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POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN THE RURAL AREAS OF KUNENE REGION IN
NAMIBIA: THE ROLE OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN
NAMIBIA (ELCIN)

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CBO	Community Basic Organization
COVID 19	The disease arising from SARS-CoV2
ELCIN	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
ELOC	Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo Kavango Church
EU	European Union
FELM	Finish Evangelical Lutheran Church Mission
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immune Virus
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	Information Technology
IPC	Integrated Phase Classification
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MDSS	Mission Diakonia and Social Services
MPD	Macroeconomic Planning Department
NDP5	Namibia Development Plan
NEPRU	Namibia Economic Policy Research Unit
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NSA	Namibia Statistic Agency

PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
SDFN	Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia
SDGS	Sustainable Development Goals
SEACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
US	United States
USA	United States of America
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WCC	World Council of Churches
WD	Western Diocese
YPLL	Years of Potential Life Lost

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When the church works among the poor, society has no other way to face and deal with poverty. In most cases poverty is caused by higher unemployment specific in the Kunene region. As the Namibian newspaper reported: “Unemployment is highly concentrated in Kunene and Zambezi regions, where joblessness was recorded at 62,8% and 58,3% respectively.”¹ In addition, Päivi Löytty and Sakari Löytty find through their research that “There are poor further training and education possibilities available, lack of jobs and lot of unemployment.”² A community under poverty cannot grow because of the following aspects: injustice, inequality, illiteracy, unemployment, high crime rates, abuse of alcoholism, abuse of power, diseases like Corona and HIV and AIDS, and mismanagement of resources. Some of these factors are challenges that confront the community of the Kaokoland/Kunene region. Therefore, this study will concentrate on how the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) can alleviate poverty among the people of the Kunene region where the church acts among that community. My main task and the core of this study focuses on reducing poverty in the Kunene region. I know

¹ Sakeus Iikela, Namibian “The Namibian” *Windhoek*, March 26, 2018, 11.
<https://www.namibian.com.na/175818/archive-read/Unemployment-inequality-on-the-rise>

² Päivi Löytty and Sakari Löytty, *Research on Mission, Diakonia and Social Services in ELCIN Western Diocese: The Past, the Present and the Future Opportunities in Holistic Mission* (Ongwediva: n.p., 2017), 28.

that there many things which cause poverty in the Kunene region, and I will touch on causes, but my focus is on alleviating poverty in the Kunene Region.

Thirty years ago, Namibia became independent from the South Africa colonial apartheid administration. Unfortunately, we still have some communities, specifically the Kaokoland/Kunene region, that live in crises of poverty. Therefore, the ELCIN is in the position to challenge poverty in the area. In doing so, the ELCIN needs proper strategies on how she can address the challenge of poverty in the region. That is why this study will try to suggest ways that the ELCIN can accomplish her goal in this regard.

1.1 Research Question

The main aim of the research is to help the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia to find an answer to the following question: *How might the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia find a permanent solution to alleviate poverty in the rural areas of the Kunene region?*

The Evangelical Lutheran Church can only respond well to the question above when she organizes herself well. I believe that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia needs to do the following things:

1. She needs expertise in the office of the department of Mission, Diakonia, and Social Services (MDSS) in the ELCIN Western Diocese;
2. ELCIN Western Diocese needs to engage national and international nongovernmental organizations for collaboration and partnership in eradicating poverty in the Kunene region;

3. By the grace of God, Organizations like World Vision can help in funding clean water and literacy projects;
4. The church should plan regular capacity-building workshops for her field workers in the Kunene region in order to empower them;
5. The ELCIN needs to establish or evaluate her monitoring and evaluation tools for projects in the area.
6. The church should establish or strengthen the proper relationship between her, nongovernmental and the Namibian government in the matter of alleviating poverty in the Kunene region.

If the church implements what I suggest here, by the grace of God, improvement will be reached in the Kunene, especially in the rural areas. I will say more about the points I list above in chapter six.

1.2 Problem Statement

I believe that the economy of the country can only grow when the country has educated people. Education is essential to accomplish almost anything, even in the issue of alleviating poverty. Dean, Schaffner and Smith in their book *Attacking Poverty in the Developing World: Christian Practitioners and Academics in Collaboration* said "Literacy is of great importance to individuals, and high literacy rates are of great importance to countries seeking to develop. But a large fraction of the world's population

remains illiterate.”³ That is a real issue in Namibia, since “Namibia has a problem of Literacy and lack of capacity.”⁴

Of course study is necessary to discover the root causes of poverty among the people of the Kunene region. However, as I indicated before, a high rate of the population in the Kunene region is illiterate. How can they overcome the problems facing them without capacity from education? Being uneducated is one of the significant issues facing the people in the Kunene region. If there is a lack of education among people, you cannot expect economic growth. Education increases the productive capacity of the population. This makes educated people more attractive as workers and thereby increases their employment prospects and the wages they can earn due to their higher productivity. It also encourages entrepreneurship, which is essential to increase the economic base of the economy. By improving productivity and entrepreneurship, the economy becomes internationally stronger and contributes to economic growth.”⁵ That means countries are developing through their educated people. Educated people are needed in the Kunene region. This is a real problem facing the Kunene region as well as Namibia as a whole. The ELCIN cannot allow the situation to continue like this, and something should be done. I know that poverty is growing drastically in the Kunene region every day, and the church requests action as soon as possible. What I observed is also confirmed by Löytty

³ Judith M. Dean, Julie Schaffner, and Stephen L. S. Smith, *Attacking Poverty in the Developing World: Christin Practitioners and Academics in Collaboration* (Waynesbore: Authentic Media, 2005), 129.

⁴ National Planning Commission, *Poverty Reduction Strategy for Namibia, Cabinet Decision 34th /01.12.97/002*, www.npc.gov.na, 7, accessed July 13, 2020.

⁵ National Planning Commission, *The Root Causes of Poverty*, Google, accessed August 7, 2020, 34. URL: <https://www.npc.gov.na/download/pbriefs/rootcauses.pdf>

and Löytty through their mini-research, which they conducted as they wrote that, “The Kunene region as a whole is one of the poorest areas in Namibia.”⁶

The current government inherited the problems created by the colonial state. The previous government divided the country into homelands. Fabrilus notes: “Today’s communal areas are former homelands created by the old South African apartheid system under which Namibia was ruled.”⁷ That means the current government has inherited these problems from the previous colonial government.

The church can render service to people in any society. This can also apply in the context of the Kunene region. The real church is always suffering together with the people, especially on the side of oppressed. Bevans and Schroeder note that “the church is called to be with the poor through an option of both solidarity and praxis, what has come to be called the ‘preferential option for the poor.’”⁸ On that issue, Newbiggin cites that “[t]he church, if it is truly the church of God, can be on one side only.”⁹ During the apartheid era in Africa, the church stood together with the people. Tutu describes what happened to the community at Bakwenena as their houses, clinic, school, and other properties were destroyed: “There were some of the indomitable women of Black Sash-white women with the courage to stand for justice; many of the members of my staff at the South Africa of churches were there; Alan Boesak of World Congress of Reformed

⁶ Löytty and Löytty, *Research on Mission*, 28.

⁷ Christo Fabrilus and Eddie Kouch, *Rights, Resources and Rural Development: Community-Based Natural Resource Management in Southern Africa* (Sterling: Earthscan Publication LTD, 2004), 149.

⁸ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 372.

⁹ Lesslie Newbiggin, *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 108.

Churches and members of the United Democratic Front stood with us.”¹⁰ Jesus warned the church leaders through his teaching that he is the Good Shepherd. Jesus wants them to stand with the sheep (people) when they face the time of crisis. Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). He stood for his people during his crucifixion until his death. The real church is expected to do the same.

In response to the need of the people in the Kunene Region, the church needs to focus on the following aspects holistically: spirituality, the daily needs of the people, and education. Wherever the church appears, her priority is to take care of the spirituality of the people. That is what is called New Being, as Tillich says: “If we call the churches or any particular church a community of faith, we say that, according to its intention, it is founded on the New Being in Jesus as the Christ or that its dynamic essence is the Spiritual Community.”¹¹ These are vital areas the church should always focus on. But you cannot preach to hungry people, because they will not listen to you. That’s why the church should respond to the needs of people holistically. I know many challenges are facing the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia in doing her mission: inadequate resources, lack of manpower, and lack of teamwork. These challenges can happen in any organization, and the church is not exempted from them.

¹⁰ Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu, *Made for Goodness and Why This Make All the Difference: This Book Is a Great Gift to the World* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010), 99-100.

¹¹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Life and the Spirit History and the Kingdom of God* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 173.

Wherever you find a society living under poverty, injustice is also there. It is the task of the Evangelical Lutheran Church to tackle injustice facing the Kunene region. When the government or the church donates any kind of assistance to the people in need, those entrusted to distribute others have not been doing this faithfully. Instead, they engage in favoritism, nepotism, and so on. Lack of justice is noted in different communities in Namibia, although in this paper, I will be focusing on poverty in the Kunene Region. Because of injustice, our people suffer from poverty, diseases, unemployment, and hunger. Adebayo, Adesna and Olaniyi write that “Besides, such people have fundamentally very little opportunity to change their condition of social existence.”¹² Gender inequality is also a contributing factor in poverty in the Kunene region as Fuller says “Family poverty, unequal gender roles that reproduce harsh and denigrating lives for many women and children, and poor schools that seem immune to the state’s attempts to boost quality and effectiveness.”¹³

The church also needs to tackle these problems because the church is the voice of the voiceless. The church needs to speak out about these problems so that everyone can share in God’s divinely ordained abundance. Boesak says, “The church must discover that oppressed people are not merely unconnected individuals but a class.”¹⁴ That means

¹² Akanmu G. Adebayo, Olutayo C. Adesna, and Rasheed O. Olaniyi, *Marginality and Crisis: Globalization and Identity in Contemporary Africa* (Maryland: Levingston Books, 2010), 120.

¹³ Bruce Fuller, *Governments Confronts Culture: The Struggle for Local Democracy in Southern Africa* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1999), xii.

¹⁴ Allan Aubrey Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence: A Socio-Ethical Study on Black Theology and Power* (New York: Orbis Books, 1974), 147.

the church needs to speak up on behalf of the oppressed, including those oppressed by poverty. This is the duty of the church to raise the prophetic voice even in this issue.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main aim and core of this study is to find ways in which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia can be victorious in her attempts at alleviating poverty among the people in the Kunene Region. In chapter six, this study will also show the church where she has failed in her previous efforts to alleviate poverty among the people in a rural area in the region.

Additionally, the purpose of this research is to focus on the contributions that the church can make to alleviate poverty on the local community level. That can be done through the following ways: (a) Equip missionaries/ workers in the fields with necessary skills. (b) Each congregation can ask to contribute an amount of money per year for the people of Kunene in need. (c) The church can engage the Ministry of Education and Culture to get support from the government in the matter of literacy and primary education in the region. (d) It will be good if the church leadership engages the Anti-Corruption Commission, especially in the Department of Education, to facilitate workshops for the church leaders, including field mission workers.

I decided to concentrate on the Kunene region to narrow my focus, and to highlight where the ELCIN can help. She is already looking at what sustainable and viable poverty alleviation strategies could serve as a way of benefiting the rural community. Therefore, this thesis will examine what kind of projects can be established for the local community, for example, (i) Sustainable Livelihood Projects, (ii) Harnessing Community Capitals for Livelihood, (iii) Livelihoods Basic Service Social Protection,

Literacy Projects, and Clean Water Projects. I have faith in God's good promises, which leads me to believe that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia has an excellent opportunity and mandate to win the battle to alleviate poverty among poor people in the region. ELCIN needs expert people in developing projects to help the church show she can establish new projects and strengthen those already in existence for people in the Kunene region.

The poor also lack protection from dishonesty. The church has a concern because, in the past, she observed such evils made by some those who had given a task to serve the poor. All people who deal with humanitarian assistance and aid to the poor need to attend training so that they can do their work correctly. After the training, the church should dismiss all workers who are involved in any corrupt activities if there is clear evidence of such. All those involved in corruption should be prosecuted like other criminals. ELCIN should stop tolerating evil work among her workers. This can help remaining workers fear being involved with corruption. The church needs justice and transparency in every activity that takes place in the Kunene region, especially in the issue of humanitarian assistance among people. The results of the absenteeism of the rule of law, or fraud in law enforcement, fall most severely on the poor.¹⁵

1.4. Literature Review

Thomas James Solomon, in his study, argues that “. . . literature search helps to identify key people, key researchers, and their published work and texts which are

¹⁵ Dean, Schaffner, and Smith, *Attacking Poverty in the Developing World*, 5.

relevant to the research topic.”¹⁶ Because of that, this research will be enriched by different views from different writers on the point of alleviating poverty. Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, in their book titled *When Helping Hurts*, outline different countries’ definitions of poverty. One of the interviewees from Moldova makes me amazed when they explain the situation of poverty: “For a poor person everything is terrible illness, humiliation, shame. We are cripples; we are afraid of everything; we depend on everyone. No one needs us. We are like garbage that everyone wants to get rid of.”¹⁷ It makes someone feel pity to hear a fellow human being responding like that. It is likely, that people living in poverty in the Kunene region, if you ask them the same question, will give you the same answer.

This chapter will review scholarship about the role of the church in alleviating poverty in the community. I will do this in light of the message from the book of the prophet Micah 6:8. In this verse, the prophet reminds us of what God requires from us. According to the prophet Micah, God expects us to do three things: “. . . to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with God” (6:8). Martin Luther, in the Small Catechism in his explanation about the *Gospel*, says, “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him” (1 John 4:6).¹⁸ Luther showed us how God loves us equally, rich or

¹⁶ Thomas James Solomons, *Exploring the Role of the Church in Economic Development: Literature Review* (Cape Town: University of Stellenbosch, 2012), 12.

¹⁷ Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), 50.

¹⁸ Martin Luther, *Small Catechism: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), 43.

poor. If we are not doing justice to each other God's judgment is waiting for us. We will stand before the throne of one who is appointed by Him, waiting for the final sentence.

Through this verse, I understood that we could not separate love and justice.

Where we find people enjoying justice, love is also there. Where there is no love, there is no justice at all. Through the prophet Micah, God asks us to love our neighbor and do justice to each other. I think it would be wise enough if we ask ourselves these questions: Are we doing enough justice to our fellow human beings? Do we love other people? Love for our fellow human beings is a requirement we need to fulfill without any compromise. Jesus stated the same in the great commandment when he said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:39).

I understand that these two questions through the literature review will get answers. The evangelist Luke said: "For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising from the dead" (Acts 17:31). To me, this tells me that God is a just judge whom we cannot compare with judges in this world. Paul confirms this by saying, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom 14:12). The church can only manage to eradicate poverty in the community of the Kunene region when there is justice and love among the church members and people in the Kunene region.

The content that appeared in the mini-thesis conducted by the officers from the office of Mission, Deaconia, Social Services in ELCIN Western Dioceses in the Kunene region in 2017 is applicable here. In their research, Löytty and Löytty find that "At many locations of Kunene region people do not have access to public services, school

attendance is low and illiteracy percentage is high.”¹⁹ Poverty is a threat to the people in the region as Löytty and Löytty argue that “Living conditions are poor and sanitation facilities are lacking.”²⁰ Such a situation touches the healthy life of the people of the Kunene region.

Perhaps another particularly pertinent study of this kind is Kasera, in his book *The Biblical and Theological Examination of Prosperity Theology* he stressed that “With Scripture commanding us to be concerned for the poor, the issue is not whether there is evidence of concern; instead, we need to ask what actions we need to take to deal with the reality of poverty.”²¹ One of the aims of this research is to find ways that can help the church to assist victims of poverty in the Kunene Region.

Dean, Schaffner and Smith, in their book called *Attacking Poverty in the Developing World*, write, “A recent demographic survey found 12 countries where more than half the 15 to 19-year-olds in the poorest 40 percent of households had no formal education at all.”²² These young, according to the years indicated above, are the people expected to lead the countries, but if we are not taking care of them, then our dream will not be a reality.

South African Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu stated that “We and all creation are the creatures of love. We are made by love, we are marked by love, and we

¹⁹ Löytty and Löytty, *Research on Mission*, 28.

²⁰ Löytty and Löytty, 28.

²¹ Basilius Kasera, *The Biblical and Theological Examination of Prosperity Theology* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand GmbH, 2012), 28.

²² Judith M. Dean, Julie Schaffner, and Stephen L. S. Smith, *Attacking Poverty in the Developing World: Christin Practitioners and Academics in Collaboration* (Waynesbore: Authentic Media, 2005), 255.

are made for love.”²³ Tutu makes the point that we are the product of love. That means if there was no love from God, then we cannot be here today, but only God’s love made all things possible, even those deemed impossible. One of the requirements God required from us, according to Micah 6:8, is love, to which Tutu also speaks.

I am pleased with how Kenyan professor and theologian John Mbiti articulated: “The less fortunate he illustrates with the orphans and widows as examples of all those who suffer distress, those most liable to the miseries of want and insecurity, those without protection, those who are in danger of exploitation and ill-treatment (cf. Mk. 12 v. 43).”²⁴ The widow gave a good example although she was weak, she gave what she had with an open heart while the rich people have difficulty opening hands to provide so that poor can benefit from what they offered. Yes, I believe that the poor are with us forever, but we need to help them so that they can also be able to have daily bread on their tables.

In his book *Religion and Society: A Namibian Perspective*, Namibian Professor John Paul Isaak argues that “To put it differently, having been made righteous by Christ, we became ‘a Christ’ towards the neighbor by enabling the poor to have their daily bread.”²⁵ All Christians are called to do that. Take care for our neighbors is a responsibility for all of us. The book *History of the Church in Namibia*, published by ELCIN Presiding bishop Shekutaamba, who is a scholar and graduated from Luther

²³ Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1997), 60

²⁴ John S. Mbiti, *African and Asian Contributions to Contemporary Theology: Report for Consultation Held at the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute Bossey* (Celigny: World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute, 1976), 84.

²⁵ Paul John Isaak, *Religion and Society: A Namibian Perspectives* (Western Cape: National Book Printers, 1997), 97.

Seminary with a Ph.D. in 2000, argues that although there is a challenge of poverty in the Kaokoland/Kunene area, the ELCIN is committed to doing her mission with the hope that in the future, she will establish more congregations.²⁶ That means when congregations are planted, the will of God will be preached there that require all people to do what is right. When people hear the word of God and accept it, then those believers will not commit evil acts because they know God's will and the work of corruption can be minimizing. In establishing congregations, that means the ELCIN is responding to the needs of the people spiritually and physically.

In the next chapter, I will be concentrating on issues that happened in the past in Namibia, injustice which causes poverty among our people. We will hear in the following chapters historical background and how injustice has happened in Namibia.

This thesis will be organized in the following way. Chapter two will focus on Historical background and injustice in Namibia. The reader will hear what happened in Namibia in the past, which is the cause of poverty in the country. Chapter Three will address the rate of poverty in the Kunene region and how poverty affects the community. Chapter Four analyzes what the Bible tells us about poverty. Chapter five will address how the theologians say about economic poverty in the African Continent. Chapter Six will deal with the methods ELCIN can use in combating poverty and all that she can do in the Kunene region. The words of the conclusion will also appear in this chapter.

²⁶ Shekutaamba Nambala, *History of The Church in Namibia* (n.c.: Lutheran Quality Books, 1994), 88.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND INJUSTICE IN NAMIBIA

In this chapter, I will say more about the historical background and injustice in Namibia instead of focusing on the history of the exact of the Kunene region. Once, the Namibian first President Sem Nuyoma and the father of the Namibian nation “. . . describing his three-month-old republic as one of the world’s poorest nations, appealed to President Bush . . . for increased American aid and invited U.S. private investment in Agriculture, health and housing project.”¹ The question here is why Namibia became the world’s poorest nation. Without hesitation, I can say injustice happened both before independence and post-independence. I will say more about how colonization was started in Namibia by the Germans and ended in South Africa's rule. Through the historical background of the colonization of Namibia, we can understand why we have a high rate of poverty in the cities and remote areas in Namibia. I have confidence that if people know this historical background, they are more able to develop their land as they participate in the development of their country. We know that the future is always rooted in the past.

