and their own reliance on other people. Ten respondents (67 percent) claimed that they supported dependents, while four (27 percent) stated that they had no dependents. The number of dependents supported by these respondents ranged from one to seven. With regard to their own dependency on other people, seven (47 percent) were dependent on either their spouses, parents or grandparents. Seven (47 percent) were independent.

Ten (67 percent) of the respondents had worked while four (27 percent) had never worked before their involvement in the empowerment scheme. The kind of jobs done included domestic work, waitressing in restaurants, beach guides, security work, and trainer in a marketing company. The highest income earned by the various respondents in their different jobs ranged from R160 to R 3,200 a month. A

breakdown of this showed that 50 percent earned below R1000 per month, while 50 percent earned R1000 and more. On the average, their monthly income before their involvement in the HOPE Scheme was R1066. These jobs were either given up or lost for various reasons including low wages, lack of independence and insecurity. For example, one of the respondents said: "I wanted more money. I wanted to earn more and to work for myself and be independent. I was not happy with my salary" (Interview 8, 18/12/2004). For another respondent, "there comes a time when you think you deserve better than what you are receiving and you think you must do something more worthwhile and sometime the thing that brings more money" (Interview 9, 23/12/2004). Added to low wages, some left or lost their jobs because the conditions of job were such that it left them little or no time to attend to family.

Some of the respondents would not have minded the low wage if they had regular secure jobs. With the high level of unemployment in South Africa, getting a permanent job without the insecurities of a contract job was difficult. Faced with stiff competition from foreign companies, many firms had to close down and in the process laid off their workers. Those in operation had to take measures to cut costs which might include reduction in labour force, outsourcing of production and the use of unprotected workers (Castells and Portes, 1989; Meagher, 1995). The outcome was a situation where a worker got a short-term contract job that might not be renewed when the contract expired. One respondent said: "I was willing to continue with my job, but because of the contract, I was disappointed" (Interview 6, 12/8/2004). Another respondent was asked to resign because the shop she was working for was closed (Interview 7, 14/8/2004). Another was laid off by the company she worked for (Interview 12, 18/10/2004), while yet another respondent lost her job as a domestic worker when "my madam separated from her husband, so there was no need for a domestic worker" (Interview 12, 18/10/2004).

4.4 Impact of the Scheme

The success or otherwise of this scheme would be judged by the number of its beneficiaries that were employed as a result of the scheme's training or other activities. It would also be judged by the reduction, among the beneficiaries, of poverty in all its ramifications, especially social and material. The designed path to

poverty reduction is through training in skills which the beneficiaries could use to make a living. In this vein an assessment of the scheme would begin with determining whether it did succeed in providing skills for the beneficiaries. The perception of the beneficiaries about the impact of the scheme was quite revealing. According to one respondent, the scheme did a lot because “before I did not know anything about designing ... it opened an opportunity to realise my dream” (Interview 11). Over and above the provision of skills the scheme had also helped some of the beneficiaries to realise their dreams of getting employed.

According to the coordinator of the Foundation, it would be difficult to determine the number of the beneficiaries that had been placed in jobs so far. This was because they have not taken a business approach in running the programme, hence proper records had not been kept. However, it was estimated that about fifty to sixty percent of those who had passed through the programme had been employed. This study shows that seven (47 percent) of the respondents were employed and earned incomes. Seven (47 percent) on the other hand were not employed (See appendix1). Of these seven that were employed, four (27 percent) were employed by those to whom they were apprenticed. Two (13 percent) were self employed, while one (7 percent) was employed by a foreign textile worker. Some of them also had their private businesses, in addition to their paid jobs. Current incomes earned in these jobs ranged from R1000 per month to R3500 per month. On average the monthly income currently earned by the beneficiaries was R1971. Comparing this to the monthly average of R1066 before the HOPE training, there was a R905 per month or 90.5 percent increase in income. According to one of the respondents, “compared to how I was living before, it is very significant. Now ... I can do things on my own” (Interview 5, 12/8/2004).

Apart from the increase in the income, there was also a trickle down effect from the direct beneficiaries to their household members or dependents, from the city to the rural areas. This was done mostly through opportunities created by the beneficiaries for other people to benefit. For example, apart from providing the same skills they acquired for their close relatives, the respondents’ improved incomes were impacting on their families in other ways. For example, one of the respondents had started a tuck shop for her mother and siblings. This was intended to help them take their destiny in their own hands and to depend less on the respondent. The fact that the respondents

were able to take care of themselves meant that their parents could focus attention on other issues as they had one less person to be concerned about.

4.4.1 Job Creation Capacity

The job creation potential of the empowerment scheme was very huge. The production of household goods as mentioned earlier would not only give employment to the beneficiaries but also to many other unemployed people who may become distributors and retailers of such products. Also, given the necessary support, the beneficiaries' businesses could grow to absorb substantial number of workers as apprentices and salespeople. However, at the moment this potential had not been adequately realised mainly as a result of a lack of financial support. Out of the many people who have passed through one type of training or the other, only a few were able to establish their own businesses. "Only two were self employed and capable of employing other people." The rest of those who got jobs were either employed by their trainers or employed in the public sector. According to Pastor Dube, "most of the people we have trained had been employed by the government" (Interview 1, 8/9/2004). These people work "as dispatchers, stock-takers, cleaners and also in the office world, people that were conversant with computers, people that could file and type reports, and various office work" (Interview 4, 4/2/2005).

Second, this study revealed that so far none of the beneficiaries of the scheme had been able to employ other people. Those that had started their own businesses lacked the financial capacity to employ or pay workers. On the other hand, two respondents who were self employed had apprentices that they were already training. One respondent had four apprentices while the other had three apprentices. These apprentices were being trained free of charge. In this way the beneficiaries were contributing to empowering their fellow community members and by so doing extending the vision and mission of the scheme. One respondent said that she was training her apprentices free because she was trained free (Interview 8, 18/12/2004). This was one way the scheme was impacting on the lives of the members of the community and the church in particular. For example, two of the four apprentices being trained by one of the respondents were members of the church, while the other two were from the respondent's community (Interview 8, 18/12/2004). However, a

closer look at the composition of the apprentices shows that close family ties defined who benefited from such apprenticeship. For example, the three apprentices being trained by one of the self-employed respondents were all her siblings (Interview 9, 23/12/2004). So far no one had been sent from the Scheme to these self-employed respondents to be apprenticed or to be employed. This could be blamed on several factors such as the beneficiaries' lack of capacity to employ or apprentice more people, or the scheme's non-existent mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the progress of the beneficiaries, and to identify those who were successful and who were in the position to absorb labour.

When asked how many of the beneficiaries are capable of training or employing other people, the scheme's coordinator replied: "At the moment we are still running other training courses to further equip our people to start and advance in their businesses. So it will be difficult for me to say the percentage of that category right now"(Interview 2, 10/6/2004). However, the respondents were highly optimistic about their ability to train other people. All the respondents interviewed at the Lamontville Training Centre asserted that they were capable of training other people given the necessary equipment (Interview 12, 18/10/2004). One respondent who was running a small private sewing business while still in the employ of her trainer has already started training people with just one machine. She claimed that

At the moment, I am busy arranging to get these machines that I want so that I can help other people ... they use my machine while I am at work. Others come during the weekend and I supervise them ... others stay with people who have machines and I help them with cutting and tell them how to do it(Interview 7, 14/8/2004).