The war which erupted between Germany and the Herero, Namas and Ndonga from 1904-1908 left many inhabitants dead. McKittrick confirms this war: “From 1904-

¹ Norman Kempster, *Los Angeles Times: Pleading Poverty, Namibia Leader Asks Bush for Help*, accessed on 07/12/2020, [latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-06-29-mn-223-story.html](https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-06-29-mn-223-story.html).

1907, Herero and Nama fought a war with the Germans South West Africa while the eastern Ndonga king briefly attacked the German fort at Namutoni, Ondonga's southern border is a show of support."² The violence, injustice and brutal activity in which oppressors and colonizers committed to capturing the land damaged the life of Namibian inhabitants.

The figure below shows human skulls of those who became victims of the war between Germany, Herero and Namas.

Figure 1: Namibians Genocide Human remains returned from Germany

Figure 2: Survivors of Herero Genocide



Figure 1. Germany returns human remains from Namibian genocide:
<https://www.namibian.com.na/180921/archive-read/Germany-returns-human-remains-from-Namibian-genocide>



Figure 2. Images of survivors of the Herero genocide foreshadowed similar scenes from the liberation of Nazi death camps
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/brutal-genocide-colonial-africa-finally-gets-its-deserved-recognition-180957073/>

Shekutaamba Nambala in his book *History in The Church in Namibia* said

“Namibia’s capital city, /Ai-//Gams, is still decorated by the signs of European power and

² Meredith McKittrick, *To Dwell Secure: Generation, Christianity, and Colonialism in Ovamboland* (Cape Town: David Phillip Publishers, 2002), 138.

success from the time of colonial intrusion in which the Herero people were reduced from 80,000 to 20,000 and the Nama people from 20, 000 to 9,700.”³

2.1. The Name “Namibia”

The name “Namibia” is derived from the Namib desert, which is still located in Namibia. According to Nambala, we can find dunes in the Namib desert and a few dispersed across the desert.⁴ On the south and north of the desert there are many beautiful mountains. We have some rivers which many times are dry due to the lack of rain in the desert.⁵ History tells us that the country was named after the Namib desert by the Namibian professor Bruba Kerina in 1968.

2.2 Namibian People

Namibia’s people speak different languages because each tribe has its own language. In the past, especially before the colonizers arrived in the country, there was no common language people used to communicate. After the colonizers arrived, they forced inhabitants to learn their languages. The owners of the land are the Aawambo, Damara, Nama, Herero, Kwangari, Masubia, San, Tswana, Himba, Dhimba, OvaTwe and Kaprivians.⁶ Currently, the official language in Namibia is English, and this commenced after independence 30 years ago.

³ Nambala, *History of The Church in Namibia*, 1.

⁴ Nambala, vii.

⁵ Nambala, vii.

⁶ Nambala, 2.

According to the latest country survey made in 2016 by the Namibia Statistic Agency (NSA), Namibia has a population of approximately 2.5 million. At the same time, UN data shows that on July 16, 2020, Namibia had a population of 2,542,495 based on Worldometer (elaborated of the latest United Nations data). Namibia's inhabitants are comparable to 0.03% of the total global population. Namibia was rated number 143 in population in the list of countries worldwide. These sources indicate that 55.2% of the inhabitants are living in urban areas, so perhaps 1,403,099 inhabitants are living in cities while smaller numbers are living in rural areas. The middle age in Namibia is 21.8 years. That is a mid-year estimated made by United Nations.⁷

After independence, English became the official language, although only 8% to 13% of the inhabitants can communicate in English. During colonial times, people were forced to use Afrikaans as a common communication language and 60% of inhabitants, mostly white people, speak Afrikaans. Some 32% speak German and most of them are white. Other inhabitants' languages used in communication in Namibia are Damra>Nama (20%), Oshiwambo (50%), Rukwangali (30%), Herero (10%) and Shilozhi (8%).⁸

2.3 Geographic Location

The country is situated in the South-Western part of Africa, and it has an area of 824,292 km². Namibia shares borders with Angola on the north (1376 km), in the

⁷ Worldometer, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/namibia-population/>, accessed July 19, 2020.

⁸ Petrus Khariseb, *The Contribution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) to Poverty Relief in the Usakos Circuit, with Special Focus on the Otjimbingwe Rural Community* (MTh. Dissertation, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, 1999), 6.

northeast with Zambia (233km), and in the southeast and east with South Africa (855). Namibia also has a border with the Atlantic Coast in the west (1572 km). One remarkable place is the border square or quadripoint, where four countries meet, which is unique globally. It consists of two border trios, located nearby each other. One is the border trio of Botswana-Namibia-Zambia and the other one, only 100 meters away, is Zambia-Botswana-Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, the course of the border is unclear, so one speaks of a near quadripoint. In the north, natural boundaries are formed by the rivers Kunene while Zambezi, Kwando, Linyanti and Chobe in the northeast, as well as orange River in the south.⁹

⁹ <https://www.info-namibia.com/info/namibias-geography>, accessed July 19, 2020.

Figure 3: The African Map



Figure 3. Source: African map, Google, <https://www.google.com/search?q=africa+map&rlz=>, accessed July 19, 2020.

Namibia is separated into fourteen districts: their names are Otjonzondjupa, Hardap, Omaheke, Erongo, Karas, Khomas, Zambezi, Omusati, Kavango East, Oshana, Ohangwena, Kavango West, Oshikoto and Kunen. In this study, I will be concentrating on the Kunene region in the west of Namibia.

2.4 Colonization

The country was colonized by three different colonizers: first by Germany, second by the British, and lastly by the white Boors of South Africa. Katyavivi records that the British annexed Namibia from 1876-1884, while Germany ruled Namibia from 1884-1915. At that time, the white farmers divided our land among themselves, a clear

indication that the manipulation and denial of inhabitants of their land and possessions, started at that time. South Africa colonized Namibia from 1915-1988.¹⁰

The history of Namibia tells us that Germany colonized Namibia from 1882 under Chancellor Von Bismarck. That means from that time, Namibia fell into the wrong hands. In order to control the inhabitants, Germany divided them according to their homelands. Katyavivi says, “In trying to control over Namibia, the Germans relied upon the use of force and the old colonial tactics of divided and rules.”¹¹

There was a time when Dr. De Vries, who was a Namibian theologian and a lecturer at United Theological Seminary in Namibia, responded to the question of why Germany was interested in occupying Namibia. De Vries answered that Germany's interest varied extensively. First were the activities performed by Germany explorers such as Friedrich Hornemann, Heinrich Barth, and Georg Schwein in the colony. They were given a task to oversee the province. The second was to do business with the territory, which contributed by extending German culture beyond her borders.¹²

In the case of Germany, the first evil they did was to grab land from the Namibian citizens and make it available to their fellow German colonizers. There were no negotiations, it was done by force. The area is essential to everyone, and in this case, German colonizers left their country, came to Namibia, and grabbed the land from the owners. On this matter, Hellberg states that, “The German colonists who, during his

¹⁰ Peter H. Katyavivi, *A History of Resistance in Namibia* (London: UNESCO Press, 1988), 7.

¹¹ Katyavivi, 7.

¹² J. Lukas de Vries, *Mission and Colonialism in Namibia* (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 2001), 7.

lifetime, begin immigrating into the colony, were given large grants of land. At the same time, Germany began to systematically exploit the mineral deposits of the country.”¹³

Former South Africa president Nelson Mandela once said: “Through force, fraud and violence, the people of North, East, West, Central and Southern Africa were relieved of their political and economic power and forced to pay allegiance to foreign monarchs. The resistance of the black man to white colonial intrusion was crushed by the gun.”¹⁴ I agree with him these foreigners came to Africa and violated the continent. When the inhabitants fought peacefully for their rights they were killed.

I have a problem understanding the argument made by Walter Rodney due to a lack of proper reasoning. He says that imperialism was not by itself the method of abuse, but became abusive when someone exported the income to his or her own country.¹⁵ Why he was saying so? I have another perspective of colonialism because, to me, colonialism is misuse, manipulation, killing, stealing, robbing, destroying, hijacking, and grabbing others' property without owner consent. Therefore, I agree with the explanation which I find in Wikipedia, which says as follows: “Colonialism is the policy of a country seeking to extend or retain its authority over other people or territories, generally with the aim of economic dominance. In the process of colonization, colonizers may impose their religion, economics, and other cultural practices on indigenous peoples.”¹⁶

¹³ Carl-J Hellberg, *Mission Colonialism and Liberation: The Lutheran Church in Namibia 1840-1966* (Windhoek: New Namibia Books (Pty) Ltd, 1977), 93.

¹⁴ J. Crwys-Williams, *In the Words of Nelson Mandela: A Little Pocketbook* (Parktown: Penguin Books, 1997), 14.

¹⁵ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1972), 162.

¹⁶ Wikipedia. en.wikipedia.org > wiki > Colonialism, accessed July 19, 2020.

Foreigners came to Namibia to commit such crimes. Up to now, we have land in Namibia still in the hands of German people, while the Namibians have no land where they can settle for themselves. They forced our forefathers and foremothers to vacate their area and took the land for their children and grandchildren. The most significant part of the land, especially in the southern part of Namibia, had been taken away by the German settlers. Katyavivi, on this matter, says, “First, the land was taken from the Namibian people and made available to Germany settlers. Land taken from the Namas and Hereros after the war of resistance was given to Germany settlers and increasing numbers of Germans emigrated to Namibia.”¹⁷ That left a lot of Herero and Nama people dead, as I indicated above in the numbers of those who died in the hands of German people.

The Germans regarded all our traditional and cultural activities as paganism, and they prohibited our forefathers and our foremothers from doing those traditional and cultural activities. The second barbaric act they did was to destroy traditional and cultural norms to subjugate Namibians.¹⁸ That is what Germany did to people in the past, and some of our values and cultures are still lost till today. It is unfair to prevent people from practicing their culture, an inheritance from their ancestors.

The shortage of food noted in Namibia after colonizers arrived in Namibia is a clear indication that Germans caused poverty in Namibia. Things were not like that before imperialism seized our country. Foods were available to all inhabitants, and many people had a lot of cattle from which they benefited. Knappert argues that the inhabitants

¹⁷ Katyavivi, *A History of Resistance in Namibia*, 11.

¹⁸ Katyavivi, 11.

bred animals and did traditional procedures of agriculture prior to the arrival of the conquerors.¹⁹ That means the Namibian people had the understanding to exercise farming and gardening to sustain themselves without foreign aid.

When the foreigners landed in Namibia—German sellers, preachers (missionaries), and other immigrants—they spoiled the rights, justice, and independence of the inhabitants. I recall once my father told me that, “When the Missionaries arrived in Namibia, especially in the southern part of the country when they preached, on the one hand hold the Bible while on the other hand, hold the gun.” Namibian people lost their possessions and their pride. Serfontein confirms this when he notes that once Germans arrived in Namibia, people like the Namas and the Hereros were deprived of their grazing grounds and reduced to the position of laborers.²⁰

2.5 Socio-Economics

The Namibian economy should be looked at from the perspective of the worldwide economy. According to the Namibia Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU) indicates that the world economy is in disaster that began from East of Asia, and spread to Namibia.²¹ The report indicates how the world economy is still controlled by western countries like the European Union (EU), the United States of America (USA), and Japan.

¹⁹ J. Knappert, *Namibia: Land and Peoples, Myths and Fables* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 86.

²⁰ J. H. P. Serfontein, *Namibia?* (Randburg: Fokus Suid Publishers, 1976), 13.

²¹ The Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit 2000, *Namibia: Economic Review and Prospects* (Tsumeb: Nation Press, 1999/2000), 1.

The 2020 Index of Economic Freedom stresses that Namibia is still politically free ever since the country got its freedom from South Africa in 1990. The current Namibian President, Hage Geingob, had been elected for a five-year term in 2014. Since 1990 after five years, Namibians have exercised their rights through voting their own leaders per their will. That means after every five years, Namibians go to the polls to elect their leaders. In all elections, the ruling party South West Africa People Organization (SWAPO) won with a majority. The last election in Namibia was done in November 2019. This source indicates that the mining division brings in more than fifty percent of external exchange income, and Namibia is predicted to become the world's third-largest uranium fabricator once a Chinese-run mine is completed. The economy of Namibia is linked to South Africa, and its credit rating is one of the highest in the region. The Namibian government busy with restructurings land, including expropriation of land with a reasonable reward for rearrangement to the black majority.²²

Foreigner organizations, for example, the World Trade Organizations (WTO), World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) use the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) technique to measure the economic development and the rate of poverty in First World countries. This technique only shows development and poverty, but stays silent on the issue of distribution of growth. It does not indicate the growth rate of poverty acknowledged by hundreds and thousands of poor people. Unfortunately, some aspects of an economy could not yet expose. Because of that value, for example, sustenance production, non-monetary exchange, home labor, and casual activity, are not included,

²² 2020 Index of Economic Freedom, <https://www.heritage.org/index/country/namibia>, accessed July 20, 2020.

even though they are a special dynamic in the Namibian situation.²³ Although Namibian resources are exploited by foreign countries, it seems no one regarded this as one of the critical problem contributors to the country's economic development.

Namibian leaders mostly used to say that the Namibian nation lives in peace, harmony, and stability. The World Bank in Namibia also supports this notion as it says that “Political stability and sound economic management have helped anchor poverty reduction. However, this has not yet been translated into job creation, and extreme socio-economic inequalities inherited from the years it was run under an apartheid system persist, despite generous public spending on social programs.”²⁴ Maybe it is true, but how can people live in peace, harmony, and stability if they are in poverty? When there are no jobs for people to work to maintain themselves, how can they live in peace? I am of the opinion that people can only live in peace if they have the means to pay the school tuition of their children, acquire food, and meet all their other basic needs.

The World Bank in Namibia continued to tell us that economic activity collapsed until 2018. According to the World Bank, “The depressed economic activity reflects the continuation of the fiscal consolidation process that acted as a major drag on the economy and the tepid growth performance of the neighboring countries that had additional adverse effect on the demand for Namibia's exports.”²⁵

Springer exposes that Namibia’s economy is doubled in the atmosphere as it comprises a new market subdivision created on capital-intensive manufacturing and

²³ “The Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit 2000,” accessed August 05, 2020, 16.

²⁴ The World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/namibia/overview>, accessed July 20, 2020

²⁵ “The World Bank.”

agricultural, fabricating most of the country's capital, and a traditional maintenance farming area. Much raw quantifiable merchandise is exported in unprocessed or semi-processed forms, and many consumer goods are imported. Agriculture has a small contribution to GDP by approximately 5%; nevertheless, it employs about 30% of the total labor force. The most substantial portion of the financial contribution from agriculture is from relatively large, marketable farmsteads. Still, traditional maintenance agriculture remains vital a large share of the inhabitants. Due to this around 70 % of the residents related to farming for their living.²⁶

As far as I know, the primary sector contributors to the Namibian economic growth are the fishing industry, agriculture, tourism sectors, logistic, manufacturing sectors, and mining sectors. Namibia's 5th National Development Plan (NDP5) says "A significant portion of the economic activities in key sectors (Agriculture, fisheries, tourism, manufacturing and services) remain primitive, informal and limited."²⁷ But some sectors like fishing and mining are in danger of corruption where our two former disgraced ministers, Sacky Shanghala, who was a minister of Justice, and former minister of Fisheries Bernard Esau. The Namibian Newspaper reported that "Esau, Shanghala and Hatuikulipi have been pinpointed as the masterminds behind a donation of state-to-state fishing licenses between 2014 and 2018, but which were used to divert money to individuals in both countries, paid through an Icelandic company."²⁸

²⁶ Springer, accessed August 04, 2020, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/2193-2409-2-1>.

²⁷ "Republic of Namibia," Namibia's 5th National Development Plan NDP5, Google, accessed August 04, 2020, <https://www.google.com/search?q=ndp+5+namibia&rlz=1C1CHBF>

²⁸ Sonja smith and Shinovene Immanuel, "Namibian," *Windhoek*, November 18, 2019, 1.

2.6. Justice and Economy in Namibia

The message from God through prophet Micah, God asks us to do justice and show love to neighbors. Still, only a few people benefit from that economy either during the apartheid era or now as we live into our independence. We are only 2.5 million, as I indicated early in this paper. We have sufficient resources in which we all can benefit, but the report stated that we have people dead by malnutrition. In contrast, we have people who eat and leave food on their tables or threw it away, while we also have people who do not have anything to eat, especially in these years. The economy which we deal with it is not for us, but must be God's economy as Isaak cites: "The status and significance of economics in relation to God demands concrete interpretation because God's dealing with humanity is concrete."²⁹ Why would God entrust His economy into the hands of the people who misuse it? How has God dealt with those who use economies in inappropriate ways? We say God knows everything, so why did He allow these things to happen? These are questions I ask myself every day. What we need to know is that all of these questions deal with the economy, God wants us to change and do justice. Isaak says, "Justice is so important to God"³⁰ Jesus came to us like a human being, as a hungry person, homeless, sick and imprisoned. The country's economics should be responding to all basic human needs like food, clothing, shelter, health care and, by inference, the basic political need for human self-respect and truthfulness.³¹ We live in a

²⁹ Paul John Isaak, *Religion and Society: A Namibian Perspectives* (Western Cape: National Book Printers, 1997), 88.

³⁰ Isaak, 88.

³¹ Isaak, *Religion and Society*, 88.

world full of injustice and our social life is halted by difficulties. People are under pressure by the injustices they face day by day.

The World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation have recognized the difficult situations faced by people around the globe. That's why these two Christian world bodies encourage their members' churches, especially parishioners, to prompt in the word and work that those who have tasted justification in Christ should not withdraw into a spiritual pigeonhole but should rather go into the world and be engaged in social liberation and gender equality for their neighbors.³²

It is true that the church is called to help those entrusted by God's economy to do justice in distributing the resources mostly to those in need. The true church is expected to be in solidarity with those who suffer injustice. Cochrane says, "The witness of the church to economic reality requires it to enter into solidarity with those who suffer economic injustice."³³

What we need to know is that faith is very important, and it can shape our lives. The real justice is empowered by faith. I didn't say justice cannot be there without faith, but here I mean God's justice. Christians believe in faith in Jesus Christ, who is a second person in the trinity. If we want to have a prosperous community of faith, the second person in the trinity should be part of our life. That kind of faith can fit everywhere, including politics. We need to be shaped by faith, especially in our effort to have

³² Isaak, 89.

³³ Charles Villa-Vicencio and John W. de Gruchy, *Doing Ethics in Context: South African Perspectives* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers. 1994), 201.

prosperous community. Isaak advised that “. . . faith shapes the whole of our lives, including politics and economics.”³⁴

The big problem we are facing, especially in my context, and I believe as well as in the globe, is that of money and justice. Dr. Panduleni Iitula, a Namibian politician, once said that “If our wealth was controlled well, depending on our population, everyone in Namibia could receive the cash of the amount of N\$ 2000.00 per month.” Unluckily, we have people who have misused the economy of my country through greed and selfishness. Isaak quoted Luther as he said, “The servant of money, according to Luther, sinks deeper and deeper into greed, he gets farther and farther away from the word of God, and finally he becomes completely hostile to it.”³⁵

Corrupt officials feed themselves with their relatives and their friends while the masses are living in poverty. Justice in Namibian economics, even post-independence, is sabotaged by the rulers and their elites. Millions and millions are missing from the state coffers day by day. The rights of the poor are trampled down, no one counts their rights. God Himself gave us direction as He said: “Do not prevent justice, do not show partiality to poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly (Lev 19: 15).” What do we need to do to heal this disease of corruption in Namibia? Hopefully the word of God can heal my nation as the word of God has the power to change what we regard and believe unchangeable. Isaak writes: “Luther’s theology is mindful of the norm and message of Jesus, seek first the kingdom of God.”³⁶ That is the same message we need to

³⁴ Isaak, *Religion and Society*, 90.

³⁵ Isaak, *Religion and Society*, 91.

³⁶ Isaak, 91.

preach to the Namibian women and men and I hope we will gain good fruit at the end of the day.

In Namibia we have copper, uranium, diamond, zinc, gold, tamarin, and others. All of these products are taken away abroad, and when they come back to Namibia, the Namibian nation is asked to buy them at a higher price. For example, Namibia export iron to developed countries at a lower price which is turned into finished products (corrugated iron) and Namibia imports the finished goods at a higher price. The poor people cannot afford their own resources because they have no money. This is the same thing they did to our cattle, goats, and sheep in Namibia. These animals are sent out from Namibia then later brought back as meat to Namibia, but as meat it costs people a lot of money. Justice for the poor is ignored. The poor are with us forever, but we need to help them so that they can also be able to have their daily bread. Isaak cited that: “To put it differently, having been made righteous by Christ, we become “a Christ” towards the neighbor by enabling the poor to have their daily bread.”³⁷

Our leaders are supposed to look at those matters and make the right decision in favor of all inhabitants. Such judgement could help the nation to live and enjoy justice and prosperity in the country. Yet our leaders are silent in these regards. Isaak wrote, “Indeed it would be total wretchedness if when the poor and the oppressed and economic exploited on earth ask my God my God why has thou forsaken us? There followed only an eternal silence.”³⁸ We need justice and peace for all people.

³⁷ Isaak, 97.

³⁸ Isaak, 92.

2.7 Poverty in Namibia

I understand poverty in the following ways. Poverty is the life a person finds himself or herself in without their basic needs being met, for example, food, health services, shelter, education, spirituality, clean water, etc. However, the Namibian Macroeconomic Planning Department (MPD) defines poverty in the following manner: “Poverty is a multidimensional concept relating to a lack of resources with which to acquire a set of basic goods and services. Conceptually, poverty can be viewed as a state of deprivation and can be defined in both absolute and relative terms. Absolute poverty can be seen as the inability to afford certain basic goods and services.”³⁹ Some households in Namibia are incapable of having the essential goods and services they need.⁴⁰

Such research can help the church, government, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), and Community Basic Organization (CBO) to detect problems and find ways to respond to the needs of the people live in poverty. Pixley and Boff explain poverty in the following manner: “Poverty today is not simple backwardness in the sense of a lack of material development. Poverty today is mainly the result of a contradictory development, in which the rich became steadily richer, at the expense of the poor who are steadily poorer. Poverty today is endogenous: It is internal to the system and a natural product of

³⁹ Macroeconomic Planning Department, *Namibia Poverty Mapping*, Windhoek, www.npc.gov.na, accessed August 12, 2020.

⁴⁰ Macroeconomic Planning Department.

it. This is why poverty today means oppression and dependence in social terms, and injustice and social sin in ethical terms.”⁴¹

I agree with Pixley and Boff. Our leaders consistently tell us that Namibia is a rich country which has many mineral resources. If that is true, why do we have people die by hunger in a country which has such rich mineral resources? Do we have useless leaders? I don't think so! We have capable leaders who play with the lives of people. The leaders love themselves and forget their electorates. The leaders don't care about God's message as He demands all of us to do justice and show love to each other. The leaders instead steal the cake of the nation. We have that kind of leader, corrupt leaders. that's why we have people living under poverty although we are told that Namibia is a rich country.

2.8 Regional Poverty Patterns and Trends

As we can see from table 1 below, Namibia recorded an overall weakening in the incidence of poverty of 11 percentage points over 2001 to 2011 period, with the national prevalence of poverty declining from 37.9 percent to 26.9 percent over this period. In the tables thus indicated, around 568,418 inhabitants were estimated to be poor.⁴² I hope that prediction becomes a reality because, currently, 29.6 % represents unemployment in Namibia.⁴³ The total number of 125,277 indigenous people expected to be in poverty at

⁴¹ Jorge Pixley J, Clodovis Boff, *The Bible, The Church and the Poor: Biblical, Theological and Pastoral Aspects of the Option for the Poor* (Wellwood: Burns & Oates, 1989), 6.

⁴² Macroeconomic Planning Department, *Namibia Poverty Mapping*.

⁴³ “Inequality and Poverty in Namibia,” A Gaping Wealth Gap, accessed August 12, 2020.

the end of the time of ten years would have been the case if the poverty rate had remained unchanged.⁴⁴ But I predict that we have already reach that sum mentioned above, especially at this time of drought and COVID 19 pandemic, as many people have lost their jobs and are in need of food.

The Namibian Macroeconomic Planning Department held a Namibia Poverty Mapping which attempted to document poverty.⁴⁵ There was a significant decline recorded in the northern regions, Ohangwena, Omusati, Kunene, and Oshikoto, including the eastern part of Omaheke. But two regions, Zabenzi and Khomas, recorded rises of 7.2 percentage points and 1.2 percentage points, respectively. In 2011, out of the thirteen regions, seven of them—Otjozondjupa, Oshikoto, Omusati, Ohangwena, Kunene, Zambezi, and Kavango—recorded poverty that measured above the national rate of 26.9 percent.⁴⁶

Table 1:Trends in Poverty Headcount, 2001- 2011 (upper- bound poverty line)

Region	Poverty Headcount Rate		
	2001	2011	Change
Zambezi	32	39.3	7.2
Erongo	9.3	6.3	-3
Hardap	20.4	17.2	-3.2
Karas	18	14.5	-3.4

⁴⁴ Macroeconomic Planning Department, *Namibia Poverty Mapping*.

⁴⁵ Macroeconomic Planning Department.

⁴⁶ Macroeconomic Planning Department.

Kavango	57.9	53.2	-4.8
Khomas	3.4	4.6	1.2
Kunene	53.7	38.9	-14.8
Ohangwena	62.8	35.3	-27.5
Omaheke	41.6	26.2	-15.5
Omusati	50.9	28.6	-22.2
Oshana	28.3	21.1	-7.1
Oshikoto	57.3	42.6	-14.7
Otjozondjupa	30.4	27.5	-2.9
Namibia	37.9	26.9	-11

2.9 Poverty in Namibia Today

According to the Namibian Newspaper of August 2, 2019, more than 10% of the Namibian inhabitants are in horrible poverty, explaining that approximately 258,259 inhabitants are affected. That was the last percentage number to have been publicized. The Namibian Newspaper continued with the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA)'s Labour Force Survey for 2018 which disclosed that Namibia's inhabitants were around 2,4 million. The general poverty percentage raised at 17,4% in 2016, a noteworthy drop from the 37,7% documented in 2004. The scarcity statistics depend on the sustainable development goals (SDGs) starting point description for Namibia for 2019, launched by

the Namibia Statistic Agency (NSA).⁴⁷ Namibia's risky poverty mark is positioned at N\$293 per month for food for families. This amount is the standard sum obtainable to relatives to live on each month. The SDG starting point statement specified that as economic progress after 2016 has been decreasing, presently upright at -2% throughout the first semester of 2019, no one knew whether the poverty deterioration would stay. Still, it communicated that the total image is hopeful.⁴⁸ To me, that is the indication that the life of the people in Namibia currently is not good at all. I think things are changing given the current situation facing the country as well as the globe today. Unfortunately, I have confidence that the rate of poverty in the country is already increasing.

Namibian Newspaper reported that: “Social expert Herbert Jauch said poverty is difficult to account for because it is measured against the set national poverty rate, and does not look at the actual cost of living of Namibians. He said an individual or household can thus be out of the poverty line, but they would still be poor as they fail to meet their basic monthly needs.”⁴⁹ I agree with him as citizens, as we do not have the same amount of money in our pockets. We are talking about unemployed people and those who are working.

In the meantime, figures by the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia (SDFN) for 2018 indicated that 995,000 inhabitants are staying in huts in the city centers in Namibia. There are 308 informal settlements in Namibia's town areas, with around

⁴⁷ Charmaine Ngachiheua, “The Namibian” *Windhoek*, August 02, 2019, 1. <https://www.namibian.com.na/191489/archive-read/Severe-poverty-still-haunts-Namibians>, accessed August 04, 2020.

⁴⁸ Ngachiheua, 1.

⁴⁹ Ngachiheua, 1.

228,000 cabins. The update of Namibia Financial Inclusion Survey 2017, conducted in August 2018, indicated that the ratio of the inhabitants who receive less than N\$1,000 per month raised at 33%, equal to the 9,7% of citizens who get over N\$11,000.⁵⁰ I can't entirely agree with the above statistic about 228,000 cabins in the country. They just count cabins in the informal settlements. Cabins are not found only in the informal settlement area, but we also find them in rural areas. They are also the same cabins we see in the cities and informal settlement. Because of that reason, I do not agree with the sum of 228,000 cabins we have in the country.

Furthermore, the ratio of inhabitants who received between N\$1,001 and N\$2,000 was 29,1%, the second-maximum numbers, followed by 10% of mature inhabitants, who get between N\$2,000 and N\$3,000. Moreover, Namibia's joblessness percentage is documented at 33,4%. Depending on the SDG description, Namibia's poverty percentage has not been decreasing further in these years. The number continued still after Namibia reached the first-millennium growth aim in 2013, relating to the National Planning Commission.⁵¹

The *Namibian Newspaper* reported that from 2013 to 2017, the poverty number was quiet between 10% and 11%. This poverty droplet was marked with the first SDG, which is to “end poverty in all its procedures everywhere,” of which Namibia enclosed nine out of the 14 pointers beneath this aim. *Namibian Newspaper* records that “Namibia has reached the status of an upper-middle-income country, which correlates with a significant reduction of poverty since independence. Despite the recent stagnation in

⁵⁰ Ngachiheua, 1.

⁵¹ Ngachiheua, 1.

poverty reduction, the proportion of people living in improvised houses and the food poverty rate declined moderately.”⁵²

The leader of the Economic Planning Commission, former minister Obeth Kandjoze, stated that the worldwide community, over the SDGs, is still trying to eradicate poverty and hunger in all forms and sizes, and guarantee that people can live with self-esteem and equality in well-being, maintainable situation.⁵³ Such a statement made by my former minister cannot make me happy because while they know they can pronounce something, there is no evidence of implementing it. People are still crying in poverty in Namibia, especially during this time of COVID 19.

The minister said, “SDGs also aim to ensure that all humans enjoy prosperous lives through economic, social and technological progress in harmony with nature, and further foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies as no sustainable development occurs without peace.”⁵⁴ Poverty in Namibia is real, it is an emergency which must be addressed. I can only have peace if my basic needs can be met. If I do not have something to eat, how can I have peace? Who violates the order and peace of the poor in Namibia? The answer is: all those disobey God in what He requires from us: to do justice and show love to each other, these are what is required to keep peace in Namibia.

2.10 The Factors Which Cause Poverty in Namibia

⁵² Ngachiheua, 1.

⁵³ Ngachiheua, 1.

⁵⁴ Ngachiheua, 1.

We have many different factors that contribute to poverty in Namibia. Some of the elements are fertility, lack of access to the internet facilities, lack of communications, adequate resources, shortage of food, lack of access to education, unemployment, ignorance, corruption, and misuse of resources. In this study, I will say something to one of these factors, which I think is crucial and that has to do with education. In other words, why is there poverty in Namibia? This question can help us to understand why we find ourselves in poverty and why we experience poverty in our daily life. The significant primary cause of poverty is the ignorance of our leaders. Our pre-independence and post-independence leaders both ignored the message of God, which He sent through the prophet Micah. God requires our leaders to practice justice and love to their subordinates, but our leaders do not obey what God asked them. Instead of doing what God told them, they became greedy and corrupt.

2.11 Lack of Education

The National Planning Commission argues that many Namibian inhabitants have not had access to education. Uneducated people are the persons most likely to be left out from the economic mainstream.⁵⁵ This is very painful to hear even after thirty years of independence. Why do our children not have access to education? This is a problem facing our nation, and I think it should be tackled before it is too late. The National Planning Commission states that poor education of numerous inhabitants comes from weak knowledge of the value of education, which in turn leads to few people passing

⁵⁵ National Planning Commission, "The root causes of Poverty", accessed August 04, 2020, <https://www.npc.gov.na/download/pbriefs/rootcauses.pdf>.

exams of skill and expertise and public inspections. Deprivation of excellence in education leads to people needing a high level of re-schooling. This deprivation also means children leave before finishing her or his school.⁵⁶ Peer pressure also plays many roles among our learners and students. Many of them are not able to complete their study.

The parental mentality around education also supports early quit out, as numerous parents, especially in remote areas, do not recognize the importance of education for the career prospects and financial futures of their kids. As a result of these influences, various youth enter into the economy not well prepared for new jobs, thus excluding them from the profits of the current economy and often leaving them in poverty.⁵⁷ In this case, parents are at least in part responsible for the failure of their children due to their lack of support. I understand that sometimes many parents have few if any resources to support their children, especially in studies at tertiary institutions. They don't have the means to support the education of their youth. On the other hand, some of them have money which, instead of supporting their children, they spend on unnecessary things like alcohol.

⁵⁶ National Planning Commission.

⁵⁷ National Planning Commission.

Figure 4: Himba Women Drinking Alcohol Drinks



figure 4. source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-40247310> accessed, August 04, 2020.

Currently, education in Namibia is not really at an acceptable level, although the National Planning Commission spoke about what happened in 2007. The National Planning Commission noted that Namibia achieved improved results in the 2007 SEACMEQ assessments, more than in 2001, while schools situated in remote rural areas did nearly an average deviation below the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SEACMEQ) average in mathematics. Variances at an area level are even higher, for example, when one compares Khomas and northern regions.⁵⁸ I do not oppose the statements made above, but I have a concern about the adequacy of the assessment made, whether it was at standard.

⁵⁸ National Planning Commission.

Table 2: Mathematics and Reading scores in SEACMEQ III, 2007 Mathematics scores

	Mathematic Score	Reading Score
Isolated/Rural area	448	464
small Towns	492	524
Cities	521	572
Total Namibia	471	497
Zambezi	459	490
Erongo	524	579
Hardap	483	510
Karas	511	550
Kavango	456	482
Khomas	523	575
Kunene	479	503
Ohangwena	448	463
Omaheke	469	496
Omusati	450	462
Oshana	457	471
Otjozondjupa	489	527
Oshikoto	475	501

Source: Own calculations from SACMEQ (2007) data.

In our days, education is regarded as the backbone of any nation. If our government and all stakeholders are not taking learning seriously, then we are walking but we do not know where we are going. In any town, informal resettlements, or

anywhere we move in Namibia, we find street kids there. I think those kids will be a heavy burden on the shoulders of the government, church, and other stakeholders in their future. The government should come up with a policy to assist parents who are not able to support the education of their children financially, especially at the level of tertiary education. I will touch a bit again on the education matter in the Kunene region in chapter three.

We looked at the history and background of Namibia and how the Namibians found themselves under the yoke of colonialism from Germany and South Africa. The Namibian people have been on a long journey with many difficulties under various oppressors. We fought for our political independence and now we are still in a struggle for economic freedom and I have hope by the grace of God that we will win this battle.

In the next chapter, we will hear how people in the Kunene region are specifically affected by poverty, and how poverty makes much-deprived impact in the life of people in the Kunene region.

CHAPTER 3

CURRENT POVERTY STATUS IN THE KUNENE REGION IN NAMIBIA

3.1. Inhabitants in the Kunene Region

The people living in the Kunene Region are living in poverty. Before I write much about poverty in the Kunene area, I would like to say a bit about the people living in the Kunene region. Opuwo town is the capital of the Kunene region. Initially, there are different groups of people or tribes in the region. We have *Ovahimba* people, and if only one person (singular) we call him or her *Omuhimba*. If they are more than one person (plural) we call them *Ovahimba*. The population of *Ovahimba* people in the Kunene area is estimated at almost 50,000. They live in the northwest of Namibia in the Kunene region, which in the past was called Kaokoland.¹ After independence, the district was *divided* into seven constituencies, namely: Outyo, Kholixas, Epupa, Opuwo Urban, Kamanyab, Opuwo Rural, and Sesfontein. The majority of the inhabitants are living in rural areas. The 2011 census states the region had a population of 86,856 people, and 74% of them were living in remote areas.²

¹ “WIKPEDIA” Himba People, Google, last modified July 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wik/Himba_people, accessed December 14, 2020.

² Macroeconomic Planning Department, *Namibia Poverty Mapping*, Windhoek, www.npc.gov.na, accessed August 12, 2020.

In the same area, we can find there another small group of people called OvaTwa. They are also Ovahimba, but they are mostly hunters. Therefore, Ovahimba people do not like to interconnect with OvaTwa. Ovahimba's behaviors are closer to Herero people in many aspects. That means not only Ovahimba people are inhabitants in the Kunene region, but other tribes are also present. Other tribes like Herero, Damara, Dhimba, Vambos, San people and other tribes. However, in this study, my concentration is on Ovahimba. They only differ from the Herero in that they are semi-nomadic pastoralist people and their language is Otjihimba.³ Herero people are not moving from place to place, although they also have cattle like the Ovahimba. Herero people live in the areas where they have enough water because they are using water from boreholes while the Ovahimba try to seek where they can find water for human consumption and their animals. For them, to stay at a particular place is dependent on the rainy season and where they can find sufficient water and grazing for their animals. The *Namibia – Kunene River Awareness Kit* stated that “The population of the Kunene Region lives in scattered rural settlements. Population concentrations and settlements are often variable and are subject to patterns of good grazing under which herders move cattle. Although many households retain a permanent base, in the driest areas, entire families relocate grazing.”⁴ That is the problem they have as they move too much from place to place. Although the ELCIN has missionaries among these people, it is not easy for them to work

³ WIKPEDIA, Himba People.

⁴ “Namibia – Kunene River Awareness Kit” Namibia, Google, last modified July 26, 2020, accessed August 22, 2020. www.kunene.riverawarenesskit.com.

among these people as they are always on the move. This is a big challenge to the church as well as to missionaries in the region.

3.2 Origin of Ovahimba People

The Himbas are descendants from the Herero tribe, a black community that came into Namibia in the mid of the 16th century. According to the Arts & Humanities Research Council, “In the mid 1800, the Herero came under attack from neighboring Nama bands, who raided most of their cattle and caused a substantial group of Herero to flee across the Angolan border.”⁵ When the Herero reached Angola, they began to beg for food and pasture hence the Angolan people decided to give them a new name Ovahimbe which means “beggars” in one direct language of Angola.⁶ They had been given this name because they had not anything. They were poor people that’s why they were looking for assistance from other people in Angola.⁷ Life in exile is not easy. The Ovahimba people come back to Namibia in 1920 when their brave soldier, Vita, commanded the group to go back to Namibia. They settled in Kaokoland/Kunene region till today.⁸ They are there till now, but they are living in poverty. Arts & Humanities Research Council record that “Cattle continue to be favored as a means of currency, and

⁵ Arts & Humanities Research Council, “Culture and the Mind,” Google, last modified July 30, 2020, accessed October 12, 2020. <https://philosophy.dept.shef.ac.uk/culture&mind/people/scelzab2/>

⁶ “Namibia – Kunene River Awareness Kit” Namibia, Google, last modified July 26, 2020, accessed August 22, 2020. www.kunene.riverawarenesskit.com.

⁷ Arts & Humanities Research Council.

⁸ Arts & Humanities Research Council.

daily life continues to revolve around tending to stock and other household duties.”⁹ To them, if you have money, but you do not have cattle, you are useless. Unfortunately, these years many cattle have been killed by droughts.

3.3 Social and Economic Information from the Region

The bedrock of this research deals with how a person survives in his or her daily life in the Kunene region. Speaking about human life means dealing with the social and economic life of the specific people. I am focusing on the people of the Kunene region. A cursory review of some crucial aspects of social and economic life of the people will be pertinent here.

3.3.1 Household Income

According to the Kunene 2011 Census Regional Profile, households were asked their source of income. The response shows that sources of income include business activities, remunerations, old-age pension, cash remittances, retirement funds, allowances for orphans, and endowments for people living with disabilities.¹⁰

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Households by Main Source of Income and Area

⁹ Arts & Humanities Research Council.