In this manner the scheme indirectly impacts on the lives of many people who would not have otherwise had the opportunity to benefit directly from the HOPE project.

There were other ways in which the Scheme had impacted the beneficiaries. First, there was the psychological empowerment that opened up the beneficiaries to the resources and power within them, which they can tap for their benefit. In order to break the cycle of poverty and to put people on the path to sustainable livelihood, the Scheme's training aimed at effecting some psychological or attitudinal change in the

beneficiaries. As one respondent observed: “it gave me a change even in the way I think ... taught me to be confident, that you can do it” (Interview 6, 12/8/2004). Another respondent asserted that “it helps people to look inward and see what they can do for themselves and also equips them to go out there to get jobs or start their own businesses” (Interview 5, 12/8/2004). Another respondent was in agreement that “it gives me a good feeling because it gives me strength to believe in me, that I can do something out of my own hand” (Interview 12, 18/10/2004). This feeling derived from some interpretations of the Bible and perception of “the promises of God”. In the words of another respondent, “I feel so empowered, I feel I can take on whatever comes before me because I know who I am and I know there is something better that God has for me and my family. I can see it and it is happening and it is going to become greater” (Interview 7, 14/8/2004). The respondent further asserted:

Sometimes there are so many things you do not understand that are within you. So when they give you hope, you begin to spring up and rise and know that there is a chance for me. Sometimes when you lose hope you think that everything is finished but when that hope is there, there is something that rises within you whether you are a believer or non-believer (Interview 7, 14/8/2004).

In the words of another respondent “we now go outside and be proud of ourselves, do things that we never thought we are able to do. When I go out and see people driving cars, I say oh these people are fortunate but now I know it is not about being fortunate, it is about vision and hope” (Interview 10, 27/12/2004).

Following from this psychological reorientation is a general sense of well-being among the respondents. Although the financial earnings of the respondents did not seem to be that impressive in terms of rands earned, there is a pervasive feeling of well-being and expectation of greater future accomplishment. Even those who are still in training are exuding much confidence in a better life after the training. Another source of this sense of well-being is the more secure and regular nature of their current jobs. One of the respondents, for example, earned less than she used to earn in previous jobs but she was happy because her loss of income was compensated by a secure employment and regular income, contrary to her previous short-term contract jobs. Although she did not earn as much as in her previous jobs, she preferred a more

permanent contract. She said: "I worked before but the problem is the short period because of the contract. The thing was driving me crazy. It is better to work permanently" (Interview 6, 12/8/2004).

Furthermore, there was a pervasive sense of satisfaction, independence and control over their lives. According to most of the respondents the scheme helped to reduce their dependence on other people. For example, 50 per cent of the respondents were dependent before they passed through the scheme. Three (20 per cent) of them had what I call "Second Degree Dependency", that is a situation where an individual is dependent on another, and also has some individuals depending on him/her. These were single mothers who were dependent on parents or grandparents (Interview 12, 18/10/2004). One of the beneficiaries who earned R1,100 a month stated that she was better off now than before she went through the empowerment scheme and was no longer dependent on her parents. She could now buy whatever she liked and the food items on her menu had improved, and she no longer had to wait to eat whatever that was cooked at home as she could buy the food she preferred. This had given her a sense of empowerment and satisfaction with life (Interview 5, 12/8/2004). Another said: "I am better than before because I am not depending on my parents" (Interview 6, 12/8/2004). The liberating and empowering impact of the Scheme is further stressed by another respondent in these words: "I am happy, I am earning more than before ... I have peace of mind, I do not need to wake up early in the morning to catch a bus to go to work, I don't need to go to work at 8 am and finish at 4 pm and earn a little ... I am like my own boss" (Interview 9, 23/12/2004).

The scheme also created an opening for the beneficiaries to earn incomes from more than one source. The strategy of apprenticing them with independent informal sector textile workers had given some the opportunity to do their own businesses after work. One of the respondents stated:

I am working with a lady. She is teaching me. On the other hand, I am self employed. I have my own private business. I am sewing garments for people who give me orders. During the day I work with the lady and after work, I do my own stuff for my clients. At work I am earning R1,500 and in my private business I am making about

R2,000 or R2,500 depending on the orders that I get per month (Interview 7, 14/8/2004).

The potential for multiplier effect of the benefits of the scheme appears to be very substantial. The improved financial standing of many of the respondents had started benefiting their dependents. For one of the respondents, there had been a marked difference in the situation of her family which comprised her mother and five siblings, who were all dependent on her:

We didn't have that much before, but now I can help where I can help. What I have done is to help them start a small tuckshop so that while I am working this side they can do something for themselves so that they can provide for themselves. It is helping. I did it to help the kids in school so that they buy food and clothes... Now my mother is selling fruits and is helping in the family and my brother is running the tuck shop (Interview 7, 14/8/2004).

Another family's well-being was also improved through the economic upliftment of their breadwinner:

I've got these two brothers of mine. So I happened to manage to take them to school, the transport, I have to do most of the things. So before the HOPE thing, I had no income but now I am earning something and I am able to support people. So it helped me a lot. They are going to school and they are progressing (Interview 10, 27/12/2004).

For another respondent, being able to train other people was one important thing the Scheme had achieved through her (Interview 8, 18/12/2004).

4.4.2 Spiritual and Emotional Dimensions

The programmes of the Foundation were two dimensional, incorporating the physical and the spiritual. The programme sought to tackle poverty at all levels and in all its ramifications. The perception that poverty was a spiritual phenomenon to a great extent influenced the spiritual angle of the Scheme. But there seemed to be a heavier dose of the spiritual. In the words of Pastor Dube, "there is a focus on the spiritual ... A lot of people who come ... have been to some counselling before, but basically they come to us because we give them that kind of spiritual counselling that most of them

need” (Interview 1, 8/9/2004). The same goes for the Empowerment Scheme, which focused not only on the physical/economic needs but also on the spiritual. As the coordinator noted, “we also have prayers. Every Thursday, we have a prayer meeting for the people who are unemployed, and we pray for them and encourage them spiritually and from time to time we make use of the same session to involve business people who would like to encourage them” (Interview 2, 10/6/2004). As Sindi notes “if we see that a person has got a need even at home, maybe their relationship is not good at home, so as a church we do pray and ask the permission of that person to intervene in their problems and solve the problem?” (Interview 3, 18/10/2004).

Many of the respondents agreed that there was much focus on the spiritual in the scheme, and they all accepted it as an important ingredient of their Christianity. Some even disagreed that there was any unnecessary focus on the spiritual. When asked whether there was a focus on the spiritual in the scheme, one respondent replied:

No, the focus was on training people in skills.
However, there is time for everything as the Bible says. There was time for prayer and time for the Bible.
I am a Christian, I consider what we did in the place as part of our Christianity. If any body has an emotional problem, it is proper that counselling should be given to that person (Interview 9, 23/12/2004).

Another respondent argued that it was in the interest of the programme that all the beneficiaries conformed to the tenets of the common faith:

While we were in the training, we must all be the same, we must have the best interest of this programme in whatever we do, we do put our focus on it. So they were involved for us to be born again. They were interested in us being born again because not all of us were born again (Interview 10, 27/12/2004).