¹⁰ “Kunene 2011 Census Regional Profile,” 2011 Population and Housing Census Kunene Regional Profile, last modified February 2014, accessed August 04, 2020, <https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/cms/assets/documents/p19dptss1qamvueu17ju7vn12b81.pdf>

Area	Households	Farming	Business	Wages Activity – Not Farming	Old-Age and Salaries	Cash Pension	Retirement Remittances	Orphan' Funds Grant	Disability Gran	Others
Kunene	18 495	31.6	7.7	41.0	11.0	5.2	0.7	0.5	0.7	1.6
Urban	5 716	6.3	14.3	53.6	11.2	9.0	1.6	0.8	0.9	2.3
Rural	12 779	42.9	4.8	35.3	10.9	3.5	0.4	0.4	0.6	1.2
Epupa	2781	77.7	5.1	6.2	7.6	1.1	0.1	0.5	0.6	1.1
Kamanjab	2391	8.9	4.6	74.7	6.5	2.7	0.2	0.1	0.1	2.0
Khorixas	3132	12.0	7.7	45.5	19.3	9.0	2.0	0.7	1.2	2.6
Opuwo	5178	46.6	11.6	27.0	9.2	3.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.9
Outjo	3279	5.2	6.8	65.8	9.4	9.1	1.0	0.7	0.9	1.2
Sesfontein	1734	29.9	6.2	36.6	16.3	6.2	0.7	0.7	1.0	2.5

Source: Kunene 2011 Census Regional Profile

“Table above shows that wages and salaries (41.0%) was the highest main source of income in Kunene Region, while the lowest was orphan grants (0.5%). In urban areas 53.6 percent of households reported wages and salaries as the highest main source of income, while farming (42.9%) dominated in rural areas.”¹¹

3.3.2 Poverty in the Region

¹¹ “Kunene 2011 Census Regional Profile.”

Ilcan and Lacey claim, “Today, Namibia retains social and economic inequalities and gender, ethnic and social class divisions that it inherited from over half a century of apartheid rule, and many people told us that these inequalities are among the most intense in the world today.”¹² The situation of poverty in the Kunene Region rates at a high level, as more than 39.5% of people in the Kunene region are living under poverty. It is a higher rate of poverty in that particular Region than other areas of Namibia. With the participation of the church in uplifting the lives of people in the Kunene region, I hope the Namibia 2030 vision target will be met. The church needs to reorganize herself to tackle the poverty of the people in the Kunene region. There are many young people heading families living under poverty. However, Kessy and Tostensen cite that “Furthermore, there is no evidence that households headed by persons younger than 21 years of age are poorer than households with older heads. About 27.7% of persons younger than 21 of age are classified as poor, which corresponds to the national average.”¹³

¹² Suzan Ilcan and Anita Lacey, *Governing the Poor: Exercises of Poverty Reduction, Practices of Poverty Reduction, Practices of Global Aid* (London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011), 111.

¹³ Flora L. Kessy and Arne Tostensen, *Out of Poverty: Comparative Poverty Reduction Strategies, in Eastern and Southern Africa* (Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2008), 145.

Figure 5: Himba families living in poverty



Figure 5. Source. https://www.google.com/search?sa=X&rlz=1C1CHBF_enUS868US868&source

Men, especially from the Himba tribe, spend their life at their homes looking after their cattle and taking care of their families. Their other main task is hunting and bringing food home. Some other men from different tribes, for example, the Aawambo from northern parts of the country, have left their families to search for jobs in the Southern parts of the country. Their main aim is to get the means to assist their family members. That was not a case among the Himba tribe in the Kunene region. Due to the drought experienced in the previous years in the area caused by poor rainfall, men were forced by the situation to leave their family members. They did this because most of the cattle on which they depend were killed by drought.

When men left the house to look for work, then women took over leading the family, as Potts and Bowyer-Bower cite: “Another important cause of female-headed households in Southern Africa is absenteeism of the male head because of migration. Usually, these men remain the *de jure* head of their households, but the wives at home take care of day-to-day household activities.”¹⁴ It became a heavy burden for the wives to

¹⁴ Deborah Potts and Tanya Bowyer-Bower, *Eastern and Southern Africa: Development Challenges in a Volatile Region* (Abington: Routledge, 2014), 49.

take care of the family members alone. Due to this, many houses find themselves in poverty because the providers (men) are no longer there.

Shortages of food among the people in the community prevent the people from attending church services, because they cannot listen when they are hungry. Lack of clean water is a challenge both to the missionaries and to the inhabitants in the area. Lack of health facilities and long distances to travel from the place to place are also challenges.¹⁵

Figure 6: Pregnant Women Living in Tents while Waiting for Labour in Kunene Region.



Figure 6. Source. World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/namibia-maternity-waiting-homes-protect-newborns-and-mothers>

The findings from this research will help the ELCIN to re-empower, reorganize, restructure, and re-plan.

¹⁵ World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/namibia-maternity-waiting-homes-protect-newborns-and-mothers>. Accessed on October 24, 2020.

According to the National Planning Commission in 2011, the Kunene region is indicated as the poorest Region among fourteen regions in Namibia. However, it noted a small reduction of poverty of 8% in the area.

Table 4: Kunene Region Poverty Headcount Rate, 2001- 2011 (Upper bound poverty line)

Kunene region	2001	Rank	2011	Rank	Change
Epupa	76.8	1	69.2	1	-7.7
Kamanjamba	37.0	4	19.9	4	-17.1
Khorixas	34.3	5	18.8	5	-15.5
Opuwo	65.2	3	44.1	2	-21.1
Outjo	22.7	6	18.0	6	14.7
Sesfontein	69.0	2	40.0	3	-29.0
Regional rate	53.7		38.9		-14.8

Source: <https://www.npc.gov.na/download/pbriefs/rootcauses.pdf>

Although we have these figures in the table above, I hope the numbers either will be decrease as we wait for the report of the Namibia Statistic Agency survey for the whole country next year. Namibia to conducts such study every ten years.

3.3.3 Unemployment

Many people in the region are living in poverty because they do not work. There are no opportunities for work in the area in which inhabitants can be recruited. In the Region, there are a few manufacturing, agricultural and tourism sectors accounting for almost 4.2 and 4.3% of employment, respectively, in the area. That means only a few

inhabitants could get jobs to be able to get a wage and assist their families. Many workers are not people from the Kunene region. For example, in the Opuwo town we have some big shops, but the workers recruited in these shops come from other areas. Such a situation causes the rate of unemployment in the Kunene region to become even higher. The National Planning Commission stresses that “Economically active population is estimated at 67 percent of the population. Of these, 36% are unemployed.”¹⁶ The constituency which is mostly affected by poverty in the Kunene region is the Epupa constituency. The National Planning Commission says, “In Epupa constituency, more than half (51 percent) of the population is classified as severely poor, while almost a third (28 percent) of the population in Opuwo is severely poor.”¹⁷ The National Planning Commission reports that “Epupa is the poorest constituency in Namibia, the most deprived materially and educationally and the seventh most deprived in terms of living environment.”¹⁸ This area needs more attention from government, church, and non-governmental organizations.

Table 5: Kunene Region Poverty Headcount Rate 2001-2011 (Lower bound poverty)

Kunene Region	2001	Rank	2011	Rank	Change
Epupa	56.6	1	50.9	1	-5.6
Kamanyamba	21.4	4	9.5	4	-12

¹⁶ Macroeconomic Planning Department, *Namibia Poverty Mapping*, Windhoek, www.npc.gov.na, accessed August 12, 2020.

¹⁷ Macroeconomic Planning Department

¹⁸ National Planning Commission, “Poverty Deprivation in Namibia 2015,” accessed July 28, 2020, www.npc.gov.na.

Khorixas	20.6	5	8.8	5	-11.7
Opuwo	49.2	2	28.2	2	-21.1
Outyo	10.9	6	8.4	6	-2.5
Sesfontein	48.8	3	23.7	3	-25.1
Regional	37.5		24.8		-12.7

Source: <https://www.npc.gov.na/download/pbriefs/rootcauses.pdf>

The long distances make it difficult for the government as well as the municipalities to render sufficient and proper services to the people in the region. In different parts of the Kunene region most of the inhabitants are not able to receive community services from the government. Lack of sanitation and poverty are major problems facing the region, as I stressed in chapter one. In many communities, women and children are playing a role in public and domestic activities while men do few works here and there. Insufficient food among the population is a threat to their life.

3.3.4 Education

Education is a major concern in the Kunene region, as many youth and children miss out on education opportunities. The “Astonishing Vision and Focus of Namibia’s Nomads,” a report from the BBC, states that “The Himba would have never seen pen or paper”¹⁹ We cannot blame them because sometimes there are no schools in their communities; where some community schools are available, the parents lack understanding of the importance of school. Such situation leaves people in the Region in

¹⁹ “The Astonishing Vision and Focus of Namibia’s Nomads,” The Salvagers Who Raise World War Two Tanks from the Dead – BBC Future, Google, last modified July 26, 2020. Accessed January 10, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/29180313-the>.

the condition of a higher rate of illiteracy, as Löytty and Löytty say: “Approximately 44% of the population aged 6 years and above in rural areas have never been to school.”²⁰ I agree with Löytty and Löytty in what they said because I observed the situation myself. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reports that the “Number of 15-59 year olds inclusive with no schooling completed at secondary level or above; or • Number of 15–59 year-olds inclusive who are illiterate.”²¹

Nevertheless, the *Namibia–Kunene River Awareness Kit* reports that “School attendance is low (in the 2001 census ca. 70% of children aged 6 to 15 years did not attend school in Epupa Constituency), and children participate in the productive activities of their households at an early age.”²² Of note is the fact that most of the people living in poverty are fertile. They multiply without control, while they don’t have the means to support their offspring.

Other contributing factors which make people in the Kunene region find themselves in such conditions are long distances and inadequate inclusive services from the government. Löytty and Löytty say that “Characteristic to the area are long distances and lack of comprehensive services from the government and municipalities.”²³ Education is essential to everyone, but it is pitiful that in the Kunene region, many have no access to education. That causes a high rate of unemployment in the area, which leads people into poverty. The results of this are the shortage of food and diseases, as Löytty

²⁰ Löytty and Löytty, *Research on Mission*, 28.

²¹ “UNDP: Kunene Report,” Datazone Level Namibian Index of Multiple Deprivation 2001, accessed July 31, 2020, <http://www.undp.org.na/publications.aspx>.

²² n, a, www.kunene.riverawarenesskit.com.

²³ Löytty and Löytty, *Research on Mission*, 28.

and Löytty write, “Lack of food, hunger and diseases like malaria and HIV and AIDS are hampering people’s wellbeing.”²⁴ This terrible situation among the people in the Kunene region needs attention from all people internal and external. I feel that it is challenging for an uneducated person to get a job in Namibia. When employers advertise post vacancies, such posts require qualification and work experience for some years. Where can an illiterate person find diplomas and experiences? That means these people will live in poverty perpetually. The report of the National Planning Commission states that “In the twenty most education deprived constituencies, more than 78 percent of the population is deprived in the education domain.”²⁵

Many youths are suffering from poverty in the region due to lack of education. The *Namibia–Kunene River Awareness Kit* continues by saying that, “Although the population is extremely young, educational services and standards are low, facilities limited of well qualified teachers.”²⁶ In this case I have understood that the Ministry of Education and Culture is failing youth in the Kunene region from independence till today. That means we marked in March this year 30 years since we obtained our independence. Most of the youth become drunkards and cause violence in the communities. The Ministry of Education and Culture should collaborate with the Ministry of Youth in the country and do something to improve the lives of the youth in the Kunene region, especially in remote areas.

²⁴ Löytty and Löytty, 28.

²⁵ n. a, www.npc.gov.na.

²⁶ n. a, www.kunene.riverawarenesskit.com.

Many Himba children, parents and youth are not serious about education. The *Arts & Humanities Research Council* says that “However, few adult Himba have ever attended school, and the current generation of children also has only sporadic attendance.”²⁷ That is an indication that parents are not interested in the education of their children. Children need coaches in education from their parents and relatives. Because of the lack of understanding about the importance of school among the parents as themselves could not get access to education, the children and youth grow without resources due to no one wanting to recruit a person without education. Of course their cultural system make them became unaccepted the education as an important in the life of any person.

Additionally, during the drought seasons, families leave one place to seek pastures and water for their cattle.²⁸ In this case, even when the children attend school the parents may be forced to move to another place.

Figure 7: Mobile school in Kunene region



Figure 3. African-E-Travel logs. Source: <https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1CHBF>

²⁷ <https://philosophy.dept.shef.ac.uk/culture&mind/people/scelzab2/>

²⁸ <https://philosophy.dept.shef.ac.uk/culture&mind/people/scelzab2/>

BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) News reported that “Three of his children attend school—some villagers think this is a bad idea. They say they've seen how school changes their children.”²⁹ Parents are not happy about their children attending or taking part in the classroom because they believe that education can change their behaviors, norms and culture. The change which happened in the life of children because of education is not welcomed by all parents in the Kunene region. Most Parents feel that education will violate their culture and norms. That’s why to them school is not important institution.

One of the great community leaders quoted by BBC News said that "When these children get into school, most of the children feel shame. They think most of the children are talking about them, that they are not looking so beautiful."³⁰ I agree with the leader of that particular community. It can happen like that because the mentality of the children is at that level. Such an attitude can also affect the performance in the classroom of the victim child. But in this case, the teacher should play a role in making both learners understand and accept each other. The Himba tribe respect and preserve their cultural dressing code hence they do not prefer putting on other fashion dressing code and it is for this reason that children feel uncomfortable when they have to attend classes with children from other tribes that are putting on school uniforms which is regarded decent to promote a conducive environment for teaching and learning as well as equality among learners. Many schools have a policy of using school uniforms and all learners are

²⁹ Pumza Fihlani, “Namibia’s Himba People Caught Between Traditions and Modernity,” BBC News, August 31, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-40247310>, accessed September 01, 2010.

³⁰ Fihlani, “Namibia’s Himba People.”

expected to wear school uniforms. In this case, the Himba parents should understand and accept the school regulations and buy school uniform for their children.

3.3.5 Health

We have many different diseases in the Kunene region: tuberculosis, malaria, cholera HIV and AIDS etc. Kunene region argues that “Cholera is a major concern in Kunene Region, particularly near the border with Angola.”³¹ Yes, that is a problem experienced in the Region from a long time ago till today. The cause of this disease is the lack of clean water and hygiene among the people in the community. The primary issue that causes the disease is the lack of restrooms in the Region. When nature calls, then people in the community use the bushes to help and release themselves. In some places in the Region, there are toilets, but people do not use them. Here the culture is playing a role, because people think that restrooms are not for them. That’s why cholera became a concern in the Region, especially in the Epupa Constituency. “In May 2008, approximately 15 people died of cholera as well.”³²

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reports that this Region identifies with comparatively high rates of people who die early.³³ Although this is a concern in all regions, it is worse in the Kunene region because of the lack of health facilities in the Region. Infant mortality is high in the Region. The worldwide known marker of deprived health, the Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL) measure, is the level

³¹ n. a, Kunene Region,” Kunene Region – Wikipedia, Google, last modified July 26, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kunene_Region.

³² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kunene_Region.”

³³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kunene_Region.

of unpredicted death based on the age of the individual who has passed away.³⁴ The high rate of the death of youth and infant mortality in the Region is not surprising because people who live in poverty inevitably become victims of many diseases that lead them to die early. UNDP confirms this with saying, “An area with a relatively high rate in a young age group (including areas with levels of infant mortality) will therefore *ceteris paribus*, have a higher overall YPLL score than an area with a similarly relatively high death rate for an older age group.”³⁵ Of course, in the area where there no higher rate of poverty, more deaths are recorded at mature ages.

UNDP says, “The YPLL indicator is a directly age and gender standardized measure of premature death (i.e. death under the age of 75).”³⁶ I assume that in Namibia, the youth age begins from 18-45 years old. All people find themselves at these ages are youth. It means from 46 years those people are mature enough.

UNDP reports that diseases like HIV and AIDS and tuberculosis are also contributing to premature death in society, especially in the Kunene region. If HIV and AIDS infect the parents and they lack the resources to follow the prescriptions from doctors or nurses, there is a possibility to transmit the HIV virus from them to the unborn baby or born baby. It is the same if an adolescent is diagnosed with HIV and AIDS, and she or he is put on the medication, but they cannot use them as they told to do, then the consequences will not be right at all. The deaths of many of our youth in the Region are

³⁴ “Kunene Report.”

³⁵ n, a, www.kunene.riverawarenesskit.com.

³⁶ n, a, www.kunene.riverawarenesskit.com.

caused by tuberculosis and AIDS. They are infected by tuberculosis, either inherited, or through misuse of alcohol, or drug abuse. Many of them have lost lives because of the lack of health facilities in the Region.

3.3.6 Food/Sustenance

The shortage of food is also a major problem facing the Kunene region. As already described above, the inhabitants are nomads. They don't have time for agriculture activities because, for them, cattle farming is very important. The European Commission notes that "Between October 2019 and March 2020, an estimated 430,000 people are facing severe acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3+) and require urgent humanitarian action."³⁷ IPC means Integrated Phase Classification. The area of Kunene is one of the regions hit by this crisis as the European Commission states that "The most affected regions are Hardap, Kavango West, Khomas, Kunene, Ohangwena, Omaheke, Omusati, and the Zambezi, which are classified as IPC Phase 3 (Crisis)."³⁸ Although in this year some regions received good rain, the Kunene region did not get good rain. Such a condition forced the President of the Republic of Namibia to declare a state of emergency in the country.

The European Commission states, "Crisis conditions are mainly due to the poor rainfall in the previous planting season, which led to a significant decline in cereal

³⁷ European Commission, *Namibia: Acute Food Insecurity Situation October 2019—March 2020 and Projection for April—September 2020*, accessed August 1, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/publication/namibia-acute-food-insecurity-situation-october-2019-march-2020-projection-april_en

³⁸ European Commission.

production in 2019.”³⁹ The drought still devastates the Region, and many people are in need of food for themselves and their animals. We could not harvest anything from our fields, especially in the north and northwest parts of the country where the Kunene region is located. COVID 19 makes things much worse. Much more humanitarian assistance than before is needed in the Kunene region from the government and non-governmental organizations, as well as from the church.

The European Commission says, “Water shortages also contributed to significant livestock deaths in the northwestern and southern regions.”⁴⁰ Yes, many animals, including cattle, continue to die because there is no water. The need for water is not only for the livestock but also for the people too.

The European Commission indeed says, “In the projection period between April and September 2020, an estimated 360,000 people are expected to experience severe acute food insecurity.”⁴¹ People in these areas are experiencing already a situation where they can find themselves without food. The government began to distribute food under the Drought Relief Food Program. This attempt is not enough because almost the whole country needs food. The Kunene is one of the regions classified as in the IPC Phase 3 crisis.

The European Commission noted some key drivers of the crisis:

1. Insufficient agriculture production in 2019
2. Shortage of rainfall and drought.

³⁹ European Commission.

⁴⁰ European Commission.

⁴¹ European Commission.

3. The need for water that left more than sixty thousand livestock dead in 2019.

3.3.7 Human Trafficking

Due to the high rate of poverty in the Kunene region, human trafficking is rampant in the Region. Hunger and poverty threaten the parents to sell their minor daughters to strangers. One of the local newspapers reported that “Child trafficking is on the increase in parts of drought-hit Opuwo and Ruacana, where some desperate parents who are not registered for any State grants are said to be swapping their daughters for money to survive. This resulted in the arrest of a South African national, Kenneth Karner (66), for human trafficking and child sex.”⁴² This is a reality faced by families for survival. Some Ovahimba parents do that to their children because of the economic crisis.

I know human trafficking is a global problem, yet in Namibia human trafficking cases rate higher especially at this time of crisis. Children are exchanged for small amounts of money, as New Era recounts, someone “paid N\$2,500 for each girl in order to travel with them. What we have discovered mostly in this type of case is that these people, because of lack of sufficient support from government, poverty, and unemployment, are pushed to survive on tourists, who pay them small amounts of money in order to take pictures of them.”⁴³ She said “The money generated is being used to buy food.”⁴⁴ The ELCIN and government should work together and support this community to provide resources and food for them.

⁴² Loide Jason, “New Era,” *Windhoek*, April 27, 2020, <https://neweralive.na/>.

⁴³ Jason.

⁴⁴ Jason.

It is surprising that the ELCIN keeps silent in the matter. As far as I know, the church should open up the eyes and ears of the government, and be a voice of the voiceless. Since the issues of human trafficking rose, I did not hear the voice of the church in the matter. Such evil happens even in the area where the ELCIN commits to doing mission. Why does the ELCIN not raise her voice on that evil? Who will speak on behalf of the people in the Kunene region? I hope the church acts as soon as possible and defends the right of the poor. The ELCIN represents the masses in Namibia, and because of that she needs to act and speak on behalf of them as the Bible commands: “Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy” (Proverbs 31:8-9). That is the same as we told by prophet Micah to do justice.

3.3.8 Clean Water

The Namibian Newspaper quoted Nguzu Muharukwa, who said, “I have addressed the problem regularly in the Kunene Regional Council meetings, but every time, there is talk of there being no money. This is a serious matter”⁴⁵ Here it is clear that the problem of water crisis in the Kunene region is already reported to those represent the government at the level of the Region and constituencies.

Figure 8: Unclean Water Consumed by Himba Tribe in Kunene Region

⁴⁵ Clemans Miyanicwe, “The Namibian” *Windhoek*, June 20, 2019, 3.



Figure 7. Source: Global Water Crisis: Water shortage. <https://www.gfa.org/special-report/global-clean-water-crisis/>

The crisis of clean water in the Kunene region is a major concern in the area, where people suffer from thirst. We know that water is life, and without water, no one can survive in this world.

African News states that “. . . villagers from Oukongo Village in Namibia's northern Kunene region endure a long walk under the scorching sun to fetch water from a stream.”⁴⁶ This is an indication of how people in the Kunene region live in need of water, not only clean water. In this scenario, the villagers are traveling for more than 10 km to fetch waters for consumption and to use in cooking their food.⁴⁷ However, they travel such long distances not for clean water, but unclean water. The ELCIN needs to create a platform with people from around the world to find a permanent solution even in the

⁴⁶ “African News” Feature: Lack of clean water thwarts Namibian villagers, Google, last modified March 25, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/24/c_137062691.htm accessed July 25, 2020.

⁴⁷ “African News”. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/24/c_137062691.htm accessed July 25, 2020.

Oukongo village. The ELCIN has already made many attempts to make boreholes in different places in the Kunene area. Partners can support the church in any kind like financials and engineering experts in the issues relate to the water.

African News reports that “The stream is their main source of water.”⁴⁸ I don’t know where we are going. Where are our political leaders in the country leading us? Thirty years are too many years, we still have people in communities without clean water. People elect their political leaders, but these leaders do not care about the citizens who put them in power. If the government failed the people, then the church needs to help the people. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia is also included in this task to improve the life of people in the Kunene region. Earlier I spoke about the diseases. How can people not be infected by diseases if the water they consume is unclean? If you don’t have access to clean water, you are in great poverty. *African News* reports that “The water is however muddy and unfit for human consumption. But we have no other choice but to utilize and survive on this water.”⁴⁹ That is a clear indication that our government fails to supply clean water to the people in remote areas. There is no other option for the church to look at people who suffer like that, but the ELCIN keeps silent. The church leaders should act accordingly without looking to the relationship which they have with political leaders. The church should address all evil activities in the societies, especially in the Kunene region. Jesus’s words cannot allow the church to be kept quiet as Jesus says “. . . I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink . . .” (Mt 25: 42).

⁴⁸ “*African News*”.

⁴⁹ “*African News*”.

According to the *African News*, Mbinge, who is a community leader, said, "We usually rely on rain for water. However, during the dry days like today, community members from about five villages rely on the stream for water."⁵⁰ Yet, the Namibian government has money to buy masks and donate them to the government of Zimbabwe as it reported by Namibia Broadcasting Corporation in the news on July 04, 2020, but how is it that our regime can buy masks and donate them to Zimbabwe when we do not have access to clean water?

In this chapter, we examined how poverty hit the Kunene region and the causes of poverty in the Region. The life of people in the area, especially the Himba people, has worsened, and I encourage the ELCIN and other stakeholders to strengthen their efforts to render services among the people in the Region.

In chapter four, I will discuss what the Bible says about poverty.

⁵⁰ "African News". http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/24/c_137062691.htm accessed July 25, 2020.

CHAPTER 4

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TELLS US ABOUT POVERTY?

4.1 The Explanation about Poverty

What does the Bible say about poverty or the poor? God Almighty is always on the side of the poor, and in him, they have hope, as Job said: “So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth” (Job:16). God creates rich and poor both, as it is indicated in Job: “who shows no partiality to nobles, nor regards the rich more than the poor, for they all the work of his hands?” (Job 34:19).

Generally, poverty is not having adequate resources or the means to obtain the necessary possessions essential in life. According to Sakwa, the author of the book *Bible and Poverty in Kenya*, he summarized poverty into two groups, physical and social needs.¹ Each person needs physical protection from any danger that can harm his or her body. This means all of us have physical needs and social needs in our life on earth. Each person needs physical protection from harm and psychological risk.² I think we can see these needs from the perspective of human rights. Therefore, each person needs love and social respect. Sakwa says that, “the priorities of the poor when it comes to the aspects of

¹ Maurice Matendechre Sakwa, *Bible and Poverty in Kenya: An Empirical Exploration* (Danvers: IDC Publishers, 2008), 109.

² Sakwa, 109.

poverty that have to be tackled include, economic or material aspects (including for instance lack of food), health (including for instance lack of political power) aspects.”³

Some people live in poverty and think that they find themselves in that situation because God wants them to be in scarcity. Since God began to create the world, he was improving the people’s life. From the Book of Genesis to Revelation, the Bible clarifies that God wills suitable life, sustenance, fulfillment and good living to His people. From the Book of Genesis, we read that God created everything good and provided plants to serve human’s need. God's attendance and participation in the day to day matters of people are discovered in His love for His people. God’s love for His people, specifically for downgraded children, women and men drives Him to descend down to the poor and stay in their midst of poverty through Jesus Christ. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Tremper Longman II, a Scholar and Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at Westmont College, in his book *The Bible and the Ballot*, puts people in categories depending on how they think about the poor: those who believe that it is a task of individuals and the church to help the poor rather than the government; those who believe the church should only focus on the church members who are in need and not for the society; those that think that the poor became poor because they are too lazy, and they do not need to be assisted at all; and those who feel that the tax deducted from their salary

³ Sakwa, 109.

should not be distributed among the poor.⁴ All people in these four groups have their own reasons why they think like that. I understand that it is our task, all of us, to care for all these in need, either the church members or those not belonging to any denomination. It is the responsibility for the church and government to take care of the poor.

4.2 Some Examples of Causes of Poverty from the Bible

In the Bible, we read many things that cause poverty among the people. For example, one of these things is human beings' evil, as it states in Gen 17-19. Some of the examples follow here: Amos. 6; 5:11; Deut 28: 47-48; Is 3:1 divine punishment, Prov. 6: 10-11 idleness, Lk 15: 14 Prov 6: 26 discrimination, Prov 13: 18; 21: 5 lack of discipline, Prov 22: 26-27 quick and empty promise, Mt 18: 23-25 obligation, Job 20:19, Is 1:7 Judge 6:6 unjust treatment, Gen 47: 20-21, 45:11 starvation and Job 1: 13-21 bad luck.

As we find ourselves in poverty, we cannot blame God because it is our responsibility as human beings. The Bible makes it categorically clear that poverty is for all people. That means each of us can be affected by poverty, white and black, old and young, women and men, unrighteous and righteous, poor and rich, bad and good (Ps 37: 25, Deut 8: 7-9; Ps 34: 9-10). Our Lord Jesus Christ in his humanity, he was poor (Mt 8: 29).

The Bible tells us about the results of poverty how it can affect human beings. The results of poverty can be embarrassment (Lk 16:3; Prov 13:18), damage (Prov 10: 15), ungodliness (Mk 12:44; Ps 119: 17), crime (Prov 30: 8-9; 6:30) and sorrow (Prov

⁴ Tremper Longman II, *The Bible and the Ballot: Using Scripture in Political Decisions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2020), 254-55.

31:7). Lastly, the Bible advises the church to take part in the poor's difficulty and simplify development programs and projects that will help alleviate scarcity (Rom 15:26; Acts 24:17; Gal 2:10).

4.3 The Old Testament and Poverty

According to Psalm 113, all people are equal regardless of their societies' status in God's eyes. God treats them equally as he creates both king and poor as it said: “He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of his people” (Ps 113:7-8). God created all people, rich and poor, men and women. That means that God cares for all people, no matter poor or rich, and not only those who have a good relationship with Him.

In Psalm 14, we can get a clear message that nothing can harm you in God's care. However, there are evildoers whose plans violate the poor's objectives. Yet God is always on the side of the poor. Poverty cannot make God leave the poor, but He is still with them and protects them from evildoers. We read, “You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor, but the Lord is their refuge” (Ps 14:6). The verse tells that God is the owner of the poor. The poor expect to trust God and the evildoers should stop their harmful behaviors toward the poor. God cannot allow the poor to be mistreated forever by their enemy, as said in 1Chronicles 16:21. God will rescue them from the hands of the oppressors. Longman says, “If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them.”⁵ The rulers need to act honestly and in fairness to the poor as the scriptures say, “The Lord

⁵ Longman, *The Bible and the Ballot*, 265.

loves Israel, so he has given them a king who will rule fairly and honestly” (1King 10:9b). To do evil to the poor is not allowed, but we need to feel compassion for them in their difficulties. God demands justice for all people as He said, “I am the Lord your God, and I demand equal justice both for you Israelites and for those foreigners who live among you” (Leviticus 24:22). We need to do as David did, “David ruled all Israel with fairness and justice” (1Chronicles 18:14). Many challenges in this world face poor people. That’s why Sider writes, “But none of our neighbors face more desperate need than those who are so poor that malnutrition and even death constantly haunt them.”⁶ The Lord does differently from what we do to the poor. Psalm 22 says, “The Lord doesn’t hate or despise the helpless in all of their troubles. When I cried out, he listened and did not turn away” (Ps 22:24).

The Bible guides us very directly to think about poor people. God told Moses to tell the Israelites that: “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God” (Lev 19:9-10). In Jeremiah He said, “People who harvest grapes leave some for the poor” (Jer 49:11). Listen to what the poor said, “Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy” (Ps 86:1). Those who have earthly materials have a responsibility to share with the poor. In Proverbs, we read, “He who oppressed the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God” (Proverbs 14:31).

⁶ Ronald J. Sider, *Cry Justice: The Bible on Hunger and Poverty* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 1.

As those have something to give to the poor, it does not mean that they lose, as the Bible said, “He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward him for what he has done” (Proverbs 19:17). Only the rich people who have love from God within himself or herself can help these in need. Newbiggin said: “There is no knowledge of God apart from the love of God, and there is no love of God apart from the love of the neighbor.”⁷ God is expecting something from those who have something to do with the poor. Psalm 131:15 says, “I will bless Zion with food, and even the poor will eat until they are full.” We read in the Bible that “Is not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?” (Isaiah 58: 7). It says, “The poor must beg for help, but the rich can give a harsh reply” (Prov 18:23). The wealth which people have is nothing and useless in God’s eyes if people do not serve the poor with what we have in this world.

We can read in the book of Ezekiel this: “The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery; they have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the alien without redress” (Ezekiel 22:29). God knows how other people deal with the poor in our communities. People do evil to each other, and at the same time, they oppress the poor. God requires people to do justice and love kindness to all people (Micah 6:8). At the end, God will fulfill what He planned to as it said, “When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the arrogant

⁷ Lesslie Newbiggin, *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 109.

boasting of the king of Assyria and his haughty pride” (Is 10:12). People should do good to each other, mostly to the poor, to escape God’s wrath.

4.4 Luke’s Gospel is for Poor and Rich

4.4.1 The Poor

Theologians learn that the gospel of Luke is for the poor and other downgraded groups. We read “. . . he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty” (Luke 1: 53). Luke’s gospel mentions the word poor more than other gospels. According to Bosch in his book *Transforming Mission*, he says, “The term *ptochos* (‘poor’) occurs ten times in Luke, compared to five times each in Mark and Matthew.”⁸ Hopefully that makes the gospel of Luke a gospel of the poor. In his teaching through his sermon on the mount, Jesus was speaking to them both as he said, “He looked up at his disciples and said: Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation” (Luke 6:20, 24).

Luke’s gospel has much more concern with the poor than other gospels. This gospel helps us to have more understanding about the poor, as Bosch records that “We would probably lost an important, if not the most important, part of the earliest Christian tradition and its intense preoccupation with the figure and message of Jesus as the hope of the poor.”⁹ That notion gives a clear picture that Luke had much concern about social matters, especially for the poor. People should learn to listen to what the poor need.

⁸ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbs Books, 1991), 98.

⁹ Bosch, 98.

Luke gives us the list of the people who suffer by poverty, for example, 4:18; 6:20; 14:13; 14:21. In Luke, people learn that those who are sick are also in the category of the poor. Jesus wants his listeners to think about Lazarus who was poor, and at the same time was sick. It means sick people are in poverty and in need of healing. Bosch writes that “This is particularly true of those who are sick. Lazarus, the exemplary poor person in Luke, is both a poor person in Luke, is both poor and sick.”¹⁰

4.4.2 Rich

The Bible tells several times about rich people. We can look to the rich fool recorded in the gospel of Luke 12:16-21. The luxurious fool was only concerned about earthly life and didn't care about the future beyond this world. He had enough food, but he did not care about others who had nothing to eat. Jesus taught that “But woe to you who are rich, for you received your consolation” (Luke 6:24). The rich fool did not know that the life of people is not limited to materials, as Blomberg in his book *Neither Poverty nor Riches*, stresses: “Jesus did not care to promote the transfer of property from one covetous man to another! Verse 15 makes it plain that Jesus tells the parable to warn people against ‘greed,’ because a person’s life does not consist in the abundance of his or her possessions.”¹¹ On different occasions, Jesus answered his followers: “In reply he said to them, whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise” (Luke 3:11). I think such a message should reach to all people entrusted to render the service to any community, especially in the Kunene region. Jesus

¹⁰ Bosch, 99.

¹¹ Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 119.

is warning all people about the hazard of greed and possessions. Therefore, in giving to the needs, we cannot expect anything from them, but God will bless us as Luke wrote, “give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back” (Luke 6:38).

It is the church's task to teach those who are not living in poverty that the time will come when we will see the poor in the bosom of Abraham. Roth, in her book *On Wealth and Poverty*, reflects on the sermon made by St. John about the poor Lazarus and the rich anonymous person. She says, “You saw him in poverty then; see him in luxury now. You saw him in hunger; see him in great abundance. You saw him striving in hunger; see him crowned with victory. You saw him suffering; see his recompense, both you who are rich and you who are poor: the rich, to keep you from thinking that wealth is worth anything without virtue; the poor, to keep you from thinking that poverty is any evil.”¹² To avoid being condemned in the day of judgment, we need to help the poor, including the people living in poverty in the Kunene region.

It seems in the conversation which the rich man and Lazarus had the rich man realized that he did seek forgiveness from God before he died. The rich man knew the Old Testament doctrine about the care and helped these in need, as Blomberg said: “He knew Old Testament teaching about caring for the needy.”¹³

¹² Catharine P. Roth, *On Wealth and Poverty* (Crestwood: ST Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 39.

¹³ Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches*, 123.

I am touched by the words of Jesus, which we can read as it recorded, according to Luke 12, as Jesus said, “Sell your possessions and give alms” (Luke 12:33).

Possessions are problem for some of us. But who gives us life and strength to work and gain what we have? If we understand fellowship, “*koinonia*,” then greed will go no more in our midst. People will give and assist each other. Blomberg writes, “Serious application of this principle to contemporary churches would require such radical transformation of most Christian fellowships that few seem willing even to begin.”¹⁴

4.5 Matthew Record

We can think about how Jesus attends to the poor at his time physically on earth. We can remember how he was feeding the five thousand and four thousand as we read Matthew 14:21 and 15:38. He was with them almost the whole day, and he felt compassion for them. Through these illustrations we can make our conclusion that Jesus taught us how we could care for our fellow human beings.

Jesus wants people to treat each other in a right manner. He said, “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law of prophets” (Matt 7:12). I know Jesus did not facilitate the project of poverty eradication among the poor in Israel. Jesus helps the people in need because all resources were available as he is a source of everything. Do we assume that we can feed five thousand and fourth thousand as standard for help to the poor's wishes? I don't think we had given the minimum and maximum in our rendering service to the poor. I agree with Kasera, who says, “Anyone

¹⁴ Blomberg, 132.

dedicated to the faithful study of God's will notice that Jesus' miracles of feeding the hungry was not meant to be a normal order of addressing the needs of the poor and needy in the church and the world in general."¹⁵ That is indicating that the ELCIN can serve the poor according to the resources available to her.

The word of God teaches us we need to attend the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We know that Jesus attended all our needs as he gave his life for us all, and we also need to show our love to our brothers and sisters in demand, specifically in the area of Kunene. The apostle John wrote,

“We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us-and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him” (John 3:19-19).

In our days, I hear the people say, “Actions speak louder than words.” That is the same as the apostle John says here. It is not enough to say we love our fellow human beings while we have our brother and sisters in the Kunene region living in poverty. Our love should turn or change into action and serve the people of God who live in scarce life in the Kunene region.

I was amazed by the word of Jesus when he was replying to the question posted by John the Baptist, according to Mt 11. He said, “the blind receives their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good

¹⁵ Basilius Kasera, *The Biblical and Theological Examination of Prosperity Theology* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand GmbH, 2012), 95.

news brought to them” (Matt 11:5). Jesus told the disciples of John the Baptist to tell him what they saw. The people of Jesus's time, especially those who were in need, Jesus provided their spiritual and physical needs. Jesus met all the needs of all people who appeared in front of him. Even those who were dead, Jesus had given life to again. The list of requirements listed by Jesus are the same needs as the people of today. These are the same needs the ELCIN is confronting daily among the people in the Kunene region.

The World Council of Churches reported that “The churches of today have to discover who are the modern counterparts of those to whom Christ requires them ‘to give food, to give drink to clothe and to visit” (Matt. 34-39).¹⁶ Yes, some churches had already discovered the needs of people in these needs mentioned in the reports. The church, like the ELCIN, wants to respond to these needs, but the obstacles are a shortage of means to overcome all necessities. The church can use the little she has in responding to the needs of the people, especially in the Kunene region.

I was thinking about what will happen in the day of judgment, according to Matt 25: 34-39. As the church will also be judged according to that passage as well as an individual. I hope it will be the day of chaos. Because of the day of judgment, the church should discover people in need and render the service to them, for example, to provide food, shelter, drinks, clothes, and other humanitarian assistance.¹⁷ I believe that ELCIN is already on the right track, and she needs only to redouble her efforts in her mission in the Kunene region. It is my wish in that day God to say the following same words to ELCIN

¹⁶ World Council of Churches, *The Church for Others and The Church for the World: A Quest for Structures for Missionary Congregations* (Geneve: Imprimerie Paul Loosli, 1967), 21.

¹⁷ World Council of Churches, 21.

that “Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness” (Isaiah 1:27). The church has a task to teach the church members that each and every one will stand facing the judgment throne if we cannot assist those in need today.