The impact of such spiritual rehabilitation was demonstrated by the success achieved in restoring faith in those who were depressed and despondent. One respondent confirmed that “it thought me more about Bible, about the promises of God. It helps when you want to give up, they give you hope” (Interview 5, 12/8/2004). There was no doubt that in addition to giving skills and finding jobs for its beneficiaries, it was also meant to serve the purpose of evangelism. However, the respondents did not

consider such activities as attempts to proselyte or make converts of the beneficiaries of the scheme. One respondent noted that though there was a focus on the spiritual in the scheme, “there was no attempt to convert me to the church” (Interview 6, 12/8/2004). In fact there seemed to be no need for that “because the assumption is that those who come to the prayer meeting are members of the church” (Interview 2, 10/6/2004). On the other hand, it appeared there was a subtle persuasion for the beneficiaries to convert to church membership. One respondent agreed that she was not born again before going for the Scheme’s training, but now she was born again (Interview 10, 27/12/2004).

However, conversion of the beneficiaries was not done in a coercive manner. It took a gradual but persistent process. As the manager of the Training Centre has noted “We don’t force them but as women, we know the dangers outside, the things that affect the lives of the people so we talk until the person sees the need to become a member of the church or the need to serve God and maintain the lifestyle” (Interview 3, 18/10/2004). Pastor Dube confirms that though conversion of non-believers is a major plank of the Scheme, no one is forced into it:

We believe very much in the empowerment of the people by teaching them. Every time we move into an area we do a development programme, what we call spiritual growth. We do not want to start work with the people before we engage them in the basic foundation so that we don’t build on the people we are going to lose on the way (Interview 1, 8/9/2004).

This suggests a belief that those who benefited from the programme should in one way or another be affiliated to the church. Whether the church had benefited by such projects in terms of increased membership was not the subject of this study. However, it was apparent that due to the help that people received most of them ended up becoming members of the church. This invariably had made the scheme an instrument of converting non-church members to church members. This made the latent purpose of the scheme as a faith based scheme more apparent. However, it is possible that the instrumentality of the scheme as a means of evangelisation might have precluded people of other faiths or those who would not want to convert to Christianity from benefiting from it.

4.5 Sustainability of Projects

If managed properly, the Scheme will be very sustainable. There are two ways of sustaining the life of the Scheme. One is through the continual operation of the Scheme itself. The other is through the activities of the beneficiaries or the Scheme's off-spring businesses. The structure of the scheme was such that given the necessary financial support it will grow and begin to generate its own income to sustain itself. For example, the training centre at Lamontville had the potential to generate enough income to cater for its financial needs and those of its trainees. With a little financial support the centre can start the production of some of the household products developed in the training for the local market. This could generate enough money for the running of the training centre at least. Most of the workshops that the scheme had run were handled by people who rendered their services on a voluntary basis. In this way the scheme's activities could continue even with minimal finances. The people that were being used by the scheme were members of the church who could easily make their services available to the project. Furthermore, the scheme could use previous beneficiaries of these workshops to train subsequent beneficiaries. In addition to the aforementioned, there were future plans that will increase the sustainability of the scheme. These plans include the expansion of the scheme's projects into new areas, which will see it becoming independent and being able to pay for the equipment and materials it needed, as well as financially support those who pass through the empowerment process. This was to be achieved by the beneficiaries making contributions to the scheme when they begin to earn incomes (Interview 2, 10/6/2004). Another way to make it sustainable was to run it as business venture producing and selling products. The training centre at Lamontville had played a major role in this regard (Interview 2, 10/6/2004).

One of the many targets of the scheme is to prepare people to take advantage of the entrepreneurship associated with the World Cup Soccer Championship which will be organised in South Africa in 2010 (Interview 2, 10/6/2004). It was hoped that those who will be prepared to take advantage of the Soccer World Cup Competition would be firmly established so that they could help other people to exit poverty.

Those who had already benefited from the scheme, particularly those that had established their own businesses formed another plank in the sustainability of the scheme. As earlier discussed, some of the beneficiaries were already training people in the same jobs they were doing. If the scheme could organise and support these and subsequent beneficiaries, it could develop contracts with them to train new beneficiaries, especially those from the communities where they were based. However, this will not materialize without requisite logistical and financial support.

4.5.1 Support Facilities

Skills training alone without support in terms of equipment and finance, cannot go far in addressing the poverty situation of the beneficiaries. The ability of the beneficiaries to start and sustain any business depended on their capacity to muster enough initial capital. As can be seen from this study, the respondents who were able to start their own businesses were those that in one way or another were able to raise the money to pay for their machines. They did this by savings from previous work or through the support of their families (Interviews 7,8 and 9). Unfortunately, not many of the beneficiaries had such savings or families capable to support them with either equipment or money. One way of making the scheme sustainable would be to support the beneficiaries with the initial resources they needed to start their businesses. At the moment the Empowerment Scheme was seeking funds for them: "We have started with the sewing project, and we have set up a committee and we have started to negotiate with government to give us a place and also to get funding for machines" (Interview 2, 10/6/2004).

The Empowerment Scheme so far had been funded by the church. All the resources being used by the scheme belonged to the church. For example, the training centre at Lamontville was housed in the church building. However, there seemed to be a changing orientation in the approach of the programme from a purely philanthropic one, to an increasingly business oriented one with the purpose of making it self-sustaining. According to the Coordinator, they had expected the companies they provided with workers to make donations to the Scheme, as they did not charge them any fees for supplying them with workers. But so far they had not received any such

4.6 Problems

As stated earlier, skills training without financial support to start their businesses has yielded little dividends for the beneficiaries. Funding posed a very serious problem not only for the individual beneficiaries but also for the scheme generally. At the individual level, a common concern was lack of finance and equipment to start a business. The aspiration of many of the respondents was to start their own businesses on completion of their training. Unfortunately, this aspiration had been constrained as they could not raise the money to buy sewing machines. Many of the respondents at the Lamontville training centre were contemplating doing small businesses like selling ice cream, and second hand clothes in order to raise the needed money to buy their own machines. Worse still, they did not have the funds to start these “small” businesses (Interview 12, 18/10/2004).

The need for financial support cannot be overemphasised. Provision of skills alone cannot be enough. One respondent observed that although “the scheme was providing us with skills and hope, but they don’t give us the finances to explore the potential in us. It can help if they can provide small finance to start with” (Interview 7, 14/8/2004). The lack of finances and equipment caused a number of setbacks for the beneficiaries. Apart from not being able to start their own businesses, those who managed to start their private businesses could not be competitive as they lacked all the necessary equipment. Jobs had to be delayed because they had to be taken to where the required machines could be found (Interview 9, 23/12/2004). This situation was further stressed by the above quoted respondent who claimed that she did get a lot of orders in her private business but since she did not have the necessary machines to finish the jobs she took them to work where she could use the machines of her employer: “If I had the required machines it will reduce the time spent on my orders” (Interview 7, 14/8/2004). She stated that “there are some special machines like the overlocker which are required for specific jobs ... if they can help me to procure these machines, this could be in form of loan. It will make me work harder as I will be required to pay back the loan” (Interview 7, 14/8/2004).

Providing the beneficiaries with the equipment and materials they needed to start their businesses as repayable loans was preferred as a way of helping them start off. Some

respondents argued that it would serve as enough motivation for them to work hard as they had to pay back the loans (Interviews 7 and 8). Lack of equipment and finance was also a major factor hampering the activities of the training centre at Lamontville. The centre required more sewing machines and materials to continue its training activities, at least at the current capacity of fifteen trainees at a sitting.