4.6 The Church with Prophetic Voice

I indicated in the early chapter that, before Namibia gained its independence, the church's voice was higher. The church stood up and spoke on behalf of the masses who were suffering. The church leaders from different denominations in Namibia -- like bishop Leonard Auala of Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo and Kavango Church (ELOK) which later became ELCIN, and moderator pastor Paul Gowaseb head of Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELOK) spoke on behalf of the Namibian citizens as they were under the yoke of oppressors. They sent an “Open Letter to the South African Prime minister Vorster.” The content of that document is as follows here:

Our people are not free and by the way they are treated, they do not feel safe. . . . The Church Boards’ urgent wish is that in terms of the declaration of the World Court and in co-operation with the UNO. . . . your government will seek a peaceful solution to the problems of our land and will see to it that human rights be put into operation and that South West Africa may become a self-sufficient and independent state.¹⁸

Where did the spirit that led our church leaders of that time go? Why can the church leaders of today not do the same? After we got our independence, the voice of the church slowly became weak. The church should stand up and tell the rulers of the day that “Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees, who write oppressive status, to turn aside the

¹⁸ Peter H, Katyavivi, *A History of Resistance in Namibia*: (London: UNESCO Press, 1988), 67.

needy from justice and that you may make the orphans your prey” (Is 10:1-2). The church needs to raise a prophetic voice again, especially on behalf of the people in the Kunene region as they are in poverty. That had also been done in the Old Testament as Thacker said, “This is a tradition stretching right back to the furious denunciations of injustice by Old Testament prophets such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah.”¹⁹ The church should do that for the sake of justice for all people in Namibia, particularly people in the Kunene region.

ELCIN should act as the prophet of her time. ELCIN should stand up and speak the truth to the Namibian government, saying that enough is enough. Thacker, in his book *Global Poverty*, tells the church that “The role of the prophet becomes the role of the Church in its task to speak truth to power, and in particular to cast down empires that set themselves up against the Lordship of Christ.”²⁰ The church should tell the leaders of today, that is the Namibian government, that God knows what they are doing. They must know all people are God’s people. God expects them to do justice to his people.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia as Church should be emulating the example of Luke and work accordingly in the Kunene region. We learn from Luke 12: 13-21 that greed can make us too selfish and forget the poor and other vulnerable around us. ELCIN must continue to teach the people about the evil of greed among her members or non-members.

4.7 Respond to Poverty and Inequality with Radical Generosity

¹⁹ Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches*, 254.

²⁰ Justin Thacker, *Global Poverty: A Theological Guide* (London: SCM Press, 2017), 136.

I know that we have many people in our communities who have nothing to help themselves or empower their families. Simultaneously, we have many people in communities who earn more than their daily bread every day.²¹ In most societies, those blessed with many things do not think about the poor in their area. We can find some people burning old clothes while there are poor people who do not have any clothes to cover their bodies. While others are blessed with enough food but throw away the food, their neighbors have nothing to consume.

Christians give tithes to the church as the Bible requires from those who belong to the fellowship. In Deuteronomy, we read that “When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year (which is the year of the tithe), giving it to the Levites, the aliens, the orphans, and the widows so that they may eat their fill within your towns” (Deuteronomy 26: 12). How many churches use tithes properly? Maybe some church parishioners have an excellent understanding of giving tithes to the church. How do the churches use these tithes? As far as I know, some churches are not accurately using tithes as they direct tithes where they are not supposed to be used, while in some churches, tithes are used only in the salary of the church workers. The poor are not getting any benefits from the levies. In doing so, we lost the target. Here I mean these supposed to benefit from tithes could not get anything. Jeremiah writes, “For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace” (Jer 6: 13-14).

²¹ Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches*, 254.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia attempts to serve the poor people in the Kunene region and help them attain wholeness. In Luke's gospel, Jesus quoted from the prophet Isaiah about his earthly ministry. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). The church needs to do so.

I appreciate some statements used by Armstrong in his book *Awaiting a Savior*: "I have hope that there is a biblical and effective way for the Church to serve the poor. I want you to have that hope as well."²² Of course, as Christians, it is not our culture to deny the truth. In the case of poverty, we cannot deny it because it is with us. That's why the ELCIN should respond to poverty in the Kunen region. If anyone ignores that there is no poverty in Namibia, they have no truth within them.

Yes, I am convinced that there are churches in the world too busy to respond to the needs of the people in need, that's why I'm here. I believe that in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) things are different. I am here as a student at Luther Seminary because ELCA church members contributed their tithes. In doing so, the ELCA fulfills what the church required by the text I indicated above. My church cannot pay my scholarship, but the ELCA helps me and my dream will become a reality one day. That does not mean that the congregants of the ELCIN are not contributing their tithes to the church. Yes, not all of them, but some do their task. Maybe what the ELCIN congregants contribute does not go so far to cater to the scholarship for someone. The churches should learn to use tithes accordingly, as the Bible tells us how the levies need to be used in

²² Aaron Armstrong, *Awaiting a Savior: The Gospel, The New Creation and The End of Poverty* (Adelphi, MD: Cruciform Press, 2011), 13.

responding to the needs of the poor. In this case, I am thinking about the people in the Kunene region living in poverty.

The question is how to raise the awareness of the church to follow this instruction. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia tries to fulfill Jesus's instruction. Jesus says, "But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and, the land. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:13-14). These verses convince me that we also need to think of rich people when we think about the poor. I am confident that if there are no poor, at the same time, there are no rich. There should always be a comparison between these two people in different conditions. Without one group, another group cannot exist. I observed that the poor and rich are not friends and they don't like each other. Blomberg confirms this, "Then, as now, in many cultures rich and poor were also virtual enemies, with the former shunning the latter as much as possible."²³

The apostle Paul teaches us to give, as he said: "They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus string up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life" (2 Tim 6:18-19).

Indeed, I believe that God wants us to make the poor rich as he has chosen us. That's why James has written that "Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs who love him?" (James 2:5). Rich Christians are expecting not to deny a call for help to the poor, as Dean Judith

²³ Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches*, 117.

said: “Christians cannot ignore the plight of the poor.”²⁴ The poor need our attention in their poverty the same as they cry for help from the Lord. Once, Jesus praised the poor woman according to what she contributed, although it was too small as recorded in Mark 12: 41-44. Jesus appreciated the way the woman gave her contribution or collection. She shared what she had so that her other fellow poor will benefit from what she gave. I am not supporting Thacker who suggests that, we need to give all that we have to those in need.”²⁵ I do not think that in this case, Jesus tells us to give all that we have to the church, but the emphasis was on how we offer. We need to give our gifts with the goodwill from the bottom of our hearts.

In comparison, Jesus was also speaking about how the scribes and Pharisees used to give their tithes. Matthew tells that “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you, tithe mint, dill, and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others” (Matt 23:23). Jesus was not happy about the way these religious leaders used to contribute their tithes. I think God does not need our money but needs our cash used in his people's service, especially the poor. God is rich for everything as it said “. . . but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” (1 Tim 6: 17). In our church book hymn, song 499: 4 we sing “*Shoka tu na osho shOmuwa, Thimbo*

²⁴ Judith M. Dean, Julie Schaffner, and Stephen L. S. Smith, *Attacking Poverty in the Developing World: Christin Practitioners and Academics in Collaboration* (Waynesbore: Authentic Media, 2005), 5.

²⁵ Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches*, 254.

nuuyamba wo wetu.”²⁶ This means “what we have is for the Lord, time and our wealth.” Anything we have is coming from the Lord, and we need to share with these in need.

It is very pitiful to have people live in our midst in poverty. We see them, but we cannot do anything. The poor are tramped down, and their rights are violated. I was thinking about the words of God in the book of Amos where God says, “Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land. The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely, I will never forget any of their deeds” (Amos 8:4-7). Here God promises that he will never forget any evil deeds done to the poor. How do we think these two verses relate to the poor of our time? Sakwa comments on the text saying “Amos 8:4-7 is against those who trample on the needy and suppress the poor of the country through unfair means (economic and other means) and utter exploitation; it is written the Lord will not forget any single thing they have done to the poor.”²⁷ I hope this verse leads the ELCIN to do a mission among the people in the Kunene region. God is always on the side of the poor.

In this chapter, we experienced the Old Testament and the New Testament of how God requests a good relationship between the rich and poor. God wants the rich to share what they have with the poor. We know that poverty is a global issue that needs collection efforts from us all. Through this chapter, God shows us what He likes and what He dislikes between these two groups of poor and rich. Paul warns people about the love of money as he wrote, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their

²⁶ ELCIN, *Ehangano: Omaimbilo Gongeleki Onkwaevangeli PaLuther YomuNamibia* (Ondangwa: ELOC Printing Press, 1987), 528.

²⁷ Sakwa, *Bible and Poverty in Kenya*, 35.

eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains” (1Tim 6:10). Every day we hear stories of how people steal money from the government, churches and non-governmental organizations. Money is there to serve all people, including the poor, but only some people enrich themselves with public funds.

I don't have any doubt that the ELCIN knows the story of poor Lazarus and the rich man. That's why the ELCIN is in the midst of her mission among the people starving, thirsty, and deprived by poverty in the Kunene region. She does not want to do what the rich man did and realize his mistakes while he is in hell. The ELCIN should continue with her task of caring and provide necessary needs to the needy. She needs only to improve her service to the people in need in the Kunene area. The ELCIN can help a limited number of people in the Kunene region that she can serve as her resources are limited.

What we need to know is that the ELCIN at this stage is not a church that can make a profit. She serves the community in the manner of free service. However, the church can ask the church members, and organizations both inside Namibia and abroad to contribute funds for a specific activity. It is true, however, that individual people or organizations do not always respond positively to such a request. Without better and more stable funding, the church's dream cannot be reached. There is also a lack of understanding among many church members as to how the church resources are used and managed. In this case, the church needs to emphasize education, particularly educating church members about how church resources are used in the church activities.

It is also true that while some church members may understand the importance of the church's activities, they may also have concerns about how church funds have been used in the past. For example, some of the money cannot be used for the purposes for which it was budgeted. Money that is collected for mission work instead is used to pay pastors and other workers' salaries in the parish. Funds might be accumulated for a church building, but then they are used for other purposes. Such mismanagement of church resources can demoralize church members, and prevent them from contributing money to church activities. Any act of misuse of the resources in any institution—including the church—is corruption and the culprit needs to appear in a hearing or court to account for such. It is not only stealing money that is corrupt, but any and all the acts of mismanagement of an institution's materials can constitute corruption.

In the last chapter, I will suggest what the church should do to combat corruption in her church premises.

4.8 Sharing Resources

All the food human beings can consume is coming from land. We use water to irrigate our crops so that they can be grown. We buy some food like meat and other kinds of food. Those selling food need to think wisely about their products' price so that even the poor can also afford to get something to eat from their markets.²⁸ The land where we live God has given to us all, rich and poor. This means it is not for us. The owner of the land and everything within and on it is for God, as it recorded in Psalms. "The earth is the Lord's and those who all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it" (Ps 24:1). We

²⁸ Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches*, 253.

need to share what we receive from the land with the poor. We need to do justice as we distribute the land to each other because it does not belong to us but is for God. The land is not for rich people only, but for the poor too. I know one day, the Lord will give freedom to the poor as Isaiah says, “The Lord will set you free from your sorrow, suffering, and slavery” (Is 14:3). In sharing resources and food, we need to do justice. Isaiah says, “The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice” (Is 59:15). Thomas Phillips, in his book titled *Reading Issues of Wealth and Poverty in Luke and Acts* says, “If the rich are those who have surplus possessions and the poor are those who have needs, then what of those who are neither rich nor poor, those who have only enough to meet their essential needs?”²⁹ The question leads all of us who read this research into self-introspection. God’s word says, “Nothing is hidden from God! He sees through everything, and we will tell him the truth” (Heb 4:13).

In this chapter, I dealt with poverty among the poor and the nature of poverty. We can learn how the Old Testament dealt with poor and how God wants the rich live with poor through reading. We also know in the New Testament how Jesus teaches the people about the poor and rich concerning the kingdom of God. the church of today needs to adopt these teachings and implement them.

In chapter five, I will explore how the theologians, mostly from Africa, speak about Economic Poverty in the African continent.

²⁹ Thomas E. Phillips, *Reading Issues of Wealth and Poverty in Luke-Acts* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 14.

CHAPTER 5

A CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON POVERTY IN AFRICA: JUSTICE, FAMILY, AND GENDER RELATIONS

Poverty is a universal issue. Theologians have reviewed it from different perspectives. Theologians of African descent have also been reflecting on the issue in their context. Bible forms the bedrock of theological reflections and most theologians of African culture explore the Bible alongside culture and traditions. How have theologians engaged issues of economic poverty in the African Continent?

This chapter explores how African theologians speak about poverty. The Lord says in Ecclesiastes 4:1, “I looked again and saw people being ill-treated everywhere on earth. They were crying, but no one was there to offer comfort, and those who ill-treated them were powerful.”¹ There is no doubt poverty is a global problem and it means Africa is not excluded. It does not mean that if poverty is a worldwide matter it has to be neglected. The church and other bodies, including the government, have pertinent roles to play in alleviating poverty in Africa which is becoming scandalous. Poverty in Africa is gravely intertwined with the unfortunate history of slavery, apartheid, and colonization

¹ Sandie Butler, David Springgs, Nick Page, Claire Page, *The Poverty and Justice Bible* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), 625.

of the African peoples. I will also present the theological challenges to the Lutheran Church in Namibia to invite her to action.

5.1. Justice and Social Life

In Namibia, the Lutheran churches were involved in promoting human rights and political freedom in the time of colonialism and apartheid. In this time of neo-colonialism in the country where people misused powers, the churches expected to stand as the conscience of the government and condemn unjust structures that keep people perpetually in poverty. Theologian Isaak, in his book *Religion and Society*, argues, “Furthermore, in countries such as Namibia, the Lutheran churches are highly active to promote human rights and political freedom during the days of colonialism and apartheid.”² Why has the church grown complacent in continuing to do her work as she did in pre-independence times? I still believe that the church is here to be a voice of the oppressed, but today's churches in Namibia keep quiet too much. Why is the prophetic voice silenced? Churches should remind those who forget that God’s judgment is waiting for us. We will stand before the throne of one appointed by Him, waiting for the final sentence. Luke said: “For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

The results of youth unemployment include: unwanted pregnancy, children dumped, suicide, cohabitation, abuse, alcoholism, theft, robbers, peer pleasure, and involvement in the wrong groups. What can we do with those young generations? The

² Isaak, *Religion and Society*, 96-97.

answer is that we need to do justice to them; otherwise, at the end of the day, those youth will blame us because we failed them, and we will regret it. As long as we have teenagers without work in the country and who have no bright future, let us forget the prosperous life. We need love in our midst wherever we live. God shows his love to us, as indicated in John 3:16.

If our governments and churches fail to improve people's lives, especially women and youth, we will continue to reap the bad consequences that will be the major challenges to Africa. Martey in his book *African Theology* said “These challenges range from poverty, hunger, diseases, poor housing, child and infant mortality, unemployment, family disintegration, population explosion, inadequate or no health care facilities and illiteracy to difficulties in transportation and inadequate communication system.”³ Something should be done immediately.

We need to do as Jesus taught us as he said: “Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these (Mark 12:31)”. We need to show this love to our youth and all people living in poverty in Africa. Without love, we cannot overcome these challenges that hurt Africa's people, mostly in Namibia.

5.2. Justice and Family in Africa

In Africa, the family is regarded as an important institution. The meaning of family in Africa is not limited to immediate family members but the entire community

³ Emmanuel Martey, *African Theology: Inculturation and Liberation* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 50.

with each family unit forming the nucleus. The communitarian nature of African society helps to make collective decision imperatives. Theologians of African descent deal with issues of poverty as emanating from injustices in the family *cum* community. The basic need for each specific community is justice. In Africa, families in the community confront many problems. Some of the families' difficulties are caused by the injustice that happens in communities, and the result of this is poverty. Another problem relates to gender and cultural issues.⁴ The churches could do much to take care of families in communities, especially those who suffer from poverty. Maybe a question can arise why the church needs to care for families? Isaak has an answer to that question in his document *Justice and Healing in Families* he said: "Because it is here where human beings are brought into the world, supported economically, and raised to participate in society."⁵ That assertion indicates that the home is very important to families and people need to live in peace and justice. Peace and justice should prevail among the family members who should be able to live without poverty.

5.3. The Church and Food Security in the Families

Food is an essential and basic necessity. In Africa, many people live in poverty of nutrition. There is a need to increase food for the people in the region. Oladipo in the document called *The Role of the Church in Poverty Alleviation in Africa* said: "Increased

⁴ Paul John Isaak, "Justice and Healing in Families," *Journal of Religion and Theology in Namibia* 4, (Jan 2002): 35-53.

⁵ Isaak, 36.

production is frequently a great need in Africa.”⁶ The church does whatever it can to combat the shortage of food in Africa and support the families. Because of poverty in Namibia, usually during the harvest seasons, the ELCIN members annually collect wheat at each parish office, intending to distribute them among those who do not have anything to eat, like the elderly, children, orphans, vulnerable, and those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. That attempt helps many families in their poverty.

Colonialism mentality also has harmful impacts, especially in a reliance on migrant labor, retrenchments, exploitation, violence, and intractable poverty.⁷ In most cases, the shortage of food results from insufficient rainfall and the consequences of poverty. Wherever you find retrenchment, unemployment, exploitation and violence, there also a shortage of food. Moving from work closer to one’s family and being assigned to another workplace that is far from one’s family also contributes to poverty, especially to family members. Each month in Namibia, retrenchment is news every day. We have current information about the fishermen retrenched, and their wives divorced them because of poverty, and this leads some of the workers retrenched to become depressed, which leads them to death. Hartman and Mbathera write in *The Namibian Newspaper* that “According to him 25 fishermen allegedly died since they lost their jobs. He claimed the deaths were due to high blood pressure, as well as suicide.”⁸ The Namibian Newspaper reported that “In the mining sector, for example, more than 1800 people lost their jobs last year alone while the construction industry sent about 30 000

⁶ Julius Oladipo, “Africa.” “The Role of the Church in Poverty Alleviation” in *Journal* Article 17, no. 4 (2000):149.

⁷ Isaak, “*Journal of Religion and Theology in Namibia*,” 38.

⁸ Adam Hartman and Ester Mbathera, “The Namibian,” *Windhoek*, December 03, 2019, 07.

workers home between 2016 and 2017.”⁹ Some children drop their education because there is no money to pay their tuition fees and other expenses. Some men work overtime, but they receive only a regular salary according to their work and the agreement they signed. They work much for fewer wages. Their employers treat employees poorly, and this leads a family into poverty. In this situation, the church tries to assist the couples, encouraging the women to be passionate and respect their relationship even when there is a lack of resources.

5.4 Misuse of the Bible, Religion, and Gender Issues

Historically, the Bible and religion have been used in destructive ways against any person of non-male gender. Some men in the church are indeed misusing the Bible to sabotage the rights of the women. Isaak notes, “Within the context of their societies, men have found that they can use the Bible to justify women’s inequality.”¹⁰ Agandjanian also speaks more about the lack of women in religious authority and leadership. Agandjanian says, “However, very little is known about the dynamics of women’s religious authority and leadership in developing settings, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, a region of powerful and diverse religious expression.”¹¹ In the church, we do not seem to value women enough, especially in the leadership of the church. We look to other organizations, and we point to them that they are not doing sufficient justice to the

⁹ Paulina Ndalikokule, Adam Hartman, Luqman Cloete, “The Namibian” *Windhoek*, February 05, 2019, 1.

¹⁰ Paul John Isaak, *Religion and Society: A Namibian Perspective* (Western Cape: National Book Printers, 1997), 69.

¹¹ Victory Agadjanian, *Women’s Religious Authority in a Church in a Sub-Saharan Setting: Dialectic of Empowerment and Dependency* 982-1008, no 6 (Nov 17, 2015) 1/21, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4801002/> Accessed June 14, 2020.

women. What about the church in Africa? The church must be an agent of change and should be an example to other institutions.

De Gruchy and Villa-Vincencio, in their book *Doing Theology in Context*, avers that “Women are separated from birth by class, location, and economic status.”¹² That is how our oppressors sought to spread this nonsense in Africa and make women became poor. In the apartheid era in Namibia, women were never ranked at the level where men rated. Men and women can do the same job, but they do not receive the same salaries. Women always received a lower wage while men got a higher salary. Men and women could be obtaining the same qualification, doing the same work, but their payments were never equal.