The empowerment scheme so far is constrained financially to render such support. Pastor Dube explained that the scheme would love to render such support if the resources were available. Currently, the only support that it had offered to its beneficiaries is networking opportunities. One way of providing such networking opportunities was through a business fellowship. The business fellowship which met twice a month under the auspices of the church provided a forum where people interact with one another and exchange ideas on how to groom their businesses. Although the Foundation received some funding from church members and from SpoorNet, the Municipality and the Department of Roads, Social Security (Interview 1, 8/9/2004), it was not clear how much was received from the above mentioned institutions. Moreover, from personal observation, it did appear that the scheme did not occupy a priority place in terms of fund allocation as compared to the HOPE Clinic. For example, during this study, the researcher never observed the clinic lack any material it needed. There was never a time patients were turned back because there were no materials such as syringes, needles and reagents for Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) for HIV/AIDS. This is understandable though, given the consequences of the pandemic.

Another problem was the absence of a business orientation in the running of the scheme. The coordinator of the scheme agreed that the scheme had not been run with profit making as a motive. For example, given that workers were provided for companies without charging fees meant that the scheme would have lost substantial income. Again, there were products which the training centre could sell to make money, but it lacked the finances for mass production. Perhaps, as Pastor Dube has noted, the image of the church as a spiritually rather than economically oriented institution had played a role in this regard (Interview 1, 8/9/2004).

of a co-operative society to which the beneficiaries will be free to belong. By so doing, they would be able to provide for one another the necessary support for their businesses to thrive (Interview 3, 18/10/2004).

Synergy with other organisations, especially Christian faith based institutions, was not adequately exploited. There were other Christian organisations in the field of development with which the Scheme could exchange ideas. For example, Diakonia was a development organisation that was formed by a coalition of several churches in Durban. There does not seem to be any collaboration between the scheme and Diakonia, or other Christian organisations providing similar services. This lack of collaboration can deny the scheme the opportunity to utilize facilities and expertise that may be available in other Christian organizations.

4.7 Conclusion

The HOPE Empowerment Scheme started as an arm of the HOPE foundation which also incorporated the HOPE Clinic, the Feeding Scheme among other initiatives. The Foundation as a concept was the brain child of Pastor Fred Robert, the founder of the Durban Christian Centre Church. It was conceived as a means to be relevant to the church community in other ways than simply ministering the gospel. This was based on some biblical principles and the perception of the church as the reservoir of God's love and the harbinger of change in the society. The scheme's main goal was to equip unemployed members of the church to find or create their own jobs. To do this, a number of projects were set up.

First, the scheme scouted for opportunities in both private and public companies which were filled by job seekers who submitted CVs to the scheme. Training sessions were also organised for job seekers to equip them for job hunting. On a more career-oriented level, skills were provided for domestic workers and those who wanted to do textile work. Although a young scheme, it had trained no less than a hundred people in various skills. Its training centre at Lamontville specialized in training people in textile work and the production of household cleaning products. The scheme drew from the pool of resources in the church. These included professionals in both business and public sectors, who volunteered their services, and church infrastructure which the

scheme used for its activities. The scheme also sent some of its beneficiaries to prospective employers who trained, and in some cases employed them.

The HOPE Empowerment Scheme had great potential for job creation, self-employment and hence poverty reduction. All the respondents trained in the textile work were optimistic about their abilities to start their own businesses and to train as well as employ people if given the necessary financial support. So far only 50 per cent of these had been employed. Two of them had started their own businesses and had apprentices. Others were either working for their trainers or employed by other informal textile workers. However, the beneficiaries of the scheme who enjoyed the benefits of their training were those who were apprenticed by private employers to whom the scheme had sent them. This set of beneficiaries also had their private businesses besides their paid jobs.

The impact of the scheme had also been felt in the incomes of the beneficiaries. There had been a 90.5 percent increase in average income. The improved earnings of the beneficiaries was beginning to impact the lives of the families of the beneficiaries. Cases of dependency had also reduced. The beneficiaries became less dependent on other people while those formerly dependent on them were being helped to start small businesses that would make them stand on their own.

The scheme faced a number of difficulties and challenges particularly financial and administrative. However, with adequate attention given to the scheme in terms of funding and strengthening its administrative aspects, greater success would be attained.

Chapter Five

Evaluation, Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The Bible (Deut. 15:11, John 12:8) predicted that the poor shall always be in human society. But what has become a challenging concern in recent years is the increasing incidence and depth of poverty. Over the years the church has taken it upon itself to tackle the problem of poverty in one way or another. In the past, the church had responded to poverty by providing relief packages including feeding schemes. Although these schemes saved and sustained lives, they did not address the fundamental need for poverty alleviation, as they were not meant to equip their beneficiaries for sustainable livelihoods. In recent decades, the church has enlarged its role of addressing the question of oppression and poverty. The church appeared to be no longer satisfied with palliative measures such as feeding schemes, and transcending such measures to empowering people with skills for sustainable livelihoods. This research is a study of the role of the church in poverty reduction in South Africa.

With the advent of a democratic government in 1994, increased attention has been accorded to the problem of poverty plaguing the majority of South Africa's population. The church realising that a majority of its membership was affected by poverty, has taken it upon itself to equip them to participate in economic activities, and thereby earn a sustainable living. The HOPE Empowerment Scheme was one of the efforts of the church to reduce poverty in its host community.

This chapter presents an evaluation of the HOPE Empowerment Scheme. The findings of this study as they relate to the research questions will be considered and recommendations for enhancing the performance of the scheme will also be made.

5.2 The Problem of Poverty

People are counted as poor when their measured standard of living is below a minimum acceptable level. Poverty in South Africa is widespread. As at 2003, about 50 percent of the population of South Africa were living below the poverty line (UNDP, 2003:70). A sizeable number of poor people are members of Christian churches. The Durban Christian Centre Church recognised the fact that poverty

existed within the ranks of its congregation, and responded by initiating the Empowerment Scheme. The intention was to equip the poor in the church with life building skills. As Oppenheim and Harker (1996) had argued poverty takes away the tools with which to build one's life.

A major cause of poverty is unemployment. Unemployment in South Africa is very high. In the KwaZulu-Natal province alone, the level of unemployment was as high as 37 percent (Diakonia, 2001/2002:14). Directly related to unemployment is low wages or no income at all. This impacts very negatively on the well-being of the poor.

Poverty as Blackburn (1991) has noted, is also related to race. Black people are more prone to poverty than other races. In South Africa, 61 percent of Blacks, 38 percent of Coloured, 5 percent of Indians and 1 percent of Whites were deemed to be poor (Aliber, 2003: 475). Poverty is also related to gender. Females were more likely to be in poverty than their male counterparts (de Beer, 2000). Females' acquisitive freedom was greatly constrained in a world where important income yielding activities were pre-empted by the males. The predicament of the females was compounded if they were Blacks. The respondents in this study were all females. Many of them were single mothers with at least one child. Dependency on parents or grand parents was a common feature in the lives of these single mothers.

Family structure is another factor that impacts on the welfare of people. Households with many dependents are more likely to struggle than households with a fewer dependents as income would have to be stretched to meet household needs in the case of the former (Silburn, 1970). This study found that most of the respondents had dependents even when they had no jobs or any income yielding activity. Those that earned could not adequately provide for their dependents as their incomes were meagre.