This makes apparent that more women are living in poverty, although they have jobs. Collins cites in her book *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge: Consciousness, and The Politics of Empowerment*, “These jobs are multiplying, spurred by the increasing need for cooks, waitresses, waiters, laundry workers, health aides, and domestic servants to service the needs of affluent middle-class families.”¹³ Most of them are hard workers, but at the end of the month, they cannot receive what they deserve, and because of that, they became destitute. That’s why most women are living under stress, which causes them many different diseases and poverty. I hope the churches in Southern Africa would be able to say no to such exploitation.

¹² John De Gruchy and C. Villa-Vicencio, *Doing Theology in Context: South African Perspectives* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1994), 201.

¹³ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and The Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 69.

In his argument Isaak said: “Women have also been subordinated through the teachings of the Christian Church.”¹⁴ One example that Isaak used at this point is that Christians believe that God is the father, which causes the problem between masculinity and feminism. Some women work, for example in the company, and they received a good salary, but unfortunately, they have not any say in what they are working for. Everything is in the hands of the husband. All the bank cards are in the hands and under the control of the husband. That’s why you find many women living in poverty although they are working and receive a salary at the end of every month. In this case, Isaak was influenced by the Asian theologian C.S. Song as he quoted her as follows: “God in traditional theology is masculine from head to toe. Such a God is a personification of male power, authority, and even brutality. In the name of this masculine God, theology has justified the subservient position of women in the church and society.”¹⁵

We also need to look to the reality of the teaching of the Bible. Listen to what Paul says: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; She must be quiet” (1 Tim 2:12). Again, he said, “Women should remain silent in the church. They are allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says” (1 Cor 14:34). Paul says the law says. When will this law be amended? These texts are used by men to sabotage and to lead women into poverty.

According to Isaak, religion has been used in the issue of racism and belief structure. Some whites think that they are closer to God than others. That is the same way

¹⁴ Isaak, *Religion and Society*, 67.

¹⁵ Isaak, 67.

some men feel that they are closer to God than women.¹⁶ This has greatly influenced Africans to think and believe that they are inferior to the Whites. Yes, I realize that some men misuse the words of Paul to make women inferior. Paul said: “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also should wives submit to their husbands in everything” (Eph 5:22; 1 Cor 11:3). Some men misunderstand these phrases, and this has led women to become the victim of poverty in Africa. “Women submit” does not mean to be suppressed and become poor. Although Paul wrote that Oduyoye and Kanyoro are saying this, “Jesus never suggested that women should be subjected to their husbands.”¹⁷

Some women are positioned in a place of submission. Isaak cites, “There is a great deal within the Bible about Cherishing women, about honoring women, about respecting women; but women should be passive and appreciative, and the most honored are those who are virginally pure.”¹⁸ Women in Southern Africa faced the same problem, especially by traditional values to which they are subjected.

Luckily enough, some women in Africa disregard such thoughts, and they concentrate on the truth of the teaching of Jesus Christ. They realize that the Bible had been written in a specific historical context. Hence feminist theologians contextualized the message of the biblical texts.¹⁹ I witness how women and other vulnerable persons

¹⁶ Isaak, 67.

¹⁷ Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro, *Talitha Qumi!: Proceedings of The Convocation of Africa Women Theologians 1989* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1990), 133.

¹⁸ Isaak, *Religion and Society*, 68.

¹⁹ Isaak, 69.

suffer in many families. Mbiti cites that “The less fortunate he illustrates with the orphans and widows as examples of all those who suffer distress, those most liable to the miseries of want and insecurity, those without protection, those who are in danger of exploitation and ill treatment (cf. Mk. 12 v. 43).”²⁰ I support the statement above where Mbiti expressed what is facing the African women in Southern Africa and Africa as a whole. He pointed to the truth of crucial issues confronting women and vulnerable people living in poverty in Africa. Many women in families, especially in Africa, are not safe because poverty is a threat. As a religious institution, the church needs to address the issue of poverty around the family and women. Most, if not all, families adopt orphans, and such families need much attention from different angles. I know that most governments in Africa are trying to do their best and respond to the basic needs of the people living in poverty.

There is no doubt that many women are under the pressure of poverty in many families in Africa, specifically in Southern Africa. This pressure contributes to broken relationships and divorce in many families in Africa. Such a situation is caused by many different issues like poverty, alcoholism, and unemployment. Isaak confirms this as he says, “Family tensions can be compounded by both affluence and poverty, by unemployment as well as by too much work, by changing gender expectations and by changing understandings and practices regarding sexuality.”²¹ I agree with Isaak in his contribution to this regard. That is a clear picture Isaak brought to us through his notes. In

²⁰ John S. Mbiti, *African and Asian Contributions to Contemporary Theology: Report for Consultation Held at the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute Bossey* (Celigny: World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute, 1976), 84.

²¹ Isaak, *Justice and Healing in Families*, 38.

Africa, we have many broken relationships between couples or couples and children, which brought poverty in many families.

Oladipo cites that “Self-help groups are being assisted here and there.”²² In the case of ELCIN, the church tried, by all means, to assist marginalized people, especially women in poverty in the Kunene region. In most cases, the church decided to do what she could to support women and the community with the necessary skills and materials. Her aim is to remove them from poverty. In some cases, such assistance made a good impact on people's lives in our communities.

Some men have a job, but they are not taken care of by their family members. Many women in Namibia are jobless and living troubled lives, although they are married to employed men. In my study, I realize that women made other fellow women poor. Some women knew that they had established a relationship with married men. Anonymous lady once said that “I was aware that he was married with kids. He was always very active on social media, and often I thought, *What a cute family!* I never had any intention of getting involved with him, especially because I had been cheated on before. At the same time, I can remember the exact moment I met him, before anything had happened. It was like I had met him before, but I knew I hadn't.”²³

The result of this is the suffering of married women and children at home as they live in poverty. They became controllers of the income of the married men. The husbands no longer pay attention to their wives and children. They do not remember anymore what

²² Oladipo, *The Role of the Church in Poverty Alleviation in Africa*, 149.

²³ <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/12/dear-therapist-i-had-affair-married-man/617361/>, accessed on February 17, 2021.

they promise to their partners. The concubines became controllers of their salaries. That leads the family members into poverty. That is why I said some women cause poverty to married women. That is a challenge face family and churches in Africa.

5.5. The Church as Agent of Empowerment for Women

Due to poverty increasing among the women in Southern Africa, for example, the churches encouraged and trained women to gain skills so that they can begin their livelihood projects for escaping from poverty. According to Oladipo, “The church has been promoting the adoption of appropriate small-scale irrigation technology on family farms, but only as a marginal activity and not in a vigorous manner.”²⁴ Yet these are good initiatives for the empowerment of women from the church to make their life easier. Some women formed a group and made garden projects in order to fend for their families. The church provides the necessary garden equipment which they use in the projects. The church took up the responsibility of giving seeds or crops that the women need in their projects at the beginning. When the harvest time comes, they sold 50% of their products and deposited their money in the project bank account. They distribute 40% of the harvest among themselves 10% among those in need in the communities. Phiri is also supporting such initiative as she encouraged the church so that those in poverty can get assistance. She cites that “The churches can also address issues of poverty by initiating income-generating projects that will economically empower the

²⁴ Oladipo, *The Role of the Church in Poverty Alleviation in Africa*, 149.

poor.”²⁵ Although some women are working very hard to change their life and society, they face a lack of marketing.

All projects need a feasibility study first before implementation. Oladipo notes that, “Then the church is blamed for having not done a thorough feasibility strategy.”²⁶ Yes, even in my church, many projects failed because of a lack of feasibility study and strategy. I recall a group of women in my church were given a land where they can make their garden for livelihood project, but because of the lack of feasibility study about the soil, the project failed. It failed because the crops were not suitable for the land. We do not have agricultural experts in the church who can help. That means what Oladipo said is true; the church has that weakness. This makes families and communities continue to suffer poverty. The church needs to send the people to study agriculture so that they will help the church when they come back from the study.

Jesus came in this world to be associated with the poor. Mbiti states that “Jesus has come to announce the good news to the poor, to proclaim release for prisons and recovery of sight for the blind, to let the broken victims go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”²⁷ (Lk 4:18 f). Jesus was not bringing only the good news of liberation to people from the poverty of the soul, but he liberated the people from the captivity of physical hardship. Jesus provided food to the people and liberated people from sickness (Mt 15: 21-28). It is the church's task in Africa to continue where he ended before he ascended into heaven. Many people need social freedom, including women and

²⁵ Isabel Apawo Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, *African Women, Religion, and Health* (New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 184.

²⁶ Oladipo, *The Role of the Church in Poverty Alleviation in Africa*, 149.

²⁷ Mbiti, *African and Asian Contributions to Contemporary Theology*, 101.

many people in the Kunene region who are suffering from poverty. That's why when Jesus told Zacchaeus to come down from the top of the tree to join the group of vulnerable people, poor and other marginalized people, as Katongole said, “. . . Jesus calls to him to come down from the top of the tree to the ground; from the clouds to join the crowds: the smelly, disorderly crowd comprising both rich and poor, widows and orphans, well-fed judges and hungry children, muscular soldiers and feeble country women; a crowd, in other words, of the historical realities and contradictions.”²⁸ There is no doubt the poor, including the women, are always with us as Jesus himself pronounced as he says, “For you always have the poor with you . . .” (Mt 26:11). Yes, the poor will always be with us, but they need special attention from us.

We have a lot of uneducated women living in poverty. Phiri and Nadal cite that “Even though most rural women are uneducated and lack access to resources, they can still benefit from projects initiated by the churches, such as the manufacture of peanut butter, poultry production, craftwork, and gardening. Such projects can empower poor people financially and protect them from the vulnerability of adopting risky survival strategies that further expose them to HIV infection.”²⁹ I agree that the high percentage of women who live in rural areas live in poverty because of the lack of education. They are unemployed and need these projects.

As the church should be an advocate of women. The LWF document called “So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth” highlights that “As Lutheran women,

²⁸ Emmanuel Katongole, *African Theology Today: African Theology Today Series Volume 1* (Scranton: The University of Scranton Press, 2002), 213.

²⁹ Phiri and Nadar, *African Women, Religion, and Health*, 184.

we want the church to be a voice for alleviating poverty which affects and oppresses women disproportionately. We would like to see the next generations free from the burdens and oppressions we bear on our shoulders.”³⁰

5.6. Women in African Independent Churches Reaction

I was impressed by how the women in African Independent Churches reacted to the word “interdependence.” They said that “The term interdependence is used here, therefore, to describe and to underline the interconnectedness of different histories, economic structures, and political structures as well as the relatedness of cultural texts, races, classes, and genders within specific and global contexts.”³¹ Why should some people treat their fellow human according to their status in society? We need to value people dignity no matter whether they are black, white, gray, or red, women or men, rich or poor. Why do we need to look at the skin color of the person? We are all human beings, and we are one no matter our status. The economic structure and political structure cannot separate us regardless of our economic status or political party where we belong.

The church is the body of love and what the church has is for the common good. Phiri and Nadar mention that “If the church is a united institution, oneness in Christ should be exercised by sharing one another’s burdens and by seeking corporately to

³⁰ Karen L. Bloomquist and Musa Panti Filibus, *So the Poor have Hope, and Injustice Shuts Its Mouth: Poverty and the Mission of the Church in Africa* (Versoix: SRO-Kundig, 2007), 91.

³¹ Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2000), 185.

correct injustices that deny access to health care or food security for the poor.”³² The church cannot allow the poor and those helpless to suffer while she keeps quiet. The church is existing to call the rights of justice of the poor and all people in need. That is also a biblical task for the church to do, as James said: “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (James 1:27). On other hand Kjell Nordstokke says “Therefore, root causes of poverty must be denounced and the dignity of individuals defended.”³³

5.7. The Land Issue and the Women in Africa

Poverty transcends having little or no money. If a person has no land such a person is poor. Most of those who have no land in many societies are women. In Africa, we have the same problem. Oladipo spoke about the land issue as he says that “The land issue is a common matter of concern in almost all Africa countries.”³⁴ The land issue as a problem everywhere in Africa mostly affects single women. Solving the land issue is very critical especially in Southern Africa. Those given authority to manage the land misuse their power. Women and vulnerable people are denied the right to acquire land, especially in the communal areas. Some women are subjected to sexual harassment and unwanted sexual acts to receive land. Most poor women cannot afford to buy ground in the commercial area because it is costly, especially in Namibia. The church in Southern

³² Phiri and Nadar, *African Women, Religion, and Health*, 184.

³³ Bloomquist and Filibus, *So the Poor have Hope, and Injustice Shuts Its Mouth*, 165.

³⁴ Oladipo, *The Role of the Church in Poverty Alleviation in Africa*, 150.

Africa seems to look the other way when it comes to land issues. “The earth is the LORD’s and all that is it, the world, and those who live in it” (Ps 24:1). The church should tackle the land issue and strengthen her voice and speak loudly on behalf of the poor women and all voiceless people in Africa.

5.8. Prostitutes in Africa

Prostitution is everywhere in the world. Most women turn to the trade to make ends meet. Oduyoye and Kanyoro speak about how they made discussion with some of the prostitutes. They said that “The prostitutes with whom we met explained that while prostitution as a line of work is beset with certain risks, it is generally well remunerated.”³⁵ Many women are suffering from poverty in Southern Africa as they believe that only the way they can earn income is through selling their bodies. That’s why the large numbers of poor women became prostitutes to survive. In Namibia, although prostitution is still unlawful, young women engage in it and they hardly lack patronage from men, especially the politicians. There is a bridge in Namibia called the bridge of prostitutes. There are also other places in the country, especially in the big towns, where you can find them. Those ladies did not join prostitution because they wish to join that business but they are forced to do so by poverty. They are forced by poverty to sell their bodies to get something they can use to bring bread to the table. The church should stand up and speak on behalf of these voiceless poor women. It is painful to see them running

³⁵ Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro, *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and The Church in Africa* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1992), 167.

when they see police officers are coming. The church should also recognize the right of these people and accept them as they are. Sometimes we blame their actions, but I think we have also contributed to their suffering in this way or another way.

5.9. Ubuntu Theology

I conclude this section with the *Ubuntu* notion which is common in Africa, mostly in Southern Africa countries. The word *Ubuntu* means humanity, people, humankind, or civilization. This connection to the word ‘*omuntu*’ in my mother tongue Oshiwambo means people or person. In the *Xhosa* language, *Ubuntu* means ‘*ungamntu ngambanye abantu*’ which interpreted unevenly means each individual’s people is perfectly articulated in affiliation with others or a person rests on other people to be a person.³⁶ To my understanding in Africa, you cannot make a living without others. We are always living because of our fellow human Africans and other people from the world. This means in Africa we need each other to make a living or sustain each other. We always depend on each other. Therefore, Ubuntu means to engage people in social life and facing life together.

According to Battle, his book *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu*, says, in Africa human being is not a lonely independent entity. He or she is always connected in the community of other fellow human beings. To be is to participate and not in the manner of independence but with the mood of sharing, interdependence.³⁷ In this

³⁶ Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press. 1997), 39.

³⁷ Battle, 39.

understanding, a human being is true of human collections even in the world of development, and people understand human nature determines some government policies.³⁸

If the people believe that they are made in the image of God, changing should start within each individual as they become a person or character. Such a personality change should lead a person to think that he or she depends on the other people in the community. That's why he or she is there for others in the community or outside the community.³⁹ On the one hand, Jesus is a product of a specific Jewish community, but those who benefit from him are not only the Jews, but other nations benefited too from him. That is the same that we are in the community to serve or the community benefits from us in the sense of the ideology of *Ubuntu*.

For example, if your hut burns by the fire, your neighbors can come to help you to bring the fire down. You alone cannot do that. This is a starting point in the understanding of the African idea of humanity as Isaak quotes Mbiti's words that "the nature brings the child into the world, but society creates the child into a social being, a corporate person."⁴⁰ That means if the parents give birth to the child, it does not mean that the child belongs to them only, but the child belongs to the whole society.

Among some tribes in Namibia, when the death happens in the house, neighbors, relative members, friends, and community members show solidarity with the family

³⁸ Battle, 39.

³⁹ Battle, 63.

⁴⁰ Isaak, *Justice and Healing in Families*, 83.

members of the one who passed away. They cannot come with empty hands. Some come with a basket full of *mahangu* (wheat) powders, sheep, goats, cattle, and drinks. That's why we believe that what we have is for common, not belonging to a person alone. That is what we also do in cases of weddings. Although such customs existed before Christianity came to Africa, this is in the right path of the Bible as apostle Paul said, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of God (Gal 6:2)." Therefore, God creates a human being for caring for his or her fellow human being. Let us help those in need.

At the same time, we all depend on God, including Blacks and whites. We are all created as God's image regardless of our skin color. In his book, Battle expressed Tutu's *ubuntu* theology as it follows here: "First, this theology builds up the true, interdependent community. Second, it recognizes persons as distinctive in their identities. Third, it combines the best of European and African cultures to produce a new and distinctive theology. And fourth, it is strong enough to address-even overthrow apartheid."⁴¹ I support Tutu's *ubuntu* theology as indicated above. I think these four points can help us to live accordingly.

Suppose we live in the idea of *ubuntu*, there will be peace, unity, sharing, and working together. In that case, the spirit can sustain our livelihood without discrimination but as one made in God's. People live in the *ubuntu* spirit, things like hatred, apartheid, and racism have no place among them. Wherever the spirit of *Ubuntu* is allowed to work, then the spirit of *Harambee* (pull together or working together) is also present. You cannot separate those two. If one of them is missing then, it means another one is also

⁴¹ Battle, *Reconciliation*, 40.

missing. *Ubuntu* and *Harambee* have meaningful in the life of people of Africa. That is my wish so that other communities embrace these two fundamental principles to live in unity and holistic life so that we can assist these living in the life of poverty. Jesus prays for unity among the apostles as he said, “Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one (John 17:11b).” In most societies, especially in Southern Africa, people understood the word unity which Jesus used in his prayer. African people need to follow that instruction of Jesus in order to help people in poverty and in need.

Chapter six will present how ELCIN continues with responding to poverty facing the Kunene region and conclude the work with some pastoral strategies as a response from the Church.

CHAPTER 6
STRATEGIES TOWARDS POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN KUNENE REGION BY
ELCIN AND CONCLUSION

This work has presented the situation of poverty in the Kunene Region. It has also reviewed the theology of poverty and the Christian response to situations that breed poverty. In this concluding chapter, I extrapolate the principles already enshrined in the leading document of ELCIN as the basis for undertaking needed strategic action in response to the situation of poverty in Kunene Region. The conclusion of the work follows.

6.1 Current Church Statements on the Region

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia is a church working according to its principles and plans. In her strategic plan 2016-2020, ELCIN pronounced that “The church in general should thus retain its credibility and avoid being biased but have a voice of the community. Christians should be made to understand their participatory role in the dynamic political situation in which we live in. The direction of the church is to take the advantage of this by forming strategic relationships with key government ministries and finding ways of advocating for people.”¹ This is a good initiative if ELCIN

¹ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN), *Strategic Plan 2016-2020*, n. y., 10.

can implement it. The main aim of the ELCIN adoption of the strategic plan is to respond positively to the need of the people as the document says: “Thus the strategic plans aims to excavate how ELCIN can reposition itself to address both the spiritual and physical needs of our Namibia populace.”² Although this is said in general, the Kunene region is also included.

Of course, ELCIN supports humanitarian services as she continued by saying, “The concern of ELCIN is not only for the spiritual needs, but also for physical, social, and economic needs. ELCIN started rendering social services, education and health, mainly for the communities in the Northern part of the country and gradually diversifying the intervention to other development work.”³

The church has different departments. The Mission and Diakonia section are entrusted with the task of dealing with social issues. “The development and social services of the church are led by the diakonia arm: Department of Mission, Diakonia and Social Services.”⁴

Through the ELCIN Western Diocese, the church is doing its work in the Kunene region to deliver the service to the community as she does in other societies. In her Five-Year Strategic plan for 2016-2020, ELCIN Western Diocese states “The diocese is committed to promoting human development through implementation of various activities aimed at improving the social status of the community of believers who care for both the spiritual and social needs of one another. As stated earlier in this research, our

² Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, 12.

³ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, 12.

⁴ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, 12.

communities are facing various social ills, and this role cannot be felt for the government of the day, the church has a role in complimenting the efforts of government and other civil society and faith based organizations.”⁵

It is noted that ELCIN is the church of the word and sacraments. This word always moves parallel with humanitarian assistance. The right answer to the question is that it is her task to do so. In chapter four, I already indicated how the church was tasked to render wholeness services to all God’s people, included the poor. As Jesus did, Christ’s church must do the same.

6.2. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia Can Find a Permanent Solution to Alleviate Poverty in the Kunene Region's Rural Areas

Jesus sends the church in the world to do mission. It is the church's task to respond to any crises that arise against God’s people in this world. In doing so, here and there, the church meets many obstacles. Although the church decided to alleviate poverty among the people in the Kunene region, she met many hindrances. She can only be successful in alleviating poverty when she paves away obstacles that prevent her from reaching her aim in that regard. Some of them are as follows here below. We can find sufficient answers to the question above in the recommendations part.

6.3. ELCIN Needs to Tackle the Following Obstacles Which Will Be Indicated Below

⁵ Five-Years Strategic Plan 2016-2020, Western Diocese, ELCIN Western Diocese, n.y., 19.

There are some aspects I would like to speak about in an attempt to reply to the question above, which I think will help the ELCIN to look very carefully at them.

6.3.1. Primary Education

Primary education is the foundation of life. ELCIN realized this at the beginning of her mission. Wherever she began to do church missions, she also started elementary classes among the children in that specific community. School dropouts among the learners at the primary phase is a concern in the region and ELCIN. Through research, I realize that one of the significant problems that make Himba children drop out of school is the schools' dress codes. Some children do not feel comfortable attending classes with a half-naked body, while other children from other tribes cover their bodies with school wear/uniform. Maybe some parents cannot afford to buy school uniforms for their children, and though some can, they cannot do that due to their tradition. Here I have some of the following suggestions.

- I encourage the church to urge the government to provide school uniforms to all learners to prevent school dropout in the region.
- If the school is for the church, then the church should do the same.
- In the parental meetings, the school management should coach the parents and all stakeholders to understand what is wrong with school dropping out.
- It can help the learners to accept a new environment and fellow learners at the school premises.

6.3.2. Literacy

The ELCIN is called to evaluate how she conducts literacy initiatives in the Kunene region, and this is urgent. People need to know that they can read and write no matter their ages. Many people of both generations in the Kunene region do not know how to read and write. They need to read their bibles and other materials for themselves. Below are some proposals the ELCIN and government can look over together, as this is an emergency need:

- ✓ Literacy should be one of the primary objectives and needs special projects, mainly in the Kunene region.
- ✓ The church and government should work together on these issues to improve reading and writing among the people, mostly the *Ovahimba* tribe in the region.
- ✓ The literacy program should be established or strengthened in the *Otyihimba* and *Oludhimba* languages. This project needs a feasibility study first before implementing it.
- ✓ The opportunity in education is still a concern and a significant question in which the church, government, communities, and other stakeholders need to find a permanent solution.
- ✓ Each village should have two literacy programs, and villagers need to be encouraged to participate in that initiative.

6.3.3. Information Technology (IT) and Communication

This is not only the problem of the Western Diocese, but it is a problem of the ELCIN. It means the ELCIN needs to confront this problem and find a solution because all the church work is affected. In our day you cannot do anything without the internet. ELCIN also needs to improve her website so users can get the opportunity to read it several times. Necessary improvement needs to be carried out on the issue as an emergency. To render excellent service in our time, only if we have proper infrastructures like the internet, mobile cellphones and other technology types of equipment to communicate with other different people from the globe. The church should utilize such infrastructures.

6.3.4. Gender Balance

Under the structure, I indicated how the ELCIN is not complying with the Lutheran World Federation policy for gender balance. The government of Namibia tries to fulfill its system of 50/50 gender balance. LWF wants all the church leadership affiliated with her to implement her policy within their churches. No matter how hard it is to fulfill it, the church needs to comply with such regulations. More women need to be in authority in the church work, especially in the Kunene region.

6.3.5. Empowerment and Capacity Building

Löytty and Löytty in their paper, they indicate that some of the missionary workers need elementary training.⁶ How can you recruit a person to do church missions without primary education? Maybe it can be possible, but is it wise to do that in our

⁶ Löytty and Löytty, *Research on Mission*, 44.

modern time? The church needs to look to other needs like language skills, updating IT knowledge, and communication skills in training. Below are some recommendations:

- Workshop for missionary workers should be done at the national church stage.
- Yearly updated in-service training is recommended.
- Such a workshop should be planned at an average level, where participants acquire the necessary skills to help them confront daily challenges in works.
- In doing so, the church needs to collaborate with the Ministry of Higher Education, Training, and innovation, and together, they can make much impact.
- The church should look carefully at the standard requirements, which will be essential for each participant in the capacity-building sessions.
- The training of missionary workers needs to be evaluated depending on demand in the mission fields. The new workers who will be recruited need to get the necessary training, while the old workers regularly need in-service training.
- One of the three components of LWF “Transformation” can only be achieved through education.
- Capacity building is the backbone of any project, and without it, you can kill the project.

6.3.6. Lack of Implementation

The ELCIN has good plans and thoughts in most cases, but those entrusted to implement cannot implement as such. It is miserable in most cases, as she failed to be a success in her effort. I assume that the ELCIN can learn a lot from such failures and find some options to implement well in the future. The ELCIN can only improve when she tries to get advice from experts, parish members, and others elsewhere. An implementation depends on the capability and capacity of its implementers.

The ELCIN, especially in the Kunene region, uses unstable personnel to implement her activities rather than recruiting experts who have experience in these particular activities. She uses cheap labor tactics. It seems the ELCIN looked at the salaries of the workers and decided to recruit unexpert workers. She did it to refrain from spending much on professionals. Maybe that is a good reason, but the implementation has failed in some cases at the end of the day. Thus, the ELCIN spent much in the Kunene region because we repeat the same thing every year. There is not the significant progress as the church dreams. If the ELCIN Western Dioceses (WD) wants to reap excellent results, she must recruit experts and seek advice from other professionals who can produce good results. This method will allow us to spend a few means rather than disbursing much on the same thing every year.

6.3.7. Financial Constraints

The ELCIN is still in a financial dilemma, and she depends on donors from around the world. Although she has some inside resources, these resources cannot provide enough sources that can help the church cater to the people's needs in the Kunene region. In the past, the ELCIN was depending on FELM (Finish Evangelical Lutheran

Mission), which was covering a big part of the ELCIN budget each year. Currently, FELM reduces her support in assisting the ELCIN, and such action had a destructive impact on the church's activities. This is a clear indication that the ELCIN cannot stay stable without proper improvement and an excellent financial support system.

As far as I know, 85% of the ELCIN members live in rural areas and most of them are unemployed. Of course, some of them moved to towns and cities, intending to get work. Unfortunately, many of them found themselves in the streets without jobs. All these dynamics mean that many ELCIN members are unable to contribute their tithes, tenths, and other church contributions as expected. Because of that, many of our remote parishes are in a financial crisis.⁷ There were many attempts made in the past to uplift the church incomes. Behind such attempts, the main aim is to get money for the salaries of the church workers. Unfortunately, community empowerment and human resources are not prioritized by the ELCIN management. That's why the church does not do much among the people of the Kunene region. We failed them and we continue to forget and neglect them.

6.3.8 Lack of Workforce

There is no doubt the ELCIN mission field workers in the Kunene region are not enough compared with the Ovahimba population in the Kunene region. According to the ELCIN WD bishop's report in the tenth Diocesan Synod held in Ongwediva ELCIN Conference Centre on December 02, 2020, he indicates that the ELCIN has only

⁷ Paul J. Isaak, *The Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia in the 21st Century* (Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, 2000), 75.

eight mission workers, four female and four male workers among more than 80,000 people. Those church mission workers cannot do much among those inhabitants in the region. In her dream to reach her goal in the region, she needs to recruit more experts to work among the people in the Kunene region. In doing so, the ELCIN should comply with the gender regulation policy of LWF to prevent recruiting one gender only. This is very important.

6.3.9 What Should ELCIN Do?

- **Encouragement and Conscientization:** The ELCIN should conscientize the people to know and restore their identity and dignity. Within a historical praxis, the people became aware of the hope and power behind the symbols and stories of their traditional faith and began to shape a new ethos, the people can indeed become the subjects of their history.⁸ People should be part of their history and participate in developing their society.
- **The church needs to listen always to the people:** People who live in a particular area know their places better than church leaders from different regions. Here I mean before the church sets up a new project in a specific location in the Kunene region, it needs to have ideas from the indigenous people in that place. Such early work can prevent the failure of the project in the community.

Although there are many methods that people can use in planting the project, I would like to say a bit to one way, which I encourage the ELCIN to use in her project in

⁸ Bonino Miguez, *Towards a Christian Political Ethics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 106.

the Kunene region. This method is called the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) method of Chambers. This method emphasizes people-centered engagement and planning. It encourages the community's people to participate in the projects planted in their communities for their progress rather than people taken from other regions. This kind of method was established with the purpose of opposing the two common approaches to study such as formal questionnaire surveys and rural development tourism.⁹ Such systems were grounded on the idea that other people outside the place did not show kindness and respect to the people in the community who did not communicate with them, and no research hand-carried with them. The study and report, which can be done without the people's participation in the community, did not indicate the people's real context and authentic lives.

I urge the ELCIN to assimilate the PRA method of Chambers. PRA's alternative tactic uses procedures that give the people in the Kunene region the power to do their own studies, exchange their own experiences, educate newcomers to do the investigation and demonstrations, strategies, and thus own the results. By Chambers, PRA is about “start, stumble, self-correct, share.” This means to motivate and empower the downgraded to have a go-ahead. It can also include critical self-awareness and acceptance of mistakes, sitting down, hearing, and study. It does not moralize but “handing over the stick” to inhabitants, who become the leading educators and experts, having self-assurance that “they can do it”; and an open-ended finding.¹⁰

⁹ Robert Chambers, *Rural Development: Putting the Last First* (London: Longman, 1983), 1.

¹⁰ Chambers, 2.

- **Operate Church Incomes:** The evangelical Lutheran church has numerous people and physical resources around Namibia. Many parishioners have different gifts and talents like nurses, government officials, doctors, teachers, farmers, lawyers, builders, welders, economists and architects, and many others. The ELCIN needs to encourage those who have different capacities to integrate their bits of knowledge in the church. If the ELCIN can do so, one day she will be free from financial constraints. Those various capacities will make a tremendous difference in impact on the poor, specifically in the Kunene region. Most congregations have old church buildings that do not use them anymore. These buildings need to be decommissioned, and could be facilities able to be used by people for public matters. Such structures could generate a lot of money, which will help the mission in the Kunene region.
- **Sustainable Livelihood programs:** As I said in chapter one, I will say something on this point in this episode. I will express some ideas that the ELCIN can look to in income-generating projects to brighten the people of Kunene's future. Besides the money coming from the congregations each year for mission work, I cannot remember any generating income projects established by ELCIN Western Diocese for support mission work in the Kunene region. The church has an excellent opportunity to set up different tasks that can generate money. The project can include bee keeping, poultry, piggery, cattle/goat rearing, bakery paste or maize milling, projects, sewing projects, handcrafts, garden projects, tailoring, etc. In this

regard, the church is to recruit the right experts from the people I mentioned above to do the feasibility study and implement the income-generating projects needed. Lawyers can set up project constitutions, while economists can draft terms of references for the projects. The other church members with different skills will be assigned to the tasks according to their abilities to implement their relevant skills. The ELCIN can recruit those experts voluntarily. In doing so, many people in the Kunene region will benefit from these projects.

- **Partnerships with home institutions:** We have a proverb in my mother tongue *Oshiwambo*, which says, “*Ondjamba yimwe iha yi tsimike ontsi.*” This means one elephant cannot make dust. Indeed, one person alone cannot do much. In saying so, I would like to emphasize the issue of partnership with other institutions in the county. The ELCIN cannot alleviate poverty in the Kunene region alone. Working with other partners is very important in this regard. ELCIN should mobilize communities, government, institutions, and other partners to protect and observe people's rights in the Kunene region. The ELCIN and her partners should mobilize resources to respond to poverty in the Kunene region. Together with others, the ELCIN could make a difference among the people of the Kunene region.
- **Cooperate with other domestic and global organizations:** I mentioned already that the ELCIN alone could not do much. The ELCIN has also noted this. That’s why in her Five-Years Strategic Plan the ELCIN

Western Diocese she says: “There is willingness on the part of donors and partners to work with the church and faith based organizations in different aspects of development work.”¹¹ It will be good if the ELCIN can seek cooperation with other organizations, either from Namibia or abroad, to work together to assist the Kunene region's people. Corroboration with other agencies can help in service delivery among the people of Kunene. The same effort should be made in the ELCIN in an attempt to alleviate poverty in the Kunene region.

Fighting for corruption: Corruption is an evil that can happen everywhere and it can be rooted out if the people try to fight it. In Namibia, we have a body called The Anti-Corruption Commission. This is a government institution. One of the tasks of this government body is “to investigate any conduct of a person employed by a public body or private body which in the opinion of the Commission may be connected with or conducted to corrupt practices, and to report thereon to an appropriate authority within the public body or private body.”¹²

The ELCIN can establish a partnership with this Anti-Corruption Commission in fighting corruption in the church. According to the Anti-Corruption task force, the church leadership can use this institution to investigate any offender whom the church's leadership thinks he or she conducts corrupt activities. The church can use the Anti-

¹¹ *Five-years Strategic Plan 2016-2020*, Western Diocese, ELCIN Western Diocese, n.y., 19.

¹² *The Anti-Corruption act, Namibia*, 2003, 8.

corruption commission to advise the church officers on how they can prevent corrupt practices and changes of practices, system and procedures compatible with the effective performance of their duties and which are necessary to reduce the likelihood of the occurrence of corruption practice.¹³ That means through workshops, the ELCIN needs to equip her workers with essential information which helps them to refrain from corrupt acts. She can request specialist trainers from the Anti-Corruption commission to train her officers without expenses. The ELCIN needs to expel any officer who involves themselves in any corruption acts. This can help other officers to refrain from conducting corrupt acts. This should be conducted according to the law of Anti-Corruption act no 8. The ELCIN needs to do this without favoring anybody. All the new officers recruited need an orientation that includes how they can prevent corrupt work in their offices. Regular in-service trainings are needed from time to time as well. Refraining from Corruption should be part of our sermons. Anti-corruption acts should be part of pastoral training curricula or syllabi. The ELCIN, together with the Anti-Corruption organization, should conduct awareness about fighting corruption in the church and society because those working in government offices and private companies, most of them are members of the church. These are ways which the ELCIN can use to root out the corruption in the church of Christ.

6.3.10. To Counter the Fear

The main thing the church needs to do is to listen carefully to what the Bible says about poverty and how the church is challenged through these scriptures. The church

¹³ *The Anti-Corruption act, Namibia, 2003, 9.*

should listen to the Bible, which speaks in her response to people living in poverty.

Although many of our rulers committed immoral activities, the church should stand firm and shout up the prophetic voice in the world of corruption. The church is there to speak loudly and waking the world. In fear, the church must remember the word of Jesus Christ, who said: “So have no fear of them; for nothing is secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mt 10: 26-28). Furthermore, the church should ask the will of God to guide the whole process. Here I mean the church should commit herself to pray for the rulers and leaders of the government.

On March 27, 2009, Dr. Samuel Kobia wrote a document to United Nations secretary-general H.E. Ban Ki-moon and H.E. Mr. Miguel d’Escot Brockmann, president of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly. In this vital document, Dr. Samuel indicated how the WCC (World Council of Churches) observed the world financial crisis's current situation. He mentioned how the world church body felt about the increased unemployment and poverty in all continents. This is a financial crisis with a moral and ethical dimension that has slowly been eroding our societies over time. WCC observed a period when instability has become an obstacle for economic growth. He continued by saying that, “It is, therefore, necessary, in the understanding of the churches, to go beyond short-term financial bailout actions and to seek long term transformation based on sound ethical and moral principles which will govern a new

financial architecture.”¹⁴ He reminds the UN general secretary that the World Council of the Churches had been pronouncing herself since 1984, calling for a new international financial order, which is based on morals and values and social justice. The world church body believes that the changing financial and economic systems must depend on honesty, social justice, and dignity.¹⁵

In his letter, Kobia speaks about three things that are very important and leaders of the countries need to think very carefully about: honesty, social justice, and dignity for all. Honesty is lacking in many people, including many of our leaders, if not all, yet many of them are entrusted to lead the global economy. In their doings there is no transparency at all. Openness and honesty are working together and you cannot separate these two essential components. If you want the nations to be free from the financial and economic crisis, these leaders need to change their behavior in dealing with country money and economics.

Why does the ELCIN leadership not do the same thing as Samuel Kobia did on behalf of his organization? The ELCIN can do the same. It seems our church leaders have a fear of losing friendship with the secular leaders in Namibia.

These three factors mentioned by Kombi can be used by the ELCIN leadership to remind the current Namibian leaders to refrain from mismanagement of country resources. Simultaneously, people in the Kunene region live in poverty and need the government's hands to assist them. They should do that without fear. Paul reminded

¹⁴ World Council of Churches, *The Churches in International Affairs: Reports 2007-2009*, Accessed November 04, 2020 (Website: <http://www.Oikoumene.org>, 2014), 86.

¹⁵ World Council of Churches, 86.

Timothy about the kind of spirit which God had given to us all. The spirit of fear is not coming from God. Paul says, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and of a sound” (2Tim 1: 7). The ELCIN leadership needs to emulate such spirit and speak up on behalf of the poor and vulnerable people. The ELCIN must be a voice for the voiceless in Namibia, including people living in the Kunene region.

6.3.11. Other Recommendations

- The Department of Mission, Diakonia, and Social Services in the ELCIN (DMDSS) should work on a regular basis with the Department of Mission, Diakonia, and Social Services offices in both dioceses. Their main aim should be to monitor the jobs which all the dioceses are entrusting to implement. This will make easier the mission work in the Kunene region.
- All diocesan mission directors should be part of the Department of Mission and Social Services planning team in the ELCIN. This will help the mission directors in both dioceses to do their works accurately.
- Significant work can be done if the ELCIN will recruit the right personnel at the national and the diocesan levels.
- Suppose it is necessary to recruit the pastor in the Department of Mission, Diakonia, and Social Services either at the church or diocesan level. In that case, he or she must do his or her pastoral work only. They cannot occupy all the positions, including work for which they do not have any experience.

- It will be good if an atmosphere of co-operation with the stakeholders can be established or strengthened. This will help the growth of the spirit of togetherness to reach our people's goals and welfare.
- Special advisors need to be recruited to coordinate and restructure the department activities from the national to the congregational level.
- Enough personnel are needed, at both the national and diocesan level.
- It is the right time for the ELCIN to consider the LWF contextual directions. These dimensions are 1. reconciliation, 2. transformation, 3. empowerment.

ELCIN resources should be taken care of properly so that they can solve the needs of the poor. In this regard, I want to remind my church co-workers that God is watching us. Even when there is no proper external monitoring and evaluation, we are should be monitored by the eighth commandment. Luther reminds us in his explanation of that commandment that “God will not forget his commandment and will pay them what they deserve. He will hang them not on green gallows but a dry one. The poor are defrauded every day, and new burdens and higher prices are imposed.”¹⁶ We cannot only point to others, but we also need to remind ourselves in that regard.

¹⁶ Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wenger, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 416.

6.4. The Words of Conclusion

This work has attempted to articulate the issue of poverty among the *Ovahimba* people in the Kunene region and proffered a solution on actions that the ELCIN should undertake in alleviating the problem of poverty in the Kunene Region. The essay is divided in chapters six. This paper aims to help the ELCIN in her attempts to alleviate poverty in the Kunene region. My goal is for the Kunene region people to have better services from the ELCIN and I hope that God will help the ELCIN in her efforts.

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