Poverty was deepened by the defunct apartheid regime. The denial of opportunities (for example, to get education and access to market), and the dispossession of the largely black community of assets and means of production such as land and farm animals, produced poverty (May and Norton, 1997). The acquisition of means and assets is very vital to the liberation of the poor from poverty. Skills development

therefore becomes very crucial. The poor among the church need to acquire relevant skills needed to avail themselves of the opportunities in an increasingly globalizing economy. The skills development projects of the Empowerment Scheme provide poor members of the church the opportunity to acquire skills for sustainable livelihood. Completely rooting out the legacy of poverty left by oppression requires not only the development of physical skills but also empowering the poor by dismantling the mental or psychological framework inculcated by the ideology of apartheid. The church through its doctrines of equality of humankind and faith in God given ability of human spirit to triumph over obstacles has done a marvellous work in repositioning the poor to take their destiny in their own hands. Although these teachings do not encourage physical violence, they are indeed a liberation theology.

Latin American liberation theology emphasizes a shift “from a definition of charity as almsgiving to an advocacy of social justice through the empowerment of disadvantaged classes” (Swatos Jr. nd:1). It does appear that the orientation of the DCC as exemplified in the operations of the HOPE Foundation and HOPE Empowerment Scheme lays less emphasis on the Latin American liberation theology brand of advocacy. This might have been informed by the change in the political climate and the realization that there are other more peaceful ways of achieving the goal of reconstruction, as Bedford (1999:2), notes that “even if many of the questions posed by liberation theology are relevant, one cannot necessarily respond to them with identical answers or even necessarily apply the same method in obtaining those answers”.

5.3 Liberation Theology and Poverty Reduction

The doctrines of the church have been clear about the issues of oppression and poverty. The responsibility for the poor and underprivileged was entrusted to the rich as common ownership of property was not only encouraged but also practiced. The rich in the early church were encouraged to give for the benefit of their less privileged brethren until equality was attained (2 Corinthians 8:14-15). Although the practice of church commonwealth did not survive over the years, the church’s position has remained critical of oppressive and inhuman social, political and economic systems. The oppressive condition in which the poor of the Third World countries lived and the

suffering it engendered provoked a set of radical theologies referred to as contextual theologies of which the most prominent was the liberation theology.

The Catholic Church contributed immensely to the emergence of liberation theology. First, the Catholic Church was guilty of complicity in supporting oppressive regimes. For example, in the 15th century, Pope Alexander VI swapped the control of Latin American church with the Kings of Spain and Portugal for support for Papal political quests in Europe. Further more, the Catholic Church did not recognise American natives as “truly humans” until 1537 when Pope Paul III officially declared them so (Cloutier, 1987). Second, the earliest proponents of liberation theology were Catholic theologians. This reveals the ambivalence of religion in social, political and economic spheres. Specker (2005:5) notes that “religion and spirituality are powerful socio-cultural forces for motivation, inclusiveness, participation and sustainability”. However, it is open to instrumentalisation and misuse.

Liberation theology has been described as endeavours to apply the gospel to situations of poverty and oppression (South African Catholic Bishops’ Conference, nd). It arose out of the crisis of oppression and exploitation, and the consequent poverty of the Third World. The theology of liberation was a response to the social, political and economic exploitation of the people of the Third World countries, especially those of Latin America. It aimed at justifying to the oppressed that God was not the author of injustice and unequal social, political and economic orders, but the liberator, with the help of the oppressed, from all forms of encumbrances that held them captive. It sought to inspire the downtrodden to do something about their conditions (Tutu, 1979:163). Apartheid as a theology supported a system that institutionalised and thrived on psychological disempowerment of the majority of the Black population in South Africa. Liberation theology attempted to undo this by creating a new consciousness among the Black community, that they are no less human beings, and that they can achieve political as well as economic freedom if they can look inward and harness the resources within them. The teachings of the DCC particularly with reference to empowering the poor, inspires confidence and hope in a prosperous future attainable through the development of latent talents.

The theology of liberation as earlier examined was an attempt to justify revolutionary or even violent approaches to political, social and economic emancipation of the poor people of the Third World. Theologies were targeted at changing the situations of people by liberating them from whatever conditions that were presumed to shackle and put them in precariously disadvantageous positions. The primary purpose of Christian theology was the liberation of humankind from the shackles of sin, which damned their souls (Luke 1:71,74,75,77). This was the spiritual aspect of Christian theology. In addition to this, biblical justification had also been sought for the liberation of humankind from the chains of myriads of human-imposed shackles, be they political, social or economic. Liberation theology was one such attempt to make religion relevant to the reality of the believers' everyday living (Levine, nd. 1). It would not be illogical to suggest that present day church attempts to economically empower the members of its congregation, was an extension of liberation theology. As Bishop Tutu (1979:163) notes, liberation theology is an attempt to justify the grace of God and what people can achieve through it. This would be the same with the HOPE Empowerment Scheme.

Although this is a brand of liberation theology, it however, does not involve physical and violent revolutionary means to its ends but sees transformation as a spiritual change. Its approach is basically persuasive in this sense, change is achieved peacefully through the gospel of repentance to new life of righteousness or what is referred to as "being born again" This spiritual change in turn brings about a change in perception of oneself and one's abilities which set in motion activities aimed at changing one's situation. The HOPE Empowerment Scheme creates a similar community as the base Christian communities of Latin America where the poor met to study the Bible and apply it to their situations (Swatos, Jr, nd; Bedford, 1999; Cloutier 1987).

A key goal of the Empowerment Scheme of the DCC is to support the beneficiaries to own their business. This will give them control over the management as well as the profits. Recognising that poverty is both a psychological as well as an economic problem, the Scheme incorporated a theology of hope into its skills development programme.

5.4 HOPE Empowerment Scheme

The HOPE Empowerment Scheme emerged at a time when the poverty situation in South Africa was proving to be insurmountable. From 1993 to 2003, the proportion of South Africa's population living below poverty line remained at 50 per cent (UNDP, 2003: 70; Pillay, 2000:viii). The situation in KwaZulu-Natal was even worse as more than 50 per cent of the province's population were classified as poor (Diakonia, 2001/2002: 14). In Durban alone, it was estimated that 44 per cent of the population lived in poverty, of which 23 per cent were in extreme poverty (Diakonia, 2003). It should be noted here that this situation was not simply a product of only apartheid policies, but also of post-apartheid democratic policies. It was exacerbated by the retreat of the government from the provision of social services following the abandoning of the pro-poor RDP for a neo-liberal, market-oriented GEAR programme. In this situation, the church felt that it had a divine responsibility to bring about a positive change, especially for those who were disadvantaged. The HOPE Empowerment Scheme had a number of projects with which it sought to address the poverty question. These projects included skills development projects for domestic workers, job seekers at the training centre at Lamontville. A critical question raised by this study is: "Did these projects provide the capacity for the beneficiaries to exit poverty?"

5.5 Conceptual Foundation

Sen's theory of development as freedom provides a sound explanatory instrument to address this critical question posed above, that is, whether the HOPE Empowerment Scheme provided the capacity for its beneficiaries to escape poverty. The problem of poverty in South Africa is one that is, to a large extent, created by the previous apartheid regime (UNDP, 2003:71). The apartheid regime perpetrated a whole range of human injustices, particularly the discrimination against the majority of the African population. Such discrimination in terms of the right to quality education and employment denied the majority of the population the opportunities and capacity to earn a reasonable income, and to attain a decent and acceptable standard of living. Compounding this situation, the GEAR programme adopted by the current democratic government in response to the ongoing process of globalization has further denied the majority of the population, particularly those who had no skills, the opportunity to

earn a decent living. As Sen notes, what people can achieve is directly tied to economic opportunities, political liberties and social power, hence the removal of sources of “unfreedom” such as poverty, and the provision of “instrumental freedom” are vital for development to take place.

One important means of providing these necessary instrumental (economic, political and social) freedoms was by providing skills for sustainable livelihood and by providing social capital to enable those previously incapacitated to take their destiny in their own hands. While skills equipped them for employment, social capital linked them with requisite resources and opportunities that might not be easily available to them if they were not in a special relationship with some organisations or individuals. The HOPE Empowerment Scheme provided such social capital for its beneficiaries by linking them to projects that equipped them with skills for gainful employment and sustainable livelihoods.

5.6 Types of Skills Training offered by the Scheme

It is not enough to give an individual a piece of fish on a regular basis to survive. It is better to teach the individual how to fish so that he/she can become independent. This was the approach adopted by the church in recent times. Skills training offered by the Empowerment Scheme had been enumerated in chapter five. The most successful in terms of empowering the beneficiaries had been the training in textile work. Using its links to informal textile workers in the church, the scheme had trained some of its beneficiaries in the business of cloth making. The Scheme also had a training centre at Lamontville, which in addition to teaching other skills, had given more attention to training textile workers. Through these two methods the scheme has been able to train textile workers, some of whom were employed by their trainers while others were self-employed in their own businesses.

Although a number of skills were offered by the scheme, not many fields were covered. People who would have loved to be trained in skills other than the ones provided by the Scheme did not have the opportunity. This study showed that only females had shown an interest in the textile work. All the respondents in this study whether from the textile department or from other skills sections were females. Other

skills like welding, auto-mechanic, panel beating and bricklaying, which were perceived as masculine jobs were lacking in the scheme's portfolio. This was a limitation on the instrumental freedom, which the scheme was meant to provide. It could be related to a lack of social capital in these fields. If the church had no members who provided these services, it would be a little difficult to secure places where the scheme could send people to train in them. While being gender sensitive, the current projects had not been able to carry the male-folks along.

5.7 The Beneficiaries of the Scheme

Some of the beneficiaries of the scheme were people who had suffered directly or indirectly from job losses, which are a major consequence of the globalization process. Lack or loss of jobs was the major reason for their enrolment in the HOPE programme. Unemployment, no doubt, inflicted psychological and emotional bruises on them before their HOPE Empowerment encounter. The effects of the combination of unemployment being a material or economic condition, and psychological or emotional depression being a spiritual condition, cannot be overemphasised. It was most appropriate that the scheme tackled the poverty problem from these two sides by providing skills as well as counselling or preaching faith and confidence to the beneficiaries.

The beneficiaries of the scheme as pointed out above were predominantly females. They came from a wide variety of backgrounds. However, the racial scope of the beneficiaries was limited to Africans who were most affected by apartheid and also the most affected by poverty. There were no White or Indian beneficiaries. These two racial groups perhaps, might have enough instrumental freedom and social capital, and therefore, might not have any need for those provided by the scheme. Although there are poor and underprivileged among these groups, the proportions are very insignificant (Terreblanche, 2003:382).

The success of the beneficiaries in terms of establishing their own businesses was also related to the issue of instrumental freedom and social capital. This study found that the beneficiaries who had succeeded most were those who had one form of savings or another which they used as initial start up capital, or those that received support in

terms of finance or equipment from their immediate or extended families. Others who were intending to start their own businesses but did not have the finances were working in jobs from which they intended to raise the finances they needed to start their own businesses. The inability to provide financial support for the beneficiaries was another limitation of the scheme.

5.8 Impact of the Scheme

In an era when companies are laying off workers, especially those without skills, providing training that will help people to access job opportunities or to be self-employed would be a powerful instrument to reduce poverty. While benefiting a small group of highly skilled professionals, the process of globalization had left behind the vast majority of unskilled workers (Castells, 2000:259). The skills taught at the scheme's workshops and training centre enabled many of the beneficiaries to secure gainful employment both in the public and private sectors, as well as establishing their own businesses. It was evident that the incomes of the beneficiaries had improved significantly as a result of their training and empowerment by the scheme. This suggests that the scheme was actually removing the source of "unfreedom" and hence empowering its beneficiaries to earn incomes with which to provide themselves with basic needs like food and health services. Those who would have been condemned to chronic poverty had been given the opportunity to make a decent and sustainable living. The elimination of social exclusion was a logical outcome as they were able to participate in the economic life of their communities. The impact of the scheme is also felt by dependents and close relatives of the beneficiaries. Most importantly, the skills the beneficiaries acquired from the scheme are being passed unto their siblings and close relatives, thereby extending to and equipping them with these "instrumental freedom" (assets, skills, and means) that they might need in the future to attain "ultimate freedom" (well-being). In addition to skills training, they were also providing their dependents with other benefits such as the opportunities to get an education. Belonging to the beneficiaries' family had created the social capital they needed to access these skills.

The work of empowering the people was pursued from two equally important dimensions: the economic as well as the psychological. Apartheid did not only do

damage to the physical and economic faculties of the people. The foundation of apartheid's social, political and economic onslaught was intrinsically psychological. Both the oppressor and the oppressed were locked in a psychological quagmire where one group arrogated to themselves a genealogical superiority, while the other group was forced to accept the inferior categorization of their humanity. An individual's achievement was to a large extent related to how the person perceives him or herself. Hence, an inferiority complex could be damaging to an individual's ability to achieve goals. Breaking this psychological shackle, and effecting changes in the lives of the oppressed, was the first step in achieving the ultimate freedom. This was where the church had played a very magnificent role by espousing to the beneficiaries a theology of hope and liberation. The theology of apartheid was sanctioned with the Bible. The church also used the same Bible to enunciate a theology of liberation that sought to undo the injustices of apartheid. The belief that a section of the population was inferior was being jettisoned while the equality of all God's creations was expounded.

The HOPE Empowerment Scheme did not just give skills to the beneficiaries, but first pulled them out of the pit of despondency and resignation to servitude. This psychological freedom was believed to be the key to all other kinds of freedom. Although the DCC did not subscribe to transformation by violent revolution, elicited by Latin American Liberation Theology, its doctrines were by no means less effectual in re-orienting the beneficiaries to have new and positive perception of themselves. It was a theology of liberation with a peaceful spiritual awakening. All the respondents in this study confessed to having been imbued with confidence by the change in their perception of themselves and the abilities with which God had freely endowed them. It was evident that the self-esteem of the respondents was restored and they could re-echo the proclamation of a beneficiary of another Christian empowerment scheme, "my life has changed. I know now that I am not useless. I have dignity and a sense of belonging" (Diakonia, 2004:1). The beneficiaries could now confidently, as Bishop Tutu (1979:168) said, look the other guy in the eye without being ashamed of his humanity. Armed with such new understanding of their humanity, they could face life with confidence and venture into areas that they were afraid of in the past. So one can reasonably affirm that:

- People had benefited from the HOPE Empowerment Scheme.

- The HOPE Empowerment Scheme succeeded in meeting its objective of reducing poverty.
- It improved the incomes and well-being of its beneficiaries.
- It provided and strengthened instrumental freedom and social capital needed by the beneficiaries to exit poverty.
- The scheme conformed to the general objective of Liberation Theology, which is to liberate the downtrodden from oppression and poverty.

Another critical question that was given attention was that of the sustainability of the scheme's projects.

5.9 Sustainability of Scheme's Projects

Are the projects of the scheme sustainable? This question became relevant as uncompetitive textile companies were closing down and laying off their workers as a result of competition from foreign companies. The scheme relied to a large extent on these companies to absorb the workers that it sent to them. As Pastor Laurent stated, the scheme depended on companies that were managed by Christians to provide jobs for their beneficiaries. As long as there were companies to absorb the job seekers that the scheme trained, the projects would be sustainable. Hence, the survival of these companies was important for the sustainability of the scheme's projects. Sustainability of the scheme depended also on the expansion of the scope of social capital available to it. The scheme provided social capital for its beneficiaries but did not seem to enjoy enough social capital itself. It was palpable that the scheme lacked the connection to some beneficial network from which it could tap resources in times of need. For example, there was a weak collaboration with other organisations in the field of development with which to share ideas and expertise. For example, there did not seem to be any reasonable collaborative relationship with Diakonia, which was an umbrella organization of many churches in South Africa.

However, the structure of the scheme was such that it could sustain itself if the relevant lines of communication were kept open between the scheme and its successful beneficiaries. The beneficiaries that had established their own businesses could become important assets to the scheme in training new beneficiaries, who would

in turn train others. If jobs were created by these new entrepreneurs, priority should be given to people sent in by the scheme. The training centre possessed the potential to survive for a long time. The large scale production of household products like scouring powder and floor polish as well as textile materials could go a long way to sustain the centre. However, a key issue was if a market could be found for the goods, considering the competition from foreign goods, which were cheaper.

5.10 Problems

One big challenge that faced the scheme was the lack of finances to execute its projects. Skills training without financial support produced limited results. It was akin to teaching an individual how to fish without giving the individual a tool with which to fish. What good would it do? The Bible said that faith without work is dead (James, 2:14-17). Preaching a theology of hope and freedom from poverty without providing the requisite material means to realise the freedom would not go far in solving the problems of poor. Despite the persuasive theology of the church, the hope of the beneficiaries would dampen if they were not fully established in their businesses and had to depend on wage employment that did not pay sufficiently. Their liberation would be compromised.

Another challenge to be addressed was the issue of exclusion. Social capital, as Harris (2002:10) noted has its own dark side. This is because what constituted social capital to a group of people might become social exclusion to another. This study had shown that there were different levels of exclusion within the scheme. There was exclusion involving non-Christians on one level, and exclusion involving Christians on the other. Non-Christians were not in position to know about the scheme, or benefit from it. Primarily, the scheme was targeted at members of the church, although non-church members of other denominations had benefited from it. Exclusion involving Christians arose due to the areas of skills covered by the scheme, the manner of publicising the scheme and the geographic areas covered. As a result of the limited skills taught by the scheme, some people were already excluded from the programme as their own areas of interest might not have been covered. Geographically, the area covered by the scheme is grossly limited. The scheme's activities are concentrated in the Durban metropolitan area, thereby eliminating those in the rural areas. Furthermore, the

methods of advertising the scheme did not give an opportunity to a wider population to participate in its projects. Selection of the beneficiaries in the case of the training centre was biased in favour of those who had a close connection to the managers.

5.11 Recommendations

The primary purpose of skills training was to make the beneficiaries self reliant by becoming self-employed. With fewer jobs in the market, training them just to go looking for jobs elsewhere would not help to realize the goals of the scheme. Hence, every effort should be made to equip them to be self-employed rather than to look for jobs elsewhere. While it was true that not every one of them would possess the ability to run their businesses, all of them desired to work to make a living. Those who were not capable of running their own businesses should be joined with others who could be in a partnership. In this way, they could put their labour to fruitful use.

The scheme should broaden the scope of the skills that were taught in the training centre. This would give opportunities to those who are talented or interested in other fields than textile work to benefit from the scheme. Other skills like carpentry, auto mechanic, panel beating, electrical/electronic repair, catering, etc, should be included in the curriculum of the training centre. Opening workshops or restaurants where these beneficiaries could train would not only give them first hand experience, but also yield revenue for the scheme as services rendered by them would be paid for by the patronising public.

In order to achieve this, the scheme should liase with institutions of higher learning such as technikons to draw on other expertise for training the beneficiaries. Students from these institutions could do their internship at the training centre. This would reduce the cost of hiring professionals while at the same time drawing from the expertise of the wider society.

Training should be accredited by the relevant government agencies. This would help those who might not want to start their own businesses, to look for jobs elsewhere. With certificates obtained from the training centre, the beneficiaries could seek employment elsewhere.

Markets should be sourced for the products of the beneficiaries. Periodic exhibitions should be organised in this regard. The scheme could organise fairs where the products of the beneficiaries could be displayed for the public. This would serve to not only advertise the beneficiaries but also the activities of the scheme. Special church occasions, like harvest and retreats, should make space for the display of the products of the beneficiaries. In addition, the church newsletters, which were distributed every Sunday could become a very powerful publicity/advertisement instrument for such products.

Those that were trained require access to finance in order to establish their businesses. Support facilities, including access to finance, should be made available to them. The Scheme could arrange with financial institutions or government agencies to provide credit for the beneficiaries. The Scheme should enter a contract where loan facilities would be made available to them to start their businesses, while they in return, in addition to paying off the loan in instalments, will employ and train other people from the scheme.

Whereas it was a good idea to establish empowerment centres in as many communities as possible, it would be more expedient to adequately staff and equip a central training centre. This would reduce the cost of running the scheme by cutting down duplication of poorly equipped centres and staff, and also lead to a high standard of excellence and quality of products by concentrating equipment and staff in a central place. It would also be easier to start other centres as the scheme expands. Beneficiaries of the scheme could then be used to start similar training centres in their various communities of origin.

There should be a streamlining of the skills in which an individual beneficiary should be trained. This would engender specialization. For example, those who are talented in and want to be trained in tailoring should specialize in that. In the same vein, those who want to do upholstery related textile work should specialize in it. Training everybody in all the skills would make them jacks of all trade without making them masters of any.

The Scheme should be made independent while retaining the financial sponsorship of the church. One way of doing this would be to move the training centre from the church building in which it was located to a place where it would be exclusively used as a training centre. This would not only provide space for packing materials and equipment used in the training centre, it would also reduce the church-skewed image of the scheme, thereby making it a little easier for people of other faiths to participate.

One of the reasons cited by some of the respondents for leaving their previous employment was the short-term contract nature of the jobs, which resulted in insecurity. To avoid this, those who were placed in jobs of any sort should be helped to secure written contracts from their employers, which would state in clear terms the duration of the job and compensation due to them in the case of termination. The legal arm of the Foundation should play an important role in this regard.

The beneficiaries should be encouraged to organise themselves in unions according to their various business lines and to be part of already existing trade unions. This would help them to speak with one voice in terms of collective bargaining and to access and benefit from any public policy and facility that may be available to them.

The social capital available to the scheme should be broadened by embracing other organizations and individuals that could be assets to the scheme. Members of the church who hold decision making positions at various organizations and businesses like banks should be brought into the board of the scheme. This might attract sponsorship from such organisations.

Finally, the management of the scheme should be handled by a team that is solely committed to the scheme and not church administrators who already had their hands full with theological activities. The HOPE Clinic was operating effectively because it was being managed by professionals, some of whom had no other jobs than the clinic work.

5.12 Conclusion

This thesis had discussed the role of the Durban Christian Centre Church in the reduction of poverty in KwaZulu-Natal in an era of globalization. Globalization and the attendant liberalization, commercialisation, privatisation of state owned corporations, reduction of state subsidies and social welfare, coupled with huge unemployment as local firms shed off labour or close shop completely in response to global competition, had contributed to an increasing proportion of the population being caught in the web of poverty. The church as an institution that brings succour to the people more than at any other time had a role to play in addressing the question of poverty.

Right from its inception, the Christian faith had taken on issues of poverty, oppression and inequality. The Christian theology of spiritual liberation from sin and damnation had in recent years been reinterpreted to include political and economic liberation. This has in various ways shaped the response of the church to the problem of poverty. Firstly, as a collective, this theology determined the decision to act in favour of poverty reduction. Biblical teaching on poverty had been to encourage those who had to give for the benefit of those who did not have until there was equality among the believers.

Secondly, it made the individual to believe in him/herself as a true and complete image of God without any diminished or sub-human faculties. It drew the attention of the believers to the wealth of spiritual or psychological resources with which God has endowed them, and stirred up confidence in their ability to change their circumstances for the better. It was in these areas that the theology of liberation had provided key interpretations of the bible. In South Africa, liberation theology which made a very strong impact in the 1980s focused more on these two elements and the emancipation of oppressed black people from the shackles of apartheid.

In the current era of globalization which had exacerbated the problem of poverty, the Christian faith in South Africa had witnessed a shift in its poverty fighting strategy from just short term charity and pastoral exhortation to "be your brother's keeper" to well orchestrated long term arrangements to reduce poverty in the society. The Durban

Christian Centre through its HOPE Foundation was reaching out to the poor in KwaZulu-Natal province. The HOPE Empowerment Scheme as one of the many arms of the foundation was focused on empowering the poor members of the church with skills that could equip them to make a living.

This study showed that the scheme was making a modest impact. It showed that there was an increase in the minimum monthly incomes of the beneficiaries after their involvement in the scheme. Poverty was not just only about income, it transcended other factors like a sense of well-being, power, satisfaction with life, control over one's life or destiny, and independence. It therefore requires a holistic (material as well as psychological) solution. It was in these areas that the impact of the scheme had been most significant. By incorporating a religious dimension into the scheme's projects which had focused on the spiritual and emotional needs of the beneficiaries, their self esteem was restored, thereby raising their confidence to face the future.

The success recorded by the scheme could be increased if adequate planning and funding were made available. In addition to making more funds available to the Scheme, the management of the Scheme should take a business approach. Markets should be found for the products of the Scheme and a reliable data base should be developed in terms of the beneficiaries of the Scheme.

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Appendix 1

Table of Respondents' Profiles

Respondent	DCC member	Sex	Age	Education	Marital status	Prev. work	Current work	Prev. income (Rand)	Current income	In dependent	Num. of dependents	Own business
1	Yes	F	21	IT Cert	Single	No	yes	0	1,100	Yes	0	No
2	Yes	F	26	Diploma	Single	Yes	Yes	3,200	1,200	Yes	0	No
3	Yes	F	24	Btech	Single	Yes	Yes	1,200	3,500	Yes	1	Yes*
4	Yes	F	39	Matric	Single	Yes	Yes	800	2,000	Yes	7	Yes
5	Yes	F	30	Matric	Single	Yes	Yes	1,00	2,500	Yes	4	Yes
6	Yes	F	25	Matric	Single	Yes	Yes	1,000	2,500	Yes	2	Yes*
7	No	F	18	Matric	Single	No	Yes	0	1,000	No	0	No
8	No	F	17	Schooling(11)	Single	No	No	0	0	No	0	No
9	Yes	F	30	Diploma	Single	No	No	0	0	No	2	No
10	Yes	F	20	Grade10	Single	Yes	No	500	0	Yes	2	No
11	No	F	22	Grade10	Single	Yes	No	160	0	No	1	No
12	Yes	F	28	Grade10	Single	Yes	No	900	0	No	1	No
13	No	F	31	Grade9	Married	Yes	No	800	0	No	2	No
14	No	F	25	Diploma	Married	Yes	No	1,100	0	No	1	No
15	Yes	F	Adult	N/A	Married	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

* Do private jobs in addition to their paid employment.

Appendix 2

Interview Questions for the Managers of HOPE Programme.

1. Name:
2. Position:

The Concept of HOPE

3. What is the idea behind the HOPE Foundation?
4. Why did the church get involved in this programme? Is it influenced by biblical principles?
5. Is the HOPE programme an integral ministry of the church or is it independent?
6. Are the managers of this programme church members only or do they include non-church people?
7. Are the participants drawn from the church alone or are non-church members welcomed to participate?
8. How has the church promoted this project in terms of encouraging participation?
9. Is there any focus in this programme on the spiritual and emotional needs of the people?
10. Are the participants/beneficiaries encouraged to become part of the church?
11. How has this affected participation?
12. Comment more on HOPE Empowerment Scheme
13. How long do these empowerment process last?
14. Do you equip them for formal or informal employment, self or wage employment?
15. What skills are they trained in?
16. So far how many people have gone through your empowerment project?
17. How many of them have been placed in jobs?
18. How many of them are self employed?
19. How many are capable of training/employing other people?
20. How do you monitor their progress after training them?
21. What other support do you give them to ensure that they are fully established?
22. How do you cover the rural areas?
23. What plan for expansion in the future do you have?
24. Is the church involved in leadership training within the programme?

25. Are there any plans to plant churches within the communities involved? If yes, what discipleship processes are taking place?
26. How do you get funding for your programme?
27. How do you relate, in terms of partnership with other organisations/churches with similar vision?
28. Are you working in concert with the government and how?
29. How can you assess your programme so far?
30. So far how much success have you recorded in terms of your set goals?
31. In what areas have you failed?
32. In what ways do you think that your performance could be improved?

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Appendix 3

Interview Questions for Beneficiaries of HOPE.

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Sex:
4. Educational Attainment:
5. Family size

Work Experience

6. Have you worked before?
7. Place of work:
8. What kind of job (self or wage employment):
9. Income:
10. Why did you stop work?

After HOPE

11. How did you become involved in the HOPE programme?
12. Is the fact that this is a church based initiative of any significance for you?
13. Have you participated in this type of programme before?
14. In what ways is the HOPE programme different?
15. Has there been any focus on your emotional or spiritual needs?
16. What kind of skill training did you receive at HOPE?
17. How long have you worked after HOPE?
18. What kind of job (self or wage employment)
19. How is HOPE training helping you in your new work?
20. How much do you earn now?
21. Do you think that you are better off now than before?
22. How do you as a person? Powerless; inferior; dissatisfied with life; Equal to tasks; Satisfied with life.
23. Do you think that you are able to buy things you could not before?
24. What food item do you normally eat now which you were not able to eat before?
25. How many apprentices can you train or employ?

Problems

26. In what areas do you think that the empowerment project has succeeded?
27. In what areas did it fail?
28. What are the problems you face in your new work?
29. What can HOPE do to help solve the problem?

